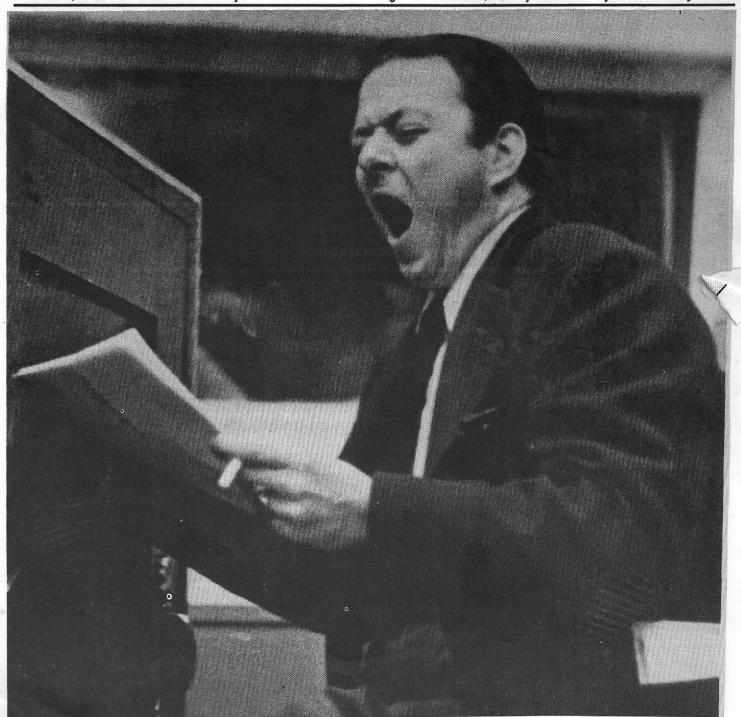
SPERDVAC - TOTAL - TOT

General Library catalog pages 213-214 are enclosed with this issue. If your copy is missing, tell Editor Dan!

Vol. 21, No. 5

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

May 1995



Actor/photographer Jerry Hausner caught sound effects man Virgil Reimer almost snoozing while he waited for his next cue. Would you close the door, Virgil?

REPS convention June 16 & 17

The Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound will hold their annual OTR convention June 16 and 17 featuring an original radio drama to be aired on KIRO, Seattle plus re-creations of Vic & Sade, X Minus One and Johnny Madero, Pier 23. Their convention site is the Overlake Hospital Conference Center in Bellevue, Washington.

Scheduled guests include Jeanette Nolan, Peter Leeds, Parley Baer, Herb Ellis, Dick Beals, Jay Livingston, Shirley Mitchell, Tyler McVey, Esther Geddes McVey, Frank Bresee, Peggy Webber, Harry Bartell, Arthur Anderson and Frank Buxton.

Also planning to appear are Norma Jean Nillson, Anne Whitfield, Rhoda Williams, Merill Mael, Doug Young, Larry Albert, Sam Edwards, sound effects man Stuart Conway, Katrina Baxter-Hodiak (daughter of Anne Baxter and John Hodiak), engineer Bill Murtough and actor John Archer.

Convention costs are \$59. Reservations should be mailed to Gary Litwin, 1212 S. 196th, Seattle, Washington 98148. His phone number is (206) 643-7641.

Gil Stratton guests May 13

Gil Stratton will join SPERDVAC at our May 13 meeting. He will discuss his work in early radio, including appearances on **Suspense**, **My Little Margie** (playing the role of Freddie), **Life With Luigi** (he was Jimmy) and on **Those Websters**.

Stratton was the voice who declared "smoking in the outer lobby only" for visitors to the "Little Theater off Times Square" during West Coast broadcasts of the First Nighter Program. Our guest is a weekend sportscaster at KNX radio, Los Angeles.

The SPERDVAC meeting begins at 12 noon Saturday, May 13. The location is St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, 15520 Sherman Way in Van Nuys. The church is located one block west of the 405 freeway.

Visitors are welcome to attend the meeting. SPERDVAC membership meetings are open free to the public.

SPERDVAC

Bob & Ginnie Newhart (In memory of Bill Quinn)

Walter Bunker

(In memory of Garry Moore & Pat Buttram)

Millie Morse

(In memory of Carlton E. Morse)

June Foray

(In memory of Hobart Donovan)

True Boardman

(In memory of John McIntire, Jerry Hausner and

Bud Heistand)

Dick Richards

(In memory of William Conrad)

Arthur Anderson

(In memory of Nila Mack)

Naomi Lewis

(In memory of Dick Mack)

Dorothy Geiger

(In memory of Milton Geiger)

Elliott Reid

(In memory of John McIntire & Howard Duff)

Ken Roberts

(In memory of Paul Stewart & Everett Sloane)

Warren M. Lewis

(In memory of Frank Lovejoy & Don W. Sharpe)

Jerome Lawrence

(In memory of Robert E. Lee)

Carl Boyer

(In memory of Don Ameche)

Shepard Menken

(In memory of Elliott Lewis & Jesse Goldstein)

Art Gilmore

(In memory of Harfield Weedin)

FRIENDS

Tippy Conrad (In memory of William Conrad) Janet Waldo

(In memory of Robert E. Lee)

George Ansbro

(In memory of Nora Marlowe & James McCallion)

George Petrie

(In memory of Andre Baruch & John Zoller)

Richard and Truda Chandlee

(In memory of Cathy Lewis & Elliott Lewis)

Seaman Jacobs

(In memory of Olan Soule & Pat Buttram)

Hy Averback

(In memory of Bob Sweeney & Elliott Lewis)

Phil Cohan

(In memory of Garry Moore & Jimmy Durante)

Betty Lackow

(Matching fund in memory of Irene Tedrow)

Joe Walker
Gary Papers
Alice Backes
Lucia Silvestri
Bob Hite
Betsy Weinberg
Jonathon Hole
Dick Murphy
Himan Brown



Amzie Strickland
Christopher Conrad
Russell J. Folsom
Bob LeMond
Dix Davis
Gil Stratton
Gary Floyd
Forest Owen
Jack Brown

Doris Singleton Issacs

SPERDVAC is very grateful to these individuals who have contributed \$50 or more to our organization during the past twelve months. Tax-deductible donations, payable to SPERDVAC, should be mailed to Carrolyn Rawski. (See SPERDVAC Directory.)

Convention plans

Smokin' rockets! Space Patrol re-creation set

SPERDVAC will re-create Space Patrol at our Nov. 3-5 old-time radio convention.

Ed Kemmer, Commander Buzz Corey on the sci-fi adventure series, will be joined by Norman Jolley (a writer of some Space Patrol scripts and actor on the program), sound effects expert Ray Erlenborn and announcer Dick Tufeld.

SPERDVAC's annual convention will begin in the afternoon Friday, Nov. 3.

The gathering will conclude about 11:30 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 5.

Two additional vintage radio program re-creations are in the planning stages. SPERDVAC convention chair Larry Gassman expects to announce the shows within one or two months.

The SPERDVAC Board of Directors has set preconvention registration fees at \$110 for members and their guests. The pre-convention rate for non-members is \$125. The at-the-door registration fee will be \$145.

Our salute to early radio will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 5985 W. Century Blvd., Los Angeles. The convention site is a brief shuttle ride from Los Angeles International Airport. Out of town guests may want to contact the hotel for overnight reservations. The Crowne Plaza Hotel's reservation desk phone number is (800) 255-7606.

Convention volunteers needed

SPERDVAC needs member volunteers now to aid the planning for our November Old-Time Radio Convention.

We are looking for members who can assist us in planning of re-creations, paperwork and panel/workshop preperations. Jobs can include reproduction and distribution of scripts, coordinating communication with all parties involved in specific presentations and last-minute troubleshooting.

Volunteers will be needed to assist at SPERDVAC's registration table and in the Collectors' Room we will have set up. We are looking for members who will contribute one or two hours at one of these locations.

Also, we need volunteers to help us unload engineering equipment prior to the convention and/or load the equipment following the convention. We expect to unload equipment (speakers, microphones, tape machines and sound board) for about 90 minutes beginning 12 noon Friday, Nov. 3. The convention will conclude by 11:30 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 5. Loading of equipment after the convention is expected to take about one hour.

With several volunteers, SPERDVAC will be able to present another smooth-running convention which everyone attending can enjoy. Without extra volunteers, we will be more likely to encounter unnecessary problems.

Members planning to attend the SPERDVAC convention Nov. 3-5 are encouraged to contact us for additional details. Convention chair Larry Gassman will be glad to hear from volunteers at (310) 947-9800.

Archives & Hollywood Museum libraries \$5.50 for five cassettes.

General Library cassettes - \$8.75 for 5 reels worth of cassettes (usually 15 cassettes)

General Library open reel —\$10 for five reels.

Archives Library reels—\$7 for five reels.

New shows in library

The SPERDVAC General Library is releasing 63 hours of more radio broadcast recordings. They are included on General Library page 213-214.

The programs include more Gunsmoke shows, AFRS music-oriented broadcasts and country-western programs contributed by Cliffie Stone.

Acqusitions chair John Gassman says there will be Weird Circle, Mysterious Traveler and Sam Spade shows added to the library beginning next month.

Here are two additional sets of tapes currently available from the General Library:

Tape 1801

- a. Wake-up Ranch 3-11-1949. Continued from previous
- b. Hometown Jamboree 5-30-1949 KXLA. Host Cliffie Stone with Bucky Tibbs, Eddie Kirk, Tenessee Ernie Ford, Herman the Hermit and The Armstrong Twins. 60 minutes.
- c. Cliffie Stone Show 7-3-1949 KFVD, 5 6 p.m. 60
- d. Wake-up Ranch 1948? First 30 minutes only of a 90 minute show. KFVD, Los Angeles.

Tape 1802

- a. Cowboy Hit Parade 1-9-1948 KRKD, 8:30 p.m. Some volume dropout. 60 minutes.
- b. Country Barn Dance 12-11-1948, KXLA. Debut of program which would later become Hometown Jamboree. Features Cliffie Stone, Eddie Kirk, Merle Travis, Harold Hensley, Judy Hayden, Tenessee Ernie Ford, Herman the Hermit and The Armstrong Twins. Broadcast from El Monte Legion Stadium.
- c. Rhythm Ranch 1-10-1948 KFI, Los Angeles.
- d. Dinner Bell Round-up Time 5-31-1948 KXLA. With Cliffie Stone, Eddie Kirk, Texanne, Merle Travis. 60 minutes.

Writer-producer-director William N. Robson dies

by Dan Haefele

Ahlheimer's Disease has taken the life of William N. Robson, the Peabody Award-winning radio writer-producer-director. He died at his Alexandria, Virginia home April 10 at age 88.

Robson's first encounter with a radio microphone came in 1922 when his father arranged for the younger Robson's high school band to play a concert on WCAE, Pittsburgh. After college, he wrote movie scripts for a short time before becoming a radio show writer in Los Angeles.

He was writing a series about World War I flyers called Conquerors of the Sky at KHJ, Los Angeles in 1933 when he was asked by the program director to become the show's director. It was his first directing assignment and began a long association with CBS as producer and director of radio shows.

Another of his early radio directing credits is **Calling All Cars**, a police-crime show aired on the West Coast about 1934.

Mr. Robson performed the duties of both producer and director of numerous radio programs. "The producer would make the decision as to the purchase of the (written) material, the employment of the actors, negotiations with the various agents and take care of the business ramifications

of the production, and the director would do what he was told," he recalled. "The creative decisions were made by the producer."

Robson was an authoritative figure when it came to directing a production. "You didit my way or else," he explained. "The show had to come first."

In 1939 Robson was selected to replace Jerry McGill as director of **Big Town** with Edward G. Robinson and Claire Trevor. Behind the scenes, most decisions had to be approved by Robinson, including Robson's appointment to the director's chair.

"He was a nice guy but a very difficult man—moody and demanding," Robson recalled.

"One time I cast Elliott Lewis in a support role. Elliott was quite new to radio at the time, and a good actor. I could see Eddie looking around sideways every time Elliott would read a line. Eddie came in during a (rehearsal) break and said, 'Get rid of him,' "Robson once recalled. "Three weeks later Eddie said to me, 'Remember that kid we had who was playing that football coach? Get him. He'd do this part real good.'"

When Robson produced and directed **The Man Behind the Gun**, a wartime drama about combat forces, Everett Sloane was initially hired as narrator. "This (show) required two

days of rehearsal," Robson related. "The narrator was the focal character of these scripts. Sloan came to me and said, 'Bill, I'm sorry but I've got a lot of responsibilities and a lot things I have to do. I just don't need that much rehearsal.' I said, 'Everett, I know you don't — but I do.' "Jackson Beck became the narrator.

Bernard Herrmann was also at odds with Robson after the first show and Nathan Van Cleave replaced him as musical director.

Robson was also demanding of himself in his work as a radio director. During many dramatic performances he was forced to split his concentration in several directions simultaneously.

"When you get into a show like Man Behind the Gun where you have diving airplanes and barrages of artillery, you have a split-second timing problem very often. You have three — four maybe — elements to contend with: music, sound, actors and a narrator. These must be cued literally on the split second. Nothing must go wrong. It's like conducting a musical composition," Robson explained. "Everything . . . became elements contributing to a coordinated end for a predetermined result."

Robson's most controversial radio broadcast was the special "An Open Letter on Race Hatred." CBS aired the show, which Robson wrote and directed, on July 23, 1943. It was inspired by the race riot in Detroit earlier that summer and by the American public's response to the incident. Several radio stations in the South refused to air the show. It earned Robson his first George F. Peabody Award.

In 1948 Robson produced and directed the unique **Door way to Life** on CBS. The series explored psychological problems of children and teenagers. "There had never been anything like it before on radio," Robson said. "It was exciting to do because it was a challenge and it was gratifying to do because we won an award."

Continued on next page



William N. Robson, left, was reunited with radio performers Dwight Weist and Charlotte Manson at the 1985 Friends of Old-Time Radio Convention.

William N. Robson continued

Robson directed **Suspense** on CBS for three seasons beginning in 1956. During that era, he went on microphone during each show to personally introduce the story.

"I used to wait until I rehearsed the entire show, then about 15 minutes before we were ready to go on tape, I'd go into a room with a typewriter and whatever came into my head was what we used. It was usually pretty effective because I was full of the subject at the time," he once explained.

During his tenure as **Suspense** director Robson sometimes wrote or adapted scripts for the series. His original stories included "Night on Red Mountain," "Don't Call Me Mother," "Eyewitness" and "Death Notice." His adaptations of short stories included "Rim of Terror," "Back for Christmas" and "Second Class Passenger."

Earlier, when he was director on **Escape**, Robson adapted "The Vanishing Lady" and "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." He also used those adaptations on **Suspense** in the late fifties.

In his adaptation of the Ambrose Bierce story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," Robson added a new character to the story to help radio listeners understand the brutality of the main character.

Robson's directing credits include **Shorty Bell**, a short-lived 1948 comedy show starring Mickey Rooney; **Columbia Workshop** and it's late fifties offspring, **CBS Radio Workshop**; **Hawk Larabee**, one of radio's earliest adult westerns; and **Luke Slaughter of Tombstone**, a late fifties western.

When television overshadowed America's appreciation of radio, Robson went to work for the Voice of America, where he was senior documentary producer. His work there included a series titled New York, New York, featuring Garry Moore with interviews of celebrities. Also on VOA, Robson wrote Two Hundred Years Ago Tonight. One episode of the 1976 series about the American Revolutionary War earned him his final Peabody Award.

During his 15 years at VOA, Robson received four of his six Peabody Awards. He retired in 1976.

Robson helped SPERDVAC celebrate its tenth anniversary by directing a re-creation of his **Suspense** story "Headshrinker" at our 1985 convention.

In addition to his wife Shirley, Robson is survived by two sons and a grandson.

Upcoming SPERDVAC meetings

June 10 — South Pasadena Public Library

July 8 — South Pasadena Public Library

Aug. 12 — Farmers & Merchants Bank, Seal Beach

Sept. 9 — South Pasadena Public Library

Oct. 14 — St. Andrews Lutheran Church

Nov. 3, 4, 5 — SPERDVAC convention at the

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles

SPERDVAC Directory

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SPERDVAC INFORMATION AND OFFICIAL BUSI-NESS: P. O. Box 7177, Van Nuys, CA 91409-7177. (310) 947-9800.

MEMBERSHIP AND RADIOGRAM SUBSCRIPTIONS: Carrolyn Rawski, 7430 Gaviota Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91406-3041

RADIOGRAM EDITOR: Dan Haefele, 4366-D 136th St., Hawthorne, CA 90250-7108 (310) 973-5060 LIBRARIES:

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GENERAL LIBRARY - Cassettes 501-1000: Peggy DeShazo, 1804 N. 39th St., San Diego, CA 92105
GENERAL LIBRARY - Cassettes 1001+: George Lovas, P. O. Box 3757, Crestline, CA 92325-3757
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Kahuna Dr., Spokane, WA 99212.

VIDEO LIBRARY- Jerry Williams, 381 Table Mountain,
Oroville, CA 95965.

AUDIO RADIOGRAM: Send C-90 cassette in returnable mailer to Stuart Lubin, 627 N. Fuller Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90036. (213) 653-2548. (For blind members only.)

AUDIO SPERDVAC CATALOGS: Bob Herman, 1329 Garrison Ave., Port Orchard, WA 98366-3321

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

ACQUISITIONS: (Discs, tapes & printed materials): John Gassman, Box 1163, Whittier, CA 90603. (310) 947-9800 for both General and Archives Libraries.

CATALOGS: Ted Theodore, 1175 Brockton St., El Cajon, CA 92020-1706.

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by Barbara J. Watkins

As perhaps some of you are, I am keeping an eye or an ear on the O. J. Simpson case. The latest squabble reported among some jurors about which movie to watch has inevitably brought to mind an alternative which most of us would request were we the jurors. Picture each of the eighteen jurors in their own rooms, listening to whatever old-time radio program they desire. I can't think of a single program that would be off-limits.

On second thought, the defense might wish to bar Mr. District Attorney, but otherwise...

Several items of interest to members living on the East Coast or to those planning to visit the New York/ New Hampshire area were in the mailbag this month. Mike Sommers sent news of an inn at Maplewood Farm in Hillsborough, New Hampshire, a half hour west of Concord.

The owners entertain guests with rebroadcasts of old-time radio shows. The shows are broadcast with a low power transmitter to vintage radios in the inn. Guests can listen to regularly scheduled broadcasts in the parlor, or if they prefer, on a radio by their bedside, by special request.

The inn has four guest suites, in a renovated 1794 farmhouse. Rooms are \$65 to \$75 a night for a double with full breakfast. For reservations, call (800) 644-6695, or fax (603) 565-4242.

The Happy Endings Cafe, 317 South Clinton Street, Syracuse, New York, will be the scene for "The 1928 Radio Review" on June 4 at 8 p.m. The program will be performed in the style of a radio broadcast over a local Syracuse station in 1928.

Art Pierce will serve as host. The show will feature music of varying styles performed by local artists Ed Clute (piano), Dennis Frisca (novelty singer and ukulelist), The Music Boys (jazz guitar-violin duo Harvey Nusbaum and Henry Jankiewicz), Tom Olson (popular vocalist and guitarist) and Marci Perini (concert soprano).

The presentation will run approximately two hours and the admission charge will be \$5. A portion of the proceeds will go to benefit WRVO-FM, public radio for Oswego-Syracuse. For additional information, call Art Pierce at (315) 337-2576.

It's time to see "what's happening down in Pine Ridge." On Saturday, June 24, the 11th Annual National Lum & Abner Society Convention will take place in nearby Mena (22 miles west of Pine Ridge). Two special guests are expected to be on hand: Parley Baer, who appeared in various roles on Lum and Abner and Shirley Lauck Babcock, the first child of Chester "Lum" Lauck and his wife Shirley.

There will be three separate programs, tentatively planned for 10 a.m., 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. On Friday and Sunday, conventioneers are encouraged to visit the Lum and Abner Museum in Pine Ridge. The Society reports that record numbers of people have written to say that they plan to attend this year's convention, so make your room reservations at the Best

Western Lime Tree Inn in Mena as soon as possible. Call the Inn at (501) 394-6350. If you have questions about the convention, send a SASE to the executive secretary, Tim Hollis, 81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, AL 35062. If you would like to become a member, send \$8 payable to the National Lum and Abner Society at that same address.

Congratulations to Chuck Schaden who is beginning his 26th year of broadcasting old-time radio this month. He began at radio station WNMP in Evanston, Illinois on May 2, 1970. A 25th anniversary party was scheduled to be held on Sunday, April 23. at the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago, with Shirley Bell Cole, radio's Little Orphan Annie, Bill Idelson, who played Rush on Vic and Sade and Fred Foy, whose voice is instantly recognizable as the announcer of The Lone Ranger, and Chuck's many fans in attendance. For a one-year, six issue subscription to Chuck Schaden's Nostalgia Digest and Radio Guide, send \$15 to The Hall Closet, Box 421, Morton Grove, IL 60053.

Send your information, questions and comments for this column to Information Please, Barbara J. Watkins, P. O. Box 561, South Pasadena, CA 91031. 'Til next time, spaceman's luck!



FOR SALE: 1940s radio station equipment: transcription turntables, mike booms, sound effects door and sfx gear, three catalogued vintage sound effects libraries (78s) referenced and in binders, assorted electronic equipment, boxed transcription tonearms, first RCA 15 ips 10" tape deck, cabinets. Would like to sell all. Send SASE for details. Contact: John Jensen, 1026 Ednuel St., Arcadia,

McGee's Closet is a free service to our members and honorary members. Send your wants in OTR-related material to McGee's Closet, c/o Barbara J.Watkins, P. O. Box 561, South Pasadena, CA 91031. Please specify desired taping format (cassette, open reel or DAT).

CA 91006.

WANTED: Sound effects whistle, original, ACME Nightingale. Looks like smoking pipe, two inches high, nickle-plated, screw-on top, no plastic. Filled with water. Willing to pay \$10 to \$60, based on condition. Contact: Larry Brown, 4502 Concord, Midland, MI 48642. Phone (517) 631-9372.



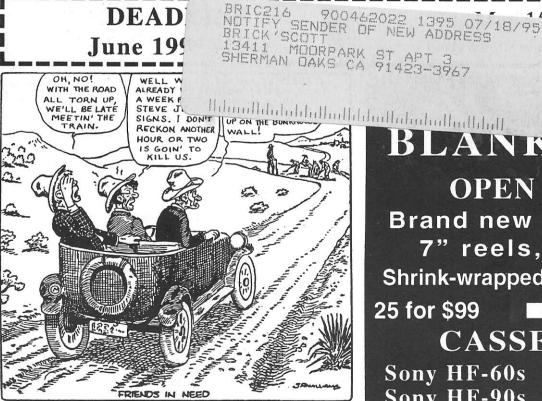
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