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Scripts For Missing *Gunsmoke* 1952 Episodes Found

By Stewart Wright
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Fans of Old-Time Radio are extremely fortunate in that all but six of 480 broadcast episodes of Gunsmoke survive in some recorded form, either from the broadcast or a rehearsal recording. Five of those Missing broadcasts are from the first ten episodes of 1952, Gunsmoke's first year on the air.

Until recently, very little was known about four of these five missing 1952 episodes; no copies of the scripts or broadcasts for these episodes were thought to survive. (More was known about "Jailbait Janet" because the 1952 script was modified and reused in 1959 for a new production with a different guest cast. The broadcast for the 1959 production survives and is in the RHAC Tape Library.)

In late March, 2007 scripts for most of the episodes from the 1952 portion of *Gunsmoke's* CBS Radio run were found. Included were those scripts

for the Five Missing broadcasts from that year. They are:

- 05/03/1952 "Ben Thompson"
- 05/17/1952 "Dodge City Killer"
- 06/14/1952 "Jailbait Janet"
- 06/21/1952 "Heat Spell"
- 06/28/1952 "The Ride Back"

(Copies of the script for the other missing episode: "Homely Girl," Broadcast Date 06/19/1960, Written by Kathleen Hite are known to exist in archives in California and Kansas. The Plot for that episode is described in the book *GUNSMOKE: A Complete History* by SuzAnne and Gabor Barabas.)

(Copies of the script for the other missing episode: "Homely Girl," Broadcast Date 06/19/1960, Written by Kathleen Hite are known to exist in archives in California and Kansas. The Plot for that episode is described in the book *GUNSMOKE: A Complete History* by SuzAnne and Gabor Barabas.)

A plotline summary for one of the missing 1952 *Gunsmoke* episodes will be published at monthly intervals in *Return with Us Now*. . . . Also included will be cast and writer information.

Photographic Credits:

The photographs of the *Gunsmoke* radio cast that accompany these plotline summaries were shot by Harry Bartell in 1953 at Knotts Berry Farm and are used with

permission previously obtained from him. Harry appeared in two of these Missing episodes and in 181 additional *Gunsmoke* episodes.



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2007 Convention Schedules

2nd Annual Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention, Sep 13 – 15, at Clarion Hotel, Aberdeen, MD; for information call Michelle or Martin Grams, Jr. at (717) 456-6208, Web site is www.midatlanticnostalgiaconvention.com

32nd Friends of Old-Time Radio Convention, Oct 18 – 21, at the Holiday Inn, Newark, NJ; For information contact Jay Hickerson, 27436 Desert Rose Ct, Leesburg, FL 34748 (352) 727-6731, JayHick@aol.com, web site: <http://www.fotr.net>

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RETURN WITH US NOW...

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August, 2007

Missing *Gunsmoke* 1952 Episode – "Ben Thompson" Plotline Summary

By Stewart Wright
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"Ben Thompson"

Broadcast: 05/03/1952

Script by Herb Purdum



Episode Notes:

A few early *Gunsmoke* episodes had no titles on the scripts. The script for this episode was simply labeled *Gunsmoke* #2. This episode was assigned the title "Ben Thompson" at an unknown, later date; perhaps by Norman Macdonnell.

Plot:

Lassiter, a notorious gunman, is killed in a gunfight with Matt Dillon. Vi, his irate widow, lets Dillon know that she plans to ruin the Marshal's reputation before she has him killed.

Sometime later, Texas, a drunk who Dillon disarmed and put in jail, has some news. Three gunmen: Ben Thompson, Tom Henderson, and Nueces Smith are coming to Dodge to kill the Marshal. Apparently, Vi Lassiter has hired them to discredit and kill Dillon. The three outlaws commit several unsolved, petty robberies around Dodge and

Thompson leaves vague notes signed by "Ben" that taunt Dillon, but do not provide adequate information to find the gunmen.

A young drunk, egged on by Nueces, claims to be Ben and publicly belittles the Marshal. Dillon knocks out the young braggart and is taking him to jail when Thompson gets the drop on Matt. Thompson takes Dillon's gun and knife and makes Matt leave the unconscious young man with Henderson. Then Ben forces the Marshal to walk with him to the edge of Dodge. As Thompson mounts his horse, he tells Matt where he can find him later that evening and orders him to come alone.

When Matt gets back to town, he finds out that the young man has been killed, stabbed in the back with the Marshal's knife. Dillon knows that he must go after Thompson and his gang to clear his name and that he cannot expect a fair fight from the outlaws.

Texas volunteers to go with Matt. Dillon refuses his offer and informs him that he has figured out that Texas is really a lawman, probably a Texas Ranger. Texas confirms Matt's assumption; he is Sergeant Jack Miles and admits that he is after Thompson. Dillon reconsiders and allows the Ranger to follow him at a distance.

At the outlaws' hideout, Matt tells Vi Lassiter that she didn't really know her husband. At one time, Matt and Lassiter were friends. Lassiter was an outlaw and a gunman, who was obsessed with proving that he was faster with a gun than Dillon. Unlike the men she hired, her husband faced the men he killed. Matt informs her that Thompson had an unconscious boy murdered to make Matt look guilty.

When Vi confronts Thompson, he admits to the murder and informs her that she is no longer giving the orders. Ben tells Vi that he wants her and that she'll get used to his ways.

Nueces tries to take the Marshal and Dillon kills him. Texas knocks out Henderson who was going to shoot Dillon in the back.

Thompson uses Vi as an unwilling shield until he reaches his horse. Texas is wounded when he tries to stop Ben's escape.

Dillon corners the outlaw leader in some rocks when Thompson's horse goes lame. Matt then uses ricochet shots to convince Ben to surrender.

Back in Dodge, Matt lets the recovering Texas know that he has ordered Vi out of Dodge. When the Ranger asks why he didn't kill the no good Thompson, Matt replies,

"Let's just say I don't like having to shoot a man, Texas. Somehow, to me. . . it just isn't any fun."

Cast:

Character names are from the script cover page followed by (full name or character description)

- William Conrad as Matt Dillon
- Parley Baer as Chester (Chester Proudfoot)
- Howard McNear as Doc (Doc Adams)
- Harry Bartell as Harry (barkeep)
- Harry Bartell as Texas (Sergeant Jack Miles)
- Bob Griffin as Ben (Ben Thompson)
- Lawrence Dobkin as Lassiter
- Michael Ann Barrett as Vi Lassiter
- Sam Edwards as Man (young braggart)
- Don Diamond as Nueces (Nueces Smith)

Comment:

It is unfortunate that this episode is among the Missing *Gunsmoke* broadcasts because the story is extremely well-written and provides significant insight into Matt's character. Matt has the following narration after killing Lassiter:

"I couldn't tell anyone, but the bitterness icing my stomach made me sick as I remembered Lassiter as a friend. . . . now dead by my gun. Then I got over it. . . I always got over it. The frontier code was a harsh one. . . . and I knew my job was one that had to be done if the West was ever to see peace. As long as killers like Lassiter lived, I would carry a gun. . . . and use it. It was the way it had to be. Sometimes a man's dying was the end of it. . . sometimes the beginning of something worse."

These words describe the motivation of Matt Dillon as well as any I have ever read or heard.

Source Citation:

- Gunsmoke* Script - "Ben Thompson"
- Box Number: 6
- Folder Number: 1
- Collection: Anne and Frank Hummert Scripts, 1932-1958
- Collection Number: 07867
- Accretion Number: 00-00-00
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Well, Sir.....
Thoughts on the Genius of Paul Rhymer

by Elizabeth McLeod



He died thirty-five years ago.

Few today outside the world of OTR have any idea who he was.

But for those of us who *do* know Paul Rhymer, there can be no doubt.

He was the most *inspired* writer radio ever knew.

And his creation -- "*Vic and Sade*" -- was one of the great literary accomplishments of the twentieth century.

Strong words to describe a deceptively simple little fifteen minute dialogue program which spent most of its run buried among the soap operas and sustaining music shows that constituted the ghetto of daytime radio during the thirties and early forties. But even its own time, "*Vic and Sade*" stood out. Listeners who would never admit to tuning in any other daytime program avidly followed the doings of Vic and Sade and Rush and Uncle Fletcher.

Why?

Because.

That's the best, simplest answer I can come up with.

Because.

There's really no way to properly explain what made "*Vic and Sade*" such a unique experience. There were many other fifteen minute comedy-dialogue shows in its time, and "*Vic and Sade*" was nothing like any of them. It never had the compelling, dramatic plots of "*Amos 'n' Andy*," or the urbane wit of "*Easy Aces*," or the broad comedy of "*Lum and Abner*." You didn't tune in "*Vic and Sade*" to find out how the characters would get themselves out of a difficult plot wrinkle -- Rush was never put on trial for murder, for example, or sued for breach of promise -- and you never fell on the floor laughing at the Gook family's Wacky Antics.

"*Vic and Sade*" wasn't really about any of these things. In fact, when you really think about it, "*Vic and Sade*" wasn't "about" anything. It was the original "show about nothing."

People didn't have adventures in "*Vic and Sade*." They didn't have escapades. They just *lived.* The daily experience of life on Virginia Avenue was the focus of the program -- an odd, stream-of-consciousness ramble thru the existence of a lower-middle-class Midwestern family, as written by a man who had lived that life himself. Paul Rhymer knew the nuances of midwestern speech like Mark Twain knew the cadences of the Mississippi or like Dickens knew the speech of Victorian London -- and his dialogue captures the way real people sound. Real people don't always talk in complete sentences. Real people don't always clearly express their ideas. Real people don't always make sense.

But even as Rhymer was able to capture the banality of real-life speech in his dialogue, he had the gift for turning that banality into something approaching poetry. His dialogue, at its best, can be appreciated not just as radio humor - but in a very real sense as a surreal sort of free verse.

"we use brickmush regular.

but we wouldn't ever in the wide world
use that horrible stingeberry jam
regular.

why it churns

and writhes and crawls

and breathes in the bottle!

yes! it churns

and writhes and crawls

and breathes in the bottle!

it's green and bubbly

and cloudy and funny."

Words worthy of an e. e. cummings or a Don Marquis, but they come from a "*Vic and Sade*" radio episode, dated 11/11/43, broadcast that one day and tossed aside.

No appreciation of "*Vic and Sade*" is complete without a nod to the cast. Art Van Harvey, Bernadine Flynn, Billy Idelson, David Whitehouse, and Clarence Hartzell were uniquely skilled in translating Rhymer's words into sound. They sensed the music -- they sensed the rhythm. They understood.

Had Paul Rhymer worked in a medium more permanent than radio, he would be hailed as a master -- required reading in American Lit classes. As it stands, he's known and remembered only by those who have taken the time to seek him out, to laboriously gather the bits and pieces that survive of program recordings.

There are OTR buffs who really dislike "*Vic and Sade*." There are also people who really dislike progressive jazz, or modern art, or blank verse. There are those who feel that music should always be melodic, that paintings should always look like something, and that poetry should always rhyme. And, of course, that comedy should always have lots and lots of jokes.

Such ones will never get "*Vic and Sade*." It has nothing to do with intelligence -- and everything to do with mindset. If you're the literal-minded type, if you think everything has a place and everything has to be in its place, if all the little cards on top of your desk are lined up in perfect four-square rows, you'll never get "*Vic and Sade*." Don't even try -- you'll just get aggravated.

But if you believe that a very big part of reality is its sheer absurdity -- if you hear the music in everyday speech -- if you can listen to Dizzy Gillespie without wondering why his horn is bent, then give "*Vic and Sade*" a listen.

And don't be afraid of stingeberry jam.

Elizabeth McLeod is a journalist, researcher, and freelance writer specializing in radio of the 1930s. She is a regular contributor to "Nostalgia Digest" magazine and the Internet OldRadio Mailing List, maintains a website, Broadcasting History Resources, and is presently researching a book on Depression-era broadcasting. Elizabeth is always looking for 1930s radio recordings in all formats -- uncoated aluminum or lacquer-coated discs, vinyl or shellac pressings, or low-generation tape copies. You can contact her at lizmcl@midcoast.com

It's All in the Name

By Paul Barringer

Did you ever wonder why celebrities change their birth names to something else when they reach stardom? Is it because their birth name just doesn't have that glitter or flamboyant flair that sets them apart from the ordinary person?

For instance, would you prefer Alphonso D'Abruzzo instead of Alan Alda, Allen Konigsberg instead of Woody Allen, or maybe Edward Albert Heimberger in place of Eddie Albert? How about Frederick Austerlitz instead of Fred Astaire, or could we call Bogart's wife, (Lauren Bacall) Betty Joan Perske, or maybe you would prefer to call Boris Karloff William Henry Pratt. It just doesn't sound the same does it?

I guess there are perfectly good reasons why celebrities get rid of their real names. Maybe it's to make them more recognizable to their public, or perhaps they just didn't like their birth name.

No matter what the reasoning, it usually works for most of them. It seems like everyone changes their name when they hit the big time, including most movie stars, singers, rock stars, television personalities, authors and writers and even professional athletes. The name changes are not limited to those listed above; even some of our O.T.R. stars changed their names. Below is a very short list of some of them.

Fred Allen - John Sullivan
Don Ameche - Dominic Felix Amici
Eve Arden - Eunice Quedens
Jack Benny - Benjamin Kubelsky
Milton Berle - Milton Berlinger
Fanny Brice - Fanny Borach
George Burns - Nathan Birnbaum
Jeff Chandler - Ira Grossel
Lee J. Cobb - Leo Jacoby
Clayton "Bud" Collyer - Clayton Heermance Jr.
Lou Costello - Louis Francis Cristillo
Bing Crosby - Harry Lillis Crosby
Ken Curtis - Curtis Wain Gates
Dale Evans - Frances Octavia Smith
Bob Hope - Leslie Townes Hope
Al Jolson - Asa Yoelson
Arthur Lake - Arthur Silverlake
Groucho Marx - Julius Marx
Roy Rogers - Leonard Slye
Penny Singleton - Dorothy McNulty
Wolfman Jack - Robert Smith

Would we have liked and enjoyed them any less, if they had not changed their names... I don't think so. This is just a very short list of some of our friends from radio. I'm sure there are hundreds, if not thousands listed on-line, why not take some time and find your favorites on the internet, and see how many you can come up with.



Leonard Slye and Frances Octavia Smith ??



New in the Tape and CD Libraries

by Maletha King

This month we continue with more "Big Town" episodes, with the fighting Editor Steve Wilson and Lorali Kilborn. These stories are very interesting and can keep us guessing, even though we know that the outcome will be for justice.

We then go on to "The Line Up", another police and detective show which was the trend in radio during these times.

We finish this series of RHAC catalog entries with a comedy program that we know you'll all enjoy - "Father Knows Best". It's a chance to enjoy the simple pleasures of life with the Andersons.

At this time I think we should all thank the RHAC members who contribute to this newsletter, making it a very interesting item to receive each month.

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