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Special 1993 Annual Collector's Edition

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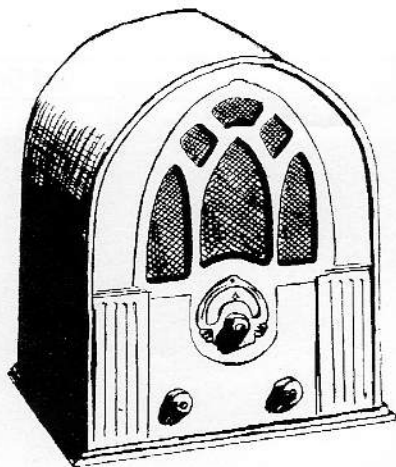
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# Himan Brown: CBS said mystery show would fail Mystery Theater lasted nine years

By BOB MADISON

New York Bureau

It's not every day that you meet a hero. As a young boy, I sat enthralled, nightly, listening to "CBS Radio Mystery Theater" with my grandmother. She has since passed away, but I recall those evenings with a crystal clarity. We had "Mystery Theater" to bring us together every night, with its creaking door and eerie music followed by the suave menacing tones of E.G. Marshall.

"Mystery Theater" was something that the smart people in radio said could no longer be done: radio drama done at an affordable price, capable of attracting a large audience. But the man behind "Mystery Theater," Himan Brown, said it could, and he did.

Himan Brown is one of the renaissance men of radio: actor, producer, and writer. His career started in radio's infancy, and continues to this day. He has been dubbed "Mr. Broadcasting," and "Mr. Radio Drama."

Currently, the Himan Brown Audio Production Center at the University of Georgia's Communications Center is distributing "Americans All," a series of 26 audio dramas produced and directed by Himan Brown designed for use in middle and high schools. His host for the series is the famous film and television star, Charlton Heston.

Mr. Brown has been inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame twice, he has won two Peabody Awards, and accorded every possible award and recognition from the radio industry. Since 1929, he has produced and directed close to 40,000 broadcasts for radio, television and film.

On January 19, 1993, DiGamma Kappa and the Georgia Association of Broadcasters gave him the Distinguished Achievement Award in Broadcasting. It was presented to him at the University of Georgia.

Mr. Brown is also a tireless philanthropist. Just this past year, he has produced 26 one minute spots for his favorite charities and causes. Mr. Brown is active in the National Urban League, The National Conference on Social Work, Bonds for Israel and UJA-Federation of New York. He recently masterminded a spoken drama celebrating the 75th



*Himan Brown with George Segal during production of "A Time for Sunlight."*

Anniversary of UJA-Federation, and has produced a series of Public Service Announcements for the organization, featuring old friends, actors Marion Seldes, Tony Roberts and Mason Adams.

I had the great pleasure of interviewing this giant of the industry in January of 1993. He graciously received me in his home of 54 years on Central Park West, an apartment whose wall space is completely covered with the paintings of Impressionist masters.

Mr. Brown sat behind his desk, nattily attired in a blue suit and paisley scarf. His manner is warm, friendly, open. He is still passionately committed to radio drama, and upset even by fans who consider it an artifact of a dead and forgotten past.

"It all started in 1929. I was 16 or 17 years old. I wanted to break into radio, I wanted to tell my high school friends to tune into me on the radio. I went to the studio and said I was an actor between shows, I lied, and said I would like to do poetry readings. Poetry readings were very popular in those days. I spoke to some actor friends I had—God, people were different then—and they helped me put to-

gether a series of voices so I could do an audition. What's an audition?, I wanted to know. And they told me about doing accents, bits from plays and some cold readings. And they told me about something called the National Broadcasting Company, so I wrote to them, asking for an audition. And they wrote back, saying come over!

"I went there, read and did my voices for a woman named Margaret Cuthbert, an austere woman of about 50. She literally told me, 'Don't call us, we'll call you.' I was about to leave when I turned and said I did Jewish voices. Milt Gross did a Jewish dialect retelling of fairy tales for the New York World, and I did some. Her face lit up, and she decided to put me on Saturday morning, around 11. I floated out of the studio! That's how I got a foot in the door.

"But, as I was leaving, she asked me if I had the rights to do Gross' material on the air. Rights? I asked. What's rights? And she explained that this was all copyrighted material, and that I would have to get the rights.

"I spent weeks tracking Milt Gross down,  
**BROWN continued page 6**

# Wavelengths Annual '93

## Revival of Creative Radio

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## On the cover

*Himan Brown, creator of The CBS Radio Mystery Theater.*  
(Photo courtesy Himan Brown)



## Opinion

I would like to use this space to thank the many friends of old-time and antique radio for their support of this expanded edition of *Wavelengths*.

Thanks go to our advertisers (listed below) who again made this magazine possible. Please patronize them and please let them know you saw their advertisements here. Thanks are also in order for our volunteer staff. They did a superb job!

Last year's *Wavelengths Annual 1992* represented a milestone for Revival of Creative Radio. Our first glossy magazine was received well by enthusiasts from coast-to-coast. This year, we tried to do one better, with larger photographs, more pages and a larger circulation. Unfortunately, it still took us much more time than anticipated to accomplish the job at hand. We appreciate our readers' patience.

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## Briefs

### Manhattan Radio Club: On The Air!

by BOB MADISON

New York Bureau

On February 2, 1993, the Gotham Radio Players of the Manhattan Radio Club broadcast Norman Corwin's *Murder in Studio One* live on Max Schmid's *Golden Age of Radio* program on WBAI-FM.

The program starred Solomon Cobitt, Rita Frucht, Frank Miklos, Ron Weitz, Ted Ferber, Jack May, Marvin Henderson, Ann Green, Fran Taormina and Bob Madison. George Cold did the sound effects, the musical supervision was by Bob Matthews and the production was directed by Steven Lewis. Suzanne Siegel provided club support.

"The original starred Ruth Gordon and Minerva Pious," said Lewis. "I have the feeling that, while Corwin thought both were great actresses, he would rather have had a man in the lead. In fact, he rewrote it for a man in his volume 26 *By Corwin*. So I feel we're being faithful to the intention if not the performance."

The original, broadcast October 12, 1941, also featured Eddie Mayehoff, Frank Lovejoy, Alan Drake, Kenny Delmar and Hester Sondergaard. Schmid hopes to continue with live radio drama as his scheduling permits.

### Under 35 radio group forms

A new old-time radio club, aimed at younger enthusiasts, is being formed by **George Wagner**, of Cincinnati, and others.

A press release calls the group, "Audio: 2100 The Association of Younger Classic Radio and Big Band Fans." Besides old-time radio, the group will embrace "hot jazz and swing."

Voting membership in the group would be limited to persons under the age of 35, but members would be eligible to receive a one-time five-year extension of voting rights, according to the release. Older collectors would be allowed to join as advisory or associate members without voting privileges.

Wagner said he discussed the concept with Warren Durham, former CBS radio announcer and host of the television program, "Big Band Days." Durham reportedly said one-third of his mail comes from younger fans.

Professor R. Joel "Joe" Senter and his wife, Carolyn, have agreed to be on the advisory board. They are members of a variety of old-time radio organizations and organized the Old-Time Radio Defense Fund.

For more information, contact Wagner by writing 2411 Ohio Ave., Apt. 2, Cincinnati, Ohio 45219.

### Star Wars back on public radio

Star Wars, the radio show, is making a comeback on public radio stations across the country.

A digitally remastered version of the 1981 stereo radio series began reappearing on some radio stations in May. The series was produced by National Public Radio and KUSC, Los Angeles, in cooperation with LucasFilm Ltd.

As in the movie, Mark Hamill continues as Skywalker and Anthony Daniels continues as the voice of the droid, C3PO. Audio cassettes and compact discs of the program are also being sold in bookstores, or by calling (800) 775-3175 with a credit card.



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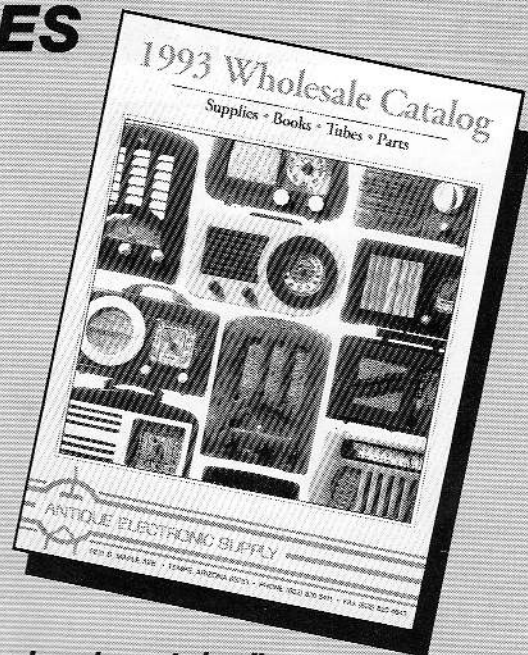
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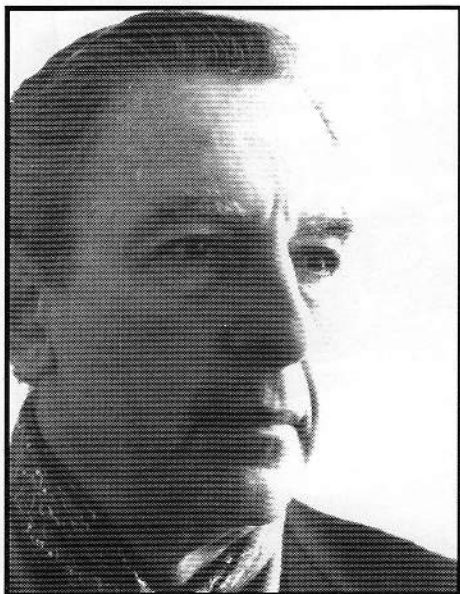
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# Himan Brown: CBS said



**BROWN** from page 3 — making a nuisance of myself. He said I could use it four times. After that, they would have to pay.

"I did the four shows, and then the option ran out. As I was leaving the studio at the end of the second broadcast, I got a call at the studio from the woman who wrote a play called 'The Goldbergs,' Gertrude Berg. She said I sounded wonderful, and if I sold one thing, maybe I could sell 'The Goldbergs' as well. And that's how it started.

"Gertrude Berg was a cruel, abusive woman whom I left eventually. I was on the air for three or four months. I played Jake, worked things out for her (it was on only in New York, on NBC). As soon as it caught on, she told me 'get lost, kid.' I was only 17-18 years old, there was nothing I could do. I was a minor, I wasn't allowed to sign papers or make deals, and I didn't want to be a trouble maker with NBC. I was about to go into law school at the time, and my professor in contracts told me to forget it, and that I'd create other things. And you know, I did.

"The separation from her was the best thing in the world for me. My experience as a producer, writer and actor with 'The Goldbergs' taught me lessons I used throughout my entire career.

"Now, back then shows were designed and created for the sponsors. Companies or products would buy radio time and then bring in shows to fill their slots. I devised a few shows of my own, 'Little Italy,' 'The Bronx Marriage Bureau,' and 'Peggy's Doctor.' For the last one, I figured there were lots of doctor

shows, but none about doctor's wives. They were all good shows, I don't think copies of any of them exist any more, except, perhaps, in the Library of Congress. Not that it matters, back then the sponsors owned all the shows—that's the way it worked. I managed to sell all of them and they were pretty successful.

"I also started a soap opera at around this time, only then they were called 'daytime romances,' because Colgate and the other soap sponsors hadn't started their association with programs like these. I started doing them for Mrs. Ashenhurst, the linchpin for all the soaps. She's still alive today, God bless her. She came from Chicago, and she literally in the early 1930s created the soap opera world. I sent her a telegram telling her I was a producer and an actor, and all of that, and would like to do something in New York with her. She had tried getting me on the phone, and she'd call in Brooklyn and my mother would answer the phone. (I was still just a kid in my early 20s!) She sent me a telegram, finally, telling me to meet her on Park Avenue. I was there, bright and early in my bar mitzvah suit and shiny hair, and we created 'Marie, the Little French Princess.' We did it for Louis Philip Cosmetics, a Chicago company. Remember, we were in the height of the Depression. Marie was the daughter of a king of a little duchy where people were starving, and she couldn't stand the suffering while she was princess. So she ran away to be a commoner somewhere, just plain, little Marie in America, the land of hope. But she had to marry somebody to get a visa to stay in the country. So she married this fellow, it was a marriage in name only, and naturally love blossomed and all of that. And for three years, he never knew she was a princess! People would bow around her and make a fuss, and this poor dope was completely impervious. Finally I said I had to have him find out, it's just too incredible. They told me I would ruin the show if I had him find out, but I thought we did enough with it. And sure it ended, there was no story left for anyone anyway.

"Around this time, 1937, I created 'Grand Central Station,' which also was a hit. It was a frame story, something like Grand Hotel in a train station, so I could tell any kind of story I wanted. The frame formula that still works, they were doing the same thing of television's 'Love Boat' and 'Hotel,' because there's inexhaustible story potential. It was done for a sponsor, too. I didn't own any of these shows.

"But I wanted to own my own show, something that was completely mine, that sponsors couldn't control. One day, I was in the sound effects room, and I came across one of the prop doors. No matter what they did, the damn thing creaked. That door spoke to me. So I came up with a show called 'The Creaking Door.'

"Nobody liked it. I was a great reader, still am, and I saw a series of books called 'Inner Sanctum Mysteries,' published by Simon and Schuster. I went and asked if I could use the name, provided we plug their hot mystery of the month on the air. They said yes, and 'Inner Sanctum' was born. Inside of a year, we were in the Top 10.

"I had great writers on that show. They were aware of the great tradition of horror and Gothic fiction, and they wrote very consciously of it. They wanted what they produced to be good. And I stayed with most of the same writers, the fellow who wrote many of the 'Inner Sanctums,' wrote 'Dick Tracy' for me, too.

"We had some of the finest actors in the business on 'Inner Sanctum.' Most people remember Boris Karloff, he was in about 25 of them, more than anyone else. Karloff was a sweetheart. For a while he lived a few blocks down from me, in the Dakota. The building opened up what were once maid's apartments, and he had a pied-a-terre in one of them. We'd go out for dinner and have fun, he was such a very sweet man, a lovely man. We once did a beautiful story about a mortician who was shunned by people because of what he did for a living. Karloff had real pathos.

"Oh, the great people we had on that show! We had Peter Lorre, a great actor, he could do wonderful things with his voice. When he had the right words, he was superb. We had Claude Rains, this was in the Casablanca era of his career, and he was a great guy. And, of course, Aggie (Agnes) Moorehead, a dear lady and sweet friend. She was one of our greatest actresses. I still miss her.

"Richard Widmark, too, was on 'Inner Sanctum' all the time. In fact, he left the studio right after a broadcast to make a midnight plane for California. He had to report for 'Kiss of Death,' his breakthrough picture.

"Years later, I did 'Inner Sanctum' for television. It was a good show, but I really think for that kind of imaginative fiction, radio is the best medium.



# mystery show would fail

"There were several narrators for the show. He never really had a name. I let one of the narrators, Raymond Edward Johnson, out of the show so he could serve in the military during World War II. When he came back, he told me he was a star, and that he wanted star billing! I couldn't believe it! I told him the show was the star, the narrator has to stay in the background—he's not the story, he tells the story. So, as a compromise, we named the narrator Raymond.

Here I asked Mr. Brown about some of his most famous programs, and the people he worked with.

"The Thin Man' came about when I discovered that MGM had all the ancillary rights to the characters—except radio! This is 1941-42. Just some kind of oversight, but what an oversight! So I went to Dashiell Hammett's agent for the radio rights.

"MGM, however, owned Asta, so we couldn't use the dog. Asta's not in the book, you see, he was an MGM creation. I had to create a new foil for Nick and Nora, so I came up with a slow, small-town sheriff to offset their sophistication. Sheriff Ebenezer Wil-

liams, who worked in Vermont where Nick and Nora had a country home. Parker Fenley played if for me, and he was wonderful. I knew him through Fred Allen, I actually acted a few times on Fred's show, and he was a great asset to the program. I thought both Nick and Nora too sophisticated to play in Nebraska without a foil.

"Hammett and Lillian Hellman used to come to our broadcasts. For Hammett, we had to be good, or we wouldn't have lasted two shows. Both he and Hellman were very demanding.

"I tested 'Dick Tracy' in Boston for a candy bar that was supposed to rip weight off you, I forget the name of it. There were no radio actors in Boston, some announcers, some voices, but no real radio actors. There was an actor named Philip Berneff who played Tracy for me, we only did it three times a week for about 26 weeks. It was like an out of town try-out. I commuted back and forth from Boston, at that age you did anything. I used a lot of second rate actors and unknowns (Berneff was a short order cook, or something). But when I got back to New York, I knew the show

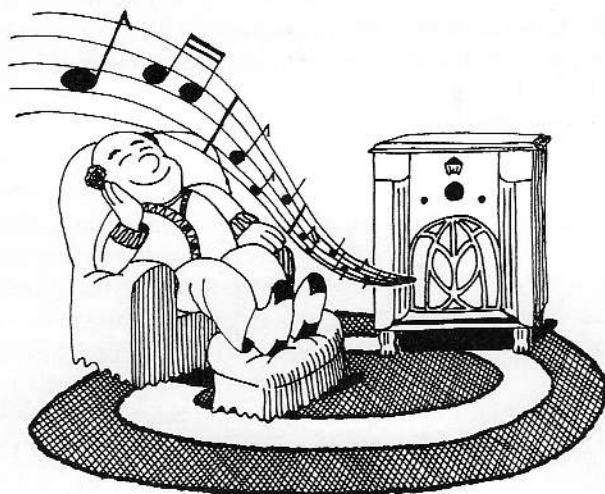
worked and did it professionally. By the way, one of my writers for 'Dick Tracy' was a young kid named Irwin Shaw.

"I didn't have any problems with 'Bulldog Drummond.' The creator of the character, H.C. (Sapper) McNeile, had been dead for a long time by then, and I got the rights from his estate. Sir Cedric Hardwicke was one of our Drummonds, and he was excellent. 'It seems to me, Himan,' Sir Cedric said, 'That I've been bashed on the noggin in the same place by the same thugs every week!' George Colorious was the original Bulldog. He was part of the Mercury Theater, and Martin Gabel brought him to me. Then the war came, and we had to get somebody else.

"Orson Welles was a great man, a really great guy. He was the genius of the medium. And not just the genius of talent, but he was also a towering intellect. I was just watching him on television the other night, in 'A Man for All Seasons.' He didn't look well. I remember him when he was young, and able to do all the things he wanted to do.

"Vinnie (Vincent) Price was the host of  
**BROWN** continued page 12

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# Odd antics made WMEX a legend after radio's fall 50s, 60s brought Top 40 and talk



WMEX's Arnie "Woo-Woo" Ginsberg

By David S. Kruh

*Special to Wavelengths*

**S**itting in the waiting room of the general manager's office at WMEX radio on a rainy day in 1975, Glenn Ordway could barely contain his excitement.

After several years toiling away at a small local radio station in Beverly, Massachusetts, just north of Boston, he was about to interview for an on-air position at one of Boston's legendary radio stations. As incredible as this moment would have been for anyone trying to make it into a major market, it was extra special for Ordway, for he, like hundreds of thousands of other Boston-area youths, had grown up listening to Boston's number one pop station. As Ordway continued to wait, the excitement building, he closed his eyes and thought back to those nights he stayed up past his bedtime, listening to a small transistor radio he had hidden in his bedroom...

"Gather 'round everybody, for you're about to hear, The show that's gonna make

you, grin from ear to ear, It's Arnie Ginsberg, on the Night Train Show. He plays the old and new, the swinging and the blue, He plays all the records, especially for you. It's Arnie Ginsberg, on the Night Train Show. And a frantic Friday night in Boston-town. Old aching adenoids, Arnie Ginsberg, Woo-Woo for you-you, on the Night Train Show all set with all the tops in pops. Brand new W-M-E-X Top 20 tunes coming your way. Number seven sound this weekend, the Marcells, and Blue Moon!"

"Mr. Richmond will see you now," the secretary said, as Ordway mentally shut off the radio and hid it beneath his pillow. The moment that everyone in radio dreams about had arrived. "And I walk into his office," Ordway recalled recently, "and there are at least 16 or 17 galvanized pails all over the floor spread out in the room. I sit down in the seat and the next thing I'm hearing is the dripping of the water as the rain hits these galvanized pails. I look over at a pail that must

have been three inches deep full of water. It was the most bizarre thing to be sitting in this room. I'm this young pup in the industry from a local Beverly radio station thinking 'Boy, I'm going to get my shot at the big time,' walk in to negotiate my first contract, and to be surrounded by all these pails and to hear the drip, drip, drip sound like in those Maxwell House commercials. And Richmond never said a word about it."

To say that the reign of the Richmond brothers, which began in 1957 and lasted for more than 20 years, was unusual even by radio terms is an understatement.

Although they hired a series of general managers and program directors, it was Mac Richmond who ultimately ran WMEX and fretted over every detail of the station's operation until the day of his death in 1971. His uncanny sense of radio, promotions and public taste made WMEX one of the country's most successful radio stations in the 1960s.

Arnie "Woo-Woo" Ginsberg was heard from 7 p.m. until 10 p.m. between 1958 and 1965, making a name for himself and the sponsors who advertised on his show with a classic high energy Top 40 music program. The kids tuned in to hear the Jive Five, the Playmates, Buddy Holly and Elvis interspersed between sound effects, jingles, station promotions and commercials. Lots of commercials.

"Oh Adventure Car Hop is the place to go. For food that's always right, Adventure food is always just so. You'll relish every bite. It's out on Route One in Saugus. Come dressed just as you are. Adventure, where the service is tops, and you never gets out of your car! Hi there, this is Arnie Ginsberg telling you that Adventure Car Hop presents for the first time anywhere the *Ginsburger*! That's right, the *Ginsburger* is now being served at Adventure Car Hop. I designed it, I planned it, I tested it, but you're going to eat it. And what a delicious mouthful it is. And adventure Car Hop is serving the *Ginsburger* on a record which you get to keep for your very own. If you say Woo-Woo Ginsberg with your order, you get another *Ginsburger* free of charge. So how can you miss, stop by the Adventure Car Hop, Route One in Saugus!"

WMEX continued page 14



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## New Products

Readers are invited to submit new product or service announcements to *Wavelengths* for publication. Listings here do not constitute endorsements of products or services. Send information to *Wavelengths*, Revival of Creative Radio, P.O. Box 1585, Haverhill, MA 01831-2285.

**Revival of Creative Radio (RCR)** is accepting advance reservations for its published transcripts and history of the lost—and previously unknown—Fred Allen program, “The Belmont Is On The Air.” The professionally produced, “Treadmill To Harwich,” is a digested booklet detailing how the shows were recorded over several summers in the 1940s on Cape Cod, but never aired.

This is the *first-ever* release of the material and offers unusual insight into Fred Allen, Portland Hoffa and major industry executives at play. Reservations of “Treadmill To Harwich” are \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members. Once the booklet is formally released, prices are expected to increase. Send payment or membership questions to RCR, P.O. Box 1585, Haverhill, MA 01831-2285.

A \$15 donation to the Massasoit College Foundation, c/o Bob Bowers, One Massasoit Boulevard, Brockton, Mass. 02402 will net contributors two videotapes of 1992's **Radio Classics Live III** performance. The program features Lon Clark, Bob Dryden, Fred Foy and Peg Lynch.

**Arthur Anderson**, mentioned in a recent issue of *Wavelengths* as working on a book about the CBS children's program, “Let's Pretend,” on which he performed 18 years, will have it published early next year by McFarland & Co., Jefferson, N.C. Titled “Let's Pretend Child Actors In the Golden Age of Radio,” the book will be illustrated with many photographs and feature a foreword written by the pioneering CBS director Norman Corwin.

Rare, private libraries of Toscanini, Cantelli, Walter, Beecham, Tebaldi and others are being offered on 10-inch reel-to-reel tapes (7 1/2 IPS) and 16-inch transcriptions. These are billed as limited edition rehearsals and concerts. For a list of the 149 items available, write to **Symphony Sound**, 18 Zygmont Lane, Greenwich, CT 06830 or call (203) 661-7413.

“Dragnet—The Radio Log,” is being offered by **Randy Eidemiller**, 7700 Lampson Ave. #37, Garden Grove, CA 92641, for \$13. The log lists all 318 original episodes and 64 rebroadcasts by show number, case type and program description. Included is an in-depth look at Jack Webb's early radio career.

A variety of materials related to the 1992 **Friends of Old-Time Radio** Convention are available. Convention booklets, including four pages of biographies of some of the guests, are \$3 each and area available by writing Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514. Three video tapes of the convention are also available. One is \$20, two are \$35 and all three are \$45.

The first tape contains material from Thursday and part of Friday, while the second offers Friday plus the first part of Saturday and the third contains material from the remainder of Saturday. There are also four audio tapes for \$20. Send money to Don Ramlow, 509 Velvet Ave., Portage, MI 49002.

**AVPRO**, P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, Calif. 92531-1392, has a new flyer promoting the availability of such shows as *Broadway Is My Beat*, *Crime Does Not Pay*, “Jack Benny Program,” “Mysterious Traveler,” “Fibber McGee & Molly,” “Lux Radio Theater,” “Gunsmoke” and “Escape.” For more information, write the company at the above address.

## Deaths

**Brad Phillips**, retired WINS, N.Y. news anchor; back-up for celebrity jock Alan Freed; and AFRS correspondent during World War II, died Feb. 4 at age 74.

**Sammy Lowe**, trumpeter, composer and arranger with the Erskine Hawkins Orchestra, died Feb. 17 of smoke inhalation in a fire at age 74.

**Marlena Easley**, last surviving member of the original Orlons, died Feb. 27 at age 48.

**Lillian Gish**, an actress who appeared on “Lux Radio Theater,” died Feb. 27 at age 99.

## Brad Phillips sat in for celebrity Freed

By **GEORGE A. MOONOGIAN**

*Wavelengths Contributing Editor*

**T**he death of Brad Phillips (see above) brought back memories of my teen years in the 1950s.

Radio was still a big part of my life back then, having grown up listening to all the great shows of the 1940s. By the mid-1950s, most of which were on their last gasp for breath with the popularity of TV. However, radio was now the major entertainment source



for a new generation of teenagers and a new generation of disc-jockeys who specialized in certain music or had a unique repartee over the airwaves.

Probably the most famous “celebrity-jock” of the 1950s was Alan Freed. When Alan came from Cleveland's WJW to New York's prestigious WINS in 1955, he became an instant airwaves success. His success led him to promote many “live” Rock n' Roll shows, which took him away from his nightly microphone on many occasions. His replacement during these absences was originally Paul Sherman, but when Sherman gained popularity in his own right, he was eventually “backed-up” and replaced by Brad Phillips, who continued his WINS affiliation until his death.

Another tie-in is this “Hound Dog” membership card. When Freed came to WINS, he was known as the “Moondog,” a title he used in Cleveland. However, New York City had its own “Moondog” in the form of street musician, composer, huckster Thomas Louis Hardin, who promptly sued Freed for \$100,000 in damages. Freed quickly dropped his “Moondog” radio tag and settled for \$5,700 with Hardin. Freed then became “King of the Rick n' Rollers.”

Meanwhile, Freed's popularity had generated great influence to teens, and to DJs as well. Up in Buffalo, N.Y., WKBW's own George Lorenz had been using the name “Hound Dog,” complete with opening barking dogs, etc., much like Freed's original WJW show. In fact, “The Hound,” as Lorenz called himself, even used Freed's WINS theme, “Big Heavy,” by the Cozy Eggleston Combo. Lorenz went on in radio popularity well into the 1960s while Freed's fortunes went downhill, culminating in his untimely death in 1965.

For those of us who grew up with radios, just a name can jog our memories back over the years to those now-distant times.



# Nick Carter in the old west?

By DANA A. ESMEL

*Wavelengths Staff Writer*

**L**on Clark remained a crime fighter, but stepped back into the old west at Cincinnati's seventh annual Old-Time Radio and Nostalgia Convention April 16 and 17 at the (Sharonville) Cincinnati Marriott.

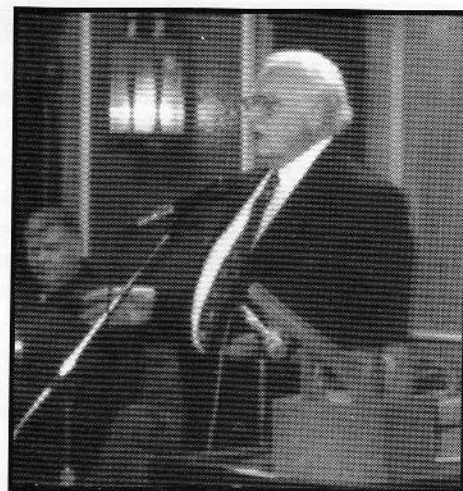
Clark, known to many as Nick Carter, became Matt Dillon, U.S. Marshall, during a popular "Gunsmoke" re-creation that included Parley Baer in his original role as Chester. Denver radio personality John Rayburn was the announcer and sound effects were provided by Barney Beck.

Supporting cast members included Gary Yoggy as Doc and several non-professional actors given the opportunity from open auditions held that day. The audience of about 90 broke into laughter as these other actors also gave an amusing re-creation of an "Ex-Lax" commercial at the break.

In its second year of "expanded" quarters, more than 300 people attended the convention during the two-day period.

A question-and-answer discussion took place Friday night. Rayburn recalled the significance of sound effects in radio productions when a seven-year-old in the 1950s chose radio over television for entertainment because he "could see the pictures better." Baer was asked if William Conrad, who originated the role of Matt Dillon on radio, had expressed interest in such re-creations. He indicated that was unlikely, noting that Conrad withdrew from television's "Jake And The Fatman" series for medical reasons.

A detective and western shows panel discussion kicked off the Saturday events, with Baer further reflecting on Conrad and "Gunsmoke." He pointed out that when the show moved to television, ad libs used by the radio cast were written into the scripts, thus infuriating Conrad, who was not cast during



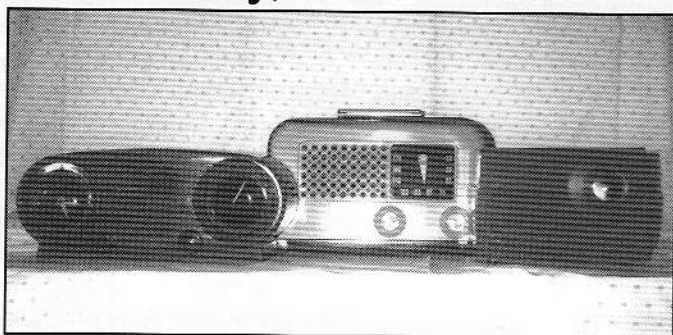
*Parley Baer returned as Chester in Cincinnati's re-creation of "Gunsmoke."*

that run. Baer added that, on television, Chester's last name was changed from Proudfoot to Good. That audience also heard Clark recall detective programs such as "Nick Carter".

Saturday's activities continued with John Rayburn's entertaining presentation of commercials from radio's golden era. Samples of commercials featured were some uncharacteristic spokespersons such as Walter Winchell  
**NICK CARTER** *continued next page* —

## Old-Radio Sets

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**(216) 582-3094**

## Nick Carter in the old west?

**NICK CARTER** *continued from preceeding page* —  
for Lotions of Love and film director Cecil B. DeMille for Lux Oil Soap on "Lux Radio Theater."

Bloopers included Don Wilson creating an uproar on the "Jack Benny" program, promoting Jell-O when Grape Nuts Flakes became its new sponsor. Also heard was a funny attempt by Ezra Stone, as Henry Aldrich, at singing for Jell-O. Rounding out the presentation was a version of a Stoney Beer commercial with unintentionally suggestive undertones.

Beck demonstrated the techniques of radio sound effects with the use of recordings and props. These effects included a gunshot with a ricochet, and various crowd sounds.

Clark returned to the title role in the "Nick Carter, Master Detective" re-creation of the episode, "Murder on Mad Mountain." The cast included Baer, Dave Warren, and Steve Thompson with his spirited portrayal of a dog.

Concluding the convention was dinner Saturday night. Accompanied by pianist Ed Clute, Clark re-created the musical theme introduction to "Moon River," a program from his early career at WLW.

In closing, Clark told the audience that radio's golden age was "an era in which television never equated." He also praised convention organizer Bob Burchett and organizers of other conventions for allowing himself and other radio celebrities "to relive the era."

## More with Mystery Theater's Himan Brown

**BROWN** *from page 7* —  
my first color mystery television show, 'The Chevy Mystery Show.' I was the producer. We'd have dinner all the time, and Vinnie and I would trade art stories.

"Art had always been a passion of mine. I started collecting in 1939. Did you see the Chagall in the hall? There's a Utrillo, a Matisse, a Picasso. I recently sold several pictures from my collection at Christie's.

"'Nero Wolfe' came about when I wanted to do 'Perry Mason,' but his creator, Erle Stanley Gardner, wanted too much money. I had loved the Wolfe books for years. Especially 'Archie,' I think Archie is a great character. I went to the author, Rex Stout, who said OK.

"I always considered this a feather in my cap. Earlier, there were two Wolfe movies that were terrible! Stout pulled the property from the studio because he didn't like what they were doing with the character. But he loved our show!

"The opening signature for that one I'm especially proud of. 'The Fat Man' was created to capitalize on my 'The Thin Man.' I always thought The Fat Man's signature didn't work: all that stuff about standing on the scale and his fortune, danger. I asked myself, what is suggestive of a fat man? His laugh! So I had Santos Ortega, the actor who played Wolfe, come up with the deep, rumbling laugh of a fat man from the very bottom of his stomach. It

worked!

"I've been involved with many shows that were based on comic strips. 'Flash Gordon' was a lot of fun to do. I only met Alex Raymond a few times, same for Milt Caniff, who created 'Terry and the Pirates.' He was a nice guy, though. I think these shows worked because listeners were so used to seeing these characters every day, that they had a presold set of visuals. They had already imagined half of it for us before we had to do anything.

I ask Mr. Brown about "CBS Radio Mystery Theater."

"It was the early 1970s. For all practical purposes, radio drama had been dead for over 10 years. But I didn't want to believe it, wouldn't believe it. So I pitched 'Radio Mystery Theater' to CBS. They told me it would be a total failure. They said that 'Himan Brown would probably kill himself, but let him do it.' They wanted only to give me one half hour! I said no! it has to become a habit again. I wanted seven one hour slots a week. It lasted for nine years.

"It was a great success. I got E.G. Marshall as my host. He would record his introductions in a few days. Later, when his contract was up, he told me to talk to his agent. I don't deal with agents, before we came to an agreement like gentlemen. So I got Tammy Grimes to replace him.

"People in the industry, real radio people, want to work in radio. Agnes Moorehead, a

## Calendar

*Readers are invited to submit times and dates of special events, conferences, exhibits and meetings. Send them to the Wavelengths editor, Revival of Creative Radio, P.O. Box 1585, Haverhill, Mass. 01831-2285. If responding to a calendar listing, please send a S.A.S.E. to the addresses noted below.*

### August

**Arthur Godfrey 90th Birthday Party**, Aug. 31, Various locations. Contact: John A. Barber, Box 70711, New Orleans, La. 70172 or Robert Brunet, 21 West 74th St., New York, N.Y. 10023.

### October

**Friends of Old-Time Radio Convention**, Oct. 21-23, Holiday Inn North, Newark, N.J. Contact: Jay Hickerson at (203) 248-2887.

**Fourth Annual Old-Time Radio and Phonograph Show**, Oct. 23, Holiday Inn, Middletown, NY. Contact: Hudson Valley Antique Radio & Phonograph Society, c/o Gramm-O-Phone Antiques at (914) 427-2602 or Victorian Talking Machine Co. at (914) 561-0132.

### November

**SPERDVAC Old-Time Radio Convention**, Nov. 12-14, Holiday Inn, Crown Plaza Hotel, 5985 West Century Boulevard, Los Angeles. Contact: SPERDVAC at (310) 947-9800.

great actress, did 'Radio Mystery Theater' for scale. Amanda Plummer made her debut on my show. People like Tony Roberts and Howard De Silva were regulars. I'm trying now to sell the series to syndication."

I ask Mr. Brown about the sale and resale of some of his work by radio hobbyists.

"They have no right to sell my programs. Charlie Michaelson should be hung by his thumbs. I receive nothing from these sales. Actors, writers, directors are entitled to rerun payments. I paid everyone for 'Mystery Theater' reruns. They are bootlegging private, copyrighted material."

The future of a post-radio drama world?

"The spoken word will always live. Television cannot replace radio. People have great respect for the spoken word. Good writing and good acting are the real messengers of any medium, theater, radio, film or television. No other medium can tell a story the way radio can! Radio is a writer's medium. I have never stopped believing that the imagination of the listener is infinitely stronger and more compelling than anything television can offer. Today, reading scores across the country are down, educational scores (and standards) are plummeting. There is just no respect for the spoken word.

"It would be fooling to think that radio will come back like it was then—television is too powerful. But the potential of the medium is not dead."



## Free Classifieds

*Messages, advertising requests for shows, willingness to trade, catalog availability, etc. may be placed by subscribers for free. Please restrict messages to 50 words or less.*

Wanted: OTR fan with diversified collection seeks trading partners who have "One Man's Family." Frank Bell, 1706 Brazos, Hobbs, NM 88240.

Collector of Bob & Ray material seeks any and all written or recorded material on Bob & Ray. John M. Lathrop III, 29 Columbia Park, Haverhill, MA 01830.

WANTED: Any news programs, or programs with World War II flavor, from 1938 to 1942. Need the New York Philharmonic from Dec. 7, 1941, Charlie McCarthy Show from Dec. 7, 1941 and Murder Clinic from late March, 1942, interrupted for an air raid drill. Will buy or trade. Henry Tchop Jr., 312 Seminole Lane, Carol Stream, IL 60188.

WANTED: The Fred Allen shows for 12/30/36 and 2/3/37 on cassettes. Harry Goldman, 3 Amy Lane, Queensbury, NY 12804

INSTALLMENTS WANTED FROM MID-40'S: Superman discovers underwater city/Superman catches criminal by following peanut shells/Lone Ranger at time of atom bomb ring premium/20,000 Leagues Under The Sea one-week serial. Even if you don't have tape, I'd be most grateful for date of any of these. S. Goldberg, 205 East 78th St., Apt. 17D, New York, N.Y. 10021-1243

Wanted: Traders on reel-to-reel. VG-EX material. My catalog lists 10,000-15,000 programs. Ted M. Davenport, 1600 Wewoka, No. Little Rock, Ark. 72116. (501) 835-0465.

I have over 6,000 shows on reels, cataloged. Willing to trade. Am looking for anything featuring Martha Raye, especially the Lifebuoy Program on which she appeared with Al Jolson. Bill Coombs, 43-B Rich St., Waltham, Mass. 02154 (617) 894-7748.

Wanted: Renfrew of the Mounted, Club Matinee (Garry Moore and Ransom Sherman) and Wilderness Road (Trail?) William Osovsky, 2501 Ivy St., Chattanooga, TN 37404.

Kitty Kallen is looking for radio and TV shows that she appeared on. She sang with Harry James, Jimmy Dorsey and others. She worked on the Danny Kaye radio show, David Rose Show and her own show, Kitty Kallen Kalling. Contact Walden Hughes at (714) 545-0318 or write 2527 Duke Place, Costa Mesa, CA 92626.

Videos wanted: "The Four Aces Vocal Group" from 1950s variety TV shows (copies ok), 1951-1958. Also, radio interviews, jingles, live concerts, candid photos. No Decca records wanted! Also, a certain Phil Silvers' "Bilko Show" (1957-1958) with child actor Sanda Renda wearing space helmet. Also, "Naked City" (1957-1959) and "Studio One" (1957-1959) with Sandy Renda. Walt Gollender, Box 519, Irvington, NJ 07111 or (201) 373-6050 collect.

### Wavelengths

is only one of the many benefits of membership in Revival of Creative Radio (RCR). If you're not already a member, join today!

(see inside back cover for details)

## Club Classifieds

Here is a sampling of some of the fine old-time and antique radio organizations. For information about listing your club or organization in this section, please write to *Wavelengths*, c/o Revival of Creative Radio, P.O. Box 1585, Haverhill, MA 01831-2285.

### Old-Time Radio Show Collectors' Association of England

Thomas H. Monroe, Director North American Operations  
2055 Elmwood Avenue  
Lakewood, OH 44107  
(216) 226-8189

Our cassette lending library contains over 1,000 shows of material initially broadcast outside the North American continent. Mainly BBC, but also some Australian, etc. Also, periodic newsletter.

### Old-Time Radio Club

Old-Time Radio Club  
P.O. Box 426  
Lancaster, NY 14086

Membership is \$17.50 per year, plus \$5 one-time new member processing. Members receive a tape listing, monthly newsletter, library listing, yearly "Memories" publication and various special items.

### Metropolitan Washington Old-Time Radio Club

Lennell Herbert, President  
4415 - 17 Briarwood Court  
Annandale, VA 22003  
(703) 354-4643

The club collects and shares OTR tapes, records, books, scripts, magazines and other related paraphernalia. There is a cassette tape and reel-to-reel library and a newsletter. Local members pay \$15 annually. All others pay \$10.

### Revival of Creative Radio (RCR)

Dana Esmel, Vice President  
P.O. Box 1585  
Haverhill, MA 01831-2285  
(508) 373-5420

RCR offers libraries of OTR shows, amateur productions and printed materials; a free subscription to *Wavelengths*; and the option of purchasing written transcripts of the lost Fred Allen Shows. Annual dues are \$15 plus a one-time \$5 initiation fee.

# Odd antics made WMEX a legend after radio's fall

WMEX from page 8

Arnie was big. But Richmond was always looking for ways to make him (and the station) bigger.

"Mac used to listen to out-of-town radio stations late at night," Arnie recalls. "He'd go into the diner located across the street on Brookline Avenue and he'd bring his little transistor radio and eat with one hand and hold the radio up to his ear with the other. One night he came in while I was on the air and he scribbled something out and handed it to me and said 'Announce this every half hour...we're going to give away a pony starting tomorrow.' He heard another station giving away a pony. So I announce it every half hour that night. The next day I went up to him and asked 'So how are we going to give away this pony?' And he just says 'Oh, I decided not to do it,'" leaving Arnie to explain the missing pony.

Mel Miller, who later went on to program all-talk WRKO to number one in the 80s, was hired in 1958 to program WMEX and do afternoon drive. He remembers how, despite Richmond's impulsiveness, there was an underlying understanding of the nature of radio and ratings. "You heard a lot of teeny bopper music because the kids in the house controlled the radio and what you'd try to do is get the kids hooked. And then when the calls were made and the surveys done, they didn't do demographics, they just asked 'What station are you listening to?' So naturally, we were big because we had a lot of kids tuned to us."

"Richmond ... started sitting with me in the control room with me during my show," wrote radio veteran Larry Lujack (who was at WMEX in the late 60s) in his autobiography titled "Superjock." "He started ... writing out things he wanted me to say on the air. It was never just a Monday. It had to be 'Marvelous Monday.' 'Terrific Tuesday.' Wednesdays were 'Wacky.' It was 'Thrilling Thursday.' On Fridays I got a choice of 'Fantastic' or 'Fabulous.' He wrote a lot of the station's commercials himself, since he thought he could do a better job than his salesmen and copywriters. They contained outdated slang phrases like 'crazy' and 'daddy-O.' Even James Dean would have blushed in embarrassment if he'd have to read that stuff." As it turned out, Lujack didn't have to read it for long. After just a few months at WMEX, he

"escaped" to Chicago, where he became one of the Midwest's biggest air talents.

Richmond's devotion to minutiae did not keep him from making major decisions that put WMEX on the map. One of his most important was hiring Jerry Williams whose talk show, when it made its debut in 1957, was the first in Boston to take on controversial issues and put listener phone calls on the air. "Mac invented the telephone talk show," says John Garabedian, who programmed WMEX in the early 70s. "Nobody ever did it before he did. People wouldn't put phone calls on the air in 1957 because they said it wasn't broadcast quality. He said that was crazy, people want to hear what other people have to say. Mac's special gift was that he really understood entertainment and what the audience wanted."

## **"Mac invented the telephone talk show"** —John Garabedian

Williams, who followed Ginsburg on the Air, recalls, "We talked about birth control, abortion, race and communism. I didn't know from one night to the next if I'd be on. That's how controversial it was," Jerry recalls. "In the days before there was any discussion of race, we used to talk about race almost nightly. Malcolm X came on about 12 times ... the last time just a month before he was killed. Our transmitter tower was bombed one night he was on and threw us off the air!"

Steve Fredricks, who took over the 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. shift when Williams left for Chicago, says that despite his eccentricities, Richmond had skill. "You have to understand that this was a 5000 watt radio station with a lousy signal and a hideous dial position at 1510 that was the number one station in the 60s. Jerry had the top rated show and you couldn't hear the station at night."

Also strange was forcing new disc jockeys to take the name of the man they had replaced. To some, this seemed like a cheap way to avoid buying new jingles and promotional material for the new DJ. But, according to Mel Miller, "It made a lot of sense. For instance, Blaine Harvey, Bob Baker, and Kevin O'Keefe (who later became a traffic reporter), were all Don Donavons."

When Fredricks left WMEX for WEEI in September of 1971, Richmond sued CBS (the owners of WEEI at the time) over the use of the name Steve Fredricks. "We were in court, and Mac was on the witness stand being questioned by the CBS attorney, when the judge, who was a listener of mine, said 'Excuse me, I want to ask the plaintiff here a question.' So the judge turns to Mac and says 'Do you mean to tell me that you would have the audacity to put someone else on the air at that time, doing what Steve does and call that person Steve Fredricks?' And Mac said 'Sure, it's a very common practice in show business. You know, there were a lot of different Lassies.' We won the suit."

In 1967, the airways in Boston began to sizzle with a ratings war that began when WRKO switched to Top 40. Backed by a nationwide network and blessed with a stronger signal and better dial position (680 kHz AM), WRKO soon became the number one Top 40 station—a position it held firmly until 1971. That year, Richmond gave afternoon drive DJ John Garabedian the chance to program WMEX. In only three months, WMEX replaced WRKO as the number one station among teenagers. But the death of Richmond in November of 1971 dashed any hopes WMEX had in surviving the ratings war.

Several years later Richmond's brother Dick sold WMEX to a broadcast group from Cincinnati. The station managed a brief rejuvenation in the late 1970s after they switched to talk, won the broadcast rights to the Red Sox and Bruins and changed the call letters to WITS. But, after a series of public embarrassments (most notably the public flogging that occurred after station manager Joe Scallan fired the beloved Red Sox broadcast team of Ned Martin and Jim Woods), the station fell upon more hard times. They replaced the entire air staff, changed the call letters again (to WMRE) and played Big Band music. Failing with that format, the station was sold again. The poltergeist listened as new owners of 1510 tried talk, simulcasting a beautiful music FM station and then country music.

Today, the station successfully serves the Hispanic community, but it barely shows up in the overall ratings. Like the Red Sox they once proudly carried, 1510 dwells in the cellar, without Richmond to tell them what to do.





# *Treadmill to Harwich:*

## *The Lost Fred Allen Shows*

*The latest benefit of membership in Revival of Creative Radio,  
a unique old-time radio club*

**D**id you know that Fred Allen wrote, produced and starred in a series called "The Belmont Is On The Air?" It was produced and heard by a select group of vacationing executives over several summers in the late 1940s at Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Now, RCR members can receive *Treadmill to Harwich: The Lost Fred Allen Shows*, a professionally produced booklet containing the program's history and only known written transcripts of the show. The special pre-publication member price is \$10.00.

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### ★ **Printed Materials Library**

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### ☆ **Wavelengths/ Wavelengths Annual subscription**

*Wavelengths* is the quarterly magazine for old-time and antique radio enthusiasts. Issues feature free classified ads, news, restoration tips, new products and more.

### **Membership kit helps get you started!**

New members receive a membership kit consisting of a membership card, Guide to Member Benefits, the first issue of a *Wavelengths* subscription, a master cassette list, supplementary library listings and a pen.

New member dues are \$20 (includes a one-time \$5 fee to cover the cost of the membership kit). Annual renewals are only \$15. Massachusetts residents must add 5 percent sales tax. Clip this coupon and return with payment to:

**RCR, P.O. Box 1585, Haverhill, MA 01831-2285.**

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These great shows - Inner Sanctum, The Green Hornet, Fibber McGee and Molly, The Lone Ranger, Gang Busters, Suspense, and many more in this video entertained young and old alike.

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