



RADIO RECALL

Metro Washington Old Time Radio Club

Visit our Club's web site at www.mwotrc.com



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Number 1

JOE PALOOKA'S ADVENTURES IN RADIOLAND

Part 1: 1930s

By Karl Schadow © 2017

Though live matches broadcast directly from ringside were a favorite among listeners during Radio's Golden Age, there were only a handful of fictional programs which sported a boxing theme. Two short-lived 1930s series which were developed specifically for radio were *Padded Fists* and *Kid Mystery* produced and aired locally by Chicago stations KYW (and later WMAQ) and KSFO (San Francisco) respectively.

The newspaper comic page provided another, *Joe Palooka*, the adventures of a dumb but lovable kid. Despite numerous attempts to bring the heavy weight champion to radio over a period of twenty years, these endeavors were met with less than modest success.

Joe Palooka was created by Ham Fisher a native of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania who had worked at the local newspaper, *Wilkes-Barre Record* and then later at the *New York Daily News*. During the 1920s while a salesman peddling various offerings of the McNaught Syndicate, he developed the Palooka character which was finally approved and launched by the Syndicate in April of 1930. It became one of the most widely circulated comics of the twentieth-century.

Radio was the first of many media outside of the newspaper in which Joe Palooka was featured. The initial inkling of a series appeared in *Variety* (March 1, 1932) stating that an audition had been previewed at CBS in New York. The network's musical director, Mark Warnow was cited for his contributions, but no other details including that of a prospective advertiser were divulged. The following month, *Variety* (April 5, 1932) announced that Joe was ready to hit the airwaves beginning Tuesday, April 12th with bi-weekly, 15-minute sessions on a Tuesday-

Thursday schedule. The sponsor was the H. J. Heinz Co. promoting Rice Flakes.

The amount of newspaper publicity ballyhooing the venture was cited by *Variety* (April 26, 1932) as "... the most extensive advertising campaign yet launched in network broadcasting to introduce a program." Some 1,800 weekly and 1,100 daily newspapers were utilized including those in the Los Angeles area to promote the series. (see KHJ ad). The 8:00 pm Pacific time represented the live repeat broadcast from New York to Western states. East Coast listeners tuned in at 6:45 pm.

Cast members included Teddy Bergman as The Champ, Frank Readick as his manager Knobby Walsh with Elsie Hitz as heartthrob Ann Howe. Others heard were Wright Kramer as Mr. Howe, Donald Hughes, Adelaide Klein, with

TONIGHT—8:00 P. M.
PACIFIC STANDARD TIME

JOE PALOOKA

★ The lovable dumb-bell who fights his way from a haberdashery to the heavyweight championship of the world!

Beginning tonight—the greatest 15 minutes of fun on the air! Don't miss it! Joe Palooka's the dumbest, gamest little guy in the world. A fightin' fool. You'll laugh with him. You'll cheer for him. You'll love him! Tune in!

Broadcast through the courtesy of Heinz Rice Flakes—
"One of the 57 Varieties."

STATION KHJ

COLUMBIA COAST-TO-COAST NETWORK

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MWOTRC was created in 1984 by Jim Burnette (1945-2001), our President Emeritus. Annual dues \$20 to locals and \$ 15 to others, and seniors. Regular meetings are held at Trinity Episcopal Church, Columbia Pike and Wayne St, Arlington, VA the 2nd Friday evening of every month, except Jun and Dec, when meetings are held Saturday noon at a local restaurant TBA.

UPCOMING OTR EVENTS



April 14, 2017 **Monthly Meeting of MWOTRC**

Arlington, VA. Special Guest Speaker: Elliot Vittes, son of Louis Vittes, famous OTR and TV script writer and film screen-writer (*Man From Homicide*, *Two on a Clue*, *Nero Wolfe*, *The Saint*, etc.)

May 4-6, 2017: **Second Annual Great Lakes Nostalgia Convention**

Four Points Sheraton in Kalamazoo, MI is the site of this convention. Dealers, Seminars, Re-creations. Special guests will include Ivan Curry, title character in the radio program, *Bobby Benson and the B-Bar-Riders* on the Mutual network and founding member of the American Radio Theatre; Tony Dow who was Wally Cleaver on *Leave It To Beaver*; and Beverly Washburn, 1950's and 1960's actress. This convention will also include OTR re-creations and performances, educational presentations, and a nostalgia vendor area. For latest info, go to <www.kalamazooarts.com>.

July 8-15, 2017: **Cruising with Greg Bell**

Sponsored by Dream Vacations of Fulton, MD, this Caribbean cruise is hosted by Greg Bell, satellite radio's OTR expert. There will be vintage radio re-creations, quizzes, and live sound effects with all passengers participating under expert guidance. Fun and educational to boot. Cruise starts in San Juan and goes to Bonaire, Curacao, Aruba, and St. Maarten. For more details call 800-269-2127 or go to www.CruisingwithGregBell.com

September 14-16, 2017: **Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention**

Hunt Valley Wyndham Hotel, Hunt Valley, MD. Among the celebrity guests this year are: Aileen Quinn (from *Annie*), Dawn Wells (from *Gilligan's Island*), Maud Adams (Bond girl from *Octopussy*), Lee Aaker (from *Adventures of Rin-Tin-Tin*), Joseph Sirola (from *The Man from Uncle*), and Barbara Carrera (Bond girl from *Never Say Never Again*.) Meet and greet these stars and get their photos and autographs. Attend seminars on old-time radio, the pulps, vintage television, the movies, Science-Fiction, etc. Latest info at <http://midatlanticnostalgiaconvention.com>



Voice of the Listener



Dear Jack,

In 2006 I tracked a transcription disk of *Howie Wing* program at Texas Tech University. I wrote them at that time and asked if they could copy it for me. They sent back an unequivocal "NO!"

This year a different person was willing to track down the disk. She warns that most of the disks in this collection (the Gordon Barton McLendon Archive) have damaged lacquer and, if that's the case, they won't try to copy it. It's a long-shot, but I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

Kathy Hammel
Sherman Oaks, CA

Dear Jack,

J. David Goldin took my husband's tapes and CDs and will work with Jerry Haendiges to make them available to the hobby. All books, scripts and magazines are going to LAB at U of MD. Martin Grams, Jr. took scrapbooks and other papers

Susan Siegel
Yorktown Hgts, NY

Hi Jack,

I've amassed "That Derek's Showbituararies" into a Word document, encompassing over 800 entries of Show-Biz personalities who died in 2016. Also included are persons from government, politics, and literature in the greater NYC, NJ area. It's primarily Anglo-American in scope but I do make exceptions from among these various fields.

Derek Tague
Orange, NJ

Dear Jack,

Thank you and all the club members for the nice sympathy card sent to me with everyone's signatures. Since my wife's death, I have so many people to thank. The MWOTRC members are the very best people. In the Spring I plan on becoming an active club member again.

Fred Fett
Manassas, VA

Dear Jack

Enclosed is a clipping from *Variety* of April 2, 1941. It's from a press release from Knox Reeves, the advertising agency that had the General Mills contract for radio's Jack Armstrong. It states that this radio serial will be kept on the air for an additional five week stretch, beginning on April 23, 1941. The show will continue to air on 12 NBC-Red stations in the Eastern daylight savings time zone.

Martin Grams, Jr.
Whiteford, MD

Dear Mr. French,

Check out this interesting website:
<http://www.wheatieswings.com/historicalnote.html>
They are selling modern reproductions of the Jack Armstrong paper airplanes. Also there are several photos on the internet of original prints of the models to be assembled.

Don Shenbarger
(via email)

Hi Jack,

Happy New Year to you and yours. Wisconsin connections to OTR or vice versa are listed in the www.mareotr.org website compiled by Ron Sayles. It has over 200 people connected to radio some local, some famous, some not so famous, sports, actors, family, education, writers and musicians.

Gordy Spiering
Milwaukee, WI

Dear Mr. French,

The local Virginia meeting for StageWise is April 5. We would appreciate it if you and Mr. & Mrs. Bush would address our Board Meeting of the Vienna, VA Theater Company on February 6th to discuss radio plays. I will forward to you copies of the three scripts we will be doing so we can discuss sound effects, styles of radio acting, etc. Anything you can tell us will be a big help to us this season.

Jessie Roberts
Theater Company of Vienna, VA

All letters must be signed, but name may be withheld if originator so specifies. Letters may be edited for brevity, but original opinions will not be altered. Originators will normally be identified only by state or hometown, unless they ask to be contacted in regard to a specific request. While Editor may answer them individually, space does not permit such answers to be included.

juvenile roles enacted by James McCallion and Donald Hughes. Kay Bealle was called upon for her expert animal imitations. The scripts were written by Ham Fisher, Georgia Backus and Allen Prescott who also served as director. Announcers were Harry von Zell with Ted Husing enlisted to provide the blow-by-blow events of Joe's iconic bouts.

Though no scripts or recordings (see below) have been located for this comedy, the plot lines culled from various press releases followed the evolution of Joe and Knobby as chronicled in the 1930 newspaper stories. Joe was hired by Knobby to be a clerk in his clothing store but as a new employee in Knobby's absence, was swindled out of the entire stock by con men. After Knobby returns and declares he is ruined, Joe goes out and retrieves, by force, the entire stock. Meanwhile, one of Knobby's customers, the manager of the current champ is seeking a 'palooka' to go a few rounds with his fighter as a publicity stunt. Knobby immediately thinks of his worker, and naturally, Joe kayos the champ and the adventures abound. His foes during this four-month stint on radio include the irreverently-named Jack McSwatt and Mac Schmelling-Saltz.

Critics were optimistic of the series. M. H. Shapiro (*The Billboard*, April 23, 1932) exclaimed, "Action is great. Skit moves along unusually fast and the dialog is just as good as the action. Plenty of life and novelty thruout. This dumb, sweet character should take on powerfully well." His anonymous counterpart at *Variety* (April 19, 1932) remarked of the cast, "Ted Bergman makes an acceptable 'Joe Palooka' and gets close to the cartoon character. His style of delivery befits the part, although Bergman suffers in comparison with Frank Readick, who plays 'Knobby,' the fight manager. Readick has a choppy harsh style that's a natural." Ray Bill (*Radio Digest*, June 1932) offered this perspective, "Joe Palooka, while nicely done and ably played, is more or less a second Padded Fists."

Joe Palooka was popular with listeners but abruptly ended after some forty episodes as it was reported in the trade (*Variety*, August 16, 1932) that Heinz was not satisfied with the sales of its Rice Flakes. Prior to this cancellation, Ray Bill (*Radio Digest*, June 1932) wondered if the purchaser of Rice Flakes-"gentle housewife"-would actually listen to the program. Bill postulated that perhaps a manufacturer of cigars or gymnasium muscle makers would be a more appropriate sponsor for the male-dominated audience. The actual story behind the kibosh was not revealed until years later; Mrs. H. J. Heinz deemed the program beneath the firm's stature. Being dropped by the sponsor was not the only round lost by Fisher regarding Joe's first radio venture. He was sued successfully (in 1934) by Allen Prescott who was owed by Fisher, a significant balance for his script writing services.

Nothing was heard regarding the champ for five years until a new audition was recorded by Ted Bergman in August of 1937. He had recently joined Sound Masters, Inc. a New York-based film company as the head of its upstart radio division. Bergman partnered with Ham Fisher and sportscaster Clem McCarthy with the trio heavily publicizing the new venture (see ad). But even with this promotion which continued into 1938, the attempt to attract an underwriter was not successful. Details of the audition recording are still unknown since the disc and script have continued to elude historians.

Several months later there was an unusual occurrence. While continuing to serve as manager of Kate Smith, Ted Collins expanded his entertainment dealings (*Variety*, October 12, 1938) by acquiring the radio rights to the Joe Palooka serial. This referred to the series of Vitaphone films. No additional information has been unearthed on this tantalizing activity.

1939 was a most intriguing year in the Joe Palooka airwaves saga. *Motion Picture Daily* (April 5, 1939) announced that an undisclosed sponsor had secured an option on a proposed radio series. Moreover, Ham Fisher was attempting to entice former light-heavyweight champion, Max Rosenbloom to play Joe. Interestingly, Rosenbloom who was nick-named 'Slapsy Maxie' by Damon Runyon would portray Joe's trainer in *The Joe Palooka Story*, a syndicated television series produced in 1954. Unfortunately, nothing further transpired regarding that initially proposed Fisher-Rosenbloom collaboration.

Amusingly, a few months later in August, the trade once again reported that Ham Fisher was endeavoring to advance his prize creation onto the airwaves having recently founded Joe Palooka, Inc. Fisher created this firm with former Detroit station

SOUND MASTERS, INC.
Present
FOR AUDITION



JOE PALOOKA

A RADIO VERSION OF
AMERICA'S MOST WIDELY
CIRCULATED COMIC STRIP

by
HAM FISHER



with
TEDDY BERGMAN



as
lovable, laughable, naive
JOE PALOOKA
and
CLEM MCCARTHY



Describing Joe's Mythical Battles for
the World's Heavyweight Crown

A TREMENDOUS
AUDIENCE IS WAITING

for
JOE PALOOKA

Produced by
SOUND MASTERS, INC.
1560 BROADWAY, NEW YORK CITY
Phone BRyant 9-2463

WWJ executive John McKay who would serve as script writer and producer (*Broadcasting*, August 15, 1939). The proposed series titled *The Story of Joe Palooka* would comprise 65, quarter-hour episodes recorded by World Broadcasting System (*Radio Daily*, August 2, 1939). Two months later, Fisher signed a contract with former WOR sales manager William Gellatly who would promote and distribute the series from his New York-based firm (see ad). Although the series was continuously offered to stations, sponsors and agencies through the spring of 1940, no details have surfaced as to the identity of any of these organizations' involvement with the program.

However, there is extant audio of two episodes (courtesy of Jack French) which have been incorrectly assigned by every source (including those online) that this author has reviewed, to the 1932 CBS run. Both of these episodes (one is cited as #7) are contained in the MARK 56 Records "Joe Palooka" LP released in 1974. Although Jim Harmon provides interesting commentary regarding the Palooka character, the source of the recordings is not disclosed.

The plots and casts are entirely different for both the CBS and WBS series. The latter has Joe training for a fight in Miami and meeting a down-and-out, former middleweight champ while Knobby gets romantically involved with a nefarious woman. This story is not part of any previous chapter of the comic strip. Moreover, three cast members have now been identified for the transcribed series: Karl Swenson plays Joe, Alan Baxter portrays Chip O'Rourke, Sr. with Ann Shepard as Delia Bennett. Several radioites remain to be identified including that of Smokey who was Joe's 'black valet' and unfortunately portrayed in the condescending stereotypical manner of the era. Finally, the two episodes are not part of any of the 1940's series as Joe is still portrayed in an uneducated dialect, a characteristic that would be changed after he enlisted in the army and returned after World War Two.

In the next issue of *Radio Recall* we'll follow Joe's ether exploits while still in the service and also those once he commences a civilian life. Author contact: <bluecar91@hotmail.com>

Forty million readers of
JOE PALOOKA

will welcome this
NEW TRANSCRIBED SERIAL

Five hundred newspapers from Maine to California carry Ham Fisher's famous cartoon strip. It's America's favorite.

The appeal of *Joe Palooka* is universal. It's read by bankers and bakers, college presidents and taxi-drivers, stockbrokers and ministers, doctors and plumbers—by men and women—by boys and girls.

Nine chances out of ten, *Joe Palooka* is featured in the leading daily in your city. And thus, there's a ready-made audience for this thoroughly absorbing and dramatic serial.

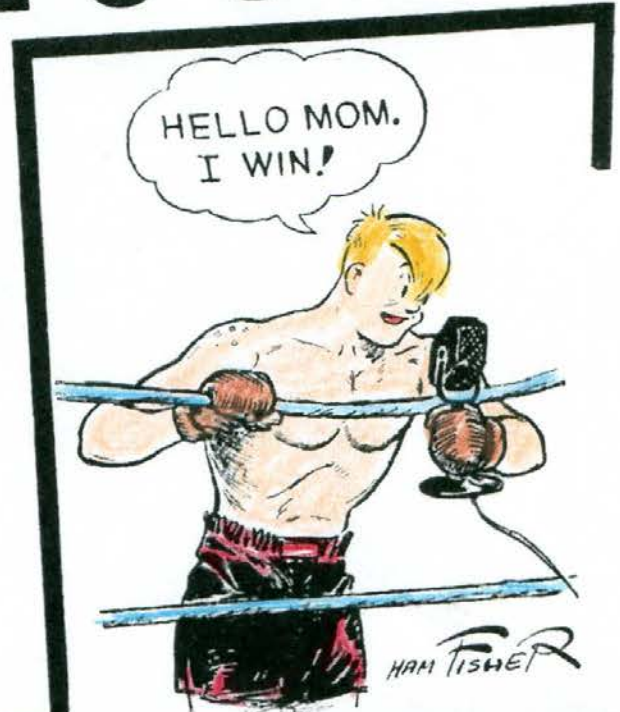
We think you'll agree that *Joe Palooka* is a great show that deserves all the praise it has received.

FIVE-A-WEEK, QUARTER HOUR

For information, write or wire

GELLATLY, Inc.

9 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA NEW YORK CITY



MWOTRC ELECTIONS

by Lawrence Kandrach

Yes, there was a second election this past year. And, no, unlike that other election, there were neither challenges nor "faithless electors". As it does every Fall, the MWOTRC held its election for officers to guide the Club during the next calendar year. This time, however, in an effort to make the selection process both more democratic and transparent, the Club first solicited nominations in October from all members in good standing via e-mail. It followed this with a similar e-mail blast of ballots during early November.

And the results are in! The incumbents in the offices of President and Vice President/ Program Chairperson, Bert Rude and Sally Stephens, respectively, were re-elected in a landslide. However, in a classic example where every vote counts, Treasurer/Membership Chairperson John Reiser was re-elected by a single ballot!

Stan Cawelti Award

Similarly, the Club utilized the same nomination and election process to select a member in good standing to receive the Stan Cawelti Award. As most of you are aware, each year the MWOTRC remembers Stan Cawelti, a singularly dedicated early Club member, by honoring an individual whom the membership feels most embodies the spirit of giving, helping, and just plain having fun that Stan always showed during his too short life and tenure with the Club.

This year, the membership nominated Martin Grams, Jr. and Lawrence Kandrach individually, and Bert and Beverly Rude jointly. Mr. Kandrach prevailed over our "first couple" by a slim margin of 2 votes, while Mr. Grams finished third. Accordingly, Mr. Kandrach received the award plaque at the MWOTRC January meeting to retain for the next year, as well as an individualized Jefferson Cup as a permanent reminder of his selection as this year's honoree.

MWOTRC'S APPEARANCE SETS LOC ATTENDANCE RECORD

The Library of Congress' Packard Campus Theater in Culpeper, Virginia holds many events each year, including showing popular movies and hosting live events. In 2016 the LOC held 146 different events in this theater, amassing a total attendance of 10,915.

The highest-attended event of the entire year

was the April 16, 2016 performance of the Metropolitan Washington Old-Time Radio Club. The Club re-created three broadcasts, complete with sound effects and live music from the Golden Age of Radio.

These included a 1940 episode of the soap opera *John's Other Wife*, a 1936 episode of the children's series *Little Orphan Annie*, (two examples of daily, 15 minute radio serials), and a 1949 half-hour episode of the private-eye series *Pat Novak for Hire*. The performers were accompanied by guest organist, Ben Model.



SAG-AFTRA (SORTA) ADMITS ERROR IN SOAP OPERA FACTS

Astute readers of RADIO RECALL will know that the official magazine of SAG-AFTRA claimed in a recent issue that *Ma Perkins* (debuting in 1933) was "history's very first soap opera."

Your RR editor, a member of that union, promptly emailed the magazine editor, pointed out that at least a dozen soap operas preceded *Ma Perkins*, including *Painted Dreams*, *Betty & Bob*, *Just Plain Bill*, *The Stolen Husband*, *Mary Southern*, and *Today's Children*. His communique was never acknowledged by SAG-AFTRA, nor did it appear in the "Letters to the Editor" section of their magazine.

However in a subsequent issue, the following statement (obviously prepared by their Legal Department) provided just a hint of the mistake that they had made:

"Correction: Regarding Summer 2016 SAG-AFTRA magazine's Snapshot reference to Ma Perkins as the first radio soap opera, there were several serialized dramas which predated it that could be considered soap operas as well."

So the OTR community can all take some comfort in knowing that another historical wrong has been righted. 'Nuff said...

MONDAY

Chappel Bros., Inc.
Present

**LITTLE
JACKIE
HELLER**



★ "Dynamic Star of Radio"

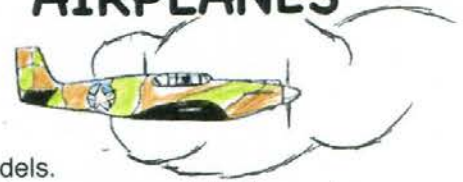
Every
Monday
Evening
NBC
BlueNet.

**WENR 9 P.M.
C.S.T.**

and Harry Kogen's Orchestra
in behalf of
KEN-L-RATION and KEN-L-BISKITS
The Energizing Foods for your Dog

JACK ARMSTRONG'S "TRU-FLITE" AIRPLANES

by Jack French © 2017



The author wishes to acknowledge and thank Peter Bellanca of Western New York for significant background material on this subject and providing the author with replicas of these airplanes. This article is simultaneously being published in the respective February issues of THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS (Old Time Radio & Nostalgia Club) and RADIO RECALL (Metro Washington OTR Club). This literary event may be a first in OTR hobby history.

Paper airplanes actually pre-date man's ability to fly. We know that Leonardo Da Vinci utilized parchment to build models of his "ornithopter" which preceded the working helicopter by nearly five centuries. Orville and Wilbur Wright used paper planes in their research which eventually resulted in the first heavier-than-air flying machine going aloft in December 1903. Three decades later, Jack Northrop used models of paper to test the aerodynamics of larger aircraft that his company would eventually manufacture and market.

In the 30s, Kellogg's printed air planes on the back of their "All-Wheat" cereal boxes. They were called "Planes of all Nations" and the promotion started with six planes. They included U.S. planes as well as one from France, Russia, and Sweden; all were commercial planes, none were military.

But the zenith of paper airplanes was reached during that period surrounding World War II and it came about for a number of reasons. One was the tremendous interest in airplanes by both youngsters and adults, spurred by newsreels, magazines, films, and comic books. Second, in most of the world, materials needed for warfare (metal, rubber, and even cloth and wood) were seldom available to toy producers so paper was their fall-back. A third factor was that paper in newspapers and magazines could be used to distribute the paper airplanes by printing ready-to-assemble airplanes that youngsters could cut from them, paste on stiff paper, and make their own aircraft.

One of the most successful creators of paper model construction was an Englishman, Wallis Rigby, who moved his company to the U.S. in the late 1930s. He was famous for his paper models of planes, boats, tanks, and trains, all of them assembled in the slot-and-tab method. Rigby's models were sold in books and boxed sets in toy stores and later appeared in the Sunday color comics section of various newspaper syndicates. His popularity in this field even resulted in an appearance in a Newsreel film in which he demonstrated how he designed and later

assembled his models.

Cereal manufacturers, especially those who wanted to increase their sale of breakfast food, offered various premiums in their cereal boxes. But they too were subject to the war-time materials shortages so they turned to paper. Nabisco obtained the services of Wallis Rigby to design airplanes which they placed in their Shredded Wheat boxes for eager youngsters to retrieve and assemble into aircraft. Alas, these were not the full-color airplanes that Rigby was distributing in other U.S. venues. These 24 different planes were imprinted with bluish ink printed on the dull-gray paper that Nabisco always used to separate its cereal biscuits in the box. (As they did a few years later with Straight Arrow's "Injun-Uity" cards.) The other characteristic of the Nabisco aircraft was that they were not 3-D; the youngster folded the two sides of the fuselage together flat and then stuck the wings through the slots.

Kellogg's distributed similar aircraft which they advertised in *St. Nicholas Magazine* and other children's periodicals. For one thin dime and a box top from Kellogg's Corn Flakes (or any other cereal from that company) they would send you a complete air facility.....12 airplanes of various military and transport types, a hangar, some field equipment and "thrilling instructions on how to fly" plus an exciting "Airways" game. All of these came in one booklet, from which they were ready to punch out and be assembled. But again, the aircraft were not that realistic since they were flat bodies with the wings shoved through slots. Nor did they fly (or actually glide) that successfully. Nevertheless they must have provided hours of entertainment for boys and girls of that era.



By far, the most authentic and air-worthy toy paper planes of World War II were distributed by General Mills whose Wheaties cereal was the official sponsor of radio's *Jack Armstrong*. The initial offer came out in the fall of 1944 inviting kids to send in a Wheaties box top and a nickel to

obtain two military planes of their choice to assemble. There were seven various duos from which to select including American, our allies, British, Russian, and for dog-fights, airships from the enemy countries of Germany and Japan. (No models were based on Italian planes, but then the Italian Air Force was not much of a factor in World War II.) When a youngster sent in his five cents and a box top, he/she had to pick one of the following pairs, which would be mailed to them in one envelope with assembly instructions:

Bell P-39 AIRACOBRA
Russian STORMOVIK IL2

Grumman F6F HELLCAT
Japanese NAKAJIMA Torpedo bomber

British FULMAR Naval fighter
German HEINKEL 178

North American P-51 MUSTANG
Japanese AICHI Dive bomber

Curtis P-40 WARHAWK
Japanese ZERO A6M

British SPITFIRE
German FOCKE-WULF 190

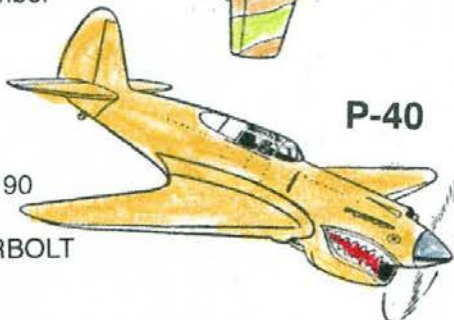
Republic P-47 THUNDERBOLT
Russian YAK I-26



P-47



P-51



P-40

All of these planes were in the fighter class, or what the U.S. called "pursuit" planes prior to World War II, hence both the initials "F" and "P" were used to designate such aircraft. Many of these planes were used on carriers by the various services. It is also noted that the U.S. planes are represented by all five of the major American companies that were producing military aircraft (which was certainly not a coincidence.) Peter Bellanca points out that both the actual P-39 Airacobra and P-40 Warhawk ("Flying Tiger") were manufactured in Western New York; the P-40 by Curtis in Buffalo/Cheektowaga region and the Airacobra by Bell in Buffalo/Niagara Falls area.

The entire promotion of this paper plane distribution was handled by the advertising firm of Knox Reeves which had the General Mills contract. This ad agency was named after its founder; Reeves was the fellow who created the term "Breakfast of Champions" that appeared on all Wheaties' boxes. The actual creator of these fourteen planes has sometimes been identified as Wallis Rigby, and while his prior models may have inspired Armstrong's Tru-Flite aircraft, Rigby did not create them. They were the artistic work of designer Fred Meyers whom Knox Reeves chose to draw them. All the planes were in authentic

military colors and were very realistic. Meyers eliminated wheels, landing gear, and propellers from the parts to be assembled since they could not survive landing after being thrown in the air.

Youngsters receiving their package in the mail would begin assembling their plane by constructing the one-piece fuselage, rolling it into the shape of a fat cigar, and gluing the tabs after inserting them through the appropriate slots. Next they would fold the cockpit according to instructions and affix it to the top of the fuselage. Usually the wings would follow, amidships and in the tail. Finally they would fashion the cowling, which had four separate pieces to glue together making it into a shape that matched the front of the fuselage. Instructions directed them to insert a penny between the cowling and the fuselage head for proper weight balance to insure smooth gliding. (Author's Note: Assembling the two replicas that Bellanca furnished me, it was determined that a penny was too heavy for maximum weight-fly ratio but a dime worked very well. Perhaps the advertising agency felt that parents, who had already shelled out for a Wheaties box and a nickel for the aircraft, might be reluctant to hand over a dime for every model plane their offspring would assemble so a penny was substituted.)

Fred Fett, long-time MWOTRC member who now lives in Virginia, was a big fan of Jack Armstrong, and always listened to him on the radio in Hamilton, Ohio where he grew up. Fred sent in for most of the radio premiums offered on Jack Armstrong, including the "Piper Cub Flying Kit" which he tells about in the June 2006 issue of RADIO RECALL. (You can read this article on our MWOTRC web site.) Fred recalls with great affection, assembling and "flying" Armstrong's Tru-Flite airplanes. *"We used to free-glide these planes and also sometimes we attached a thread to one wing to fly them around in circles where the planes appeared to be very realistic in flight. To fly the planes in circles we used an ice pick to make a small hole in the end of one wing so we could tie the string or thread to the plane."*

There was a grassy slope in front of the executive building of a local metal products factory where Fred and his childhood buddies would fly their Jack Armstrong paper planes on a string. One day some senior executives came out of the building and the boys thought they were going to chase them off their property. But instead of chasing them off, the executives were quite interested in the toy planes and asked if they could examine the planes more closely. They then complimented the lads on the planes and went off on their way. But boys will be boys and Fred says *"I remember very clearly when my aunt chased my cousin and me off the roof of her back porch as we were finishing the final flight of our Japanese Zero with the red 'meatball' insignia."*

We had put lots of flammable Testor's brand glue on this plane, ignited it, and flew the burning plane off the roof as if shot down by the good guys." The aviation and adventure radio programs inspired Fred significantly for later military service; he grew up to serve over three decades in the U.S. military, including 26 years in the Air Force.



With the envelope containing the two aircraft to assemble and instructions, the Knox Reeves firm also included a copy of the *Jack Armstrong Tru-Flite News*, which was printed in Minneapolis, MN. Only two issues were published and distributed during the short period this promotion was in effect. (It ended in March 1945.) Each issue contained articles attesting to the popularity of the air planes and encouraging local contests with the planes. For these local events, it was suggested that they include five categories to be judged: 1) total flight distance 2) duration of flight 3) aerobatics 4) G-Line flight 5) Stability, maneuverability and landing smoothness. The total distance of some of these planes was impressive; one first place winner had achieved 65 feet, 3 inches. (My assembled replica, with a dime for weight, never exceeded 20 feet.)

Two articles in the above "newspaper" were laudatory, assuming they were true, and who are we to say now that the advertising company "made them up." One involved the donation of 1,200 unassembled air craft to military hospitals in the South Pacific as the request of a "Navy Chaplain LCDR. F.T. Parkman" who told General Mills that they had increased morale greatly among the wounded warriors. The second article pictured two young lads from Minneapolis, Bruce Wood and Johnny Rockwell, of whom it said were "unofficial test pilots" for the Tru-Flite planes designed by Fred Meyers. (I would suspect that both Bruce and Johnny were sons of executives of the Knox Reeves Agency, but I can't prove it.)

This promotional event apparently lasted about six months and the ad agency began

warning that planes would be sent out only "while supplies last and not beyond February 25, 1945." How many thousands of these military replicas went out to boys and girls in the United States is anybody's guess, but there is no doubt they were the most popular of the paper air planes distributed. And they are still being marketed today. Once the copyright expired, a number of venues began reproducing them and selling them to the public. A few of them are currently on-line so if you are so inclined, you can buy some and assemble them at your leisure. As always, Googling "Jack Armstrong Tru-Flite" model planes will take you to their web sites.

But if you'd just like to try your hand at assembling one of these planes, your editor has been provided with the full-color layout of the Jack Armstrong Tru-Flite plans for the Bell Airacobra. If you email your editor with AIRACOBRA in the title and "please...thank you" in the text, I forward a copy to you. You can print it on stiff paper, assemble it, and "fly it." (Might be fun.....)

DEATH VALLEY THEN AND NOW

September 30, 1930 was the debut of a network radio drama show: unique in several ways. It was not only one of the first westerns, it lasted longer than other western. *Death Valley Days* ran from 1930 to 1944, was reformatted as *Death Valley Sheriff*, which ran another year, and then under the title *The Sheriff* aired from 1945 to 1951. Later, in 1952, it went to television, where it aired for an impressive 558 episodes.

Most of the credit for its success rests on the shoulders of its creator and chief writer, Ruth Cornwall Woodman (1894-1970). She was the first woman to oversee a western series and she got the job by default. Pacific Coast Borax Company had instructed the McCann-Erickson Agency to create a western radio series showcasing Death Valley, where borax was obtained and carried out in wagons with a 20 mule team. Few in the agency knew much about radio so the job was pushed on the only woman.

Woodman sailed into the project with gusto, making annual trips to Death Valley to uncover historical facts about it and its storied residents. She then wove her gathered stories into compelling radio scripts.

Today Death Valley is observing its 22nd anniversary as a National Park, and with 3.4 million acres, is the largest park in the lower 48 states. Its highest recorded temperature of 134 degrees in 1913 has never been exceeded in this hemisphere. It currently contains over 1,000 varied plants and 300 different birds.

Recent discoveries there have disclosed bones of animals dating back 5 million years, including mastodons, camels, and tapirs.

Reactions to Radio Interruptions on Pearl Harbor Day, Dec 7th

Compiled by Bert Rude



On December 7, 1941, the Giants and the Dodgers were pigskin-dueling at the Polo Grounds in New York. December 7, 1941. (There were baseball *and* football Dodgers back then). It was the last game of the season. Interest was high. Tuffy Leeman, Giants All-Pro running back, was being honored. A sellout crowd of 55,051 packed the stands and the tussle began about 2 p.m. (1).

Mutual radio WOR AM 710 was broadcasting the game live. Shortly after 2:25 p.m. the station interrupted with a 13- to 22-second flash about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The station also broke in periodically thereafter with bulletins “for a half minute, a minute at a time.” (2).

At the stadium, word “spread slowly and sporadically,” recounted David Hinckley, a *New York Daily News* reporter. “While some attendees would later vividly remember hearing bulletins on the public address system, the papers next day said nothing was announced until after the game when military personnel were told to report to their stations.” During the game, however, some alert fans may have been intrigued to hear Col. William Donovan, then Director of the Office of the Coordination of Information, being summoned to his Washington office (3).

But the reaction was much stronger among listeners at home. “WOR got furious telephone calls from people too excited about the game to become excited about anything else,” *Time* magazine reported. “In Denver, when a religious hour was canceled, one man called station KFEL to ask if it considered the war news more important than the gospel” (4).

Agitated radio listeners notwithstanding, fact seemed to evoke less reaction than an earlier broadcast of a notable war hoax. “Nowhere” reported *Time*, “did the straight radio reports of the terrific bombing at Honolulu—of Jap pilots

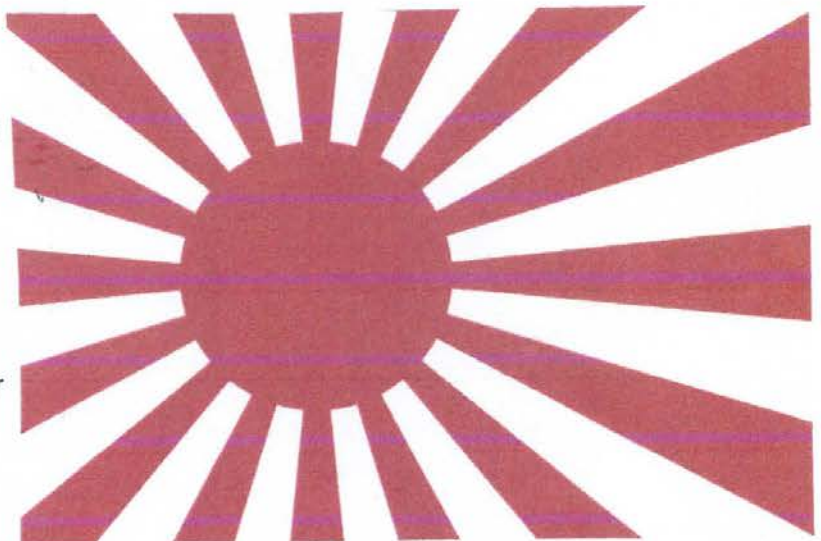
diving over the beautiful mountains to fire U.S. ships and kill U.S. men—create anything resembling the panic created three years ago by Orson Welles’s famed faking of a Martian invasion (5).”

Soon, however, the nation ramped up. The U.S. Maritime Commission had announced a goal of completing two merchant ships a day. “That goal,” *Time* drolly noted, “may now have to be revised upward (6).”

And five old soldiers declared themselves ready after hearing the news in the Atlanta Soldiers’ Home. “White-haired Major General Henry Taylor Dowling, who had fought with the First Florida Infantry, sat stiffly erect and announced: ‘The Georgia Division of the United Confederate Veterans is at war with Japan’” *Time* said. “Four nonagenarian heads nodded in fierce agreement (7).”

Footnotes

1. David Hinckley, “A Sunday Afternoon Story Tuffy Leeman’s Day, December 7, 1941 Chapter 201.” *New York Daily News*, December 7, 2003.
2. *Time*, “U.S. Radio at War,” December 15, 1941, p. 48.
3. Hinckley, op. cit. Information about Donovan’s duties is from an online CIA document, “A Look Back. . .General William J. Donovan Heads Office of Strategic Services”, which was established in 1942. The document was posted December 31, 2009 and updated April 30, 2013.
4. *Time*, op. cit.
5. *Time*, op. cit.
6. *Time*, op. cit., p. 79.
7. *Time*, December 22, 1941 p. 36.



SHORTTAKES

"One factor that encouraged radio adoption (by farms) was that families did not have to await rural electrification to buy their first set. By 1930, good quality, battery-powered radios were available, and many listeners tuned the airwaves each evening by the light of kerosene lamps. The nation's broadcasting system had matured, radio signal coverage had improved, and sets had become much more affordable. As late as 1950, more farm families owned a radio than had a car, a telephone, or electricity."

Steve Craig
*Out of the Dark:
A History of Radio and Rural America*
(Univ of Alabama Press, 2009)

"There was a time in Chicago when I did forty-five shows a week. Radio was the greatest thing that ever happened to performers. It made us home owning, tax-paying, family raising, stay-in-one-place people who made a regular salary for the first time in show business. It brought with it a certain respect that actors had never had before. People don't like to give actors much respect because they're afraid we'll get out of hand. It's no wonder we've been kicked around for centuries."

Interview of Les Tremayne in
Life in the Past Lane, Vol. 2
by Jason Hill
(Bear Manor Media, 2015)

"Edwin Armstrong's biggest mistake had been his naive assumption that David Sarnoff was still the same giddy engineer he knew 20 years earlier. Armstrong knew that Sarnoff had built a wildly successful Radio Corporation of America and the largest AM radio network. What Armstrong hadn't expected was for Sarnoff to betray their friendship and lead a secret cartel dedicated to crippling both FM radio and the infant television industry."

Scott Woolley
The Network: The Battle for the Airwaves
(Harper Collins, 2016)

"At Woosung, we caught the first flow of the incoming tide and an hour and a half later, we were moored....surrounded by the frenzied, swirling, endless hysteria that is post-war Shanghai. Ships from every maritime nation funneling goods into the vacuum of Chinese import...coolies and junk-men earning starvation wages...streets clotted with rickshaws, push-carts, limousines, trucks and swarming with beggars, rice-powdered girls, British taipans, French bankers....Four and a half million people, living on a mud-flat, helplessly riding time into whatever is China's future..."

Gil Doud, Jr. and Bob Tallman
Voyage of the Scarlet Queen script
(Aired August 14, 1947)



from the **EDITOR'S DESK**

Email: editor@mwotrc.com



With my second-to-last issue now completed, your editor looks forward to the very last one in April. Following me, with the June issue will be Martin Grams, Jr. in the editor's chair. Young blood is just what this publication, and hobby, needs and I'm delighted to turn over the reins to Martin at this time.

Thanks to our contributors to this issue. Karl Schadow, a diligent and tireless researcher, provides us with the historical background of prize-fighter, Joe Palooka in a fascinating two-parter that will be completed in April issue. Bert Rude gives us the real story on how radio listeners reacted to the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor. (Some of them should have been

ashamed.) While Bert is fastidious about citing all his sources, we don't expect that of our fine contributors in the future.

Every time I think of Kellogg's cereals, I recall with pleasure that their "Pep" sponsored on radio *The Adventures of Superman*. Of course, they don't make Pep anymore. The other day I ran across a mid-1940s ad for Kellogg's "Variety Pack — 10 packages, 6 cereals" They included: Corn Flakes, Pep, Krumbles, Rice Krispies, Shredded Wheat, and Corn Soya. I never heard of Corn Soya and I thought only Nabisco sold Shredded Wheat. Or is my soon-to-be 81 year old brain on the fritz? Sure hope not; I need to stay sharp to crank out the April Fools issue.

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