



# RADIO RECALL

Metro Washington Old Time Radio Club

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## THE END OF AN ERA

By Stewart Wright © 2017

On Sunday, February 26, 2017 an era in Radio dramas programming ended: the last episode of Jim French's *Imagination Theatre* was broadcast. (*Imagination Theatre* was an "umbrella title" under which the various series and stand-alone shows of Jim French Productions and others aired.) The syndicated weekly series began on March 17, 1996, a run of 1,093 weeks or nearly 21 years. Jim French Productions ceased accepting orders for shows on March 19th and shut down operations on March 31st.

The public announcement to cease production of *Imagination Theatre* and close Jim French Productions was made at the scheduled live recording session at the Kirkland Performance Center on January 30, 2017. It was quite appropriate that the announcement was made there as over 340 Jim French shows were taped or recorded before a live audience.

The last few months had not been good for Jim French and his family. In December 2017, an injury required hospitalization for Jim and surgery was necessary because of a problem discovered

while in the hospital. Jim had just been released from a rehabilitation facility, when his wife, Pat was rushed to the hospital with a serious medical problem. Pat died on February 8th. She was 87 years old. Jim and his family had already made the decision to shut down Jim French Productions and *Imagination Theatre* less than two weeks prior to Pat's death.

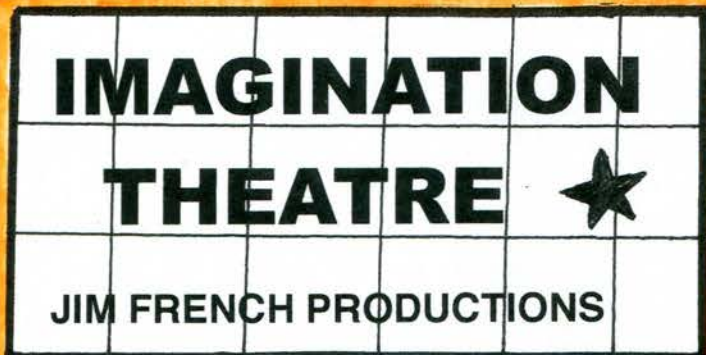
Until the advent of the syndicated *Imagination Theatre* by TransMedia on March 17, 1996, Jim's shows were usually only aired in the Seattle area. Jim French Productions assumed syndication operations of *Imagination Theatre* in January, 2007. Episodes from his *The Adventures of Harry Nile*, *The Classic Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, and *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* series also have been broadcast on Sirius/XM satellite Radio,

Jim French had begun writing, directing, and producing radio dramas for Seattle listeners in 1965. Over the years, he had written and/or produced at least 1002 shows.

Perhaps Jim's motivation to write and produce radio drama as can be summed up in two paragraphs from an interview I conducted with Jim in June, 1998.

"When I got into radio I was very young and very naive. I believed with all my heart that you were a guest in people's homes and you should never say or do anything that would be offensive."

"I am very proud to know that there are a few thousand people around the country who listen to what I do. I am a crusader for decent radio. I



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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.)

### April 21-23, 2017: **REPS Showcase**

Hotel One One Six (Bellevue Coast Hotel) at 625 116th Avenue, N.E., Bellevue, WA is where the Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound will hold this entertaining event. Guest stars include Terry Moore, Johnny McGovern, Tommy Cook, Gloria McMillan, and Tony Dow. OTR re-creations will include: *The Green Hornet, Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy, Suspense*, and *Bob & Ray*. Additional panels and seminars will be held. Collect autographs and photographs from these OTR and television stars. For more details go to <[repsshowcase.com](http://repsshowcase.com)>

### 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](http://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](http://www.CruisingwithGregBell.com)



# Voice of the Listener



Dear Jack,

I am sorry to see you retire, but at least you leave knowing RADIO RECALL is in good hands. Over the past several years, I've enjoyed your publication. I first became a member at the FOTR convention in 1990 when I got a free membership as a door prize. I did drop out of the club for a couple of years, but I saw the error of my ways and came back. Good luck in your afterlife of not being the editor of the MWOTRC publication.

Ron Sayles  
Milwaukee, WI

Dear Jack,

**Thanks for the great list of OTR contacts. Although I'm on vacation I will start making contacts immediately. Because of your help, the RPTF is already aware of all archival institutions, including those which were in attendance at that LOC conference where we met.**

Frank Absher  
St. Louis, MO

Dear Mr. French.

You and the Bushes were most helpful to us on the Board discussing the practicalities of a radio broadcast back then. The information on manual sound effects was certainly welcome. We hope you will be able to attend one of our OTR recreations in March-April. We also look forward to your presentation at StageWise.

Jessie Roberts  
Vienna Community Theatre

Hey Jack.

**See what happens? You edit one d\*mned book on western radio and suddenly you're the expert. My question is: did any of Ivan Cury's "Bobby Benson" television programs in NYC survive? If so, where would they be available. I've searched all the "usual suspects" but no luck and no leads. What now?**

Charlie Summers  
OTR Digest on line

Dear Jack,

**I appreciate your contributions to my request for programs in which the star did not appear, because of illness or scheduling conflicts or whatever. I am compiling a list of these and will feature them on a future on-air presentation.**

Larry Gassman  
Los Angeles, CA

Dear Editor Jack,

A tip of the old Fedora to you for another varied and informative *Radio Recall!* I liked the way you cited the cooperation between Peter Bellanca's bang-up Buffalo Club newsletter and your vaunted and long-running *RR*.

Mark Anderson  
Carlisle, PA

Dear Editor,

**Just a short note, Jack, to let you know that I enjoyed your article about Jack Armstrong paper airplanes. Thanks for the history lesson.**

Bob Cockrum  
(via email)

Dear Editor French,

For correctly pointing out that Matt's horse on *Gunsmoke* had no name, I consider you to be the Mycroft Holmes of Radio History! If you don't remember, he was Sherlock's older brother, extremely sedentary (not a failing of yours), and, according to Sherlock, "... has the tidiest and most orderly brain, with the greatest capacity for storing facts, of any man living."

John Heimann  
Arlington, VA

Dear Jack,

**I know the tributes will be pouring in to you as you step down from the editor's job in April but let me say no one will miss you more in that job than me... Thanks again !**

Phil Paulin  
Palm Coast, FL

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.

don't want to preach, that's ineffective. I want there to be an alternative, some kind of entertainment for an hour every week where the kids can tune in and not have their ears assaulted. Young listeners are a large portion of our audience. My life's goal is to be a part of reestablishing radio drama as an industry."

Jim has definitely done his part in reestablishing radio drama. Since Jim French retired from daily commercial radio in July, 1994, he has written and/or produced 691 shows for that aired on radio. By the way, Jim is known as "Gentleman Jim" by his colleagues in the radio industry, which gives you an idea of the high esteem in which he is held by radio people.

One of Jim French's crowning achievements was the production of *The Classic Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* – the complete Conan Doyle Canon. It was the first time the Canon was produced and aired as a single series for North American radio and that the main characters were played by the same actors throughout: Sherlock Holmes (John Patrick Lowrie), Dr. John H. Watson (Lawrence Albert), Mrs. Hudson (Lee Paasch), and Inspector Lestrade (Rick May). Finally, it was the first time that a single writer, M. J. Elliott, adapted the entire Conan Doyle Canon for radio.

The following are the titles and number of episodes of the individual Jim French series. *The Adventures Of Harry Nile* (293), *The Anthony*

*Rathe Chronicles* (5), *Call Simon Walker* (2), *The Classic Adventures Of Sherlock Holmes* (64), *Crisis* (152), *Dameron* (49), *Dramatization of Historical Events* (3), *The Further Adventures Of Sherlock Holmes* (128), *The Hilary Caine Mysteries* (22). *Kerides*, *The Thinker* (18). *Mr. Darnborough Investigates* (3), *Phoenix Rising* (4), *Raffles*, *The Gentleman Thief* (19), *Stand-Alone Shows* (183), *The Strange Seeker* (47), and *Tower Playhouse* (10). While many of Jim French's show fall into the Mystery and Detective genres, The stand-alone shows and the shows from *Crisis* and *Tower Playhouse* cover many genres including straight Drama, Comedy, Westerns, Science Fiction, and Horror.

I first met Jim French in 1976 when I was stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington and since 1998 I have talked and corresponded with him many times. I have always found him to be honest, completely trust-worthy, and innovative. I feel highly privileged to have Jim French for a friend.

Want to learn more about Jim French and his radio series? The author has compiled and maintained twelve detailed broadcast logs on these series with much background information in Adobe Acrobat format (PDF) files. They can be found at:

<http://www.old-time.com/otrlogs2/index.html>

A final update to these broadcast logs is planned to be posted to the above website on or about April 30, 2017.



## MWOTRC TURNS THEIR TALENTS TOWARDS BASEBALL

by Mark Anderson © 2017

Saturday April the first will be another landmark day for MWOTRC presentations. The Lawrence Kandrach Singers, led by baritone soloist Denis Roma, are in fine voice, and Sandra Pitts-Malone has been practicing her baseball opening toss for days. This will be Futures Day at the minor league baseball stadium in Dayton, Ohio, where the young Dayton Dragons team will take the field for a friendly game against the Cincinnati Reds star players of yesteryear.

The pre-game ceremonies are where the Club will be take part, and they will be right on cue. The much-sought-after honors of singing the National Anthem and throwing the first pitch from the mound have both been bestowed upon the Club. The Dragons are the sponsor of MWOTRC, featuring the GRTR Studio broadcasts.

The Club's charter bus rolled into Dayton a couple of days early, driven by John Abbott. It was a tuneful and amusing ride, by all accounts. Bert Rude and Lawrence Kandrach got right to work. Lawrence, assisted by Virginia Ainslie, scurried around the hotel to find rehearsal space for the



Singers. Bert was driven across town by Alice Daniels to the local radio station where he was a guest on the "Dragon's Lair" talk show.

"It's a plum assignment for the Club, for sure," Bert said. "We've performed for so many years in auditoriums, social halls, and at conventions, so when we take the field on Saturday it will really be something special. Thanks to all the Dragons management, we're reaching out further than ever."

So, the stage is set for Saturday the first: open-air, big crowd and the Lawrence Kandrach Singers, and Sandra Pitts-Malone, will be doing the Club proud. The day promises to be sunny and warm, just right to feel the love of baseball and performance.

# EVOLUTION OF SOUND EFFECTS

by Jack French © 2017

(based upon an oral presentation at MANC, September 2016)

Sound effects in conjunction with the performing arts actually goes back to Greek theatre about 700 BC. Stage plays were performed in outdoor arenas attended by large audiences. There was no curtain, or lights, and few stage properties, but they did have voice magnification, through the use of elaborate masks which increased the volume of actors' voices.

The Greeks also had sound effects, but they were formal and simplistic.....rain was suggested by dropping pebbles into a jar of water. For thunder and/or lightning, they struck a gong in full view of the audience.

Elizabethan theatre in the 1600s and 1700s was much more attentive to sound effects, most of them executed backstage. Horse's hooves involved stomping on floor with poles, battle scenes were amplified backstage with metal crashing against metal and screams of the wounded, along with sounds from battle trumpets.

Shakespeare was accustomed to seeing lightning created by sending firecrackers down a wire attached to the stage while thunder was imitated by rolling a cannon ball in a V-shaped seesaw trough that moved up and down. Some battle scenes involved the use of a real cannon, with powder, but no ball or shot. Because of such cannon fire on stage, the Globe Theatre caught fire in June 1613 and burned down.

A playwright, John Dennis, wrote a play in 1704 in which thunder played an important part. Unhappy with the cannon ball effect in normal usage, Dennis invented his own device for creating thunder. History has not recorded what it consisted of, but it was probably a "thunder sheet", which involved rattling a large sheet of copper or brass.

Alas, Dennis' play did not do well at the box office and the theatre performing it, dropped it and instead began a revival of *MacBeth*, but still utilizing Dennis' new thunder method. The playwright was very upset so he attended performances during which he would stand up and announce to the patrons, "They will not let my play run, but they have stolen my thunder."

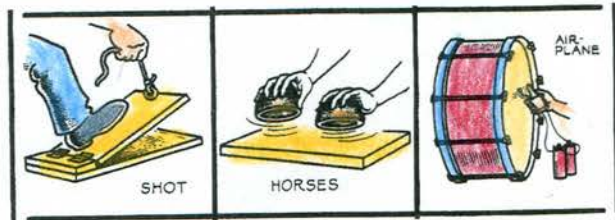
Sound effects for stage plays had vastly improved in number and realism on the American stage in the 1800s and later in vaudeville.

Backstage they had a rain machine, a splash tank, a wind machine, a surf box, and coconut shells for hoofbeats on a variety of turf. Blank pistols could be fired on stage or behind the curtain.

A married couple, Arthur and Ora Nichols, got

started in vaudeville as a musical duet; she played the piano and he played violin. There they witnessed the sound effects in other acts, usually created by the percussionist. The Nichols' weren't doing that well in vaudeville so when the silent films arrived about 1900, they segued into that new media, first as musicians and then as sound effects personnel.

Silent movies were only "silent" when filmed; when shown on the screen, there was plenty of sound....not just the accompanying music. There were gunshots, screams, crashes, hoofbeats, rain, sword clashing, etc. And Ora and Arthur did it all. But by the late 1920s, the "talkies" had decimated silent film industry so the married duo jumped ship again, this time into radio.



They went to work for CBS radio in 1928 and Ora was put in charge of the sound effects department. She recruited percussionists and trained them in producing sound effects for network radio. Ora proved she could produce sound effects with her own devices that were as realistic as the original source. Orson Welles, who wanted a section of sod grass to be mowed by a real lawn mower, agreed to use instead an egg beater in the hands of Ora. She also created the sound of a Martian ship compartment door opening...by slowly revolving the lid on a metal pot for the famous *War of the Worlds* program.

Gunshots went through several variations over the years. In radio's earliest times, a wooden lathe was slapped on a leather pillow. Later a wooden clapper was used. Eventually real weapons firing blanks came into usage, something studios resented because of the expense of cartridges. Ora Nichols invented a device entirely of wood that replicated the "ack-ack-ack" sound of a machine gun with revolving slats striking against an unyielding surface.

Recorded sound on discs proceeded dramatic radio but it took a while for companies to create sound effect records and market them to the radio industry. These records were very necessary for sound personnel in creating the "large sounds", i.e. automobiles, ocean liners, packed stadiums, most military sounds (cannon

fire, tanks, etc.) waterfalls, and airplanes.

Most radio studios had a library of sound effects records they could call upon. To play them, most studios had three adjacent turn tables with four swinging arms. With this system in place, two sounds could come from the same disk at the same time. For example, the sound of one car could be under the needle of one arm and a few minutes later, a second arm could be placed at the same spot of the spinning disc and it would sound like two cars chasing each other.

The compact nature of these discs was a real convenience. One such record might contain up to 50 different sounds in short segments. Sound personnel soon found out that by altering the speed and pitch of the audio, several different sounds could be created from the same segment. For example, the recorded sound of a waterfall could, at different speeds and pitch, sound like an earth quake, a jet plane, a railroad train, and in short bursts, like an automatic weapon.

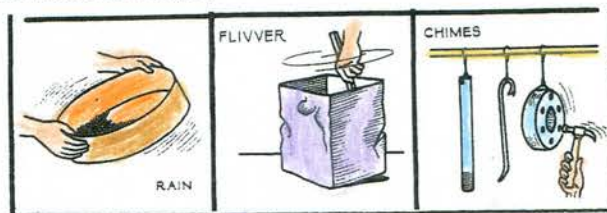
Of course there were many sounds that were always executed manually. Knocking on a door could be that of a policeman, a timid salesman, a spy using a coded knock, or an angry woman, all of which would be very different. The same with footsteps, which were always done manually. They could be a man, woman, child....they could be fast, slow, with a limp, or dozens of other variables.

Other sounds that were virtually always "manual" were the animal sounds. The network's publicity department wanted listeners to think that Lassie starred in her own show. They even distributed photos of the dog with glasses on, sitting on chair by a microphone, looking at a script. But Lassie, Rin-Tin-Tin, and Yukon King were all impersonated by a series of humans, Dewey Cole of WXYZ who voiced Yukon King, as well as Silver and Scout, actually got AFRA to agree that he should be paid extra as an actor when doing these roles.

Most of these animal imitators could do several of nature's creatures. Dave Light voiced the dog and the cat on *Mayor of the Town*; horses, cows, chickens, and cougars on *Gene Autry's Melody Ranch*; as well as Toto on *Wizard of Oz*. Frank Milano imitated all the animals on *Bobby Benson and the B-Bar-B Riders*, including two at one time, i.e. fight between a horse and a cougar.

Since an infant cannot read a script, the cooing, crying, or babble from a baby was

done by women who specialized in this type of sound. Sybil Trent, who started on radio at age three, and later went on to star on *Let's Pretend*, was an excellent "baby" as a mature actress on radio.

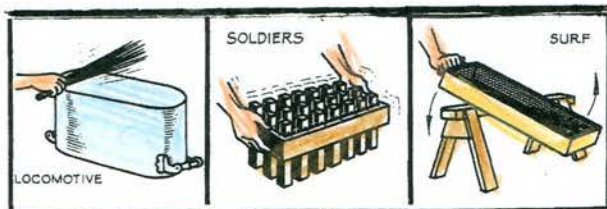


As with most endeavors, the longer it is done, the better it gets, and this is certainly true of art of sound effects. The zenith was probably reached in the late 1950s by the very talented trio of Ray Kemper, Tom Hanley, and Bill James. Two or three of them worked together on *Straight Arrow*, *Gunsmoke*, *Voyage of the Scarlet Queen*, *Fort Laramie*, and *Have Gun, Will Travel*.

You can listen to any one of their episodes and admire their innovative handiwork. Every footstep is precise, every mount into a saddle sounds as it should; when a table conversation ends, we hear the chair legs scraping on the floor as the participants push away from the table. We can even tell the difference in the boot-steps of Chester and Matt; the latter has jingling spurs (the sound by Ray Kemper, shaking an old set of car keys.)

And despite the skill of women in radio, they found it very difficult to break into sound effects. Ora Nichols, who had nearly created the profession, had done sound effects on *Buck Rogers*, *Mercury Theatre of the Air*, *March of Time*, etc. She retired from radio in 1947, convinced that she had proven that women could be effective sound effects personnel. But alas, the few women hired in those roles during the man-shortage in WW II, were relieved of their jobs when the veterans returned.

FOOTNOTE: Radio's sound effects personnel were not "Foley artists." This term is derived from Jack Donovan Foley, who worked for Republic Studios and added sound to film and television, much of it electronically. But Foley was working on these projects months after the shooting of the film or video. He could try hundreds of different sounds until he got the best one. However his counterparts on radio worked live on each program and had only one chance to get it right. So these two jobs are "distant cousins" but hardly the same.



# JOE PALOOKA'S ADVENTURES IN RADIOLAND

## Part 2: 1940s

By Karl Schadow © 2017

The demonstration that extant audio of a Joe Palooka radio program identified with a 1930's series which was not a component of the well-known 1932 Heinz-sponsored, CBS run, highlighted Part 1 (*Radio Recall*, February 2017) of this two-part treatise regarding the popular comic strip hero's foray on the airwaves. In the second and concluding installment, The Champ's radio escapades during the 1940s will be chronicled.

In November of 1940, Joe Palooka of the comics enlisted in the U.S. Army. This move by creator Ham Fisher, while contributing to the general public's acceptance of the recently-enacted peace-time draft, curtailed any further distribution of the current Palooka radio enterprise. This transcribed venture, *The Story of Joe Palooka*, was produced by the World Broadcasting System and then distributed by Gellatly, Inc.

The episodes mentioned in the opening paragraph are early chapters of this serial which feature Joe as a civilian. During World War II, Ham Fisher in addition to his duties with the daily and Sunday strip (which was also published in many military publications), contributed many Palooka cartoons for use by the Armed Forces. There would be no mention in the trade of a new Palooka radio program until the spring of 1945.

The return to the aural medium was forecast by both *Radio Daily* (March 14, 1945) and *Variety* (April 11, 1945). Soap opera veteran Karl Swenson who played the lead in *The Story of Joe Palooka* would reenact this role to be joined by Lee Dixon (formerly of Broadway's *Oklahoma*) as his buddy Jerry Leemy.

The character would be Dixon's major radio endeavor of his career. This new venture would stress: "morale and educational values" as appearing in the comic strip, with the plots to involve Joe's war activities including exhibition bouts and then evolve into his experiences as a civilian once the fighting was over. In order to control the series as much as possible, Ham Fisher decided on a transcribed, syndicated version, versus that aired via a network. However, there was interest by Gillette, Inc. in possibly sponsoring this program on Mutual.

Script authorship was assigned to Harold Conrad, a prominent sports writer for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* and founding member of the Boxing Writers Association of America. The producer/director was former Benton & Bowles radio director Jack Hurdle who was eagerly anticipating a discharge from military service. Prior to the war, Hurdle had extensive experience on commercial programs including *The Second Mrs. Burton*, *A Woman of America* and *The Thin Man*. By April of 1945 two audition discs had been recorded in New York by the NBC Radio-Recording Department (NBCRRD).

Though many sources incorrectly cite Chicago as the studio origin, the matrix number of the transcriptions begins with 'N' and not 'C' thus signifying The Big Apple. The two discs recorded by the NBCRRD were produced under the auspices of Graphic Radio Productions, Inc. based in Omaha, Nebraska. Executives of the firm included Ham Fisher and two members of the local Roberts Dairy Co., president J. Gordon Roberts and sales/advertising director John Ross, whose full name was John Ross Rosenblatt and who would serve as overall manager of the radio project. The Rosenblatt name may be familiar to sports fans as that city's Rosenblatt Stadium (razed in 2012) was the former home of UFL and minor league baseball teams and host of the College World Series.

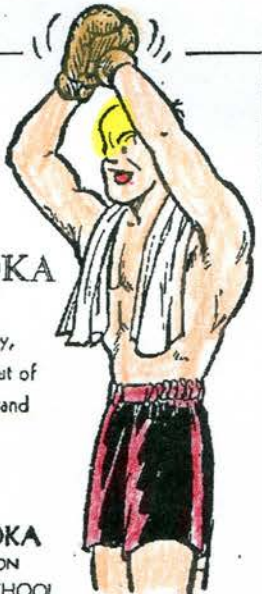
The story of Joe Palooka's latest ether enterprise was actually spearheaded by John Rosenblatt. As told in the hometown *Sunday World-Herald* (September 9, 1945), Rosenblatt had recalled seeing the strip in 1943 and postulated that it would make a great radio program. Perhaps he had not heard or was otherwise unfamiliar with any of the 1930s series. Subsequently, he corresponded with Ham Fisher

**HEY KIDS!**  
JOHNSON MILK &  
ICE CREAM CO.

BRINGS YOU  
**JOE PALOOKA**


Joe and his pals Knobby,  
Leemy and Ann step out of  
the comic strip into a brand  
new  
RADIO SERIES

JOIN **JOE PALOOKA**  
WORLD CHAMPION  
EVERY EVENING AFTER SCHOOL



**5:00 p. m. to 5:15 p. m.**  
**Mondays thru Fridays**

sponsored by  
**Johnson Milk and  
Ice Cream Co.**





and almost two years ensued before a suitable product would be on the market. Full page advertisements in the trade included the Omaha firm as sales representative.

Perusing the two audition recordings, staff of stations, sponsors and agencies heard Joe in his activities in the South Pacific. Along with Jerry, the duo had been selected by Army brass for a secret mission. After a short briefing, but prior to their embarkation, Jerry is slated to fight a Corporal Wralowsky who turns out to be Cpl. Ray Martin the former welter-weight champion. Joe's buddy survives Martin's beating and immediately following the bout, Jerry and Joe are whisked away aboard an Army transport.

The second episode ends in classic cliff-hanger style. Additional cast in these episodes include Horace McMahon as Ray Martin, Stacy Harris as Lt. Jordan and John Gibson as an unnamed officer. The ringside announcer heard during the opening and closing segments was Harry Balogh, familiar to fight fans from his announcing duties at Madison Square Garden and Yankee Stadium. The names of the second announcer, organist, sound effects artist and engineer have yet to be determined. Interestingly, author Harold Conrad receives on-air credit at the close of both episodes. Despite efforts by Graphic Radio to promote the series, it remain unsold throughout the summer of 1945. However, Round Two of this venture was about to commence.

In the fall of 1945, copy promoting a 1/4 hour, Mon-Fri, Joe Palooka radio serial on local stations began to appear in newspapers across the country (see KSWO ad, Lawton, Oklahoma). Although *Variety* (August 15, 1945) had reported that Mutual was still interested in possibly airing Palooka's exploits on a network basis, exclusive rights to the series had been recently purchased by the North Central Broadcasting System (NCBS) and Mississippi Valley Network (MVN). Both organizations were headed by John Boler. The series was offered to stations of the NCBS, MVN and all others across the country. Twenty-seven stations (including one in Hawaii) had immediately signed up to air the venture (*The Billboard*, September 8, 1945).

*Broadcasting* (September 10, 1945) stated that both Karl Swenson and Lee Dixon would

retain their respective roles. However, production of the new series was transferred from New York to Chicago which was home to the NCBS corporate office. It should be noted that some recent histories of Joe Palooka indicate that NBC was involved in negotiating a network run of its own. This is absolutely not the case, as no information has been located in the trade nor in the various archival collections of the network which supports this myth.

Commensurate with the transference of production site, a new firm, L.S. Toogood Recording Company produced the discs. Additionally, Chicagoland cast and crew were recruited to fill roles vacated by their New York counterparts. There was still some speculation, however, that Harold Conrad would continue to submit scripts from New York (*Sunday World-Herald*, September 9, 1945 and *Radio Daily*, September 10, 1945). A review in *Variety* (November 14, 1945) by Mike Connelly rectified this matter by acknowledging several individuals including the crafting duo of Ham Fisher and Phil Gelb.

The latter had been a staff scribe at KNX-CBS in Hollywood and after relocating to the Midwest, had recently penned *The March of Minnesota* public affairs series. Two NCBS executives, Donn Clayton and George Maher were enlisted as director and producer, respectively. In his assessment of the venture, Connelly cited: "... 260 hairy-chested episodes will draw well among adult listeners as well as the moppet trade toward which it's primarily beamed is attested by the fact of the number of stations who've already bought it are carrying it as late as 10 p.m." He concluded: "Kids'll eat it up, and so will a lot of their pops-especially those who like to play with Junior's train set."

The cast is lead by Norman Gottschalk who had garnered extensive experience on such shows as *Author's Playhouse* and *Vic & Sade*. Audio of twenty episodes scattered among the initial 42 of this venture have been released by Radio Archives. In addition, the two NBCRRD audition discs were also featured in this collection.

The plot of "Joe Palooka's New Radio Serial" as it was being promoted to differentiate it from



the earlier 1945 series, began with Joe returning to civilian life and his career after the war. We find him at Yankee Stadium winning in a fifteen-round decision, a bout against contender Al Wilson. Everyone expected Joe to knockout Wilson early in the fight.

Afterwards, there is much speculation by fans and the sports writers as to the reasons behind the outcome. Joe is persuaded by Jerry and manager Knobby not to talk to the press or anyone else. Joe goes off on his own and disappears. An intense search then commences for him. Not only are his friends on the hunt but also mobsters. Had that hero Joe, thrown a fight?

There are numerous subplots introduced as Joe ends up in the Midwest via precarious means; is befriended by a hobo and subsequently a widow, and changes his name a couple of times as he moves from one town to another. A fixed fight may be the least of his worries as he becomes a suspect in a murder case. As of Episode #42, Joe is working in Zinctown with Knobby and the gangsters still engaging the chase one step behind in Midville.

Meanwhile, the boxing commission having heard startling testimony, has exonerated Joe of all wrong doing. However, Joe has no way of learning of this judgement. Cast members culled from various sources including *Variety* and *The National Radio Artists Directory* include: Arthur Hern (Knobby), Murray Forbes (Jerry), Elmira Roessler (Myrtle), Eloise Kummer (Ann Howe), Olan Soule (Dr. Hubbard), Janet Niles (Lois), George Cigar (Inspector Doyle), with additional AFRAites: Jack Petruzzi, Hal Lansing, Joan Lundeen, Joe Rockhold, Dick Good and Jess Pugh.

Hired as the NCBS publicity-promotion director for the series was Eileen Oberling, who continued the exploitation in the trade and newspapers. By the end of 1945, it was being aired on some 50 stations. Roberts Dairy was sponsoring the program on both KOIL (Omaha) and KFOR (Lincoln) in addition to others in the Midwest.

Though various dairies and ice cream companies were often advertisers, Madison Blanche Department Store was the underwriter on the 50,000 Watt powerhouse WWL in New Orleans. Some stations opted to join with the newspaper in promoting the radio program with the daily comics (see ad for KTUC, Tucson, Arizona). Fans of *The Champ* from Hawaii (KGU) to Binghamton, New York (WNBF) were able to tune in his exciting adventures.

However, their comrades in some of the smallest markets (stations up to 250 Watts) would be disappointed as their local outlet could not afford the program. This dilemma was profiled in *Variety* (January 2, 1946) as the series was identified along with *Easy Aces* and *Stay Tuned for Terror* (the Robert Bloch-penned horror series) as products highly desired by station managers, if


the price could be lowered to a range of \$2.50-\$5.00 per episode. It is unknown if NCBS/MVN executives were amenable to this proposal.

One 250 Watter along with its bankroller that had success was KNOW (Austin, Texas) with Joe's odysseys sponsored by the local Polar Ice Cream Company. Their achievement as profiled in *Radio Showmanship* (July 1946) elicited the following in promoting to a kids market: "One of the most successful appeals to this audience has been through comic strip personalities. What gives such features an added punch is the fact that almost as many adults as children listen to kid show programs."

Even though additional stations were being added in 1946, NCBS was experiencing financial difficulties in overall operation. By the summer of that year, the Hollywood-based Teleways Radio Productions, Inc. had assumed distribution of the program. Ultimately, NCBS went into bankruptcy. Teleways continued to syndicate the program throughout the late 1940s including to CFRB in Toronto. Stations and sponsors continued to develop innovative ways to promote the radio program, with one such firm offering a free movie ticket to the latest Palooka movie (see Dobyns-Taylor Hardware Co./WKPT ad). It is unknown if other stations offered premiums.

With the dawn of a new decade, *Daily Variety* (October 17, 1950) announced that Ham Fisher had partnered with television producer P. K. Palmer to create yet another firm to promote Joe's adaptations for radio, television and movies. No radio ventures have been unearthed for the 1950s. However, a modestly successful 26-episode, syndicated series for the small screen was released by Guild Films in the mid 1950s. It enjoyed success into the 1970s.

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**Acknowledgements:** The author thanks Martin Grams, Jr. and Ben Ohmart for their invaluable assistance. Moreover, special recognition is extended to this periodical's retiring editor, Jack French who has been a friend and mentor to this author for many years. (Contact author at <bluecar91@hotmail.com>)

## NEW MUSICAL IN VIENNA, VA DESTINED FOR WIDE ACCLAIM

by Andy Marx © 2017

The vibrant arts scene in Vienna, VA has just put out the welcome mat for a newly-minted theater group, called History Players of Vienna. The earnest and smiling faces of HPOV will be on posters all over town, as they are slated to debut their new musical *Big Congress: Vienna Writes the Future* at the upcoming Summer By the Tracks Arts Festival.

HPOV writer-director Hildy Moran sat down with us on the troupe's first rehearsal in town. "Musicals make history accessible and exciting," she told us. "And it just seemed natural to see how in Europe the Congress of Vienna way back in 1815 could relate to events today and how our own future is being shaped."

Moran drew great inspiration from the current Broadway hit, *Hamilton*. She told us: "You know how Lin Miranda got his basic idea from reading a biography of Alexander Hamilton? Same for me! I practically wore out my grandpa's 8-track recording of "1776"! Why not sing about Philadelphia, New York, and now Austria? You learn a lot along the way!"



The score for *Big Congress* has some smashing original tunes, and it pays homage to classic show tunes, as well. The show opens with the rousing ensemble number "We Sent Napoleon Packing!" The first act closes with an exquisite dance number celebrating the first big resolution, "The Night They Partitioned Ukraine." Tallyrand and Metternich do an amusing little two-step as they ponder, "Saxony Is Up for Grabs."

The past horrors of war cannot be ignored; and the quest for peace is captured in a backdrop montage of paintings of the human spirit and the poignant, hopeful, ballad, "Getting to Goya." As the deals get ironed out and the new map of Europe is revealed, the curtain rings down with the anthem, "Be Joyous While You Can."

Hildy and her troupe are working hard in their new rehearsal space just off Maple Avenue. The HPOV folks will be doing impromptu sing-outs at venues around town, to put us in a tuneful mood as we think about how proud our town can be in this, the 202<sup>nd</sup> anniversary year of the events in that other Vienna.

## MELLOW MUSIC MAKES MAESTRO MERRIMENT

by A. Peryl Phoule

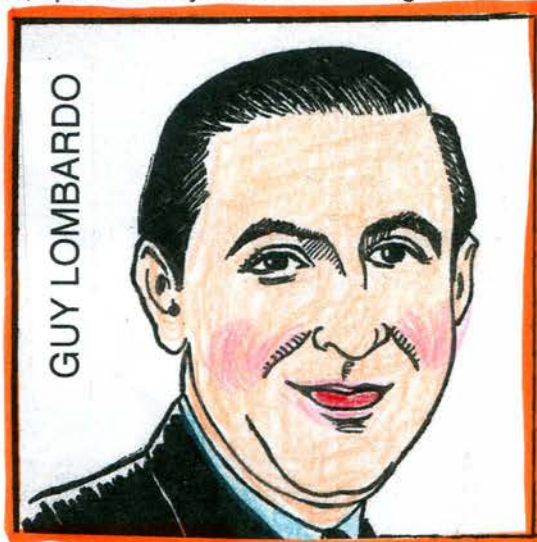
Radio's famous orchestra leader was born in rural Transylvania on June 19, 1902. The oldest of

five sons of a one-armed paper hanger, he started making music before he could read. His father, Gustave Lumbago, immigrated to Canada in 1915, determined to become a Royal Canadian Mountie. But when he arrived there, he discovered that the RCMP only accepted men with two arms. To conceal his disappointment, he taught his sons to be dedicated musicians.

Gus Jr. played the violin, Carmen the flute, Liebert both the drums and saxophone, while the younger twins, Frick and Frack, played dual piano. When they finished high school, the Lumbagos formed a small band and toured southern Canada.

With the U.S. struggling with Prohibition, the little band went to Cleveland and got a job in a bordello, which they later put on their resume as "A House of Negotiable Affection." In 1925 they moved to Chicago, playing in a expansive speak-easy operated by a local entrepreneur, Alphonse Capone, where they first appeared on local radio in 1927, after a Capone visit to the radio studio.

Two years later the band had expanded to 16 members and Gus, Jr. changed his name to Guy Lombardo. To please his father, he also changed the name of the band; instead of the "Lilting Lumbagos", they were now the Royal Canadians. Nailing down a long term contract at the Hotel Roosevelt in Manhattan, their theme song became *Auld Lang Syne*. (The song was chosen since it was in public domain, hence no royalties.) It also made them very popular at New Year's Eve parties every year. By 1930 they were on network radio, sponsored by Robert Burns Cigars.



In later years, The Royal Canadians were heard on a variety of radio shows including *LombardoLand* and *Burns & Allen*, in addition to guest appearances. Profits from the orchestra enabled Guy to build a waterfront mansion on Long Island, where he also owned a restaurant, a shoe repair, and an umbrella boutique.

His loved speed boats but hated gardening. Ironically, he sneezed to death at a flower show in Houston, TX on November 5, 1977.

# FAREWELL FROM AN EDITOR

In February 1991 when I was president of MWOTRC, Ken Neal retired as editor of what we called then MWOTRC Newsletter. Unable to find an immediate replacement for Ken, I took over the editor's job. I renamed the publication RADIO RECALL and put out one issue (Mar/Apr) in which I wrote all the articles. Unlike Ken Neal, I had no computer and therefore my finished product looked a little primitive.

I next talked Barbara Durmick into being the editor; she had a brother-in-law with a computer and he helped here churn out each issue. Sometimes I was the only contributor and Barbara soon tired of begging for articles. At the end of 1992, she resigned and I couldn't blame her. In January 1993, I took over for what I thought would be a temporary task, and some 23 years later, I'm finally stepping down.

With no computer, I relied on a wood-burning typewriter and wrote out the headlines with magic markers. It took me a year to formalize the page format....page 1 (Headlined articles), page 2 (list of officer contacts and upcoming OTR events) page 3 (letters to editor) and bottom of last page (editorial observations.) On the editor's page, I used this caricature of me drawn by a co-worker when I was in federal service.



The May/June issue of 1994 celebrated our club's 10th Anniversary and I managed to solicit congrats from six different OTR pubs which I published in RADIO RECALL. That summer I had a new caricature of me, drawn by professional artist, Bobb Lynes of SPERDVAC. It went on the last page of each issue.



Bobb had illustrated his book, *Radio's Golden Years*, with hundreds of drawings of OTR stars and he gave me permission to use them, (crediting hm, of course) but his generosity did not stop there. When I needed a caricature not in his book, he drew it for me (Doris Day, Karl Malden, Rosemary Clooney, etc.) I will certainly be eternally grateful to Bobb.

By 1995 I had developed a technique to make RADIO RECALL more professional. I would write an article for another OTR club's publication (which was processed on computer.) When it was released, I xeroxed it and then ran it in the next issue of RADIO RECALL. I used this system for about a year and it worked pretty well.

In April 1996 I bought my first computer and put away the wood-burning typewriter. So now we had professional type and headlines. But my process was still the same as it is today: I would type the articles, paste them on blank paper with

Elmer's Rubber Cement. I had at least one illustration per page so after I found them, I cut them out and pasted them into my mock-up. When I finished 12 pages, I xeroxed the entire issue, then used white-out to eliminate the lines, and finally took the finished product to a commercial printer.

By 1997 we were attracting prominent OTR historians and authors to our pages (Jim Cox, Elizabeth McLeod, Lou Genco, etc..) Our cassette lending library was a big deal then so almost every issue contained 2-6 pages of new listings of their programs.

Over the next years, I concentrated on building up a cadre of good writers who could, and would, contribute to RADIO RECALL on a regular basis, in terms of original articles. Two of the most productive are in this issue: Stewart Wright and Karl Schadow. Other regulars were Jim Widner, Mark Anderson, Cort Vitty, Michael Hayde, Rob Farr, Maury Cagle, Martin Grams, Jr., Ryan Ellett, John Abbott, Kathy Hammel, Lawrence Kandrach...all of whom we hope to see in future issues for the new editor.

In addition to book reviews, I added columns entitled "Ask the Expert" and "Shorttakes". Mark Anderson briefly had a column he called "First Listener." I also sprinkled each issue with some vintage advertisements on OTR shows and personalities, saving the large ones for the back cover.

MENSA asked me to address their summer 2013 regional conference, discussing the history of radio. They had a caricaturist on site and he drew me. It showed an "older and wiser" editor and I placed it on the last page, replacing the one Bobb Lynes did. (Alas, this more recent model did not go over well with the troops.)



I've held this editorial job for over nearly a quarter century and published 141 issues of RADIO RECALL. Ben Bradlee was just shy of 70 when he retired as editor of the Washington Post. I turn 81 this April and figure it's time to hang it up. The vacancy has been filled by Martin Grams, Jr. so it couldn't be in better hands.

**ADDENDUM:** While I am not a relative of Jim French, I would be proud to be so. For over four decades, he and I have been active in the OTR community. Since he was in Washington State and I've been in Washington, DC, we've been frequently confused with each other.

For April Fool's issue, Mark Anderson has two entries (Baseball and Vienna) which are pure whimsy. The article on Guy Lombardo contains a few truths but it's mostly April Foolerism.

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