

# RADIO RECALL

February 2018, Volume 35, No. 1



## HOW NBC ATTEMPTED TO KILL JACK BENNY'S RADIO CAREER

In an era where only four major networks existed, competitive business was more about industry supremacy and prestige than financial stature... at least, that was the view of William S. Paley, president of CBS. In July of 1948, CBS made *Amos n' Andy* an offer of \$2,000,000 a year for the exclusive radio and television rights after their contract with Lever Bros. and NBC expired. Strategically, the move was in line with the network's plan to load up on top air talent that could double over to television. The comedy team of Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll was used as a nucleus to build up a CBS powerhouse.

Standard method of operation for high-paying clients was an advertising agency to create a number of proposals, whereupon the sponsor would choose the program of their liking – the networks were merely a brick and mortar facility supplying the equipment and distribution for radio production.

With television on the horizon, Paley wanted CBS to become the dominant player. Investing in part ownership of a program – and celebrities – would be essential not just securing chief talent for the shape of things to come, but also a means of handicapping the competition. Going forward CBS would own (in part) the programs that aired over their television network, rather than lease airtime and studio facilities. This business practice still continues to this day.

On the evening of October 3, 1948, *The Lucky Strike Program*, starring Jack Benny, was the highest rating of any radio comedian for a season opener. Dominating



[HTTP://WWW.MWOTRC.COM/](http://www.mwotrc.com/)

the ratings on Sunday nights, at 7 o'clock, it was no surprise that CBS approached Jack Benny with a similar offer. The Bureau of Internal Revenue, however, took issue with the capital gains deal. The Revenue claimed there was a difference between the *Amos n' Andy* deal and one involving almost any other radio personality.

Capital gains implies the selling of a property, not personal services. Hence something must be sold aside from the individual. It was acceptable for CBS to "buy" the *Amos n' Andy* show because the act, and not the actors, were the important aspect of the purchase. A Jack Benny show without Jack Benny would be nothing. An Edgar Bergen-Charlie McCarthy show without Edgar Bergen would be unthinkable. In such cases and in virtually all other instances of top radio personalities, the individual and the show were not divisible. It would be the sale of personal services.

Rumors started to spread by late November that Jack Benny would receive a chunk of CBS stock in return for his signature, offsetting the capital gains issue. Vincent Riggio, president of American Tobacco, the sponsor of Benny's comedy program, protested against the arrangement and threatened to drop sponsorship if Benny signed with CBS.

By Thanksgiving, the mass exodus of three top NBC Sunday shows to CBS about the first of the year was nearing the wrapping-up stage. Attempting to counter-attack the talent raids, NBC firmly demanded Coca-Cola, the sponsor of



Bergen, buy the NBC Sunday time slot for five years. The plan backfired by forcing executives at Coca-Cola into a corner, causing the sponsor to give serious consideration to make a move to CBS.

Before the end of November, Jack Benny signed the contract with CBS. "Understood that Benny was so firmly committed to Columbia's board chairman, William S. Paley, that he couldn't get out of it," reported one newspaper columnist. The terms of the Benny contract earmarked \$100,000 for promotion of Jack Benny's program making the switch to CBS, Paley shelling out \$3,000 for each rating point loss as a result of the network switch (paid to the sponsor), and \$350,000 purchase price for Benny's Amusement Enterprises operation. In the event that the Treasury Department went against the capital gains deal, Paley would book Benny as a "television consultant" for ten years at \$200,000 a year or a CBS stock offer in the event the tax deal developed frostbite. (So that Phil Harris, who remained on NBC, could continue to appear on the Benny program, CBS would rearrange its Sunday schedule to give Harris time to negotiate the travel distance between the two studios.)

Executives at NBC were shortsighted to understand the real reason why Benny – and other top-rated comedians – jumped to CBS. NBC had a strict policy against taping radio broadcasts in advance. Radio personalities were tired of showing up at the studio “live” every week when the convenience of tape – relatively new technology in the industry – provided convenience. NBC simply did not want to invest in the vast expense of purchase and installation, but official word through the hallways was that “tape is unstable and unreliable.” Unaware of the driving force, NBC attempted to counteract by offering lucrative contracts with such personalities as Bob Hope and Milton Berle, offering long-term employment. Another method was to create a number of in-house programs such as *Screen Directors’ Playhouse*, *Nightbeat* and *Dimension X*.

Perhaps the most ambitious was *The Big Show*, an innovation in show business deriving its name from the fact that the talent roster each week included “the biggest names in show business” – name guest stars chosen from music, drama, comedy in stage, motion-picture, concert, radio and television who were all “top performers” in their respective fields. *The Big Show* was presented under NBC’s new sponsorship plan known as “Operation Tandem,” in which sponsors were offered participation in sponsorship of five prime-time programs each week, no more than three sponsors to be included in any 30-minute program time. Prior to this, radio programs primarily featured only one sponsor throughout the time slot (although the same sponsor was able to promote more than one of their own products.)

Week after week, *The Big Show* presented a roster of names promoted in tabloids as “bigger than any in radio or television,” which included Jimmy Durante, Eddie Cantor, Ed Wynn, Bob Hope, Groucho Marx, Martin and Lewis, Frankie Laine, Ezio Pinza, Judy Holliday, Fanny Brice and Judy Garland. Regarding the budget for talent, by one estimate, the program cost the network \$300 a minute.

Tallulah Bankhead, best known as a successful stage actress in New York City, became a household name as a result of her capacity as emcee for the program. What was good for Tallulah, however, was not necessarily good for NBC. Plagued with a horrendous budget and the inability to attract enough sponsors to cover the cost of production, network executives weighed options regarding broadcasting *The Big Show*. Bad timing was another negative: radio was starting to be overshadowed by television (jokes about television programs offering better entertainment than radio often crept into *The Big Show* scripts) and scheduled in a competing timeslot that NBC fought bitterly for domination, against a rival network... and Jack Benny.

NBC strategically scheduled *The Big Show* to air against Jack Benny, even cracking jokes about “he-who-shall-not-be-named” and a spoof of Jack Benny’s program in the premiere broadcast. Phil Harris had first option to vacate his 7:30 p.m. Sunday night time slot and would not budge. For the second season of *The Big Show*, however, Harris agreed to move to Friday nights and NBC got what they wanted – a 90-minute program that began 30 minutes before Jack Benny and concluded 30 minutes after Jack Benny.

Network breaks and station identification were deliberately over a few minutes to ensure NBC listeners would not immediately switch to Jack Benny at 7 p.m.

Within weeks the program garnered praise from critics ranging from “the season’s best” to the “most razzle-dazzle comedy-entertainment layout since broadcasting was incepted.” *Collier’s* (January 1951) wrote an unabashed plug for the program on its editorial page (devoting all but four inches of an entire editorial page) and called the selection of Tallulah Bankhead for emcee as “the most progressive step that radio has taken since the loud-speaker replaced headphones.” The *Washington Post*, following the broadcast of January 28, 1951, likewise went out of its way to applaud NBC for giving the radio public a program marked by originality.

NBC took advantage of *The Big Show* not just to create new radio personalities (such as Tallulah Bankhead), but molded recurring guest stars for potential weekly programs including Judy Holliday. (*The Judy Holliday Show* never met fruition but her appearances on *The Big Show* remained a highlight during the two years.)

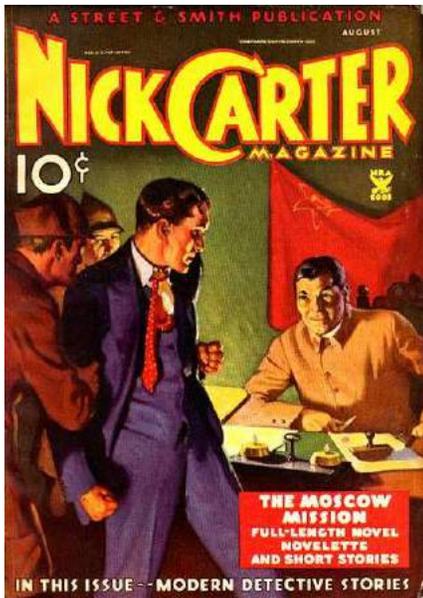
Romantically, many historians consider *The Big Show* the most celebrated variety program in broadcasting history. Ambitious, the program was.

Marketing for *The Big Show* was unparalleled compared to any other program broadcast over NBC radio. Not a week went by that a national magazine featured an article about *The Big Show*, some authored by Tallulah Bankhead herself (ghostwritten by the staff of NBC). But amidst all the publicity, ratings played a key factor. According to the Hooper rating, Benny’s rating rose 2.2 over his NBC rating, which covered both the live broadcast and the West Coast repeat. *Amos ‘n’ Andy*, following Benny, rode the tide and posted a pickup of 5.7.

NBC’s answer to the CBS-Jack Benny Sunday night powerhouse was using the biggest star line-up ever set for one radio series. Was it worth it? John Dunning, author of *On The Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*, summed it up best: “*The Big Show* has its moments, but *The Jack Benny Program* rolled along on CBS, as consistently brilliant and funny as ever. The moral, perhaps, is that brilliance and genius cannot be bought, that a buckshot approach never works and that most good things come finally from a single inspired source.”

[This article features excerpts from the book, \*\*The Big Show: Tallulah Bankhead and her Radio Career\*\*, written by Martin Grams, Jr., due for publication this July.](#)

## RECENT NEWS IN THE HOBBY OF OLD-TIME RADIO



● Fans of Nick Carter will be pleased to know that the George Hess Collection is available for review at the University of Minnesota. Not only are they offering a few complimentary digital scans of old pulp/dime magazines here, but in another year or two will also house the J. Randolph Cox collection, recently donated.

<https://www.lib.umn.edu/clrc/digital-dime-novels>

● While not necessarily “old-time radio,” Rod Serling’s radio program, *Zero Hour*, syndicated from 1973-74, received extensive coverage on James Scully’s Breaking Walls podcast containing a recent interview with Jay M. Kholos, the creator of the radio program, recalling how he convinced Serling to contribute. You can listen to that episode here:

<https://soundcloud.com/thewallbreakers/jay-m-kholos-on-his-relationship-with-rod-serling>

● Turns out radio script writer Herman Wouk is alive and well at the age of 102. The Library of Congress wrote a fascinating piece about his career which you can read here:

[https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0012/words\\_wouck.html](https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0012/words_wouck.html)

● *One Plus One* is a 1961 movie written and directed by Arch Oboler, containing five short stories on the morals of sex, inspired by a recent reading of THE KINSEY REPORT, and finally makes its way to DVD. So obscure that most people never even knew it existed, the independent, low-budget Arch Oboler production features June Duprez, who by that time was desperate for money, and actor Leo G. Carroll. (The rest of the cast are virtual unknowns.) Kino-Lorber recently released *The Bubble* on DVD and Blu-Ray, another rarely-seen Arch Oboler production, and MGM has scheduled *Bwana Devil* for commercial release late this year. The latter was the first film ever shot in 3-D but Oboler’s contribution to the silver screen was overshadowed by a Warner Brothers picture, *House of Wax*, that same year. We mention *One Plus One* because the film is not being released on DVD through standard distribution channels, but another bizarre film for Arch Oboler completists. You can grab your copy at [www.classicmoviesdvd.com](http://www.classicmoviesdvd.com)

● Susan Smulyan sent this request in: “has anyone come across any radio reports of Lindbergh's 1927 flight? I'm a consultant for a PBS film about the early days of Pan Am. They want to talk about Lindbergh’s impact on aviation and his relationship with Juan Trippe and Pan Am. Grateful for any leads. Thanks!” If you have any info you want to share, drop the editor a line and he will forward your contact info to her.

● Over 100 episodes of the radio detective series, *Mr. Chamelion*, was transferred from 16-inch transcription discs to CD. Up until now only half a dozen episodes existed in collector hands. By late February all 100+ episodes will be available to collectors through a number of channels, including YouTube. If the extant recordings intrigued you, this will be welcome news. A master of disguise, Mr. Chamelion changed his appearance in every episode in order to go undercover and unearth the identity of a murderer. Broadcast circa 1948-1953.

## A DORIS DAY MYSTERY



The photo on the left features Doris Day at the Armed Forces Radio Service. The three men pictured remain unidentified. Collector Peter Flapper is seeking any information about this photo, where it was taken and who the men are. If you can identify any of these individuals, drop the editor a line, won't you?

## BOB BURCHETT: A GUIDING LIGHT IN THE HOBBY

One hell of a way to start the new year, or any new year... On the morning of January 2, we lost two legends who practically changed the landscape of the hobby of old-time radio: Bob Burchett and Frank Buxton. While we spend hundreds of hours a year listening to old-time radio recordings, and reading magazine articles and scholarly journals, we often forget the trendsetters of the times who made the hobby what it is today.

Bob Burchett was a guiding light in the hobby and as Rodney Bowcock so aptly mentioned on Facebook: "Bob was never afraid to take the initiative and do things himself. He wanted a convention in Cincinnati? He got some folks together and started one. Someone wanted to form a club where members could trade shows? He started Hello Again Radio. Fan magazines drying up? No reason not to keep printing The Old Time Radio Digest. He did that for years."



Bob Burnham of BRC Broadcast Services recalled the time Burchett, inspired by a recent visit to the Friends of Old-Time Radio Convention in Newark, New Jersey, wanted to replicate the same in Cincinnati, Ohio. "Bob called me up outta the blue and said, 'If he put on a convention in Cincinnati, would ya come?' Cincy is only about a five hour drive from Detroit and that would begin the first of my many treks to Cincy. I only missed one or two out of a couple decades worth. The last one, I think, was 2012. Bob seemed in good health and his usual upbeat spirit that made those trips so

much fun. In 2006, he presented me with the Stone-Waterman Award basically for my efforts and support. But the award should go to him, and I believe he did get one in Newark."

Bob Burchett played a larger role than most people in the hobby know. He was, for many years, the official photographer of the Friends of Old-Time Radio convention, preserving the image of fans meeting their idols such as Jackson Beck, Fred Foy, Carlton E. Morse, and the great Hildegard. Few photos can be found of Burchett at those early convention years because Bob was behind the camera, not in front. And he tended to forget to have his own photo taken with the legends. For decades he maintained a bi-monthly magazine devoted solely to old-time radio, *The Old Time Radio Digest*. Those early issues are gems and Bob was responsible for selecting articles with meat and substance. Some of the earliest documented findings of *Duffy's Tavern*, *Suspense*, *The Adventures of Superman* and *The Great Gildersleeve* can be found within the pages. He was blessed to meet Ezra Stone and help preserve Stone's legacy as the Henry Aldrich of radio fame. In recent years he was also the editor of the OTRR magazine, reporting of recent discoveries from archival finds.

"Bob was the moving force behind the Cincinnati radio conventions," recalled Terry Salomonson. "I attended every one of the conventions from the beginning. He was a long term, and very good friend. Bob was the first person to receive the Parley E. Baer award. He also was the only one that received it from Parley's hands to his."

Jim McCuaig, a Canadian collector of old-time radio, added: "Bob's dedicated work with the Cincinnati OTR Convention led to my meeting many American friends for the first time, and boosted my interest in OTR, classic television and nostalgia conventions in general. I owe him a great deal." Indeed, we all owe Bob a great deal. We can take comfort in knowing he is sharing laughs with Willard Waterman, Rosemary Rice and Ezra Stone, among others.

## FRANK BUXTON: RADIO LEGEND, DEAD AT 87

For years Frank Buxton served as a board member for the annual San Francisco Silent Film Festival, which seems ironic when you consider among his accomplishments a book about old-time radio -- a medium consisting primarily of sound. In 1966, the same year Erik Barnouw introduced us to *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*, Frank Buxton teamed up with Bill Owen for a book of their own: *Radio's Golden Age: The Programs and the Personalities* (Easton Valley Press). This ultimately led to an expanded version in 1972 titled, *The Big Broadcast: 1920-1950* (Viking Press, Inc.). The dust jacket even promoted the encyclopedia as "A new, revised and greatly expanded edition of *Radio's Golden Age*." For years *The Big Broadcast*, compiled in an era before the Internet, was the only encyclopedia about old-time radio available to collectors.

John Dunning's *Tune in Yesterday* went a step further by providing more content about the programs, and published in 1976 made a perfect companion with *The Big Broadcast*. Possibly because word on the street was that Dunning was revising and expanding his edition for Oxford University Press, in 1997, a second edition of *The Big Broadcast* hit the shelves, this time as a red hardcover and published by Scarecrow Press. Dunning's expanded version, re-titled *On the Air*, was published a year later in 1998. Again, both revised editions compliment the other.

John Tefteller, a collector of old-time radio and frequent convention attendee, shares the same admiration others have expressed: "When I was very young, like ten or eleven, my mom brought

home Frank Buxton's book on old-time radio. I devoured it and it was the first book on old-time radio I ever read." It was Buxton and Owen's encyclopedia that established a cult fan base for old-time radio programs, providing reference material that would be consulted for countless magazine articles.



Larry Albert and Frank Buxton at a recent REPS Convention in Seattle, Washington.

Buxton's other accomplishments included hosting and producing the ABC television documentary series, *Discovery*, from 1962 to 1966. Teaming up with Hal Seeger, Buxton provided the voice for all 100 *Batfink* cartoons. He hosted a game show, *Get the Message*, for ABC in 1964, later to be replaced by Robert Q. Lewis. He played supporting roles in such movies as *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* and *Overboard*. As a writer, producer and director for Paramount Television, he is credited for *Love, American Style*, *The Odd Couple*, *Happy Days* and *Mork & Mindy*.

Buxton's love for old-time radio never diminished. A frequent attendee of the Friends of Old-Time Radio Convention, REPS and SPERDVAC, he participated in panels and radio re-enactments. His contribution, though minor compared to what has evolved over the decades, cannot be forgotten. *The Big Broadcast* book is considered by fans as the first encyclopedia ever published on old-time radio, and while some might debate that statement, few can argue. Frank Buxton also passed away on January 2. He was 87. Perhaps no better compliment could be provided than the casual reminder that fans back then, as they do today, refer to *The Big Broadcast* not by the title, but as "the Buxton and Owen book."

## R.I.P. DICK ORKIN, ALIAS “CHICKEN MAN”

Jack French shared this tid-bit the other day, proving the superstition that deaths come in groups of three. Reprinted with permission from edgestudio.com:

Among the voices lost in 2017 – except as recordings – were June Foray and Dick Orkin. Foray was known to the entire animation and voice industry.. And to the multitude of people who didn't know her name, she was known as the voice of as Rocket J. Squirrel, Granny, and countless other characters... Fewer knew the name Dick Orkin, but the listeners of 1,500 radio stations worldwide knew his voice as that of “Chickenman”. In addition to creating that and other hilarious radio spoofs, Orkin brought his brand of absurdly silly humor to all sorts of radio advertisers. The hall-of-famer's client list notably included otherwise serious concerns like Time Magazine and "more banks than you can imagine" – companies that until then weren't known to air funny spots. For all his listeners, he was as entertaining as Stan Freberg and Bob and Ray had been, and within our industry he was surely as influential. Orkin died of a stroke on Christmas Eve 2017 at age 84. He had been powering down, but he was still writing and voicing occasional commercials at the tail end of his 69-year career.

## THE ORIGIN OF OLD-TIME RADIO?

**RALSTON**  
**'OLD-TIME NUTRITION' brings you OLD-TIME RADIO**  
*A unique album available only from Hot Ralston*

*The Nostalgic Voices & Sounds of*  
**OLD-TIME RADIO**

Great stars and shows from the golden days of radio entertainment. Performances and actual broadcast excerpts from the 20's, 30's and 40's.

WITH WILL ROGERS, AL JOLSON, JIMMY DURANTE, KATE SMITH, BURNS & ALLEN AND MANY OTHERS

Remember when America gathered in the corner of the front room to listen to the radio? Those were happy days, filled with happy entertainment. And Hot Ralston wants you to enjoy them again. Send today for "Old-Time Radio," a special 12" LP album that glows with the songs, sounds and smiles of radio's golden days. More than a dozen of radio's great old stars are represented. It's available *only* from Hot Ralston, the whole-grain wheat cereal that's something of a cheerful echo of the good old days itself. Ralston, you know, has stood for flavor and old-time nutrition at American breakfast tables since 1896.

MAIL ONLY \$1 →  
and the "To open press here" flap from a box of Regular or Instant Hot Ralston.

OLD-TIME RADIO, BOX 6652, CLINTON, INDIANA  
To get your album, enclose \$1 (no stamps, please) and the "To open press here" flap from a package of Hot Ralston cereal. Send to the address above.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Zone \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: Offer expires Dec. 31, 1964. Good in U.S.A., its territories and possessions. Offer void where taxed, prohibited or restricted. RALSTON PURINA COMPANY.

From Michael Hayde: I found the attached ad in the October 26, 1963 issue of *TV Guide*. I am wondering if this was the first record of its kind (not including the *Hear It Now* LPs of the 1950s) of a compilation of Old-Time Radio material. I thought it unusual that the era was already being presented nostalgically, given dramatic radio officially died only one year previous.

I have done some research and noticed the phrase “old-time radio” turns up in newspapers as far back as 1930! But generally, it has evolved from a label to describe the oldest radio sets, to specific genres (it was often used in reference to broadcasts of live music during the 1950s when recorded music was taking over), up to the 1970s and beyond as a description of the entire era.

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- Pres: Bert Rude, 8611 Beechnut Ct., Ellicott City, MD, 21043, 443-794-3180 <president@mwotrc.com>
- V.P: Jim Pasquale, 11 Southway, Unit C, Greenbelt, MD 20770, 908-655-6227 <programs@mwotrc.com>
- Treasurer and Membership: Joanie Ferrell Langdon, 926 S. Fairfax St., Alexandria, VA 22314, 703-549-8594 <membership@mwotrc.com>
- Print/Video Library: M&M Bush, 6437 Fifth St, Alexandria, VA 22312, 703-354-7852 <library@mwotrc.com>
- Audio Library: Rebecca Jones, P.O. Box 638, Walkersville, MD 21793-0638 <audio@mwotrc.com>
- Editor: Martin Grams, P.O. Box 52, Whiteford, MD 21160 <martingrams@icloud.com>
- GRTR: Mark Anderson, 928 Patton Dr., Carlisle PA 17013, 717-706-3105 <grtr@mwotrc.com>
- Webmaster: John Abbott, 312 Scholastic Court, Winston-Salem, NC 27106 <webmaster@mwotrc.com>
- Archivist: Michael Hayde, 7618 Somerset Ln, Manassas, VA 20111, 331-0714 <treasurer@mwotrc.com>

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

## **UP-COMING EVENTS**

### **MWOTR CLUB MEETINGS, 7:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall of Trinity Episcopal Church**

February 9, 2018, "Radio Actors Who Made Children's Records" will present a unique perspective of commercial collectibles for young children and how folks like Harold Peary (as The Great Gildersleeve), among others, recorded records for children. Club member Fred Berney is the presenter.

March 9, 2018, "A Word from Our Sponsor" will feature Jack French in an interactive examination of vintage radio commercials. Audience members will be invited to read commercials for a chance to win prizes for the best presentations. Jack and club member Wendy Wilmer will also deliver a parody on commercials originally done as the "Happy Couple Morning Radio Show" sketch with Fred Allen and Tallulah Bankhead.

### **February 9 to 11, 2018 Farpoint Convention**

Science-fiction from Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon, Star Wars and Star Trek, this annual event flies in three Hollywood celebrities and features vendors, panels and a screening room. Held at the Delta Hotel by Marriott (same hotel where the Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Con is held) at 245 Shawan Road, Hunt Valley, Maryland. For more info visit: <http://www.farpointcon.com/>

### **February 24, 2018 Pulp Adventurecon**

Pulp magazines, Golden Age Comics, Big Little Books, Movie Collectibles, Old-Time Radio and related paper material for sale from dozens of vendors. Universal Palms, 4900 Powerline Road, Fort Lauderdale,

Florida. Special guest is Allen Bellman, golden age Marvel Comics artist (yes, he drew Captain America). For more information visit: <http://www.pulpadventure.com/>

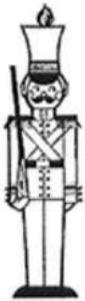
### **March 18, 2018 Baltimore Toy Show**

Held at the Timonium Fairgrounds, this one-day show features more than 100 vendors offering tens of thousands of vintage antiques and collectibles. A couple members of the club attend every year and there are a lot of old-time radio memorabilia available for sale. Worth making the trek and difficult to leave empty-handed. For more info visit <http://www.davehartshows.com/>

### **April 6 to 8, 2018 The Windy City Pulp and Paper Show**

The largest pulp and paper show in the country. Over 100 vendors selling pulp magazines such as *The Shadow*, *Nick Carter*, *Master Detective*, *Doc Savage*, *Galaxy Science-Fiction Magazine*, and many others. There are also vendors selling old-time radio promotional posters, recordings on CDs, and other rarities. Held at the Westin Lombard Yorktown Center, 70 Yorktown Center, Lombard, Illinois, 60148.

For more information visit: <http://windycitypulpandpaper.com/>



# **BALTIMORE TOY SHOW**

**Sunday, March 18<sup>th</sup> (one day only!)**

**9am - 3pm**

**Admission \$5**



**Vintage to Contemporary Toys,  
Games, Dolls, Action Figures**



**Sports Memorabilia  
Vintage Advertising  
& Paper**

**100+ DEALERS**

**~LOCATION~**

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2200 York Rd. Lutherville, MD 21093**



**davehartshows.com 443-841-8022**

## WHAT'S IN A SCRIPT?

For a collector of vintage radio broadcasts, nothing can be more frustrating than buying or trading for recordings that, upon first indication, were not among their collection – only to discover it was a duplicate recording with an alternate title.

During the 1980s and 1990s, it was common for collectors to create and assign “descriptive titles” for recordings that have no official script titles. Radio programs such as *The Lone Ranger* and *The Man Called X* had official script titles but the announcer never delivered the title during broadcast. As a result, the only way collectors could be ensured not to purchase a duplicate recording was to go by official episode numbers or broadcast dates.

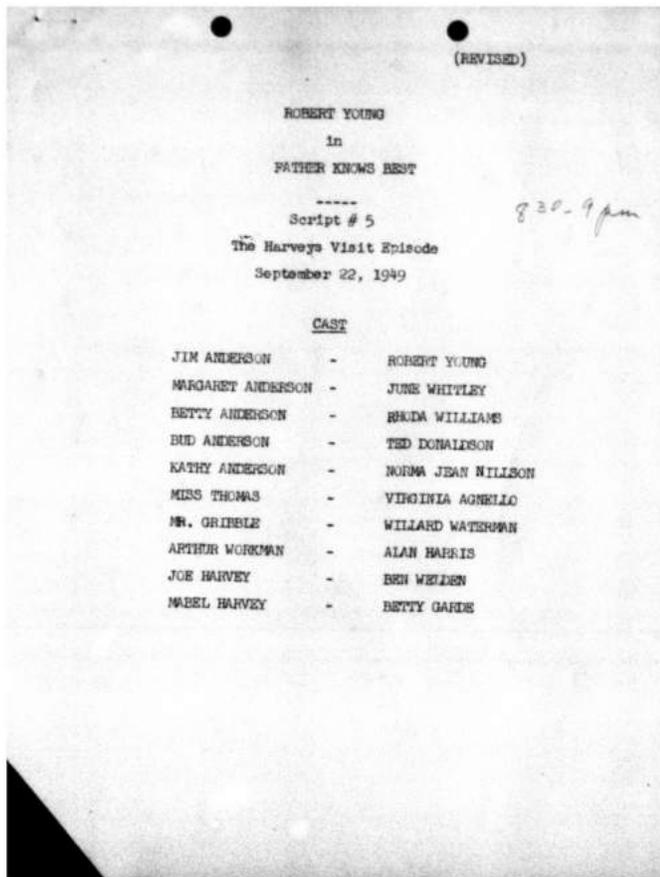
To add to the confusion, programs such as *The Life of Riley* and *Fibber McGee and Molly* never had script titles. Programs such as *The Aldrich Family* and *Duffy's Tavern* did not have script titles in the early years – but did in the later years. When ZIV syndicated such programs as *The Red Skelton Show* and *Boston Blackie*, which never had official script titles, episode numbers were assigned (except for the Christmas episodes).

Today, companies such as Radio Archives and Radio Spirits create “descriptive titles” for programs such as *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*, *Boston Blackie* and *Phil Harris and Alice Faye* for the benefit of their customers – overlooking the fact that many sets are listing “descriptive titles” where official script titles do exist. The general consensus is that there is nothing wrong with “descriptive titles” provided the collector knows those are not the official script titles.

Today, the internet contains broadcast logs for thousands of radio programs – more than half of them inaccurate. While some websites continue to revise information as they gather from varied sources, others are out of date and throw about such labels as “definitive” and “certified” to give the appearance that their logs are accurate compared to others.

So how do collectors of old-time radio programs decipher the difference between a “descriptive title” and a “script title”? The answer is as easy as printed reference books, usually written by historians who tracked down various archives and assembled the information, and then published their findings. A book about *Archie Andrews*, being assembled at the time you read this, will point out exactly when official script titles were assigned, along with the correct broadcast dates and titles.

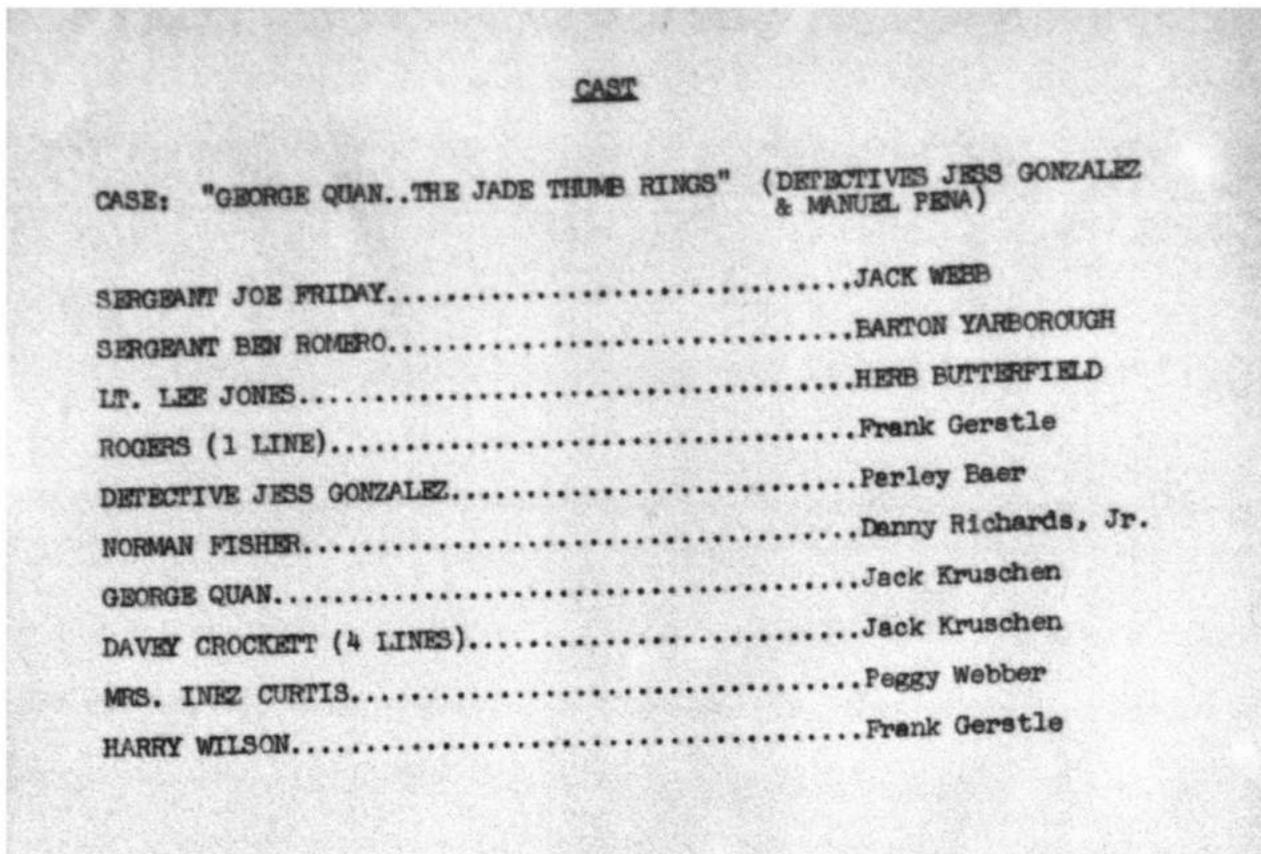
A recent book about *The Quiz Kids* clarifies there were never script titles for any of the radio broadcasts, so each and every broadcast is documented by episode number, broadcast date and child contestants.



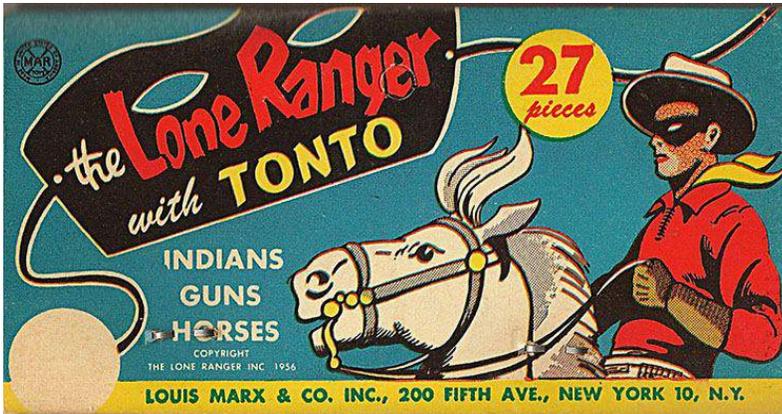
Samples of two radio scripts where official script titles are prominent. On the left is the front page for *Father Knows Best*, broadcast September 22, 1949. The script title is "The Harveys Visit Episode" but collectors today cite the episode as "The Old School Chum" and "Jim's Friend Comes to Visit."

Club member Michael Hayde wrote a superb book about radio and television's *Dragnet* and Mike took the time to verify the correct script titles based on the front page of each script (sample of an episode below).

Also note that tracking down the original scripts can provide a detailed cast list, sorely needed versus the "guesswork" that continues to spread on the Internet.



## PLOT SUMMARIES FOR “LOST” LONE RANGER RADIO BROADCASTS



Many fans of *The Lone Ranger* radio program are aware that the first 790 or so episodes do not exist in recorded form. For your amusement, here are plot summaries from some of the Masked Man's earliest adventures, which do not exist in recorded form.

### **Episode #20, Broadcast March 16, 1933**

**Plot:** Slim was rejected for a loan from the new bank. Most of the town folk were reluctant to invest their money in the brick-and-mortar institution, especially since Angus Tavish, the biggest rancher in Sleepy Creek, had not invested his own money. The Lone Ranger and Tonto, aware that Big Stan Clavin, the bank manager, was embezzling small amounts and responsible for the close of a bank in San Francisco, waited until a robber dug up the money in Clavin's back yard. The Lone Ranger stole the \$10,000 and turned the thief over to the sheriff. When Slim informed the town citizens about the failure of the San Francisco bank, a riot erupts until The Lone Ranger assisted Angus Tavish in depositing \$10,000 into the bank. The town citizens, assured of their investments, began to make deposits – a sound foundation for the financial institution. At the end of the day, Tavish informed Clavin that the stolen money was returned where it belonged and quietly, without the citizens aware, established a real account with the bank.

### **Episode #21, Broadcast March 18, 1933**

**Plot:** Barney Oldfield and Jake Blossom plot to have Steve, an innocent railroad worker, destroy the Gopher Gulch bridge which is near completion. If the bridge is destroyed, Maxwell would lose the contract for the construction work and Jake would be quite sure of obtaining it. Barney tricks Steve into thinking that Duke Atterbury, the owner of the railroad, was responsible for the death of Steve's sister, and that the train going across the bridge would have Atterbury on board. Tonto overhears Barney and Jake's discussion and The Lone Ranger intercepts Steve before he could go down with the bridge that was blown up. Barney, discovering he was provided a ten second fuse, not a ten-minute fuse, realizes he was duped. Head bent low, The Lone Ranger on the great horse Silver, swept over the country following the rails of the newly laid track, hoping to catch up with the approaching train that was unaware of the destruction at the Gopher Gulch bridge, carrying Duke Atterbury. When the conductor ignores the warnings of the Masked Man, The Lone Ranger shoots through the pistons to allow the steam to escape, saving the lives of Steve's sister, who was married to Duke Atterbury.



Rare publicity photo promoting Amos n' Andy making the move to CBS during the network's notorious talent raid of 1948.