NEW CATALOG PAGES!

Playing the Good Guys on the Lone Ranger
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- RON LANGSETH
- JEFFREY J. LEBRUN in memory of all departed voice artists
- ALFRED LUCAS
- LON McCARTT in memory of Smilin’ Ed (Froggy the Gremlin) McConnell
- ROBY & JOYCE McHONE
- ESTHER GEDDES McVEY in memory of my leading man, Tyler McVey
- JAN MERLIN in memory of Frankie Thomas and Mona Burns Thomas
- MILLIE MORSE in memory of Jim Harmon
- LEON McCARTT in memory of Smilin’ Ed (Froggy the Gremlin) McConnell
- ROBY & JOYCE McHONE
- ESTHER GEDDES McVEY in memory of my leading man, Tyler McVey
- JAN MERLIN in memory of Frankie Thomas and Mona Burns Thomas
- MILLIE MORSE in memory of Jim Harmon
- BOB MOTT to all the SFX artists when radio was still radio
- GEORGE (BOB) & VIRGINIA NEWHART in memory of Bill Quinn
- DR. WAYNE OTT
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- PHIL PROCTOR
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- C. W. STAUFENBERG in memory of Paul Rhymers and members of the “Vic and Sade” cast
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- JOAN TREMAYNE in memory of Les Tremayne
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- EDWARD C. WEAVER
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- JAMES C. WORDEN
G.I. Jivin’ with G.I. Jill

You won’t find her name in Dunning. Buxton and Owen left her out. On the other hand, her name was on the lips of virtually every G.I. of World War II. G.I. Jill was as familiar to the average G.I. as a Betty Grable pinup and the relationship seemed more personal. Six days a week, for 15 minutes at a stretch, Jill’s breezy, consoling, every-girl manner and voice drifted across the Armed Forces Radio Service airwaves to the far reaches of the theatres of war. For 13 of those 15 minutes Jill spun the platters on request of popular performers like Woody Herman, Stan Kenton, Gene Krupa and Duke Ellington. The other two minutes were pure G.I. Jill with a warmth and hometown feel and contagious sense of humor that lonely G.I.s could easily relate to. Jill’s vehicle for her musical deliveries was G.I. Jive, one of the most popular of all the AFRS shows on the air thanks to Jill’s efforts.

Her real name was Martha Wilkerson. Martha and her husband, Mort Werner, were serving up music and light banter as Jack and Jill on Hi Neighbor on a San Francisco radio station just as America entered World War II. Mort was soon called into the service and Martha carried on alone. The format was simple. Jill played records and offered tidbits of news from the home front to G.I.s within reach, of her broadcast voice. She even included birth announcements of children born to servicemen in the Pacific. Jill’s easy manner and delivery was connecting in a big way with servicemen longing for a touch of home.

Armed Forces Radio Service personnel took note of Jill’s efforts and enlisted her as one of an already established series called G.I. Jive. Similar in nature to her earlier Hi Neighbor efforts, but with a much wider reach, G.I. Jive was a 15-minute program of popular musical numbers tied together with a bit of commentary from a DJ. Initially DJ duties were handled by military personnel and occasionally by a celebrity host sitting in for a day. Approximately 600 broadcasts into G.I. Jive G.I. Jill appeared on the scene and the popularity of the program began to climb.

Of all the AFTS shows on the air during the war, Jill’s show accounted for an estimated 25% of all the fan mail. A lot of comparisons were made between G.I. Jill and her perceived competitor, Tokyo Rose. The comparison was spurious, of course. *Time* magazine in February 4, 1945, succinctly noted the essential difference between the two broadcasters: “The fair flower of Tokyo exerts herself mightily to make U.S. servicemen homesick; G.I. Jill’s trick is to make them feel at home.”

Martha Wilkerson’s identity as G.I. Jill was generally kept under wraps until near the end of the war. The reason was simple and it had to do with maintaining the image of an ideal. Jill was everyman’s image of a wife, sweetheart or sister. This was a war that was being fought for a lot of reasons including the ideals G.I. Jill represented in every broadcast. Her signoff was familiar to every listener and it signified her around-the-world reach: “Good morning to some of you, good afternoon to some more of you, and to the rest of you—good night.”

Finally, as the war neared an end Jill’s other identity was revealed to curious servicemen around the world. *Time* and *Yank* both published articles in 1945 lauding Jill’s wartime efforts and naming Martha Wilkerson as the face behind the voice. Martha made a few radio appearances around that time on programs including *House Party*, *Vox Pop* and *Request Performance* essentially taking a curtain call for her role as G.I. Jill.

For a time after the war Jill remained on the air in an expanded version of *G.I. Jive* called *Jill’s All Time Juke Box*. When her tour of duty as G.I. Jill was eventually over, like millions of other released service personnel, Martha Wilkerson returned to civilian life. She made no effort to capitalize on her enormous wartime popularity. As *Yank* Magazine reported in 1945: “Commercial interests, particularly radio advertising firms, are much aware of Jill’s success and have offered her fat contracts, but Jill has nixed them all.”

Instead, Martha Wilkerson carved out a new career for herself as a screenwriter. Sharp-eyed viewers might have caught Martha Wilkerson’s name as the credits rolled on such popular television series as *Bonanza*, *The Virginian*, *Ironside* and Robert Montgomery Presents without ever making the connection with G.I. Jill.
Board members retain seats; re-elect Bob Steinmetz president

Current board members Bob Steinmetz, Barbara Harmon, Dan Haefele, Dave Struthers and Glenda Kelly were all re-elected to the board of directors it was announced at the annual meeting held March 10 at the Mid-Valley Library in North Hills. In the board meeting held afterward the board re-elected Bob Steinmetz president and Barbara Harmon re-elected vice-president. Dan Haefele was reappointed treasurer and Glenda Kelly was reappointed secretary.

Only five members ran for re-election and so the sixth board member would be selected from write-in candidates receiving the most votes. Those receiving more than 10 write-in votes were Bob Lynes 41, Barbara Watkins 22, Rex Quinn 15, Larry Gassman 13, John Gassman 11, and Jerry Williams 11. Bobb and Barbara declined to join the board and Rex Quinn agreed to accept a seat on the board. The 2012 board of directors, then, is composed of the same individuals who sat on the 2011 board.

This year Barbara Harmon received the most votes with 226 followed by Glenda Kelly with 224. Dan Haefele and Bob Steinmetz were next with 222 votes each and Dave Struthers with 218.

In total a record 44 write-in candidates, including Water Commissioner Gildersleeve and Police Commissioner Weston, were received. In addition other stalwarts Rochester and Amos and Andy each received one vote.

Of the 801 ballots mailed 233 were returned making the 2012 election a 29% turnout, down 3.5% from last year. The results were tabulated by the election chair Neil Mitchell and election committee members Laurie Mitchell and Edwin Nudel.

‘Network Ratings’ is Informative, Entertaining and Amusing

by Jim Cox

One of the most intriguing books this vintage radio historian has read recently rolled from McFarland’s presses. It approaches the spectrum in a way we’ve not seen in a while, concentrating on audience draw for major series over a couple of decades of the golden age.

Network Radio Ratings, 1932-1953: A History of Prime Time Programs through the Ratings of Nielsen, Crossley and Hooper was authored by Jim Ramsburg, a retired radio and advertising practitioner. Far from what you’d anticipate by the title, it’s anything but dull, dry, and distasteful. On the contrary every page of Ramsburg’s manuscript lights up with sparkling metaphors and alluring content that helps readers put into perspective why the numbers fell as they did. In other words, it’s not a databank by itself; well over half is text matter tripping along in a light-hearted style that you’ll find not only informative but entertaining and amusing as well.


It’s obvious too that Ramsburg took his assignment seriously, in addition to the cleverness of his substance. The investigation that went into this arduous compendium was a weighty commitment of time and talent. Yet the information, including comparisons between features,
MEET HERB ELLIS

Join us May 12 at our monthly meeting when John Gassman will interview SPERDVAC friend Herb Ellis, star of numerous radio programs including major roles in Dragnet and Gunsmoke. That’s Saturday, May 12, at high noon at the Mid-Valley Regional Library at 16244 Nordhoff Street in North Hills. The meeting is free and open to the public.

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A-2901 The Lone Ranger
"The Last Outpost" by Fran Striker 8-1-1949. #2580/1805.
"The Bigger They Are" by Gibson Fox 8-3-1949. #2581/1806.

A-2902 The Lone Ranger
"The Boundry" by Tom Dougall 8-5-1949. #2582/1807.
"The Clayton Mine" by Dan Beattie 8-8-1949. #2583/1808.

A-2903 The Lone Ranger
"Western Vengeance" by Gibson Fox 8-10-1949. #2584/1809.
"Desert Adventure" by Felix Holt 8-12-1949. #2585/1810.

A-2904 The Lone Ranger
Disc damage causes static sound during the show's first half.
"Grubstake to Murder" by Fran Striker 8-17-1949. #2587/1812.

A-2905 The Lone Ranger
"Bob Dayton's Secret" by Dan Beattie 8-19-1949. #2588/1813.
"Hiram Weeks' Plan" by Dan Beattie 8-22-1949. #2589/1814.

A-2906 The Lone Ranger
"Misjudged Man" by Fran Striker 8-24-1949. #2590/1815.
"When the Trapper Was Trapped" by Dan Beattie 8-26-1949. #2591/1816.

A-2907 The Lone Ranger
"Outlaw Lawman" by Fran Striker 8-29-1949. #2592/1817.
"Gunman for Hire" by Felix Holt 8-31-1949. #2593/1818.

A-2908 The Lone Ranger
"Word of Honor" by Ralph Goll 9-2-1949. #2594/1819.
"Mrs. Sheriff" by Felix Holt 9-5-1949. #2595/1820.

A-2909 The Lone Ranger
"A Deal in Crime" by Fran Striker 9-7-1949. #2596/1821.

A-2910 The Lone Ranger
"Claim Jumpers" by Felix Holt 9-12-1949. #2598/1823.
"Outlaw's Revenge" by Fran Striker 9-14-1949. #2599/1824.

A-2911 The Lone Ranger
"Foxy Outfoxed" by Felix Holt 9-21-1949. #2602/1827.

A-2912 The Lone Ranger
"Medal of Honor" by Tom Dougall 9-23-1949. #2603/1828.
"Toll Bridge" by Ralph Goll 9-26-1949. #2604/1829.

A-2913 The Lone Ranger
"Beef for Lame Bear" by Fran Striker 9-30-1949. #2606/1831.

A-2914 The Lone Ranger
"Barnaby Boggs, Eradicator" by Fran Striker 10-3-1949. #2607/1832.
"Treasure Trail" by Ralph Goll 10-5-1949. #2608/1833.

A-2915 The Lone Ranger
"Rendezvous at the River" by Dan Beattie 10-7-1949. #2609/1834.
"Condemned Man's Return" by Fran Striker 10-10-1949. #2610/1835.

A-2916 The Lone Ranger
"The Unlucky Horseshoe" by Ralph Goll 10-12-1949. #2611/1836.
"Rifles at Railhead" by Tom Dougall 10-14-1949. #2612/1837.

A-2917 The Lone Ranger
"Forces Against Evil" by Dan Beattie 10-17-1949. #2613/1838.
"The Sheriff of Gunstock" by Fran Striker 10-19-1949. #2614/1839.

A-2918 The Lone Ranger
"Old Mike's Story" by Dan Beattie 10-21-1949. #2615/1840.
"United Nations" by Fran Striker 10-24-1949. #2616/1841.

A-2919 The Lone Ranger
"Trigger Takes the Bait" by Felix Holt 10-26-1949. #2617/1842.
"Mission by Proxy" by Fran Striker 10-28-1949. #2618/1843.

A-2920 The Lone Ranger
"The Medicine Horn" by Ralph Goll 10-31-1949. #2619/1844.
"The Boastful Bandit" by Dan Beattie 11-2-1949. #2620/1845.

A-2921 The Lone Ranger
"The Thousand Mile Fight" by Tom Dougall 11-4-1949. #2621/1846.
"Covered Wagon Robbery" by Felix Holt 11-7-1949. #2622/1847.

A-2922 The Lone Ranger
"Man of the House" by Dan Beattie 11-9-1949. #2623/1848.
"A Bad Tooth" by Fran Striker 11-11-1949. #2624/1849.

A-2923 The Lone Ranger
"Driven Sheep" by Dan Beattie 11-14-1949. #2625/1850.
"Enough Rope" by Tom Dougall 11-16-1949. #2626/1851.

4/12
A-2924 The Lone Ranger
"Dead Man's Chest" by Ralph Goll 11-21-1949. #2628/1853.

A-2925 The Lone Ranger
"Pilgrim's Progress" by Tom Dougall 11-23-1949. #2629/1854.
"The Midget Deputy" by Dan Beattie 11-25-1949. #2630/1855.

A-2926 The Lone Ranger
"The Tennessee Kid" by Dan Beattie 11-28-1949. #2631/1856.
"Jim Watson Comes Home" by Felix Holt 12-2-1949. #2633/1858.

A-2927 The Lone Ranger
"The Sagebrush Round-up" by Tom Dougall 12-5-1949. #2634/1859.
"Bullets on Boot Hill" by Ralph Goll 12-7-1949. #2635/1860.

A-2928 The Lone Ranger
"Indian Campaign" by Fran Striker 12-9-1949. #2636/1861.
"The Young Gentleman" by Dan Beattie 12-12-1949. #2637/1862.

A-2929 The Lone Ranger
"Spanish Gold" by Ralph Goll 12-14-1949. #2638/1863.
"Lawman's Badge" by Fran Striker 12-16-1949. #2639/1864

A-2930 The Lone Ranger
"Mountain Seige" by Tom Dougall 9-4-1950. #2751/1975
"Pledge to a Dead Man" by Fran Striker 9-6-1950. #2752/1976

A-2931 The Lone Ranger
"Outlaw by Proxy" by Fran Striker 9-8-1950. #2753/1977.

A-2932 The Lone Ranger

A-2933 The Lone Ranger
"Bridge of Destiny" by Fran Striker 9-20-1950. #2758/1982.

A-2934 The Lone Ranger
"El Capitan" by Fran Striker 9-29-1950. #2762/1986.

A-2935 The Lone Ranger

A-2936 The Lone Ranger
"Valley of Death" by Dan Beattie 10-16-1950. #2769/1993.

A-2937 The Lone Ranger

A-2938 The Lone Ranger
"One-Eyed Bandit" by Dan Beattie 11-6-1950. #2778/2002.

A-2939 The Lone Ranger

A-2940 The Lone Ranger
"Dead Man's Boots" by Ralph Goll 11-20-1950. #2784/2008.

A-2941 The Lone Ranger
"Rainbow Stampede" by Felix Holt 11-29-1950. #2788/2012.
"The Ribbon of Honor" by Felix Holt 12-6-1950. #2791/2015.

A-2942 The Lone Ranger
"Deadly Silver" by Ralph Goll 12-11-1950. #2793/2017.

A-2943 The Lone Ranger
"As the Arrow Points" by Ralph Goll 12-20-1950. #2797/2021.

A-2944 The Lone Ranger
"Path of Progress" by Dan Beattie 1-1-1951. #2802/2026.
"Cell Mate" by Dan Beattie 1-3-1951. #2803/2027.

A-2945 The Lone Ranger
"Glory Pass" by Tom Dougall 1-5-1951. #2804/2028.
"Billy-Be-Hung Returns" 1-8-1951. #2805/2029.

A-2946 The Lone Ranger
"To Pay a Debt" by Tom Dougall 1-15-1951. #2808/2032.
"The Secret Six-Gun" 1-17-1951. #2809/2033.
(Rolland Parker portrays Tonto on these two programs.)

A-2947 The Lone Ranger
"Renegade Rifles" by Tom Dougall 1-29-1951. #2814/2038.
"Rough Diamonds" by Tom Dougall 2-5-1951. #2817/2041.
A-2948 The Lone Ranger
"The Key of Jeopardy" by Ralph Goll 2-12-1951. #2820/2044.
"Winter Range War" by Dan Beattie 2-14-1951. #2821/2045.

A-2949 The Lone Ranger
"Mesa Mountain" by Fran Striker 5-30-1951. #2866/2090.
"The Refugee Bandit" by Dan Beattie 6-4-1951. #2868/2092.

A-2950 The Lone Ranger
"The Deserter" by Fran Striker 6-6-1951. #2869/2093.
"Death on a Stagecoach" by Steve McCarthy 6-20-1951. #2875/2099.

A-2951 The Lone Ranger
"Elbow Room" 6-22-1951. #2876/2100.
"Delayed Hanging" by Dan Beattie 6-27-1951. #2878/2102.

A-2952 The Lone Ranger
"Land of Promise" by Dan Beattie 6-29-1951. #2879/2103.
"Trail to Survival" by Dan Beattie 7-2-1951. #2880/2104.

A-2953 The Lone Ranger
"For a Lost Cause" by Dan Beattie 7-6-1951. #2882/2106.
"The Red Mark" by Fran Striker 7-16-1951. #2886/2110.

A-2954 The Lone Ranger
"Ambush at Elbow Bend" by Steve McCarthy 8-6-1951. #2895/2119.
"Through the Wall" by Ralph Goll 8-13-1951. #2898/2122.

A-2955 The Lone Ranger
"Double Jeopardy" by Steve McCarthy 8-15-1951. #2899/2123.
"Shadow of the Gallows" by Steve McCarthy 8-17-1951. #2900/2124.

A-2956 The Lone Ranger
"Homecoming" by Tom Dougall 8-22-1951. #2902/2126.
"Empty Strongboxes" by Betty Joyce 8-24-1951. #2903/2127.

A-2957 The Lone Ranger
"The Horse Triangle" by Dan Beattie 8-27-1951. #2904/2128.
"Renegade's Revenge" by Steve McCarthy 9-10-1951. #2910/2134.

A-2958 The Lone Ranger
"Death in the Forest" by Fran Striker 9-14-1951. #2912/2136.
"Sadie and the Bearded Men" by Dan Beattie 9-21-1951. #2915/2139.

A-2959 The Lone Ranger
"The Henderson Reveille" by Steve McCarthy 9-24-1951. #2916/2140.
"Mexican Pursuit" by Steve McCarthy 10-1-1951. #2919/2143.

A-2960 The Lone Ranger
"Backtrail" by Betty Joyce 10-3-1951. #2920/2144.
"Lew Barry's Revenge" by Dan Beattie 10-8-1951. #2922/2146.

A-2961 The Lone Ranger
"Double Cross Trails" by Steve McCarthy 10-10-1951. #2923/2147.
"Jim Bowie's Claim" by Fran Striker 10-17-1951. #2926/2150.

A-2962 The Lone Ranger
"The Lawton's Last Haunt" by Steve McCarthy 10-31-1951. #2932/2156.
"Warpaint and Feathers" by Dan Beattie 11-2-1951. #2933/2157.

A-2963 The Lone Ranger
"Major Ravenshaw" by Ralph Goll 11-5-1951. #2934/2158.
"The Camels Are Coming" by Ralph Goll 11-9-1951. #2936/2160.

A-2964 The Lone Ranger
"Mule Train of Death" by Ralph Goll 11-19-1951. #2940/2164.
"Court Marshal" by Tom Dougall 12-7-1951. #2948/2172.

A-2965 The Lone Ranger
"The Stormy Trail" by Steve McCarthy 12-21-1951. #2954/2178.
"False Accusations" by Dan Beattie 12-28-1951. #2957/2181.

A-2966
LET'S GO TO THE MOVIES "Hit Parade of 1947" 3-12-1947 (MBS). Features Betty Wragge and Jack Kirby with Gil Lamb. Produced and directed by Roger Bower.


A-2967 THIS IS HOLLYWOOD
Hedda Hopper hosts this CBS anthology series.
"White Tie and Tails" 12-21-1946. Stars William Bendix, Dan Dureau and June Lockhart.
A-2968


A-2969 DR. CHRISTIAN

A-2970 DR. CHRISTIAN

A-2971 DR. CHRISTIAN

A-2972 BOB HOPE SHOW
Shirley Temple guests 1-7-1947. Features singer Marie Laller, Barbara Jo Allen as Vera Vague and Jerry Colonna. Program originates from Pomona, California. Show runs overtime and is cut off the air.

Beatrice Lilly guests 1-14-1947. Features singer Betty Jane Rhodes, Barbara Jo Allen as Vera Vague and Jerry Colonna. Wendel Niles announces both programs.

A-2973


A-2974 STUDIO ONE

The Mr. President series aired on ABC starring Edward Arnold as a different American president each week. Scripts by Jean Holloway. Transferred from discs with a brief, non-dramatic portion missing from the middle of each program when the recording engineer switched to the reverse side of the transcription record.

A-2975 Mr. President (ABC)

A-2976 Mr. President (ABC)

A-2977 Mr. President (ABC)

A-2978 Mr. President (ABC)

A-2979 Mr. President (ABC)

A-2980 Mr. President (ABC)

A-2981 Mr. President (ABC)

A-2982 Mr. President (ABC)

A-2983 Mr. President (ABC)
“You sound young and good.”

Playing Young Good Guys on The Lone Ranger
(and on The Green Hornet and The Challenge of the Yukon, too)

by Dave Parker

BACK IN THE LATE 1940s I had the pleasure of acting on The Lone Ranger radio program, which as readers know originated on the ABC network from station WXYZ, which was always called “WIXIE” in Detroit. I played young good guys because, as director Chuck Livingstone told me at the time, “You sound young and good.” At 87 some people think I still do.

So, in the same studio with some world class radio actors, I played deputy sheriffs, cowboys, stagecoach drivers and young ranchers who said things like “Golly Masked Man, if it hadn’t been for you and Tonto, Mary and I would have lost our little farm for sure.” Or “I don’t know what it is about you Masked Man, but somehow I trust you.” Was it fun? It sure was. And it paid for my brand new 1950 Chevy coupe.

The Ranger studio was the living room of an old brownstone mansion in an upscale Detroit neighborhood. It had wall-to-wall dark red carpeting, a big fireplace, dark wood paneling, drapes on the windows and leather benches around the walls for the actors to sit on. Altogether a most attractive place, acoustically perfect for the programs which originated from there. In fact the only things that identified it as a radio studio were the RCA 44BX microphone hanging from the ceiling, the large clock on the wall, and a big window to the control room for the director and sound engineer. During the shows, the place was filled with actors and clouds of blue cigarette smoke. Nothing like the pure bracing air of the Western plains pictured in the scripts. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays the studio rang with gunshots, fist fights and the lines of actors in high-energy action! I can hear them now! “All right you sidewinder—take that” (FIST SOCK); “Look out Kemo Sabay—rustlers shoot at us!” (BANG BANG BANG!); “There go the crooks, Tonto. Let’s head ‘em off at the ranch!”; “Let’s go, Silver”; “Gettum up Scout!” (GALLOPING HOOVES). Total action and total excitement!

And all of it three times a week!

The scripts for the stories were written by Fran Striker, the original writer, augmented in later years by staff members Dan Beattie, Tom Dougall and Betty Joyce, who was a freelancer. The afternoon of the broadcast the scripts were duplicated on a ditto machine and cranked out on legal-size scripts in large type so the actors could more easily read their lines. When we reported in we were given our scripts and told the parts we would play by director Chuck Livingstone. “Ernie, you’re Dan; Harry, play Don; Bill, You’re Scar;” “Dick, you’re Tommy” and so on.

Then we went off to mark our scripts and highlight our lines before the first read-through. But first a special word about Fran Striker. There has always been confusion and disagreement about who originated the ideas for the Ranger. Fran Striker, Jr., said that there is absolutely no question about it: his dad did! George Trendle, the owner of the shows, said he did, and Jim Jewell, the much disliked first director of the Ranger, said he did. It is safe (and probably right) to say that all three did but among them it was Fran who was the master storyteller. Fran Jr. said that wherever he was, whatever he was doing, his dad would jot down story ideas for future use. And Fran had an idea a minute. Dick Osgood, in his definitive book Wixie Wonderland, wrote that, “Fran reduced the mass-production of plot and character to a formula so clearly and exactly worked out that he could take playing cards, each designating a type of character, then a problem the character could be stuck with, then the manner in which the Ranger learned of it, and finally how he and Tonto came to be involved and how the Masked Man disappeared at the end of the show. After shuffling the deck and placing the ten cards face up, the rest was almost automatic.” When asked about his early-day writing Fran said with a smile, “When you put the mask on business together with no sex, no cruelty, no gambling and no drinking it’s very limiting.”

Fran’s office upstairs had shelf after shelf of books, pamphlets, and articles about the “early Western United States”—as celebrated in the opening format. There were catalogs of rifles and pistols from the Colt and Winchester companies. Also there were maps of territories picturing the areas dramatized in the stories plus quotations from early day sheriffs and other lawmen like Wyatt Earp and Pat Garrett as well as outlaws like Billy the Kid, Doc Holiday and Jesse James.

Because from the very first it was decided the program could teach respect for the law, Fran said he never wrote a really crooked sheriff or marshal. But he added, “Once in a while I’ll write a crooked deputy who’s feeling his oats while the sheriff is out of town.”

“If I were describing the kind of man the Ranger is,” said Fran, “he’s dedicated to the job of stamping out crime and he’ll keep on doing it until he dies. And between now and then keep on writing him as a fearless champion of justice in a Western world filled with crime and violence.” Of course the saloons that appear in every known Western had to be replaced with cafés for the wholesome Ranger stories. But
they were still home base for the loud and raucous customers who’d challenge strangers or someone like the errand-running Tonto with lines like: “Hey, Injun, what you got in that sack?” which required Tonto to say: “Me got supplies for friend in camp” to which the bad guy would say “Oh yeah! Bring that bag over here so I can see what you stole” to which the angry Tonto would say “Tonto not steal; now me got to go.” Of course, this exchange escalated to a showdown ending with a burst of “tension music” usually from classic composers like Wagner, Mendelssohn or Liszt for whose music no royalty need be paid.

To the occasional critic who complained that Fran’s characters were stereotypes, Fran said: “Of course they are. I don’t have time in a fast-paced action program to show complicated characters; if you want subtle story telling go to the library not radio.”

For the actors, director Chuck Livingston was the absolute boss of the show. While Fran was upstairs with his Underwood typewriter, Chuck was in his control room with his script and his stopwatch bringing together the three elements of radio drama: the spoken dialogue, the sound effects, and the music. It was a tough job given the short times available to bring together the three elements of radio that were in his control room with his script and his stopwatch bringing together the three elements of radio drama: the spoken dialogue, the sound effects, and the music. It was a tough job given the short times available to bring the show to air.

The Challenge of the Yukon was in his control room with his script and his stopwatch bringing together the three elements of radio drama: the spoken dialogue, the sound effects, and the music. It was a tough job given the short times available to bring the show to air.

Chuck made timing notations in his script every 15 seconds with the result that the Ranger never ran long or short, an accomplishment in which he took great pride. Next was the essential “production rehearsal” to integrate the dialogue, the sound effects and music. Chuck said, “This was where I had to figure, Was I getting the right feeling? Was it quiet enough, loud enough, and is there enough excitement in the music? Am I really getting the feeling that the audience is there, on the scene, living the story along with the actors? If not why not?” Then the dress rehearsal to see how it all went together with no interruptions. No stops. And then, the show. Total rehearsal time was around three hours.

There were other network directors who thought that a scant three hours of rehearsal for a complicated show like the Ranger was skimpy indeed! Chuck was a no-nonsense director. No time to be social or do anything not directly related to the job at hand, which was to get a quality show on and off the air at 29:30. I don’t recall Chuck ever thanking anyone for a good job though compliments between the actors were occasions for pride. But that was Chuck style. As Fred Foy said, “Once the show got started Chuck was very intense about what he was doing, and when this carried over to the actors in the studio it could create animosities. But that was Chuck’s manner of directing.” I can still hear Chuck’s voice from the studio talk-back, sometimes with sarcasm: “Is it too much to ask you guys to come up with better lines in that crowd ad lib?” Or “Is that part too difficult for you, Jack?” The story was told that one actor started for the control room with fire in his eye but the other guys stopped him. Not smart to hit the director! One thing though. Everyone on the Ranger took pride that they could perform so well in spite of the technical and high standards demanded by Charles D. Livingston.

There were two other shows that originated from the WXYZ studios, The Green Hornet and The Challenge of the Yukon, both directed by Fred Flowerday. With Fred you had a friend in the control room. Calm, secure of his directing skills, he was in many ways just the opposite of Chuck. No scowls, no disapproving looks. But Fred too was in total charge of the show making suggestions like: “I think you ought to make that guy tougher, Ernie.” Or “make him more scared of King , Gill.” Or to the sound guys he’d say, “Make the chair scrapes louder, Don, they’re getting lost in the crowd noise.” Or “can’t we make those spurs jangle more guys?”

But Yukon too had to be rushed through rehearsals to air time. When I spoke about it with Fred Foy a few years ago he reminded me that the casts knew what to do because they’d played the same kinds of parts before. The manual sound effects guys had made all the struggles and fist socks before, and Billy Hengstebeck, the recorded effects guy, had played his howling winds, and gunshots thousands of times! Hence the ability to speed through rehearsals.

Speaking of gunshots, Fred Foy said he was amazed at how they always came in at the exact time they were needed. Fact was that Billy took a yellow grease pencil sharpened to a fine point and with the 78 rpm gunshot record revolving, he’d gently touch the pencil to the record making an instant yellow circle. Then with the phonograph needle positioned exactly on the circle, the gunshot was bound to play when needed—if you knew what you were doing. Which Billy always did. But few things are perfect and the story was told that during one program Tonto’s gun failed to shoot on cue. Whereupon the ever resourceful actor said, “Tonto gun not shoot. Tonto use knife” whereupon his gun went BANG! The WXYZ sound department got a lot of praise from other sound effects guys from around the country and properly so. The Detroit effects guys were skillful professionals who took a lot of pride in their work.

The sound guys had a room all to themselves filled with the exotic things needed to paint the sound pictures of the violence-filled stories. There was an old bathtub for any water scenes the scripts might call for. There were “Walk boards” for the wooden sidewalks on which the characters might walk (the sound guys wore special shoes with leather soles and heels, the better to create the walking, running, stumbling and scuffling feet of the characters). Also several half-coconut shells and short-handled toilet plungers for the many, many horses, many horses hooves always required for the Ranger. There was a leather saddle for the “squeaks” a saddle makes when mounted. And the metal framework of an old stagecoach for whatever metal noises might be called for. There were special “walk boxes” with dirt, sand, gravel, brush and snow (which was always done with Kingsford corn starch). In fact Yukon demanded so many snow effects that the guys had stuffed two or three pillow cases filled with the squeaky, crunchy stuff on which to walk. There were a couple of wooden chairs used to scrape (on wood) when a character would get up from a card game or dinner table. Tony Caminita, one of the three sound men assigned to the Ranger, said that Chuck Livingston wanted, “Every action to be ‘Illuminated’ with the right kind of sound.” Because all the manual sound effects came from a special room (it had been the ‘sun room’ of the mansion) it was easy to balance the volume of the efx with the actors voices. Chuck Livingston had designed the system to suit his directorial needs. And it worked perfectly. For unruly crowds, angry mobs, and Indian “pow
wows” there was a small third room Chuck called “the hole.” It was there that we invented the ad-lib lines appropriate for the scenes. As an aside I need to explain that no one could come up with lines for “Indian ad-lib.” So Chuck said, “Try mumbling ‘Pepsi Cola’ with the right angry mood.” Amazingly, it sounded OK for lines mumbled off mike in the background. One thing the sound guys didn’t do was bark like a dog—Sgt. Preston’s dog Yukon King. That distinction belonged to 72-year-old actor Ted Johnstone who barked into a hole in a Roi Tan cigar box, it being felt that the box gave a unique “dog-like quality” to Ted’s voice. Ted also played the Inspector on The Challenge of the Yukon, for which he named Scar Hatfield. He’ll be armed and dangerous so be careful.” To which Sgt. Preston (Paul Sutton) would say “King and I will be ready in an hour. Won’t we King?” at which King would bark happily. Ted could bark fiercely and growl menacingly, but his all time triumph was doing two dogs in a dog fight. Once he told me that he was getting too old to play the inspector and seconds later barked like a couple of raging dogs. He said he might have a heart attack and was going to call AFRA and tell them he was due for new extra for doing all that “dog stuff.” I don’t think he ever did though. No point in upsetting Chuck Livingstone or George Trendle. There were only three shows in Detroit and if you weren’t cast on any of them that was serious bad news.

My day job at the time was teaching radio acting and production at Wayne University so I was financially secure. But for the others the WIXIE shows were it.

In my mind’s eye I can still see the actors clustered around the 44BX microphone, the standard mike in the industry, hanging from the ceiling, the更好 to clear the space beneath for the scuffling feet of the actors involved in the countless fights and struggles demanded by the scripts.

The WIXIE shows all featured action, requiring lots and lots of breathless line deliveries. Every script called for “EFFORT” as in “All right you cattle rustlin’ side-winder, take that (EFFORT)” accompanied, as always, by the sound guys who slapped one palm against the other close to the mike for a very real knockout punch.

Charged with bringing the stories to life was the stock company of actors, the “regulars” so often heard on the Ranger, Hornet and Yukon. There were about 10 to 12 of them who played the good guys, bad guys, sheriffs, sleazy lawyers greedy bankers, young ranchers, stagecoach drivers, young kids, Western moms and occasionally a young girl or two. But as there were never any “romantic moments” on the shows, young girls were scarce. Fran said, “The Ranger’s all wrapped up in his mission” so that he doesn’t have any time for friends or romance.”

Among the most memorable actors on the show were Gilly Shea with his great Irish accent. Paul Hughes with his deep growling voice who could play anyone and was heard often. Ernie Winstanley, Harry Goldstein and me usually playing good guys, and, of course, Dick Beals, (later to provide the unforgettable voice of “Speedy Alka Seltzer” who played every young boy the show had. The parts were noted on the first script page with simple clarity: DIRK NASBY TOUGH CROOK, DAN SAWYER YOUNG RANCHER. JIMMY JACK-SON YOUNG BOY, SLADE BARNET SLICK LAWYER. To this day I can hear Paul Hughes’ slick voice purring, “You don’t need to read that contract, Granny. It’s all nice and legal. All you have to do is sign your name right there. Here, let me guide your hand.” And then there was Bill Saunders as all kinds of crooks—most memorably Butch Cavendish, the vicious gang leader who ambushed the 10 Texas Rangers at Bryant’s Gap and started the Lone Ranger on his life’s heroic mission. I can hear it now. “All right boys, here they come. Now wipe ‘em out to the last man!! BANG BANG BANG.” Talk about thrilling! And of course there was John Todd, who played the Ranger’s faithful Indian companion, Tonto, from the first show to the last. John was trained in the classics, but he was delighted to provide the deep monosyllabic voice of the Ranger’s loyal sidekick. “Look, Kemo Sabay, there shells from crook rifle on ground.” Or “Hoof print of crook horse go toward bank. It look like we on his trail”. And always Tonto’s scene endings “Getum up Scout!” It was well known that the 76-year-old John might doze off during the show. Hard to believe but true. Fred Foy remembered the time when John was shaken awake and dropped his script all over the floor. Bad news for John and worse news for Brace Beemer who had to play both the Ranger and Tonto for the next several scenes. Chuck Livingstone nearly dropped dead in the control room. But as I look back on it there were precious few bloopers or mistakes to jar the ears of radio listeners. Of course you’d expect professional performers to be line perfect. And we were almost always. Intending to say “All right gents, get your guns up,” Sheriff Frank Russell shouted: “All right guns get your gents up. Get your gents get your guns aw sufferin’ snakes, just shoot ‘em.” And the mistake that brought all the actors in the studio to mufing their snorts was Gilly Shea’s shout: “I need five good men who can ride a gun and shoot a horse!” And it was an accepted truth among the actors that an early day announcer said the unthinkable: “A fiery horse with the speed of light a cloud of dust and a fury Hi-Yo Silver.” All true said the recording engineer who made the master disk of the show. As he told Mr. Trendle, he was able to delete the “windy portion” of the program.

Aside from the Ranger himself the best and best known was announcer/narrator Fred Foy who started with the show in 1948 and continued in that essential role until the studio finally went down in 1954. I can so easily see Fred, script in hand, waiting by the mike for his cue from Chuck. The sweep second hand of the clock creeping upward and then the red light, the burst of music and those immortal
opening words we knew by heart: “A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty ‘Hi-Yo Silver,’ The Lone Ranger.” There never was a more exciting show opening.

All the actors called him “Mr. Trendle” if they met him in the hall. Maybe Brace called him “George” but for sure none of us did. A word about Brace Beemer is essential. He was a big man, maybe 6’3” or 6’4.” Trim, handsome and serious, he was the perfect man for the starring role. He was a superb horseman with the ability to get his Colt six-gun out of his holster in an eye-blink. Riding his great horse Silver, he appeared at rodeos and made public appearances, many of which were at hospitals for children where he often left “silver bullets” and autographed pictures for the handicapped youngsters. On the first Ranger show I did, he came over to me and said with a welcoming smile, “Hi I’m Brace Beemer, I sweep up around the place.” From that time on we shared smiles, but not conversations. I learned he was like that with all the actors. Always professional, always polite, but not given to serious social interaction.

Brace was not the first radio Ranger; that distinction went to George Stenius who as George Seaton went to Hollywood where he became a distinguished writer and director. He was followed by the deep-voiced Earle Graser who held the job until April 9, 1941, when he fell asleep behind the wheel of his car and rammed into a parked truck. In the following anguish and anxiety, it was decided that Fran should write a scene where the Ranger was shot and seriously wounded with Tonto gradually nursing him back to health. That way, the change in voice from Graser to Brace was gradual and acceptable. Fran said that when a young listener was told by his parents that his masked hero was dead, he could say “No he’s not; he’s only wounded.”

‘Network Ratings’

networks, days, times, sponsors, and personalities seems right on the mark. We didn’t discover any glaring errors in his research.

Surprisingly the body of material appears in three columns on each page which takes some getting used to. After reading for a while, however, it wasn’t a distraction. There are no images in the book; some might view that as a handicap but possibly only incidentally. After all it is a numbers-oriented application and pictures really aren’t required. Many tables of figures make comparisons trouble-free and are easy to comprehend. It’s clear that care has been taken to provide precisely what the reader really wants to know.

Pure and simple, this is a history book, but an incredibly interesting and detailed one. Even for those who don’t particularly care for such accounts, a love of old time radio will probably turn them on to Ramsburg’s Network Radio Ratings, 1932-1953. In softcover, the tome with bibliography and index sells for $65 and may be ordered right now for rapid delivery from www.mcfarlandpub.com or 800-253-2187.

For anyone doing research, it’s one of those volumes that will probably be referenced over and over.

Your only disappointment may be that you wish you had a similar guide for daytime programming, too. Perhaps Ramsburg will treat us to that yet.

From 1941 until the show ended in 1954 Brace played the Lone Ranger, both on the air and on his many, many public appearances where he wore the mask and rode “the great horse Silver.”

So there we were in that smoke-filled studio, everyone’s eyes locked on their scripts, with every line highlighted, and everyone charged with the energy so important for an action show. And everything ending with the immortal question asked by grateful people who needed to know. “Who was that Masked Man, anyway?” And then the tag: “Why everyone around these parts knows who he is (PAUSE, WITH REVERENCE) “He’s the Lone Ranger!” Music up to tag with the Ranger’s final” Hi-Yo Silver!” A perfect ending for a perfect show.

The Lone Ranger of course, became an American Institution. It’s safe to say that everyone in the country knows of the Masked Man. The TV show, understandably, is what most people remember these days with Clayton Moore and Jay Silverheels in the starring roles.

I was amused a short time ago when I was speaking of the radio Ranger. “Oh,” said my friend. “I didn’t know The Lone Ranger was ever on radio.” Hi-Yo Silver!”

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