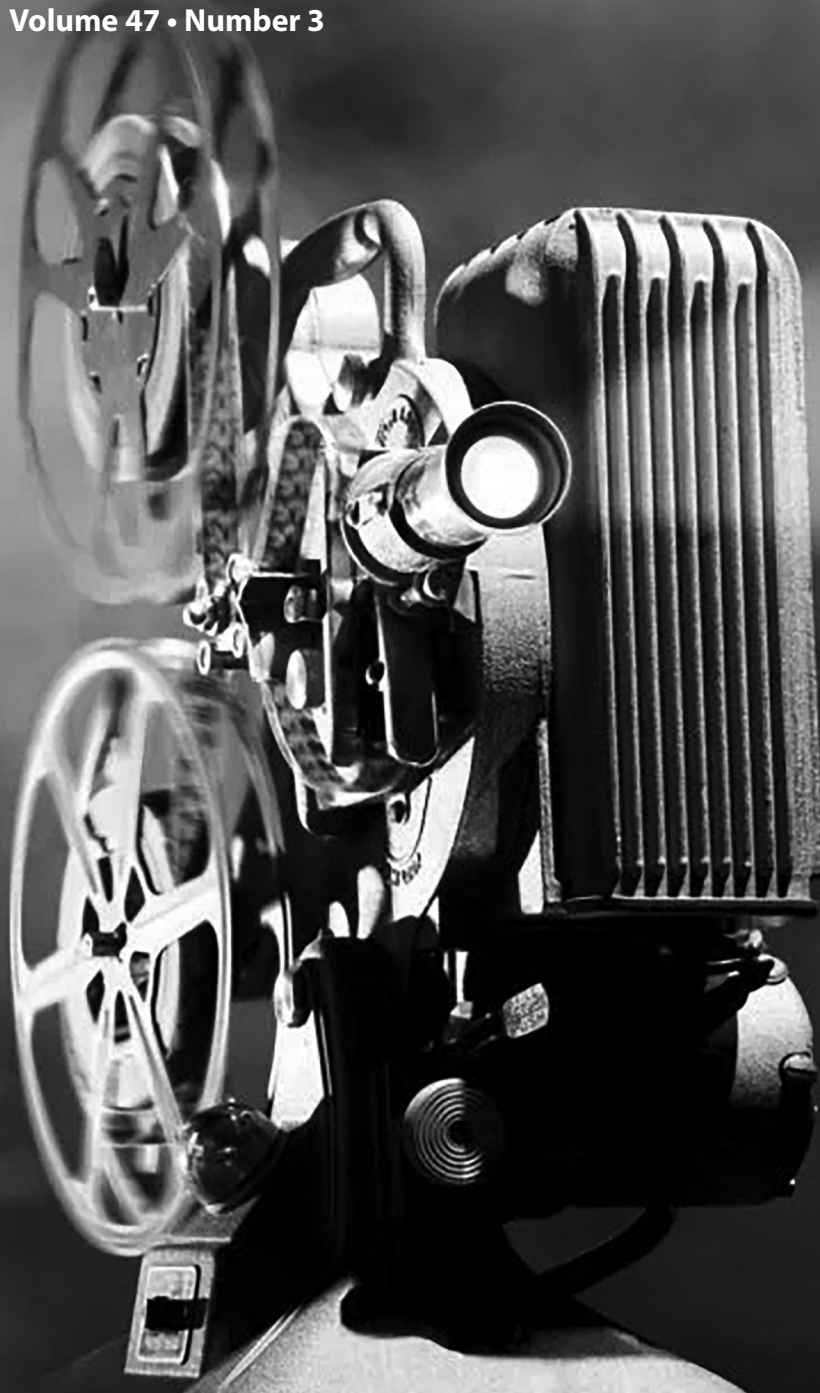


THEATRE OF THE MIND, YES, BUT . . . LAUGHTER—SERIOUS BUSINESS • DON'T TOUCH THAT



Volume 47 • Number 3

JUNE 2023



sound  
advice

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*from the president*

# Virtual Confab Set for October

DEAR ESTEEMED MEMBERS OF SPERDVAC:

**I** HOPE THIS MESSAGE finds you in good health and high spirits. As the president of SPERDVAC, I am delighted to announce that our highly anticipated annual convention will take place *virtually* this year, bringing together our vibrant community from across the globe. This landmark event, scheduled for October, promises to be a memorable celebration of our shared passion for old-time radio and audio drama.

Since we are restarting the convention program, the first since 2019, we have decided to embrace the virtual format, ensuring the accessibility of our convention for all members, regardless of location. While we certainly miss the camaraderie of in-person gatherings, this virtual experience offers us unique opportunities to connect, share, and preserve the legacy of audio entertainment that we hold dear. This will be the very first time members worldwide may attend our convention without leaving the comfort of their home!

Our organizing committee has been working tirelessly to curate a diverse and captivating program that reflects the rich tapestry of our community. From panel discussions featuring industry experts to treasured performances from previous SPERDVAC conventions to interviews with legendary performers, our convention will be a true feast for the senses.

In the coming weeks, we will provide additional details about the convention, including registration information, session schedules, and special guests. Stay tuned to our official website and social media channels for regular updates.

On behalf of the entire SPERDVAC team, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for your ongoing support and enthusiasm. Let us come together, united by our love for old-time radio and audio drama, to make this virtual convention a resound-

ing success.

Thank you once again for being part of this incredible journey. Your passion and commitment are the lifeblood of our organization, and I look forward to welcoming you all to an unforgettable

convention in October 2023.

The 2023 virtual convention in October is a precursor to an actual live convention currently planned for the fourth quarter of 2024, commemorating SPERDVAC's

50th anniversary. We will be reaching out to you, our members, asking for your thoughts and ideas about what you would like to make the event the one we've waited for. The request will come in the form of a survey sent via email and *Radiogram*.

Until next time, stay safe and stay tuned.!

*Timothy Knofler*





## Theatre of the Mind, yes, but . . .

**WE ARE PLEASED** to publish our own Bob Tevis' essay titled "Listen to the Movies," which originally appeared in *Classic Images* magazine. Bob extols the virtues of the soundtracks of movies, and if one listens critically one finds subtle and not-so-subtle nuances of sound design in films that would fit perfectly on radio. Moreover, he talks about the transition of movie dramas to radio dramas, particularly those on the successful radio series *Lux Radio Theatre*, hosted by one of the mavens of moviemaking, Cecil B. DeMille.

I have been involved in such work for well over 10 years. As associate producer, for lack of a better term—because I spend a lot of time with the producer—of Eugene, OR's resident aural repertory company, Radio Redux, I have participated in re-creations of many a movie through our own interpretation of *Lux Radio Theatre*. Using the format, including Lux commercials—a ubiquitous term, for sure, since our commercials appropriate Lux for everything from Lux breakfast cereals to Lux embalming fluid—we have often used the original scripts or our own adaptations to re-create everything from Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night* and *Lost Horizon* to John Ford's *Stagecoach* and Robert Wise's *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. We've also appropriated *Screen Director's Playhouse* (and *Guild*) for similar productions such as our rousingly successful, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*.

The latter production proved somewhat controversial, however. You see, our lead performer used an unconscious Danny Kaye-esque gesture when transforming into his alter-ego, as it were. It was clearly a visual sign; a sign, moreover, that caught the attention of audience members who began to laugh before the transition was made complete. The visual sign drew the ire of a newspaper reviewer. Much to our surprise, the reviewer made a case for radio being the "theatre of the mind" (good) and then censured us for allowing our lead to gesture to cue the audience that he was transitioning from mild-mannered Walter Mitty to, for instance, a heroic RAF fighter pilot (bad). A theatre company calling itself Radio Redux, the reviewer grumbled, should know better; it should hold its head in shame for allowing a hambone actor to use visual cues during a supposed radio broadcast.

Our response was bewilderment. Half the supporting cast said that they hadn't noticed the visual cue. The other half had but said it didn't seem to distract from anything. Our director, after the fact, of course, felt as if, perhaps, maybe, he should have restrained our lead. Our lead said he didn't know he was doing anything harmful; he just did what he felt right for the character and the circumstance. I, being a keen observer, had noticed the gesture and approved; after all, our motto is "radio worth watching."

So that brings us to the question of just how many visual shenanigans were going on during the golden age of radio. We all know that the majority of radio shows were produced in front of live audiences, especially comedies. Were actors devoid of any facial expressions? How about pauses? Were dramatic pauses disparaged by directors for creating dead air? Did Hoppy, Roy, and Gene discard their range duds and shootin' irons for the business suit of the studio? Just how far did radio performers go in keeping things exclusively aural?

Depending on who is talking the answer is not far. During numerous interviews with OTR performers I have concluded that stage movement and manners remained an integral part of perfor-

mance. If one is really into a performance it is difficult not to gesture, to stifle a facial expression, or remain fixed to one point even though a microphone demands such attention to space. Moreover, anecdote after anecdote told of the practical jokers who, thinking they were at rehearsal or otherwise didn't care, could not resist the temptation to drop the star's trousers as he delivered his gripping speech at the play's climax eliciting audience guffaws while confusing the at-home audience.

Jokesters notwithstanding, I was also able to find commentaries in various trade publications that report lots of on-stage action. For instance, stage activity seemed to be the rule in programs like *Truth or Consequences* and *People are Funny*. As reported in *Movie-Radio Guide* (February 21, 1942), columnist Martin Lewis noted that "something happened that gave the studio audience good reason to break out in shrieks and screams of laughter" during a then recent broadcast of *Truth or Consequences*. Lewis wrote that a woman contestant who had to suffer the consequence was required to hop over a group of candlesticks spread across the stage. Ralph Edwards described the scene, but as she performed the consequence her undergarment began to slide lower and lower and then fell off altogether. Edwards was most discreet in describing her predicament, but the live audience was making up the indiscreet difference with the at-home listeners clueless. Finally, Edwards offered the lady the use of a backstage dressing room but she refused the offer, saying that she didn't want to miss a moment of the show. With slip in hand she returned to her seat.

Another instance is reserved for comedy shows, and why not. Most of radio's comedians came from vaudeville whose schticks included plenty of visual gags. One was part of the Eddie Cantor 1942 show, which involved uproarious laughter from the studio audience to the consternation of the at-home audience. What was so funny? As reported, when introduced Bert "The Mad Russian" Gordon came on stage with his script covering his face and bushy moustache. He then slowly removed the script as he uttered his familiar greeting, "How do you do," and then released his considerable ears, which had been pinned back. Never an explanation for at-home listeners who must have sensed that Gordon's delivery alone brought the house down.

In a certain respect, then, the experiences of live audience members and the experiences of at-home listeners were different. One might argue that being a member of a live audience was more complete than being a member of an at-home audience. If so that would negate the idea that radio was and is exclusively the "theatre of the mind." But that ignores the intent of radio drama. The fact that a performer uses facial expressions, or body movement, or even props—George's cigar!—to enhance his or her performance to give life to character belongs to the actor and not the show. The show itself is performed inside the mind to great results that we all cherish. In fact, we at Radio Redux often tell our audience members to close their eyes and "watch with their ears."<sup>1</sup>



Bert "The Mad Russian" Gordon



## RADIO SCRAPBOOK

Red Skelton and Bill Thompson (the Old Timer and Nick de Popolus to Fibber McGee and Molly) ham it up at NBC studios in 1942.



### *Red's Got a 'Ham on White' for Lunch*

Who knew that Red Skelton and Fibber McGee and Molly were neighbors. No, not on Wistful Vista but at NBC in the early 1940s. It was said among Red's best friends and fans were Jim and Marian Jordan, and considering that both programs rehearsed every Tuesday night in opposite studios the casts became quite chummy, linked by their dedication to making people laugh. Observers claimed that this friendship turned the studios on

Tuesday nights into a madhouse. If the photograph above is any indication of madcap monkeyshines then audience members were, indeed, in for a special treat. Specifically posed for an NBC photographer, Red captured the mirthful mood with Fibber McGee and Molly funny guy Bill Thompson, who isn't quite sure what to make of being pressed between two slices of white bread to make a laugh sandwich of pure ham.





# LAUGHTER— SERIOUS BUSINESS

## A PRIMER ON RADIO COMEDY 1950

by Rei Dorne

**B**ACK IN THE LATE 1940s Hubbell Robinson, Jr., CBS vice-president in charge of programming, realized that comedy was serious business. Seeing the bald pates of nervous comics was proof enough, he said. So with an accountant's agility Robinson categorized comedy into four general classifications:



1) The Stand-Up Joke, 2) The Situation Comedy, 3) The Premise Comedy, and 4) The Personality Comedy. Armed with his clipboard, Robinson then defined and gave examples of each type of comedy to show how they worked.

It's time to return to those days of laughter and look behind the scenes at the serious side of radio comedy, which by 1950, was spreading into that new and different medium, television.

- The Stand-Up Joke, or stand-up comedy, is the routine calling for a string of unrelated gags. Robinson considered the stand-up joke to be the grandfather of all comedy shows. But at the time—the late 1940s—stand-up comedy was struggling against the tide of its brethren, situation, premise and personality comedies. Robinson argued that there just weren't enough new jokes and, worse, the old ones had been dished up in every conceivable form. Being somewhat of a wit himself, Robinson concluded that the stand-up joke was being served as hash—and, as every cook knows, that's the last word.

- The Situation Comedy was the province of radio, Robinson contended, even

though he granted motion pictures with its invention never mind that stage comedies were there first. The situation comedy is the comedic story with a plot that has a beginning, middle and end, and was well represented on the airwaves. *Amos 'n' Andy*, *Burns and Allen*, and *Fibber McGee and Molly* were pioneers in this field, and successful followers of the technique included *Our Miss Brooks* and *My Favorite Husband*. Add to this list the antics of Red Skelton and Joan Davis.

Incidentally, Joan Davis and Burns and Allen, whose vaudeville training made them masters of timing, started out in radio as stand-up joke comics. But when the handwriting on the wall presented itself, both switched to situation comedy. This was a wise choice, to be sure, since they adapted to the situation so well and proved that good comics can find humor in any situation.

- The Premise Comedy is exactly what its title implies. Indeed, such programs are not based on plots but what develops after considering a presumption. Probably the noblest exponents of this classification are Jack Benny and Fred Allen. Their shows are not based on plots, but a simple idea that balloons into a 30-minute laugh riot. Take, for example, the Jack Benny program, which begins with a premise, such as what he and his cast did on Groundhog Day. From that simple notion the laughs are related to and spring from that basic premise or theme. Fred Allen is similar but more in tune with topics of current events, such as, "Do you think teachers are underpaid?" or "What do you think of the new Parisian flat-chested look?" Whether the premise be serious or ridiculous the result is laughter.

- The Personality Comedian is considered a rarity in Robinson's classification system. In this category, there is no plot or premise. If anything, the comic here is related to the stand-up joke but without the routine of running gags. The whole business of laughter here is that the personality tells jokes, at times astutely and at other times clumsily.

This type of comedy is best suited to the emcee personality, and Arthur Godfrey was an outstanding example of the personality comic at the time of Robinson's study. Bing Crosby was also listed in this category. Neither has a plot or premise to work with and yet they tell jokes. But neither relies on joke-telling exclusively and neither are known as comics.

Robinson concluded that the success of the personality comedian was hard to explain, preferring to say that, "Well, he's just Godfrey that's all."

Significantly to the success of the laugh, the situation, premise, and personality formats do share a common trait—a clear and consistent delineation of character. For example, Jack Benny is always a penny pincher; my friend Irma is always a scatterbrain living in a world of her own; our Miss Brooks is always a pessimist prepared for the worst; Lum and Abner are always down-to-earth; and Charlie McCarthy is always an irascible if adorable brat.

Finally, extreme care was taken with each joke or humorous situation to make certain it was in strict keeping with the carefully established personality of the character who uttered it. Many was the joke that was sure "boff" but struck out because it was not in character. Take Burns and Allen, for example. According to George, Gracie was seldom on hand in person at the preliminary script sessions, but always in spirit—"Now Gracie would be thinking this way . . ." or "Gracie would say . . ." But when neither the writers nor George were certain as to whether Gracie would really react as the script indicated, George would put through a fast call home and the fate of the gag was settled with a brief "good" or "sorry, no." Gracie so completely understood her comedy role—her character—that she knew immediately whether a situation was in character or not.

It's a serious business, this funny business. There's gold and glory in the funny-bone, Robinson noted, but you have to know how to tap it.🎤

# After 46 years OTR show ceases production

by Bobb Lynes

We all knew that this day was coming, ordained like death and taxes.

The longest, continuously running old-time radio show west of Chicago has come to the end of its radio life. With the sad news of the death of long-time (46 years!) KPFK icon Roy Tuckman, Bobb Lynes and Barbara (Sunday) Watkins have reluctantly decided to stop producing new *Don't Touch That Dial* programs. Known as *Roy of Hollywood on Something's Happening*, our dear friend Roy had featured *DTTD* since May of 2001, when we had been cancelled (after 27 years) from KCSN.

*DTTD* was created by Kevin Stern in May 1974 (there's that month again) as *Canyons of the Mind* featuring comedy LP bits, etc. Kevin teamed up with Jerry Haendiges, got permission to air old-time radio shows on KCSN, and changed the show title to *Don't Touch That Dial* with airing for two hours on Thursdays and Sundays.

*DTTD* became the nucleus for the beginning of SPERDVAC in November 1974 as Kevin Stern, Jerry Haendiges and Jim Coontz gathered together to discuss their appreciation for old-time radio. In February 1975 I (Bobb Lynes) joined the gathering. In August 1975, Kevin asked on-air for volunteers to help

program *DTTD*, since Jerry was getting too busy. I, being a fellow SPERDVAC member and OTR collector, called in during the show, volunteered to help, and was invited to bring some OTR tapes to KCSN the next Sunday.

Beginning August 17, 1975, I co-hosted the show, which became so popular that it was expanded to 3-hours every Sunday. Kevin invited Harvey Tow to take over the Thursday spot, renaming it the *Old-Time Radio Theatre*. OTR was very popular at KCSN circa 1975-2000!

In 1977, Kevin left me in charge of *DTTD*. During 1979 Barbara Watkins (a *DTTD* fan/listener) joined the show and changed both of our lives forever. We even had a contest to give Barbara a radio name since she didn't want to use her real name on the air. She became "Barbara Sunday" after the OTR soap opera *Our Gal Sunday* combined with the fact of *DTTD* was being heard on Sundays. She

began co-hosting, co-producing and finally producing *DTTD* giving me time to volunteer at other local non-commercial stations such as KPFK, KSPC and KCRW, airing OTR shows.

For the next five years I also found time to very proudly serve as SPERDVAC president.

In the summer of 1983, we helped form a group to bring new dramas to radio called *30 Minutes to Curtain*, which ran until 2001.

New management at KCSN cancelled *DTTD* on Easter Sunday 2001, but a week later Roy called and invited us to bring *DTTD* to KPFK, for six hours, once a month. We settled on 3 hours the first Monday of every month, beginning

in May (again) of 2001. New management at

KPFK cut Roy's hours from 6 to 3 hours nightly in February 2016 so we were off-air for exactly one year until February 2017 (hence the asterisk referring to 49 years of OTR). Came the Covid "pan-damnic" and we were forced to do the show remotely from home, never returning to the KPFK studio from March 2020 until May (again!) 2023 where we are now.

It just wouldn't be the same without Roy, so . . .

Strangely, the very same day of Roy's passing, YesterdayUSA Superstation announced that it would begin re-running tapes of *DTTD* every Saturday 2-5 pm (Pacific) starting the next week. Thank you, guys!

So, *Don't Touch That Dial* lives on—I Love Lucy style, in re-runs!

Barbara and I wish to thank, with all our hearts, all the people who made these 49 years for me and 44 years for Barbara so enjoyable and memorable: program directors, station managers, guest hosts, OTR guests, donors, OTR hosts, SPERDVAC and especially the greatest listeners in the world. We had the best!

Catch me (carrying on for Frank Bresee) on the Friday night show with Walden, John and Larry, 7:30-9 pm on yesterdayusa.net, just sittin' and talkin' OTR, nostalgia and whatever comes to mind. Barbara? She is still collecting and archiving.

This is Bobb Lynes, saying for Barbara Sunday, thank you for listening and remember: old-time radio still lives on—"don't touch that dial" (re-runs) . . . And goodnight, Snooker and Starlight, wherever you are.

(MUSIC: "Thanks for the Memories" plays off to I.D.).



## Radio still reaches the blind but only in different and varied ways

SPERDVAC's own Walden Hughes, host of his own Yesterday USA OTR program, is featured in a new magazine article that discusses the changes in technology and how those changes affect the blind.

Donna L. Harper's "Radio and the Blind: An Evolving Relationship," in the May 10, 2023, edition of *Radio World*, outlines the radical changes in "radio" since the advent of the internet. Radio was once limited to the ether but now reaches audiences via the internet; further, in many cases programming is on demand. Just how has this change in broadcasting met the needs of the blind?

As noted in the article, "In the 1920s, newspaper articles called radio a godsend for the blind. It was both educational and entertaining, and it would help them to feel less isolated."

Does the same hold true today?

According to the article, media consumption patterns among the blind reflect those of the population at large, but there has been an explosion of electronic content that is available on internet radio and podcasts.

Walden reflects on that change, noting that he lost his sight at age nine, and radio became very important in his life. He liked country music and sports, but he also found talk shows educational.

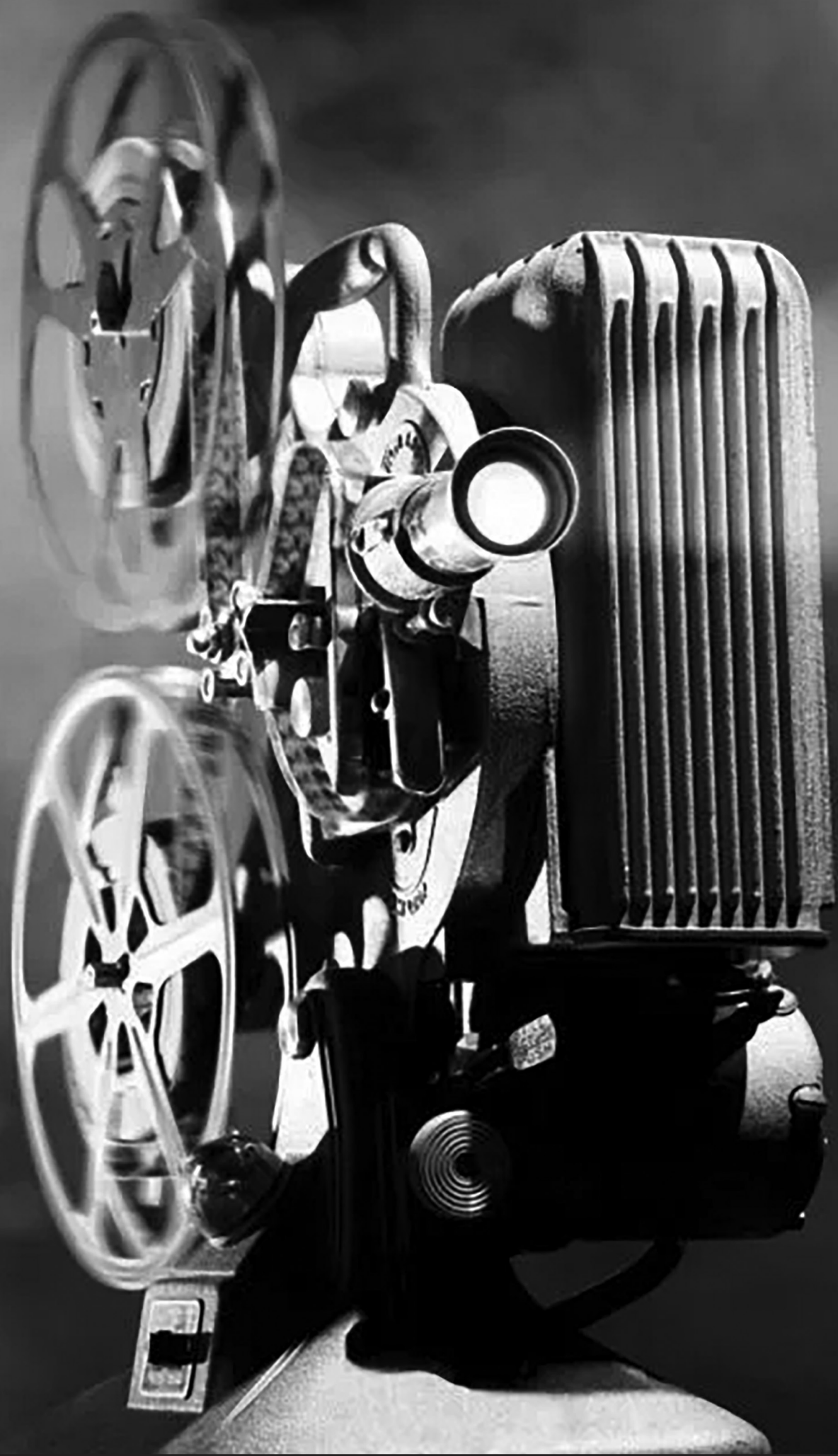
"The 1970s and 1980s were the golden age of talk radio," he says. "There were great debates about issues, and no name-calling. I could learn from it."

The article continues: today, the 56-year-old listens to C-SPAN Radio, but he finds most current talk shows too argumentative. Plus, "There are too many nationally syndicated hosts, and not enough who are local."

The complete article is available free on the internet at <https://tinyurl.com/rw-blind>.







# sound advice

by  
Robert  
E.  
Tevis

listen  
to  
a  
movie

**M**Y FRIEND, DR. JOE WEBB, recently sent me an interesting email.

Dr. Webb is a leading expert on the classic radio show, *Suspense*. *Suspense* was a top-rated program that ran from 1942 to 1962 on the CBS radio network. Movie fans might be surprised to learn that Alfred Hitchcock helped direct an audition show (similar to a TV pilot) for *Suspense*. It was an adaptation of one of his films, *The Lodger* (1927).

The audition was part of a CBS series, *Forecast*, which gave full-budget treatment to ideas for new programming. The producer was Charles Vanda. In his discussions with Hitchcock about turning the audition into a continuing series with “Hitch” as host, it was Hitchcock who gave the series the name *Suspense*.

The series that was originally envisioned by Vanda and Hitchcock never really made it to the air. Vanda went into WW2 service and helped create the Armed Forces Radio Service. Hitchcock went on to obviously much bigger things. But a re-formatted *Suspense* would become one of Hitchcock’s favorite programs, and its producer, William Spier, would become known as “The Hitchcock of the airwaves.”

The email that I received from Dr. Webb announced that a group of radio enthusiasts had created a podcast of a lost 1942 *Suspense* episode, *Rope*. *Suspense* had over 900 broadcasts including some “repeats,” and only 13 original performances are missing. *Rope* was the third broadcast, produced just before Vanda left CBS, and seemed hopelessly lost. This new re-creation was based on the 1929 stage play that Hitchcock would eventually turn into his own film production, *Rope* (1948).

*Rope* was one of the features at the recent Nitrate Picture Show at the George Eastman Museum in Rochester, NY. It occurred to me that it would be a good jumping off point to talk about the strong connection classic films had to classic radio.

As most of you know I am the vice-president of SPERDVAC (The Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio, Drama, Variety and Comedy), and our organization not only has a collection of original radio recordings, but has also produced a





Film adaptations, like the *Lux Radio Theatre* (February 5, 1945) production of Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944), not only gave Dana Andrews, Gene Tierney (pictured) and Vincent Price the opportunity to reprise their roles and keep the film alive in the public's mind, but allowed actors to continue to work once the film was complete—providing an employment bridge between film work. It worked. *Lux* was often radio's most-listened to program every week. It was radio's most successful hour-long radio drama.

number of radio re-creations based on famous films at our annual conventions and on-line. If you are a movie fan, and have never listened to an audio adaptation of a classic film, you should give them a try.

SPERDVAC president, Tim Knofler, once interviewed Robert Osborne of Turner Classic Movies (TCM) about this very subject. Mr. Osborne told him that many people don't realize how important radio was for those in the motion picture business. Film adaptations, like the *Lux Radio Theatre* (February 5, 1945) production of Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944), not only gave Dana Andrews, Gene Tierney and Vincent Price the opportunity to reprise

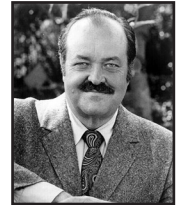
their roles and keep the film alive in the public's mind, but allowed actors to continue to work once the film was complete—providing an employment bridge between film work. It worked. *Lux* was often radio's most-listened to program every week. It was radio's most successful hour-long radio drama.

Today, you can hear these film adaptations at a variety of places on the internet. For example, you can listen to the *Lux Radio Theater* production of *Laura* on YouTube at <https://youtube.com/watch?v=QvcBw7S29-g>.

YouTube also gives you access to other *Lux Radio Theatre* programs, as well as

film adaptations which were done for other programs like *Screen Directors Playhouse*.

One of my favorite films is *Call Northside 777* (1948) with Jimmy Stewart. There is an episode of *Screen Directors Playhouse* of this film, which was originally broadcast on December 9, 1949, on YouTube which also starred Jimmy Stewart and was directed by Henry Hathaway. The radio show adds further information about the true story behind the film which you did not learn in the movie—you'll have to listen to learn what that is. This adaptation also has the easily recognizable voice of actor William Conrad whose career stretched out into television and who you might remember from *Cannon* (1971-1976). The link to YouTube is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37TsJFlxQN4>.



William Conrad as Frank Cannon

The key word in that last sentence is the word "adaptation." Most of these films ran longer than the 30 or 60-minute radio shows. The scripts, therefore, had to be "adapted" or changed to fit not only the time frame, but also to give the audience the key points of the movie and allow time for commercials and announcements. For fans of a particular film, it's fascinating to hear how the radio scriptwriter and director changed the film to fit the radio format. It often gives you the chance to discover a new nuance on the story or the performance.

Additionally, many of the shows often have the same actors that were in the original film. This gives you have another chance to experience the characters beyond the film, and the performers behind them.

**LET'S NOW** get back to *Rope*. *Rope* began as a British stage play written in 1929 by Patrick Hamilton. Hamilton was a British novelist and playwright who is best known for not only *Rope*, but for his play *Gas Light* which was also adapted for film. Many will remember the 1944 MGM film which starred Ingrid Bergman and was directed by George Cukor.

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KNX

## A GREAT PROGRAM SALUTES ITS GREAT NETWORK

Cecil B. deMille, famed producer whose radio career has matched his great success in motion pictures. As producer of the Lux Radio Theatre, he is welcomed at the loudspeakers of millions of radio listeners every Monday night. Hollywood has become the more real to countless radio devotees through the Lux Radio Theatre and Mr. deMille. Below you see him at work during production rehearsals of "Main Street." This program starred Barbara Stanwyck and Fred MacMurray.



Louis Silvers, our music master, shoulders a man-sized job in planning and directing the appropriate musical background for the Lux Radio Theatre. A real radio veteran, Lou Silvers is considered a peer in his profession.



CBS

COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM AT 'COLUMBIA SQUARE' HOLLYWOOD

Trade advertisement extols the virtues of motion pictures and radio on *Lux Radio Theatre* on CBS in 1938



The email that I received from Dr. Webb announced that a group of radio enthusiasts had created a podcast of a lost 1942 *Suspense* episode, *Rope*. . . . *Rope* was the third broadcast, produced just before Vanda left CBS, and seemed hopelessly lost. This new re-creation was based on the 1929 stage play that Hitchcock would eventually turn into his own film production, *Rope* (1948). *Rope* was one of the features at the Nitrate Picture Show at the George Eastman Museum in Rochester, NY. It occurred to me that it would be a good jumping off point to talk about the strong connection classic films had to classic radio.

One might assume that Hitchcock saw *Rope* when it first played at the Strand in London or at one of the other West End theatres, but apparently that guess would be wrong.

The play was first broadcast on an experimental live television broadcast in 1939 by the BBC. Hitchcock later claimed that this is where he was introduced to the play.

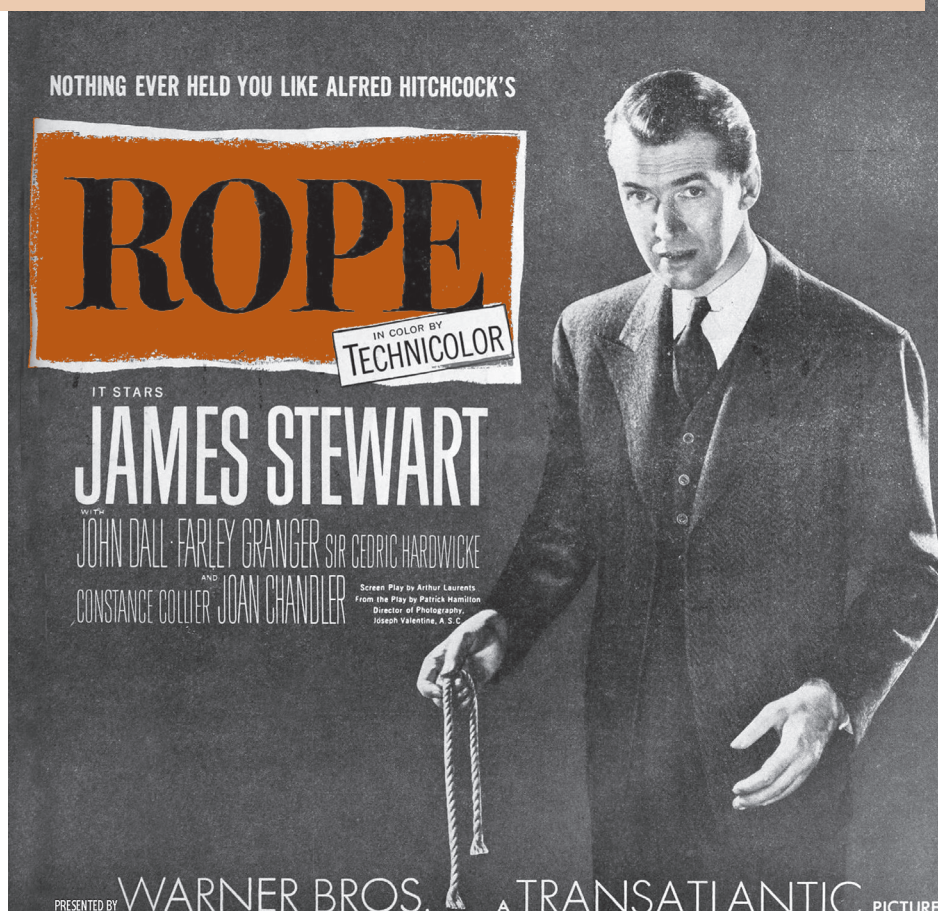


By necessity, in a world of live television without video editing, the program used long takes. Hitchcock would later explain this was the inspiration for the well-known film production technique he used to create the film in 1948—supposedly the entire drama was photographed in one take.

On July 8, 1942, however, *Rope* was chosen for a *Suspense* episode on radio. It was one of the first season of shows on the program. About half of the missing *Suspense* programs are from that summer 1942 season. It is possible that no recording was ever made of some broadcasts of that first season.

This was the reason that Dr. Webb sent out his email to us in the radio field. He and other *Suspense* fans were ecstatic that Rachel Pulliam and her Sole Twin Audios company had devoted their time to re-create that episode in audio form from the original script.

Rachel, who studied to become an elementary school teacher, got into classic radio as a hobby—listening to



CDs of old programs like *Suspense*, *The Whistler*, and *Escape*. About a decade ago, she discovered a Yahoo group that focused on re-creating performances on old radio scripts.

“I had no idea you could do that,” she told me, “The very first one I did was a re-creation of *Evening Primrose* which was an *Escape* program.” Amazingly, she created this program and *Rope* without the use of a technical staff. She did a casting call on line, provided the potential

actors with the script and recorded their performances, and mixed it with royalty free music and special effects. It’s quite an achievement for one person. She also added original music provided by her friend Dr. Ross C. Bernhardt for the *Rope* episode. Bernhardt is the Director of Choral Activities and Professor of Music at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. You can hear the results of their effort here on this link to the Mutual Audio Network. <https://cms.megaphone.fm/channel/MUTUAL9188504915?selected=MUTUAL1676350103>

Her other podcasts are available through Apple, YouTube and the Anchor.fm sites. She said this activity was a labor of love for her. We are fortunate to have such a talented producer providing us with these free adaptations. The important and exciting thing here



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for *Suspense* enthusiasts is that an audio production now exists of the formerly lost episode.

With regard to an audio version of the play/film *Rope* itself, Dr. Webb also provided me with a link to the Internet Archive group of BBC Radio recordings of Alfred Hitchcock plays which includes *Rope*. <https://archive.org/details/BBC->

presents-Alfred Hitchcock.

This version of *Rope* was performed at BBC Radio on December 03, 1983, and starred Alan Rickman. With all the resources of BBC Radio behind it, *Rope* is an extremely edgy production and worth a listen.

You will also notice in that link radio show recordings of *Rebecca* (1940),

*Strangers on A Train* (1951), *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), *The 39 Steps* (1935), as well as other Hitchcock films. In one case, there are two performances of *Strangers on a Train*—one with Michael Sheen and Bill Nighy, the other with Patrick Stewart.

So, take a moment to listen to a movie, and discover how film translates to the medium of radio and audio.🎧



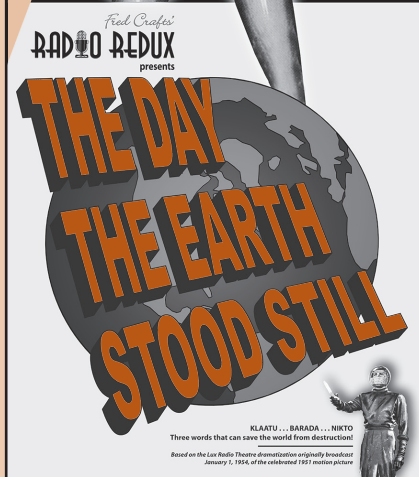
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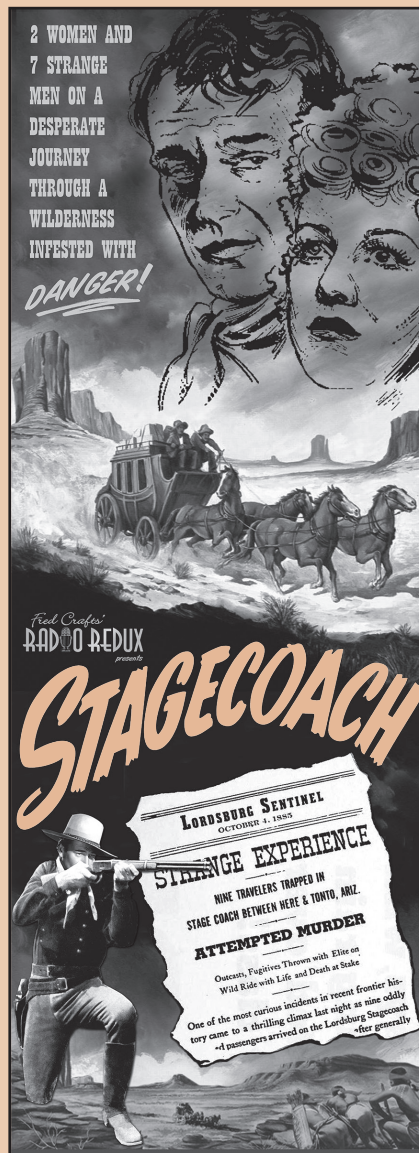


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# Ace Daredevil of Sky and Mind

**R**ADIO'S AVIATION HEROES were almost exclusively male; however, out in the real world a handful of pioneering women had already made their presence known. Ruth Elder, Blanche Scott, Ruth Law and Harriett Quimby were among those whose exploits might have made for inspiring listening. Unfortunately, most female roles in the typical aviation series consisted of girlfriends or airline hostesses. Enter Marilou Neumayer.

Mary Louise Neumayer was born on August 26, 1920, in Council Bluffs, IA. Her father, Lucius, was a hotel owner and avid pilot who was reportedly one of the first men in the state to earn his pilot's license following the end of the Great War. Marilou was introduced to the joy of flight at an early age by her father. "I was just 6-years-old when dad told mother a little white lie about taking me for a walk," she once explained to a reporter, "but instead we trekked off in dad's shiny new Cub—and it was fun." There were more such clandestine flights, but Marilou's attention became fixated upon an entertainment career. She made her radio debut at 10 when she appeared on a local radio program—*Kiddie Klub* and sang "Temptation." In high school and later at Duchesne College, Marilou concentrated on dramatics, making radio and stage appearances whenever possible.

In 1940, Marilou decided to pursue a radio career and moved to Chicago. The decision quickly paid off. Within three weeks of her arrival in the Windy City, she landed her first radio part on WGN's *Let Freedom Ring*. She won the continuing role of Joyce Ryan on *Captain Midnight* after two months. Marilou landed yet another continuing role playing Stella Carlon in *Ma Perkins*. Neumayer quickly amassed a resume that included appearances on *Mr. First Nighter*, *Breakfast in Hollywood*, *Shoot the Works*, *Breakfast Club*, *Bachelor's Children*, *Helpmate*, *Crime Files of Flamond*, *Chicago Theater of the Air*, *Painted Dreams*, *Care of Aggie Horn*, *Grand Hotel*, *Blind Date*, *Spotlight of Bands* and *Five After the Hour*.

It was Neumayer's role of Joyce Ryan on *Captain Midnight* that revived memories of Marilou's late father and their shared fascination with aviation. Talking with script writer Bob Burtt, who possessed an extensive aviation background, inspired the actress to earn her own pilot's license. In 1943, Marilou enrolled in the Civil Aeronautics Administration's ground school training course. The following year she took her first solo, began racking up flight hours and eventually

earned her pilot's license.

Marilou seems to have juggled a full schedule of activities during her time in Chicago. Besides her radio career and aviation, she maintained a keen interest in psychology and counseling as well as aiding in the war effort. No stranger to bond rallies and USO shows, she was selected as the NBC service men's first pin up girl.

During this same time, she was enrolled as a part time student at Northwestern University studying psychology. Combining her acting abilities with her evolving interest in therapy work, Neumayer joined a small group of actors participating in a program of psycho-dramatic therapy at a Chicago veteran's rehabilitation hospital. At least once a week, Marilou and her group visited the hospital and were read a case history of a traumatized serviceman. The actors would interact with the patient dramatizing incidents from his past in order to uncover clues the medical staff could use in effecting a cure. One of the first two soldiers released from the hospital as a result of the program was one of Marilou's patients. During this same general timeframe, she starred in *Registered Nurse*, a film for the American College of Surgeons intended to spur enlist-

ments in the Army Nursing Corps, appeared in several movie shorts and signed a film contract with Paramount Pictures.

With all that was happening in her career, it came as a surprise when Marilou announced her imminent retirement in 1946. She had met and become engaged to Dr. Harrison Putnam and made the decision to give up acting. One of Marilou's final radio appearances came on September 26, 1946, in an episode of *Crime Files of Flamond*. She was set to play a bride whose husband ends up murdered shortly after a nasty argument between the bride and her mother-in-law. Taking no chances, she phoned the Putmans, mother and son, to assure them there was absolutely no connection between her radio character and her real self.

Dr. Putnam passed away in 1970. Marilou then worked as a realtor for several years. Her interest in therapy was rekindled and at the age of 65 obtained a university degree in social work and counseling and was subsequently employed at a community hospital until her eventual retirement.

Marilou Neumayer Putnam died on April 20, 2013, at the age of 92. Radio, at its best, was sometimes capable of inspiring not only its listeners but also performers like Marilou Neumayer.👊



Caption as appeared in *Tune-In* (April 1945) : "All decked out in 32 pounds of flying suit, Marilou's ready to take to the air" as Joyce Ryan in *Captain Midnight*, Monday through Friday, 5:45 PM EWT.

# 2023 MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Your board of directors requires your valued feedback regarding two topics: our *Radiogram* publication and the 2024 SPERDVAC convention.

## TOPIC #1 RADIOGRAM

Constantly escalating printing and mailing costs have made our 11-times-a-year distribution of the *Radiogram* newsletter virtually unsustainable. Submitted for your approval, select which of the four options is most agreeable to you.

- ☐ *Radiogram* moves from 11 times a year to bi-monthly (six times a year)
- ☐ *Radiogram* increases the number of pages but moves to once per quarter (four times a year)
- ☐ *Radiogram* paper copy is discontinued and replaced with email PDF distribution.
- ☐ *Radiogram* print version is included for Gold and Platinum Members; Silver Level Membership would receive the email version.

Your input is vital to help us determine the best choices to mitigate our spending deficit. If our organization acquires more members, the aforementioned changes could be unnecessary.

## TOPIC #2 SPERDVAC CONVENTION

Our SPERDVAC 50th anniversary 2024 convention will be held for all our members and to honor all those who have supported our organization over the years. Please let us know your thoughts on the following topics:

1. Which location would you be most likely to attend?

- ☐ Costa Mesa, California (Hotel)
- ☐ Las Vegas, Nevada (Hotel)
- ☐ 3-Day SPERDVAC Convention Cruise

2. Would you be more likely to attend an event held?

- ☐ Thursday thru Sunday
- ☐ Sunday thru Wednesday

3. I am willing to donate in addition to the registration fee to support the convention. Yes/No

4. I am interested in a Premium VIP Package (Celebrity meet and greet, VIP seating, Autographed photos/photo opportunities, limited rehearsal seating, etc.) Yes/No

5. Which type of panels/presentations would you want to attend? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Relatives of classic radio stars
- ☐ Histories of classic radio programs/entertainers
- ☐ Research on classic radio shows (e.g., The Suspense Project or The Lost Jack Benny Scripts)
- ☐ Special Screenings of selected treasures from the SPERDVAC video vault.
- ☐ Panels for SPERDVAC preservation activities and acquiring uncirculated programs.
- ☐ Musical groups performing in the style of the classic radio era?
- ☐ Re-creations of classic radio episodes with special guests
- ☐ New audio theatre shows performed by special guests.

6. I would be willing to participate as a convention volunteer or the following,

- ☐ 2 hours
- ☐ 4 hours
- ☐ 6 hours
- ☐ 8 hours or more.

If we have missed something, please provide your thoughts at [info@sperdvac.com](mailto:info@sperdvac.com) and use Survey Feedback in the subject title. Thank you for taking the time to help to guide SPERDVAC into the next 50 years.

You may return this survey to:

SPERDVAC  
2625 Middlefield Road #171  
Palo Alto, Ca 94306-2516

THANK YOU!



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