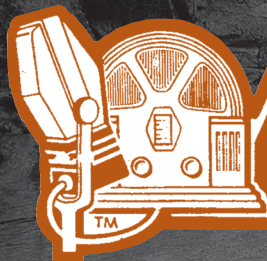


EASY ACES • BOSTON'S FACELESS MAN • REMEMBERING PARKYAKARKUS • THE ADVENTURERS CLUB



speedvac

RADIOGRAM

Volume 47 • Number 6

SEPTEMBER 2023

Stay
Tuned
for
Terror . . .

Yours truly,
JACK
the
RIPPER



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from the president

GREETINGS SPERDVAC MEMBERS:

I HOPE this message finds you all in good health and spirits. As we move into September, I am excited to share some important updates and developments within our organization.

Membership Survey Results

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to all of you who participated in our recent membership survey. Your engagement and feedback are essential for the growth and enhancement of our community. We received an impressive 28% response rate, a significant achievement considering that the average response rate for similar surveys in other organizations is typically between 3% to 6%. Your dedication to shaping the future of SPERDVAC is commendable, and I encourage all members to continue being actively involved.

2024 50th Anniversary Convention

The location for our momentous 50th anniversary convention has generated considerable interest among our members. After careful consideration and spirited discussions during our recent board meeting. We are currently working on finalizing the details, with a tentative date set for the first or second weekend of November 2024. Rest assured, as soon as we have all the information in place, we will share the exciting news with you.

SPERDVAC Cruise Idea

While the SPERDVAC cruise concept has generated much enthusiasm, we have decided to delay its implementation to 2025. We want to ensure this special event is meticulously planned and offers a truly memorable experience for all attendees. Our team will be dedicating the upcoming year to carefully crafting the cruise's options and possibilities, intending to present them to you next year. Your patience and understanding as we work towards this goal are greatly appreciated.

SPERDVAC Disc Archives Relocation

The relocation of our invaluable disc archives is well underway. We have completed an evaluation of our current facilities and are actively in the process of selecting a suitable new location. Moving such fragile and historically significant materials requires a meticulous approach to ensure their safety. The arduous process of packing, transporting,

and reorganizing the archives will take several days. We are considering sharing pictures of this process with you, so you can witness the efforts underway to preserve our treasured collection.

Virtual Convention and Radiogram Updates

Our first-ever virtual convention is just around the corner, scheduled for October 27 through 29, 2023. Our team is led by the very talented Zach Eastman. He has been working tirelessly to organize an unforgettable event. The actual event schedule and sign-up details will be communicated to you via email, and you can also look forward to reading about it in the October issue of the *Radiogram*. Additionally, we are currently reviewing the distribution schedule for the *Radiogram* and hope to provide updates in an upcoming issue.

Digital Restoration and Member Database

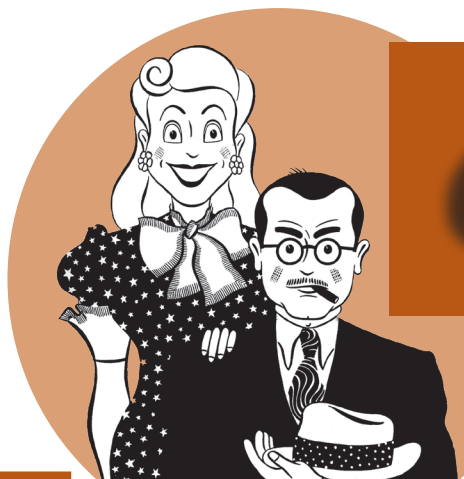
Corey Harker, our director of digital restoration, has been doing exceptional work in revitalizing our disc recordings, ensuring they remain accessible and enjoyable for all. We will keep you updated through email and *Radiogram* regarding the availability of the newly restored programs. Our membership chair, Sean Dougherty, continues to manage and maintain our member database and email communications. His dedication to ensuring our operations run smoothly is something we all benefit from. It's a big job and Sean makes it look easy, but we know better. Thank you to all the board members who are so very generous with their time and talents.

...

In closing, I want to extend my appreciation to all of you for your continued support and active engagement. Our collective efforts are what make SPERDVAC a vibrant and thriving community. I will have more exciting updates in the months to come.

Until next time, stay safe and stay tuned.📻

Timothy Knofler



Ladies and Gentlemen . . . *Easy Aces*

An introduction to one of radio's most comical, lovable and enduring programs as culled from various press announcements throughout the years.

IN THE ANNALS OF RADIO HISTORY, there are a few programs that have managed to capture the hearts of audiences across generations. One such gem is the radio show *Easy Aces*. A pioneer in the world of situational comedy, *Easy Aces* brought laughter, relatability, and a touch of glamour to the airwaves during the mid-20th century.

Premiering in 1930, *Easy Aces* was the brainchild of writer and actor Goodman Ace and his wife, Jane Ace. Set in the fictional suburban town of Easyville, the show centered around the comical and often mundane adventures of the suburban couple, Jane and Goodman. What set *Easy Aces* apart was its unique blend of humor, wit, and domestic situations that resonated deeply with its audience. The show's relatable characters and lighthearted stories provided a much-needed escape during the challenging times of the Great Depression and beyond.

At the core of *Easy Aces* were its endearing characters, Jane and Goodman. Jane, portrayed by Jane Ace herself, was a charming and quick-witted woman who navigated the challenges of domestic life with humor and grace. Her on-air chemistry with her real-life husband Goodman was palpable, creating an authenticity that drew listeners in. Goodman's deadpan humor and quirky interactions with Jane added layers of amusement to the show's narrative. The couple's dynamic mirrored the ordinary yet relatable moments in married life, making them an instant hit among listeners.

Easy Aces was not just a radio show; it was a storytelling experiment that pushed the boundaries of narrative structure. Instead of relying solely on punchlines, the show incorporated recurring storylines and ongoing character development. The Aces' adventures were carefully woven into longer arcs, allowing audiences to follow their journey and develop a deeper connection to the characters. This innovative approach laid the groundwork for future sitcoms and contributed to the evolution of comedic storytelling on radio and television.

What made *Easy Aces* stand out was its ability to extract humor from everyday situations. While other comedy shows of the era often relied on slapstick or exaggerated scenarios, *Easy Aces* found hilarity in the mundane. From misunderstandings at the grocery store to amusing observations about neighbors, the show had an uncanny knack for finding comedy in the little things. This relatability resonated with

listeners, who found solace in the show's ability to transform the ordinary into something extraordinary.

Easy Aces wasn't just a source of laughter; it also acted as a cultural mirror that reflected the values, concerns, and norms of its time. The show's portrayal of suburban life in the 1930s and 1940s captured the essence of American middle-class aspirations, family dynamics, and societal expectations. Moreover, the witty banter and timeless humor ensured that the show's appeal transcended its era, remaining relevant

even in the modern age. The themes of love, communication, and domesticity explored in *Easy Aces* are universal, allowing new generations of listeners to connect with the show's enduring charm.

The legacy of *Easy Aces* extends far beyond its years on the airwaves. The show not only paved the way for sitcoms on television but also left an indelible mark on comedic storytelling. The wit, subtlety, and relatability of the show inspired subsequent generations of writers, actors, and creators. Elements of its innovative narrative approach



can be seen in beloved television shows that followed, such as *I Love Lucy*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, and beyond. The show's legacy is a testament to its timeless humor and the lasting impact it had on the entertainment landscape.

In an era dominated by visual media and digital entertainment, the radio show *Easy Aces* still has the power to captivate audiences. Thanks to the availability of digital archives and streaming platforms, modern listeners can rediscover the magic of Jane and Goodman's witty exchanges and relive the joys of the Golden Age of Radio. For those seeking a nostalgic journey, *Easy Aces* serves as a delightful reminder of the enduring appeal of well-crafted humor and genuine human connection.

Easy Aces remains a shining example of how radio, even in its simplicity, can create a lasting impact on culture and entertainment. With its relatable characters, innovative storytelling, and timeless humor, the show continues to bring laughter and joy to listeners old and new. The legacy of *Easy Aces* is a testament to the enduring power of storytelling and the unique ability of radio to forge connections that transcend time. As we look back on this iconic radio show, we are reminded that the art of laughter knows no boundaries and that the magic of the airwaves can still bring smiles to faces, no matter the era. 🎧

the Mystery of Boston's

FACELESS

In 1953, a Boston radio personality pushed the boundaries of radio's disembodied voice concept by consistently concealing his face from audiences.



by Rei Dorne

IN THE BUSTLING WORLD of radio waves, where personalities rise and fall like the tides, one enigmatic figure had managed to capture the hearts and minds of Boston listeners, all while shrouding himself in an air of mystique.

Meet Morgan Baker—a man whose tale was as intriguing as his decision to leave the sun-soaked shores of California for the rugged climes of New England.

It's a question that has puzzled many: Why would someone swap the warmth of the west coast for the brisk embrace of New England's weather? State pride, some might argue, is the driving force. After all, who could resist the allure of steadfast loyalty to one's roots?

But Morgan's case is unique, for he defied convention, undertaking a journey that is often undertaken in reverse.

Yet, it's not only his choice of abode that kept the intrigue alive. It's the very essence of his being, his face—something most would consider a core aspect of identity—that remained veiled from the public eye. To describe it as a “matter” may seem odd, but to Morgan, it was a defining principle. He shielded his face from the prying gaze of publicity, a decision that defied the norm in a world where visibility often equates to success.

Morgan held the reins as the director of the *Housewives Protective League*, a program that graced the airwaves of Boston's station WEEI. And while he lacked the vocal prowess of a singer or the wit of a comedian, his simple yet engaging discourse on a plethora of subjects captured the attention of radio enthusiasts across the city. It was an astonishing feat—using just his voice, he'd cultivated a dedicated following and carved out a niche that defied the boundaries of traditional entertainment.

But what about the man behind the voice? Surely, a figure as prominent as Morgan would embrace public appearances, a chance to put a face to the captivating tones that resonate through the airwaves. Yet, that assumption would be far from the truth. Morgan had craftily managed to maintain an air of anonymity, a faceless enigma who communicated solely through

his vocal cords and leaves his mark with a simple signature on fan mail—a signature that had turned him into something of a legend within the WEEI corridors.

Speculations might arise, leading one to question the motives behind the enigmatic façade. Was there a hidden secret that Morgan guarded with such fervor? But the truth was refreshingly mundane. Morgan resided in the tranquil suburb of Milton, where an ultra-modern ranch house served as his haven. He was a family man, married with two children—an embodiment of ordinary pursuits, dabbling in amateur photography and furniture craftsmanship. His mode of transportation to work each day was nothing out of the ordinary, an embodiment of simplicity in a world often characterized by extravagance.

Morgan Baker was no enigmatic sorcerer delving into the depths of black magic, nor was he an eccentric collector of rare artifacts. Rather, he was a man who thrived on the airwaves, finding solace and satisfaction in being an unseen voice that resonated with thousands. It's a technique that defied the norms, and yet, it's the very reason behind his resounding success.

In a world where visibility reigns supreme, where celebrity is intertwined with the visual spectacle, Morgan Baker stood as a testament to the power of the unseen. He was a radio virtuoso who defied convention, captivating hearts and captivating imaginations, all while remaining steadfastly and unapologetically faceless. And as long as his voice continued to echo through the frequencies, the allure of the enigmatic Morgan Baker remained, a mystery that eluded easy explanation. 🗣️



Morgan Baker with back to camera, as usual, samples one of his sponsors in 70-year-old newspaper cut.

Write, Writers, Write

SPEAKING OF *RADIOGRAM*, ahem, a notable concern has arisen. Since the onset of the pandemic, our submissions have regrettably dwindled. While we manage to persevere and express our gratitude to all contributors, there have been instances when ol' Ed found himself restlessly pacing at night due to the lack of material to fill a 16-page magazine. Candidly, it makes no difference if we continue monthly, go bi-monthly or quarterly, or drop print altogether and go on-line weekly, monthly, etc., if there is no content *Radiogram* goes bust. If you can write—a requirement—and tell a good story, then we need you. Thank you in advance.

...

Now, I cannot praise enough the dedication of SPERDVAC's preservationists, namely Corey Harker and Zach Eastman, and Doug Hopkinson at Radio Archives, and their fellow laborers who spend their time and talents liberating discs and other media from deterioration. Their tireless efforts to safeguard what is literally our irreplaceable artifacts ensure that future generations can connect with—oh, let's get elegiac here: our rich tapestry of human history. That may be stating it excessively, but it is true. If you wish to participate in these efforts by volunteering your time and talent or by donating funds to help support the necessary equipment and shipping expenses, contact us at info@spervac.com. We have so many holdings and so little time.

...

Next, we have a couple of updates to our Lone Ranger timeline published in our July issue.

First, mouseketeer Lonnie Burr shared with us that he appeared in an early Cheerios commercial with Clayton Moore somewhere around 1954. Lonnie writes that, "We rode in on horses; he [the Lone Ranger] extolled the virtues of breakfast, specifically Cheerios, and then the second scene is me chomping down the cereal due to the Ranger's admonitions." He added: "Clayton was very pleasant and calm to the young ac-

tor who rode in on a horse, with Clayton also 'horsed.' I think part of my casting was finding a 'young, wholesome fellow who could ride well;' I owned my first horse (not a pony) at nine and at 10 did a title role doing my own riding in 'The Holy Terror' on a later series, *The Range Rider*." Thanks, Lonnie.

Second, two additional broadcasts have been uncovered. NPR's *All Things Considered* in recognition of the Lone Ranger's 75th anniversary in 2008 ran a 20-minute tribute to the American icon. Featured in the commentary was Fred Foy, who, naturally, recited the memorable Lone Ranger narrative . . . one last time. Fred passed away less than a year later.

In addition, the September 8, 1960, episode of *To Tell the Truth* showcased Fran Stryker, whose affidavit as read by host Bud Collyer asserted that Stryker was the "creator" of the Lone Ranger. With regard to the latter, Stryker answers a question from one of the panelists that throws off the entire panel and every Lone Ranger enthusiast on the planet. Panelist Ralph Bellamy asked the trio to identify the place of origin, and the "real" Stryker replied Buffalo, NY. That response sent the panelists disqualifying that "imposter," but once Stryker rose as the real Fran Stryker the panel went berserk. In unison they cried that everyone knows the Lone Ranger came into this world in Detroit, but Stryker calmly replies that two initial episodes were broadcast in Buffalo. But from the expressions on the faces of the panelists and emcee Bud Collyer, *doubt* reigned. Hmmm . . . wonder what he meant, *exactly*.

This brings us to yet a further claim found in Fran Stryker, Jr.'s biography of his father, *His Typewriter Grew Spurs*. A Lone Ranger fan sent us a note that Stryker, Jr. argues that the first broadcast of *The Lone Ranger* was not January 30 but January 31. Oh boy! Those purist researchers obsessed with detail must have settled that issue, but just wondering: Has that date been hidden from researchers all these years?🐾

RADIO LAFFS WITH EDDIE CANTOR

Eddie Cantor, Jimmy Wallington, the Mad Russian and Parkyakarkus in conversation on *The Eddie Cantor Show*.

Jimmy: Gee—a Clipper! That's the last word in airplanes.
Eddie: No, Jimmy. The last word is "jump."

Jimmy: What a strange land! You know, here, the Ethiopians pray in the streets.

Eddie: That's nothing. In America the pedestrians do the same thing.

Eddie: Look at the Rhumba those girls are doing! I'd love to bring them back to America to dance for congress.

Jimmy: Why?

Eddie: That would be the greatest motion ever brought before the house.

Russian: Boy, you should hear me play that old song, *Petunia!*

Eddie: *Petunia*? How does it go?

Russian: Pe-tunia old gray bonnet. . .

Parky: This is a League of Nations farm.

Eddie: League of Nations farm? How's that?

Parky: I've got Belgian hares, French poodles, Australian sheep, and on the porch are 2000 geese.

Eddie: 2000 geese on the porch?

Parky: Yeah—Portugese.

Eddie: Did you know that in Washington a man cured hundreds of cases of sleeping sickness with just three words?

Jimmy: Three words?

Eddie: Yes! He just stood up and said: "Congress is adjourned."

Parky: We got a 75¢-dinner and a \$1-dinner.

Eddie: What's the difference between them?

Parky: With the \$1-dinner you get medical attention.

Eddie: What's this—only hash? Don't I get a choice?

Parky: Sure! You get choice. Take it or leave it! . . . What dessert you want, you lucky fellow?

Eddie: Lucky fellow! But I haven't had anything to eat yet!

Parky: You don't know how lucky you are!

Eddie: You know what a senator is?

Parky: There's a matador, a picador and a senator.

Eddie: No, stupid—matadors and picadors fight the bull.

Parky: I see . . . senators just throw the bull.

Eddie: I'm angry with Ida.

Jimmy: What happened?

Eddie: Clark Gable had dinner with us and he kissed Ida's cheek.

Jimmy: Yes, but that happened six weeks ago.

Eddie: I know . . . but she hasn't washed her face since!

remembering parkyakarkus

by Alan Irving



IN THE GOLDEN AGE OF RADIO, one name echoed through the airwaves, instantly eliciting laughter and joy from millions of listeners: Nick Parkyakarkus (pronounced “Park-yuh-carcass”). With a unique blend of wit, wordplay, and character versatility, Parkyakarkus became a household name, leaving an indelible mark on comedy history. This article delves into the life, career, and enduring legacy of the enigmatic radio comedian whose humor transcended time and generations.



Born Harry Einstein on May 6, 1904, in Boston, MA, Parkyakarkus would later adopt this quirky moniker, a nod to his Greek and Armenian heritage. Raised in a family of entertainers, Einstein’s destiny seemed preordained. His father was a vaudeville performer, and young Harry grew up surrounded by the vibrant world of entertainment. He honed his comedic chops through local stage

performances and soon discovered a flair for radio.

Parkyakarkus made his radio debut in the 1930s on *The Eddie Cantor Show*. His unique voice, a mix of playful accents and zany characterizations, captured the attention of listeners across the nation. But it was his appearances on *Al Pearce and His Gang* that truly solidified his reputation as a comedic genius. Parkyakarkus introduced a roster of uproarious characters, each with their own distinct quirks and accents, demonstrating his remarkable vocal versatility.

One of Parkyakarkus’ most beloved characters was Hubie Cushman, a bumbling everyman with a knack for getting into absurd situations. The character’s catchphrase, “You know what? I gotta sit down!” became a cultural phenomenon, instantly recognizable to fans of the show. Parkyakarkus effortlessly slipped into various personas, from the lovable eccentric to the snarky wise guy, showcasing his unmatched range as a performer.

In an era when scripted content dominated the airwaves, Parkyakarkus stood out for his improvisational prowess. He often engaged in ad-lib sessions, interacting with the audience and weaving their responses into his comedic routines. This interactive approach endeared him to listeners, making them feel like active participants in his comedic world. Parkyakarkus’ ability to think on his feet and create humor on the spot set a precedent for later comedians and helped redefine the boundaries of radio entertainment.

As with many comedians of his time, Parkyakarkus occasionally faced criticism for his portrayal of ethnic stereotypes. While his intent was often light-hearted and aimed at celebrating diverse cultures, some of his material would be considered insensitive by today’s standards. It’s essential to view his work within the context of its era, acknowledging both the progress made in understanding cultural sensitivities and the broader impact he had on comedy.

Parkyakarkus’ influence extended beyond his radio career. His inventive comedic style paved the way for future generations of comedians, inspiring the likes of Mel Brooks, Sid Caesar, and more. The knack for creating memorable characters and his fearless approach to improvisation can be seen as a direct precursor to the sketch comedy shows that became popular in the later decades.

Behind the laughter, Parkyakarkus battled personal demons. His

struggle with alcoholism cast a shadow over his career, leading to sporadic work and periods of absence from the limelight. Tragically, on November 23, 1958, while performing at a charity event in California, Harry Einstein suffered a fatal heart attack. The world lost a comedic genius whose legacy would continue to bring laughter to generations to come.

Though Parkyakarkus left us too soon, his humor lives on. Recordings of his radio performances, including his iconic characters and catchphrases, have been preserved and are easily accessible through various platforms. His work continues to inspire comedy enthusiasts, reminding us of the power of laughter to transcend time and connect people across generations.

In the annals of comedy history, Parkyakarkus occupies a special place. With his distinctive voice, multifaceted characters, and groundbreaking improvisational skills, he left an indelible mark on the world of entertainment. His legacy serves as a reminder of the timeless appeal of humor and the enduring impact of those who dedicate their lives to making us laugh. As we revisit his recordings and relive his comedic genius, let us celebrate Parkyakarkus as an artist who brought joy to countless lives through the magic of radio. 🎤



Promotional photo for Parky's 1945 series *Meet Me at Parky's*, later broadcast over Mutual. Parky is flanked by Joan Barton and Patsy Bolton.

Robert Bloch's
Yours truly,
**JACK
the
RIPPER**

BROTHER ON



OF THE DARKNESS

by Patrick Lucanio and Gary Coville

The fascination surrounding the enigma of Jack the Ripper has gripped the public's attention since his initial reign of terror in the East End of London back in 1888, spanning a remarkable 135 years. Despite the multitude of conjectures that have been put forth regarding his true identity, he continues to linger in the obscurity, a realm where only works of creative literature have managed to shed light on his significance in the contemporary realm. Among these, a particular piece of literary art, along with its adaptations in radio presentations, has transcended the boundaries of a mere historical inquiry, propelling Jack the Ripper into the realm of supernatural evil.

ROBERT BLOCH'S short story "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper," first published in the July 1943 edition of *Weird Tales*, set the mold for the many works that take Jack the Ripper from the realm of crime fiction (i.e., from the realm of history) to the realm of supernatural horror, and it is in such tales that the truest mythic representation of Jack the Ripper is unveiled. Here the Ripper emerges as not just a criminal harassing London, as depicted in Marie Belloc-Lowndes's *The Lodger*, but rather as an absolute malevolent presence loose in the civilized world. As such, and because of Bloch's theme, the Ripper has become a major figure in the literary genre of horror. The Ripper's name may be absent but his presence is nonetheless sensed in the spate of slasher films whose narratives may or may not be rooted in the supernatural but whose renderings are always horrifying, both aesthetically and morally. Hence, Jack the Ripper is now barely distinguishable from such other demonic figures in literature as Dracula and Mr. Hyde.

In "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper," Bloch fashions a first-person narrative about a distinguished Briton named Sir Guy Hollis who arrives in modern Chicago in pursuit of Jack the Ripper, whom he believes is still alive. According to Sir Guy's implausible theory, Jack the Ripper was a sorcerer whose killings and mutilations were actually sacrifices to

"Hecate and the dark gods" who grant "boons of eternal youth." Sir Guy's theory proves correct when Sir Guy himself becomes yet another victim. Afterward, the narrator, John Carmody (with whom we have felt sympathy throughout the course of events), confides that Sir Guy—indeed, we—should address him as "Jack" not John.

Bloch's story serves as excellent proof that horror need not be basted in explicit gore to be effective. Indeed, Bloch's tale not only elicits dread, primarily through atmosphere, but it purges dread through its celebrated ironic ending. As a gothic horror tale, it has few rivals, despite its modern setting.

Structurally, "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper," follows a simple four-part design marked distinctly by four changes of setting. Bloch opens his story in the office of John Carmody, a psychiatrist, where Sir Guy relates a succinct history of the Jack the Ripper crimes before telling Carmody that he believes the Ripper is loose in Chicago. Carmody objects to such a claim, arguing that a man of 85 years couldn't possibly be murdering young women in Chicago. At this point Sir Guy offers his theory, asserting that Jack the Ripper has never grown older. Admitting that his theory is a crazy one, he states a maxim that could easily elicit agreement from any modern Ripperologist: "All the theories about the Ripper are crazy. The idea that he was a doctor. Or a maniac. Or a woman. The reasons advanced



Robert Bloch in 1943

for such beliefs are flimsy enough. There's nothing to go by. So why would my notion be any worse?" Carmody replies that even doctors and maniacs grow old, but Sir Guy will not be dissuaded by mere logic; he then advances his theory in detail:

What about sorcerers? . . . Necromancers. Wizards. Practicers of Black Magic? . . . I studied everything. After a while I began to study the dates of the murders. The pattern those dates formed. The rhythm. The solar, lunar, stellar rhythm. The sidereal aspect. The astrological significance. . . . Suppose Jack the Ripper didn't murder for murder's sake alone? Suppose he wanted to make—a sacrifice? It is said that if you

Adapted from "Brother of the Darkness," chapter 3 of Gary Coville and Patrick Lucanio's *Jack the Ripper: His Life and Crimes in Popular Entertainment* (McFarland 1999)



Laird Cregar as Mr. Slade, i.e., Jack the Ripper, in the film adaptation of Marie Belloc-Lowndes novel, *The Lodger*. Reportedly, at the time of the film's release Cregar portrayed John Carmody in the radio adaptation of Bloch's story on *The Kate Smith Show*.

offer blood to the dark gods that they grant boons. Yes, if a blood offering is made at the proper time when the moon and the stars are right and with the proper ceremonies—they grant boons. Boons of youth. Eternal youth.

Robert Bloch was a follower of H. P. Lovecraft, the famed horror writer whose output usually found publication in *Weird Tales*, and at this juncture, Lovecraft's influence on Bloch is evident. Bloch never truly identifies the "dark gods," although in an especially ironic yet subtle clue to the Ripper's identity, Carmody surveys his "neighbors and began to wonder . . . How many of them were playing a part, concealing something? How many would worship Hecate and grant that horrid goddess the dark boon of blood?" Sir Guy states later that, "a mad beast is loose on this world! An ageless, eternal beast, sacrificing to Hecate as the dark gods!" But Bloch never specifically delineates this Hecate as the mythic "Terrible Mother" who devours men other to make reference to a goddess. In other works, however, Bloch is quite explicit with respect to the mythology, such as the ample treatment of Egyptian mythology in "The

Opener of the Way" (1936). In "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" Bloch merely drops the name Hecate, leaving us essentially with generic dark gods as the true power for the Ripper's existence. As such, the dark gods influence is not unlike the direct "Cthulhian" influence in Bloch's Lovecraftian works like "The Shambler from the Stars" (*Weird Tales*, September 1935). The theme of a pact with dark gods is pervasive in the Bloch canon, reaching its zenith in his Hugo award-winning story, "The Hell-bound Train," published in the September 1958 edition of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. As a supernatural element, it is easy to conclude that the dark gods remain pretty much Lovecraftian, if only by circumstance. But what is important is that the Ripper seems to be an extension of the dark gods. Amazingly, even Carmody balks at any kind of explanation

for his existence; he is simply matter-of-fact, existing without explanation. Carmody, like those Lovecraftian researchers ever decoding the sacred writings of Cthulhu, has somehow discovered the secrets of eternity by making a pact with the dark gods, or perhaps with Hecate herself.

It is significant at this point in the story that Carmody, also like those Lovecraftian researchers, is no simple man but rather a man of letters, a member of the "so-called intelligentsia." As a psychiatrist, Carmody is sought out by Sir Guy because Carmody is the ideal man for his purpose. Sir Guy tells Carmody that, "You number among your acquaintances many writers, painters, poets. The so-called intelligentsia. The bohemians. The lunatic fringe from the near north side" which seems to draw the Ripper. It is at this point that Bloch begins making an estranged, alternate world out of mundane trappings. In fact, Bloch turns the mundane into the bizarre by ever transfiguring his milieu, moving slowly from a Chicago office through the "lunatic fringe from the near north side" and a ginmill "off South Clark Street" to culminate in a dark alley whose fog resembles "London fog" in

the month of November—"the place and the time of the Ripper murders," Sir Guy notes.

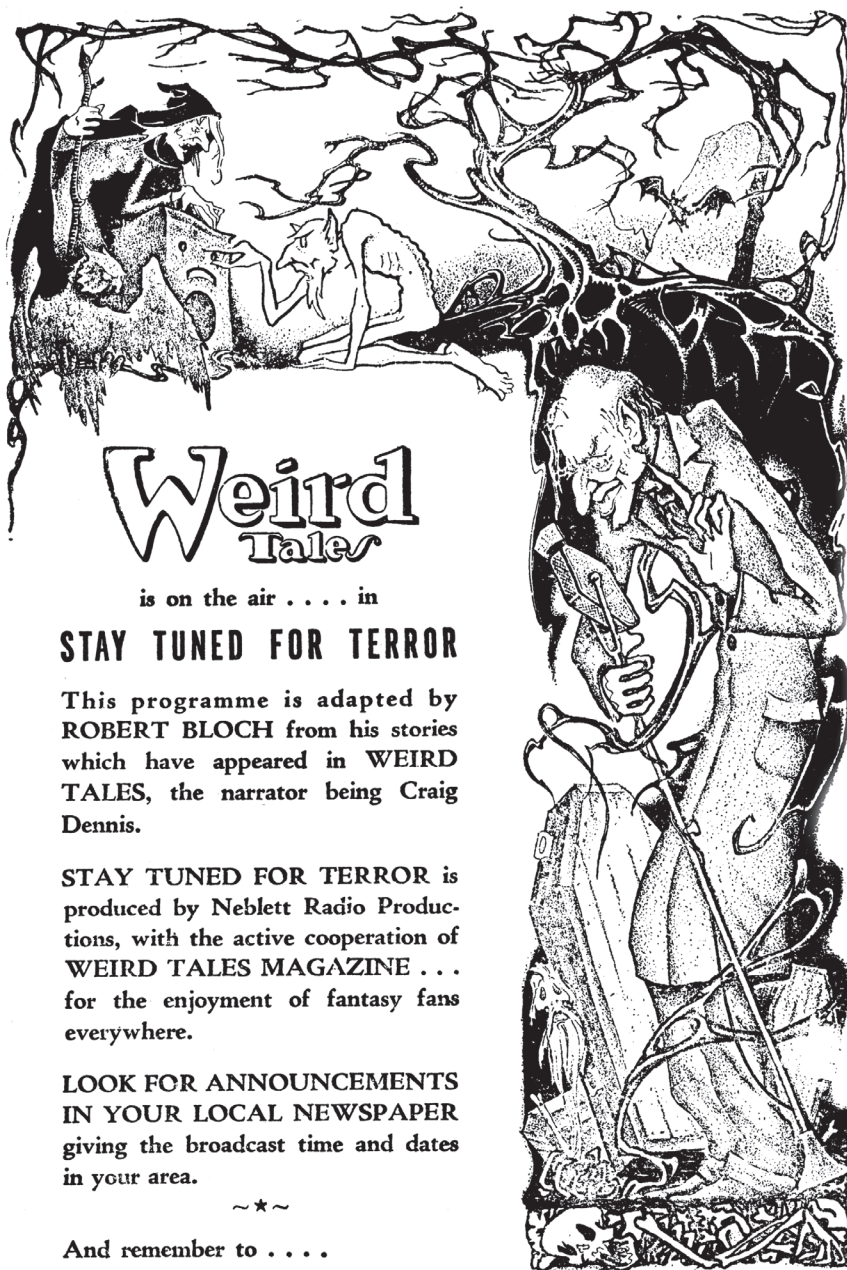
Accordingly, the characters grow ever more eccentric—ever more estranged from the norm—concomitantly to the settings. From the office of a respectable psychiatrist, Bloch takes us to the studio of Lester Baston—described by Carmody as "a real screwball"—where we meet the "lunatic fringe." It is here that Sir Guy gets a "monocle-full," as Carmody quips, of the members of the intelligentsia. Bloch writes that Sir Guy

saw LaVerne Gonnister, the poetess, hit Hymie Kralik in the eye. He saw Hymie sit down on the floor and cry until Dick Pool accidentally stepped on his stomach as he walked through to the dining-room for a drink. He heard Nadia Vilihoff the commercial artist tell Johnny Odcutt that she thought his tattooing was in dreadful taste, and he saw Barclay Melton crawl under the dining-room table with Johnny Odcutt's wife.

Here Bloch plays up the stereotypes with purpose; he describes a world in which the elite eschew the social norm with self-indulgent resolve, and such a description may be stereotypical but it nonetheless illustrates the often hostile view of the intelligentsia by what is otherwise described as the common folk. But even more discerning is that Bloch depicts the group as itself eccentric. In fact the group accepts Sir Guy's theory, but the members of this lunatic fringe accept the theory solely for its eccentricity and not for any inherent value much like the manner in which our modern popular culture critics radically accept "cult films," particularly those of Edward D. Wood, Jr. Baston, always referring to Sir Guy as "the Walrus," states that Sir Guy "isn't kidding" about his search for the Ripper, but then just as quickly slaps Sir Guy on the back telling the group that:

Our English cousin is really on the trail of the fabulous Jack the Ripper. You all remember Jack the Ripper, I presume? Quite a cutup in the old days, as I recall. Really had some ripping good times when he went out on a tear.

Time through cliché has taken its toll on Bloch's surprise ending, but anyone reading the story soon discovers just how transparent the ending is anyway. This is not Bloch's deficiency as a writer, but it is evidence of a proficient writer of horror stories. The ending is actually the story's strength in that it does not rest so much on the ending as surprise,



Weird Tales

is on the air in

STAY TUNED FOR TERROR

This programme is adapted by ROBERT BLOCH from his stories which have appeared in WEIRD TALES, the narrator being Craig Dennis.

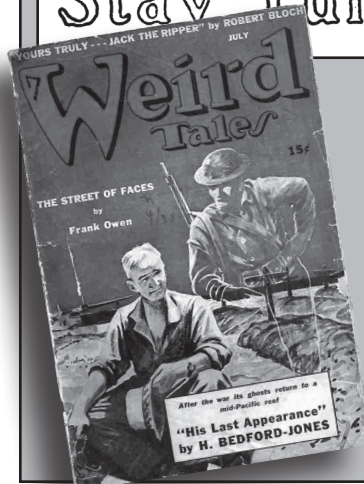
STAY TUNED FOR TERROR is produced by Neblett Radio Productions, with the active cooperation of WEIRD TALES MAGAZINE . . . for the enjoyment of fantasy fans everywhere.

LOOK FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS IN YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER giving the broadcast time and dates in your area.

~*~

And remember to

Stay Tuned for Terror!



Advertisement in the Canadian edition of *Weird Tales* promotes the radio series *Stay Tuned for Terror*, which reportedly also carried the title *Weird Tales' Stay Tuned for Terror*. At left is the cover of the July 1943 edition of *Weird Tales*, which premiered Bloch's celebrated story. Bloch reported that the success of "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" led to his radio series, and its subsequent success on radio caught the attention of Alfred Hitchcock, who purchased several of his stories for his television series and eventually purchased Bloch's novel, *Psycho*.

the sudden revelation that the narrator, with whom we have had sympathy, is the killer, but rather on the admission itself. By using a first-person point of view, Bloch clearly establishes that the Ripper is not an objective evil (an omnipotent force "out there") but a subjective one, an omnipotent force that lives within us all. Bloch demonstrates this by allowing the Ripper to take us into his confidence; moreover, Bloch mirrors the ubiquitous "I" of the narrative to reflect back to us. After all, we become the Ripper. It is not Carmody who whispers, "Never mind the 'John,' just call me—'Jack'" as much as it is the reader who whispers the words and raises the knife. We indeed read it, we say it, we acknowledge it: we are Jack the Ripper.

Bloch himself once stated that his story had "continued to lead a charmed life in print, and on radio and television . . . [to the point] over the years Jack and I have become blood brothers." Charmed life indeed; by Bloch's own estimation the story has well over 50 revivals in its 50-plus years of existence. In part this is due to Bloch's heavy use of dialogue and his four simple settings; such a structure made the transition from pulp magazine to radio drama desirable. Those dark and sinister miasmatic alleys of 19th-century Whitechapel and the uncountable other venues where Ripper-like murders have been conceived and executed just lend themselves admirably to the mental and emotional images that radio listeners create for themselves. Hence, just as the eerie, fog-laden byways of *The Lodger* found a receptive home in the imaginative minds of radio listeners, the frightening dens of Chicago's south side of "Yours truly, Jack the Ripper" found a similar retreat.

ACCORDING TO BLOCH, the first dramatization of "Yours truly, Jack the Ripper" was broadcast January 7, 1944, on the CBS variety series *The Kate Smith Show*. Bloch wrote in the "Eyrie" (letters to the editor) section of *Weird Tales* (July 1945) that, "For many years I've had certain pet ideas about doing a radio horror show of my own . . . the closest I came to realizing my ambition in the past was when Laird Cregar did 'Yours truly, Jack the Ripper' over the Kate Smith hour in '44."

Laird Cregar, who was currently starring as Mr. Slade in John Brahm's *The Lodger* (officially released by 20th Century-Fox on the very date of the broadcast), portrayed Carmody in the 15-minute sketch in which Carmody

"STAY TUNED FOR TERROR"

With Craig Dennis, Don Doolittle, Francis Spencer, Romelle Fay, others

Writer: Robert Bloch

Production: Howard Keegan

15 Mins.

Co-op

13 Stations

(Craig Dennis Productions, Chicago)

Written originally by Robert Bloch for *Weird Tales* mag and later adapted for radio by the author, these 39 quarter-hour episodes, each a complete story in itself, make up a series of hair-raisers that should appeal to listeners who like a horror story for a nightcap—and after the children have been tucked in bed. Howard Keegan, who originated the successful "Lights Out" on the airwaves, is the producer here also, and his expert direction proves as conducive of nightmares as a Dagwood sandwich.

The Bloch-Keegan combo achieves a maximum of scariness with small casts and the standard ghostly sound effects (squeaking doors, whistling winds, etc.) in the 12 minutes of the 15-minute open-end disks allotted for dramaturgy (there's a minute-and-a-half set aside on each end for commercials, with no middle pitch, which makes for unbroken continuity and resultant build-up in suspense). Romelle Fay provides eerie organ-issimos to background the chill-inspiring thesping of Craig Dennis, Don Doolittle, Francis Spencer, etc.

Titles cue general trend. "Man Who Raised the Dead" is a guess at what might have happened to Hitler; "Satan's Phonograph" is about a man's soul being lifted out of his body and imprisoned in a phonograph machine; "Strange Flight of Richard Clayton" concerns a rocket trip to the moon; "Grinning Ghoul" is just that, and so on. "Swan Lake" is the effective theme.

"Ghoul," to give an idea, details the story of a cemetery keeper plagued by a sleep-walking, poker-faced professor to look into the matter of ghouls living in caverns under the cemetery, professor claiming he has dreamed about them during his somnambulings. Cemetery keeper fails for it and, with a friend, accompanies the prof to the very tombstone the latter has dreamed about as marking the entrance to the caverns. They push the stone, a boulder rolls away, revealing deep-descending steps, and they go down into the earth. The prof drops the lantern, and, in inky darkness, with enough caterwauling to wake the dead, the ghouls do away with the cemetery keeper's friend. Keeper escapes, however, after a struggle with one of the fiends, during which he tears off what feels like one of their faces, only to find on emerging from the caverns that it's a mask. It's the professor's, of course.

Mike.

From the November 7, 1945, edition of *Variety* is this review of the syndicated/transcribed production of *Stay Tuned for Terror*. There is no mention of any affiliation with *Weird Tales* magazine other than Robert Bloch had written for the magazine.

narrates the story; amazingly, the sketch ends with Carmody's admission that he is, indeed, Jack the Ripper. As innocuous as the ending sounds in our modern era, it nonetheless seems to run contrary to radio standards. In context, the ending mitigates radio's fear of unjust compensation; the ultimate revelation of Carmody's true identity as Jack the Ripper serves only to validate what had been to that point perceived as Sir Guy's insane obsession. The concluding words of Carmody that

we "Never mind the 'John,' just call me—'Jack'" remain the concluding words of the radio adaptation but with an emphasis on the *revelation*, not the Ripper's impending murder of Sir Guy. The audience is free to imagine that the Ripper is about to kill and escape into the fog; in fact, as the drama ends there are no creative sound effects employed to nudge the listener along to any conclusion. We do not hear the Ripper's knife plunging into

Sir Guy's body, nor do we hear a lifeless body falling to the ground. The faint of heart are at perfect liberty to invent an ending in which the police arrive and frighten off the Ripper. It is fair to conclude here that based on the logic of radio, Carmody's words may lead *in medias res* just as well as to the denouement.

It needs to be noted at this point that the recording used for review was a single 15-minute sketch with no introduction or closing. The performance was acted by only two individuals playing Carmody and Sir Guy. It is not possible to detect Cregar's voice in the performance, however, nor to discern the context in which the sketch was included in the Kate Smith variety series.

Bloch adapted his story in 1944 for his own series, *Stay Tuned for Terror*, a syndicated drama produced and directed by John Nebbett. The production history remains obscure; apparently there are no recordings available of this series. Bloch writes that he now had the opportunity to knock "on the lid of my coffin in the shape of an assignment to adapt my own stories for *Stay Tuned for Terror*. This series of 15-minute programs is being transcribed at CBS studios in Chicago. A remarkable radio voice has been found in Craig Dennis, the narrator, and he is supported by a large and versatile cast. Original organ scores are

used in each show. And the production is supervised by Johnny Nebbett of 'So the Story Goes' fame. The program may have been also titled *Weird Tales* since Bloch notes that the magazine "has generously permitted the use of its name, and I trust that the program will prove worthy of this distinction." Also a full-page advertisement in the magazine indicated that "*Weird Tales* is on the air . . . in *Stay Tuned for Terror*" (at left).

A year later on March 6, 1945, "Your



Truly, Jack the Ripper" was dramatized on the NBC series *Mollé Mystery Theatre* and the production was later incorporated into the syndicated anthology series *Mystery Playhouse*. Host Peter Lorre introduced the *Mystery Playhouse* repeat by noting appropriately that "there is the element of the supernatural in the story that will amaze you; for it seems that the spirit world has given the black heart of Jack the Ripper the power of everlasting

life." The 30-minute adaptation essentially follows Bloch's structure, but a few changes were made. Carmody is given a nurse named Miss Cannister, and the bohemian, brusque artist Lester Baston is now a more subdued Les Banton, a newspaper reporter. Bloch's ending remains intact, but radio's decorum is preserved by an epilogue assuring us that Carmody will face justice. Following the murder of Sir Guy, Carmody is arrested, and Miss Cannister tells Banton that Carmody believes that "the gods won't let him be executed." Moreover, she insists that Carmody actually believes that he is Jack the Ripper which convinces her that Carmody is insane. This worries Banton because he tells her that the law doesn't execute the insane—it allows them to live. Miss Cannister expresses fear at the revelation that Carmody just might be the Ripper, but Banton interrupts her gasp, saying cautiously, "Who knows?"

As a footnote, Bloch's story and presumably his radio play were adapted by Barré Lyndon, who had written the script for John Brahm's *The Lodger* in 1944, for the NBC television series, *Thriller* (April 11, 1961). For the 60-minute format, Bloch's succinct narrative necessitated a broader purview, and, accordingly, Lyndon embellished the story with an irrelevant romance between painter Hymie

Kralik, an otherwise insignificant character in the original story, and his model Arlene, who becomes the Ripper's fifth victim. Lyndon added a third major character, police detective Jago, who replaces Carmody as the voice of skepticism. Carmody, himself, is relegated to a rather passive voice in the background.

As an additional footnote, Bloch's concept that the Ripper was a manifestation of a relentless supernatural force is projected far into the future for the NBC television series *Star Trek*. Using "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" as a springboard, his futuristic "Wolf in the Fold," first broadcast December 22, 1967, forces us to face the prospect that the future is not a hiding place where our own inadequacies will be smoothed away. People may change in meager and superficial ways, he asserts, but certain primordial instincts will live on through eternity and beyond, a notion that echoes the monstrous presence in French writer Guy de Maupassant's "The Horla," written in 1887, one year before the Ripper murders themselves.

Bloch's notion of the Ripper returned to radio drama in the "The Strange Case of Lucas Lauder," broadcast February 26, 1975, over *CBS Mystery Theater*, one of the most heralded attempts to resurrect dramatic radio. Writer George Lowther offered a tale of the Ripper's wandering immortal spirit, not unlike Bloch's "Wolf in the Fold," in a story of a condemned prisoner's confession to the warden that he was possessed by the specter of Jack the Ripper vis-à-vis de Maupassant's "The Horla." The warden comes to believe that the Ripper's murderous soul has possessed him. As is so crucial to the true gothic story, it is love that has the power to overcome evil, and responding to classic radio's standards, love conquers all.

IN TOTAL, what makes the singular story "Yours truly, Jack the Ripper" so vital to the Ripper's myth of Jack the Ripper is that Robert Bloch cleverly blended history with fiction. The appeal of Bloch's tale relies more on its ability to elucidate the mystery of the Ripper (i.e., the vicious crimes and his eerie anonymity) in terms of the motif of the traditional horror story, namely that evil is a metaphysical reality, than on storytelling alone. The result is that the figure of Jack the Ripper transcends history to become an eponymous figure. The Ripper is no longer just a criminal but a hateful monster possessed by supernatural evil.☛

AND ASK ABOUT *Stay tuned for* **TERROR**

TO FILL THAT LATE EVENING SPOT!

A new 15-minute package!
Gripping, suspense-packed tales
of horror that will chill the spine
of every listener! Weird, fearful
stories by famed "creeper"
author, Robert Bloch! Now
ready on transcriptions!



NEBLETT RADIO PRODUCTIONS

PROGRAMS WITH PROVEN POWER

360 N. Michigan Avenue - - Chicago 1, Illinois

Advertisement in the January 3, 1945, edition of *Variety* promotes *Stay Tuned for Terror* featuring "weird, fearful stories by famed 'creeper' author, Robert Bloch."

The time: 1985
The crime: Murder
The suspect: Jack The Ripper!
The only ones who can stop him are his next targets!

BRIDGE ACROSS TIME

Starring
David Hasselhoff
"Knight Rider"
and
Stephanie Kramer
"Hunter"

FRIDAY NIGHT WORLD PREMIERE
MOVIE! 8PM 4, 10

Robert Bloch's idea that Jack the Ripper was an eternal demonic force reached its most absurd level in 1985 in the television movie-of-the-week *Bridge Across Time*, premiering November 22. In William F. Nolan's script, when London Bridge was moved stone-by-stone from London to Lake Havasu, AZ, the evil spirit of Jack the Ripper moved with it. Naturally, he started in Arizona where he left off in England. The film was re-released and syndicated under two other titles, *Arizona Ripper* and *Terror at London Bridge*.



'Following the off-trail path . . . ever onward'

STARTING IN THE 1950s, on the heels of Sir Edmund Hillary's conquest of Mount Everest, television began peppering the airwaves with true life accounts of exploration and adventure. Series such as *I Search for Adventure*, *Expedition*, *Bold Journey*, *True Adventure*, *Danger is My Business* and *Kingdom of the Sea* enjoyed enthusiastic audiences. This type of programming represented an area in which radio was at a distinct disadvantage. Nonetheless, one forward looking radio series made a worthy effort.

By 1947, The Adventurers Club of Chicago had been in existence for 36 years and in that time had tallied an impressive roster of members. When the idea was conceived to base a radio series on the real-life exploits of some of the Chicago club's members the proposed series soon took shape in the form of *The Adventurers Club*. The program would originate from station WBBM, CBS's Chicago station, and was carried across the full Columbia Network. The W.A. Sheaffer Pen Company signed on to sponsor the program. Some of Chicago's top radio talent were utilized in producing the series. Ken Nordine was hired as announcer. Jack and Gretchen Sharp collaborated on the scripts, Russ Young directed, and Jack Simpson was producer. Original music was supplied by Dave Bacal utilizing organ and tympani.

The Adventurers Club premiered on January 11, 1947. Airing on Saturday mornings, the series was aimed primarily at male juveniles but with the expectation that it would also appeal to more than a few adults. The opening signature consisted of an ethereal voice speaking from an echo chamber defining what it meant to be an adventurer: "An adventurer follows the off-trail path . . . where excitement and danger beckon ever onward." Ken Nordine would then set the stage by revealing that week's adventurer and his claim to fame. Kicking off the premiere episode was the true story of Dr. William McGovern, who set out to explore Tibet's forbidden city of Lhasa by disguising himself as a coolie. Larry Wolters, writing in the *Chicago Tribune* (January 14, 1947), praised the series as "a good substitute for those blood and thunder thrillers kids are crazy about but which so often meet with parental objections." The first episode, Wolters said, "was as full of suspense as Superman."

The following week, *The Adventurers Club* featured exploits from the career of Major A.S. "Speed" Chandler, aviator, auto racer and stunt

pilot. Among other stunts, Chandler pioneered the feat of descending a ladder hanging from a plane and entering a speeding car. *Variety* (January 22, 1947) reviewed the Chandler broadcast. Acknowledging that the program was geared toward the youth market, the reviewer found the episode "fast, loud and boyishly suspenseful stuff, with payoff scenes in the tradition of films full of slugfests."

While the showcased adventurers were invariably played by actors drawn from the Chicago pool of local radio talent, the actual adventurers were appearing regularly as guest speakers at weekly meetings of the Chicago Adventurers Club. For example, Colonel John D. Craig, deep sea diver, explorer, photographer and author, spoke to club members on January 21, 1947, and talked about his experiences at the Bikini atomic bomb site. On March 15, a dramatization of Craig's encounters with man-eating tigers in India was broadcast to listeners. He would be featured in yet another episode of *The Adventures Club* on October 18, 1947, recounting his encounter with smugglers off the coast of southern California.

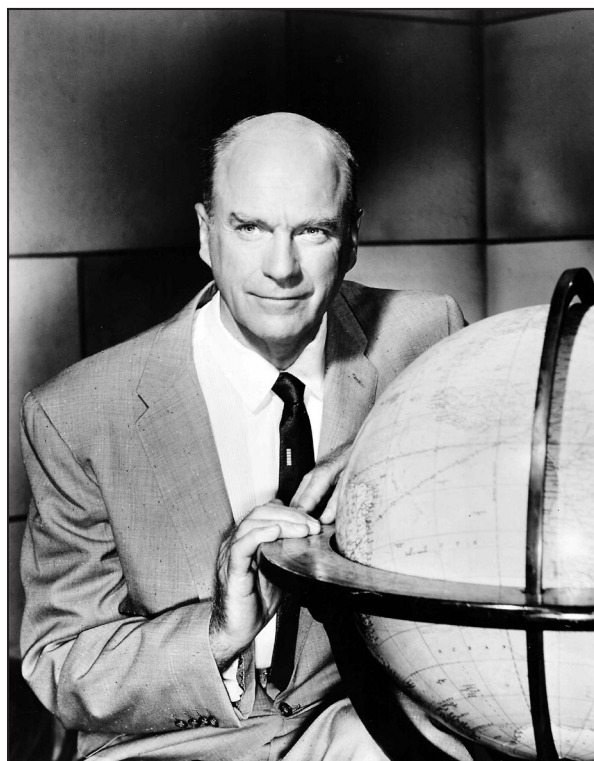
Craig would later become arguably the most recognized explorer on television, producing and hosting several series including *Danger is my Business* and *Kingdom of the Sea*.

Probably the most intriguing tale told on *The Adventurers Club* was

the three-part story of Count Byron Khun de Prorok and his search for the tomb of the Berber Queen, Tin Hinan. Ed Prentiss would portray the role of de Prorok. De Prorok's discovery and entry into Tin Hinan's tomb in 1925 made news around the world and seemed ideally suited for the program. De Prorok's was the only serialized story dramatized in the series.

Although a controversial figure, de Prorok was a headline maker. Part of his media appeal was the fact that he had pioneered the use of motion picture film to document his work. Ironically, none of de Prorok's films seem to have survived while all three episodes of his story are among the handful of surviving episodes of *The Adventurers Club*.

After 52 episodes, *The Adventurers Club* concluded its run on January 3, 1948, but not before listeners were reminded one last time that an adventurer follows "the off-trail path . . . where excitement and danger beckon ever onward." This was essentially the theme television would adopt as it began to follow in the footsteps of *The Adventurers Club*. 🐾



★ ★ ★
Adventurers' Club (10:30 a. m.) The true story of John Craig, fearless hunter who followed the off-trail path where excitement and danger beckoned to capture man-eating tigers in the jungles of India, provides another thrilling chapter in "The Adventurers' Club."
★ ★ ★



OLD NEWS IS GOOD NEWS

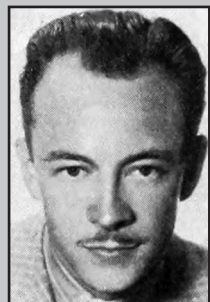


Mob Crashes Gates to See Radio Play

And you thought angry audiences crashing through barriers to see a concert or a play was a recent phenomenon. During the December 14, 1936, SRO performance of “Madame Sans-Gene” on *Lux Radio Theatre*, disappointed fans took to their own devices and crashed through the doors to see their favorite stars, namely, in this case, the very popular MGM personalities Jean Harlow and Robert Taylor. Below is the original caption in the March 1937 edition of *Radio Stars*:

When the *Lux Radio Theatre* presented Jean Harlow and Robert Taylor in *Madame Sans Gene*, a crowd of more than three hundred and fifty persons, who could not get seats in the theatre, broke open the doors after the broadcast had been on the air about eight minutes and rushed into the lobby. Only the presence of police officers prevented them from disrupting the broadcast. Here are the principals in the show: C. Henry Gordon, (Left), Jean Harlow, M-G-M star; Cecil B. DeMille, producer; Claude Rains, Warner Bros. star; Robert Taylor, M-G-M star.

‘First Nighter’ on CBS tonight at 8:00



September 2, 1938 [85 years ago]. THE FIRST NIGHTER program has a first night of its own at 8:00 when it does its first broadcast over the CBS network—and right now might be a fine time to tell you something about Les Tremayne, its leading man.

Les’ career, up to a point, has been about the same as Don Ameche’s. He followed Don into the leading role in *Betty and Bob*; then he followed Don into the *First Nighter* stardom—and a few days after Don had an appendicitis operation, Les had one too. It’s highly possible that, like Don, he’ll eventually land in Hollywood because he’s a good actor and good looking besides—except that the *First Nighter* sponsors, having learned their lesson, have both

Les and Barbara Luddy, his leading lady, under long-term contracts.

Les is the son of Dolly Tremayne, British movie star, and his father and grandmother were famous concert singers. He was an athlete from childhood, and also began to study dancing, music, art and dramatics early in life. He went through the entire backstage school, occupying every position and job a theatre had to offer.

To put you into a fine relaxed mood at the end of the day listen to Jesse Crawford’s organ music on NBC-Red at 10:45.

Tune in on ED WYNN



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