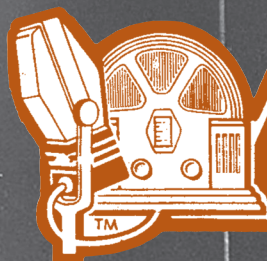


SPERDVAC SPOTLIGHT ON KARL SCHADOW • MINNESOTA'S ICEBOX RADIO THEATER • DUDLEY MANLOVE

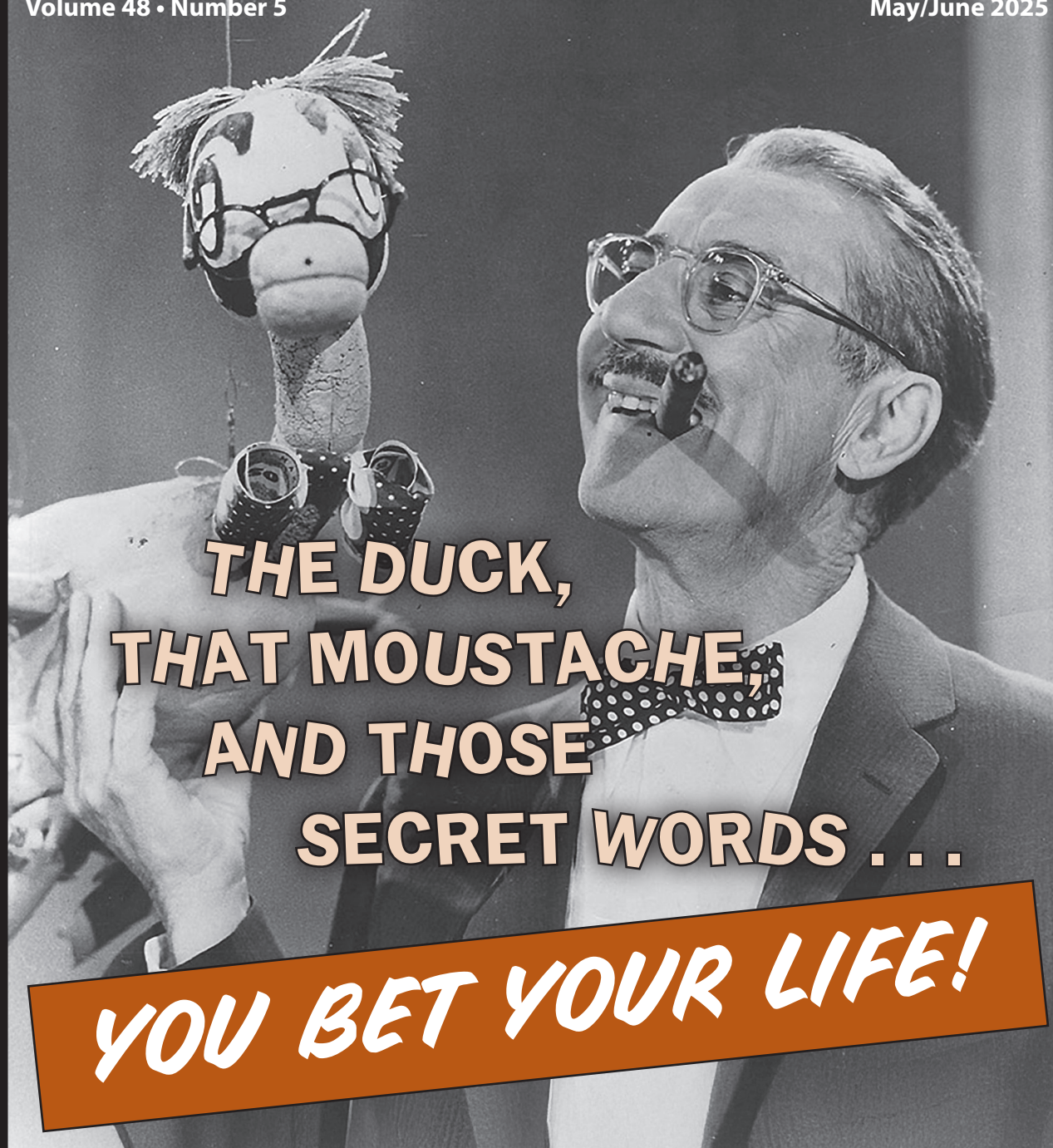


sperdvac

RADIOGRAM

Volume 48 • Number 5

May/June 2025



THE DUCK,
THAT MOUSTACHE,
AND THOSE
SECRET WORDS . . .

YOU BET YOUR LIFE!



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- JEFFREY J. LEBRUN in memory of all departed voice artists
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- ROBY & JOYCE MCHONE
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- MICKEY SMITH in memory of my beloved wife, Mary
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Volume 48 • Number 5 • May/June 2025

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RADIOGRAM is published bi-monthly by SPERDVAC, the Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy, a California nonprofit public benefit corporation, 2625 Middlefield Road #171, Palo Alto, CA 94306-2516. Dues are \$20 for first year and \$20 for renewals; \$30 American currency for Canadian members. Annual subscriptions to *Radiogram* only are \$15 in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, and \$20 in all other countries. Editorial submissions are welcome, but the publisher assumes no responsibility for the return of unsolicited material. All editorial-related photographs and artwork received unsolicited become the property of SPERDVAC. SPERDVAC assumes first serial rights for all submissions accepted. Opinions expressed are not necessarily the opinions of SPERDVAC. All rights to letters sent to *Radiogram* will be treated as unconditionally assigned for publication unless otherwise stated. The publishers make every effort to ensure the accuracy of information published in editorial material but assume no responsibility for inconveniences or damages resulting from editorial error or omissions. Publisher is not responsible for typographical errors. All photographs and illustrations are believed authorized for reproduction as set forth within. Entire contents are copyright © 2025 by the Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy. All rights reserved. Nothing contained in this issue may be reproduced, in whole or in part, by any means, including the Internet, without prior written permission from the publisher.

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from the president

MY INITIAL EXPOSURE to classic radio involved a “blowhard” named Gildersleeve and a bratty kid with the name of Craig Bullard. Those familiar with their first meeting also know “who got the best of who.” At 10-years-old, I developed an interest in these broadcasts due to the restriction of television, due to poor grades, by my parents, allowing only radio. Consequently, I spent Sunday afternoons dial surfing and landing on 710 KNUS for John Dunning’s *Old Time Radio Show*, a habit that persisted for several years.

As my academic performance improved, I connected with individuals like John Dunning, Barrett Benson and Dick King, who were key figures in the Radio Historical Association of Colorado. I eventually acquired

a reel-to-reel deck, joined several buying groups, and became a member of SPERDVAC. The phrase *Restricted—Do Not Trade* isn’t seen very often nowadays but viewing that on an open reel cue sheet made you feel like you were a part of Captain Midnight’s Secret Squadron and I reveled in it.

Throughout my career, I worked in various fields including radio, audio production, micro-electronics engineering, and internet technology. Currently, my primary focus is on audio/video preservation, which will be central during my tenure as SPERDVAC’s president.

Along for the ride is vice-president Zach Eastman, who is far more eloquent than I, and a good friend from the past administration. Working side-by-side, we will once again open the lending library using digital formats. Programs, scripts and video will all be available to our members just as it was in the club’s golden age.

Our secretary, Scott Mahan, is back for another tour of duty, and the board couldn’t be happier. Mr. Mahan is a jack-of-all-trades and helps us steer the ship, as it were. His background in IT and knowledge of classic radio benefit the organization greatly.

Sean Dougherty returns as our membership chair and is working on a simpler and more intuitive way to sign up as a member of SPERDVAC. This has been of high impor-

tance to the board as frustration has grown with our prior system. Look for the changes to happen soon.

Returning to the board this year is SPERDVAC veteran Larry Gassman. He really needs no introduction as he has been a past president and mouthpiece for the club. He will work with Scott and myself to make sure our website and library are within ADA compliance for the blind and handicapped.

Long time board member Walden Hughes, along with newcomer Constance Campanella and Sean Dougherty, are working on securing grants and donations to support SPERDVAC’s initiatives, particularly in outreach and volunteer recruitment.

James Scully re-joins the board, focusing on the preser-

vation of both historic and contemporary full-cast dramas. We’re proud to have James help bring the club into the 21st century.

Sadly, our treasurer of the past administration, Xan Chamberlain, is leaving us after our transition is complete. He has worked diligently to keep SPERDVAC solvent through the past few years and ensure that the organization will continue to flourish in the future.

Thank you, Xan, for your service to the club and for your friendship.

For those interested in taking over the open position, please send an email to spervac@spervac.com

I also extend my gratitude to Tim Knofler and Bob Tevis for their guidance and leadership in past years. Both are passionate about the club and our mission. I know they’ll be keeping an eye on us.

Thank you for your support and confidence in this board. We will work hard to honor our moniker, the Society to Preserve & Encourage Radio Drama, Variety And Comedy.

Until next time,

Corey Harker



Karl Schadow

by Sean Dougherty
SPERDVAC MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

FOR MOST CLASSIC RADIO FANS, finding shows to enjoy is as simple as clicking the mouse on your computer but for dedicated researchers such as SPERDVAC member Karl Schadow finding his next show can be a year's-long-process. Karl specializes in finding information about obscure shows or teasing out new information about beloved classics. He's also a living incarnation of the Bob & Ray sketch "Mr. I Know Where They Are," except it's "I know who has the legal ownership of that program," and is a go-to resource for the entire hobby when it comes to rights issues. He's always going to be known as the researcher who cracked the decades-long mystery of the name of the actor who played Jimmy Barton on the immortal syndicated Christmas series *The Cinnamon Bear*, but that's just the tip of the iceberg of knowledge he's granted the rest of the hobby over the years. SPERDVAC spoke to him recently about his process and some of his most exciting finds.

Q. How did you get started as a researcher? What was your background?

Yes. In the 1970s, what piqued my interest was *The CBS Radio Mystery Theater*. I was hooked and it became a hobby for a long time. My background is medical science, microbiology and andrology. I bring hardcore scientific mindset to the research aspects of classic radio. That is unusual in classic radio fandom. Even among the academic researchers, it stands out.

Q. Tell us about your process for starting a project—and let's make sure to tell the story of how you finally cracked the mystery of who played Jimmy Barton on *The Cinnamon Bear*.

The Cinnamon Bear was a departure for me as I usually focus on more obscure shows, but trying to determine these cast members and other lost information regarding the show was so interesting. When I start a research project, I have a checklist, similar to an airline pilot or a ship's captain. I try to find as many players as possible who are involved in a radio program. It could be an actor, actress, director, producer, sound effects engineer, or music director as well as folks from the sponsors and advertising agencies. For *Cinnamon Bear*, the breakthrough was finding archives of Transco, short for Radio Transcription Company of America, Ltd., a transcription service that produced and distributed the program. I'd been seeking their archives for a long time. The Library of Congress holds "Records from The Transco Collection," including a lot of material from various produc-

tion companies. It came from Bruce Eells, a Hollywood radio producer in the 1940s who saved all of this printed matter. It eventually made its way to the Library of Congress in the 1970s. The collection became available relatively recently and that's when I was able to take a look at it and discovered the cast list. And Transco was really the last place to look. I had checked all kinds of other sources and people involved in the program

and there was nothing there. I was surprised that nobody had revealed that Bobby La Manche had played Jimmy Barton. We still don't know much about him but some military websites listed him as a P-39 flyer during World War II.

Q. What are you working on now that might come out by the time we publish?

I'm working on *Zorro*. Also George Bruce's *Air Stories of the World War*. I love obscure programs. You'll see a reference in a trade magazine or in pulp stories and that gets me going. Pulp stories adapted for radio is another big gold mine for me. Moreover, if a writer worked in pulps and radio I want to know more about him or her. I've done a lot of work uncovering information on radio by Robert Bloch and his

series *Stay Tuned for Terror*. There are scripts now available on eBay. I'm trying to get all that information. You find nothing for year and then all of a sudden scripts appear on eBay, and before that, a couple of Canadian collectors had audio files. So now, of the 39 episodes Bloch wrote we have four, that's 10% of *Stay Tuned for Terror* for audio.

Q. Did he write the entire series? Are you just looking for the

I love obscure programs. You'll see a reference in a trade magazine or in pulp stories and that gets me going. Pulp stories adapted for radio is another big gold mine for me.

episodes?

He did craft all of scripts. What is most interesting is that eight of the 39, 15-minute transcribed episodes are original radio dramas that Bloch wrote specifically for *Stay Tuned for Terror* and have not been published in any other media. Bloch said he never saved any of these. His collection of papers is huge. It's at the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming at Laramie. Except for an ad from the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* there is nothing on *Stay Tuned for Terror*. Then all of a sudden scripts showed up on eBay. We're trying to work on those—maybe something will be available by the time the interview publishes.

Q. Please give us another example of a successful work of research.

Absolutely. I perform much work for Mark Tepper of Radio Spirits and also for Carl Amari as an independent researcher. *The Listener Series Volume Number Three*, was released by Radio Spirits late last fall. It included the obscure soap opera, *The Sparks of Friendship* and nobody had ever heard of it. It was only broadcast in the Midwest in 1940 and 1941. I saw *The Sparks of Friendship* in the trade periodicals, which are good secondary sources. *The Billboard*, *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety* all promoted and reviewed shows so you can learn about them from archive issues of those magazines. Back in the 30s and 40s they had great radio coverage. There was also the annual *Variety Radio Directory*. They published four volumes during the late 30s, early 40s, and with a list of the titles of thousands of radio programs to investigate, covering network, transcribed-syndicated and local shows. I just happened to see this promo for *The Sparks of Friendship*. I thought, there has to be a story behind this somewhere.

The sponsor was Haskins Bros. out of Omaha, NE, promoting Sparks Granulated Soap. There are two episodes in the Library of Congress. And they're in the George Garabedian collection, part of Mark 56 records, which many classic radio collectors will know. He's a former radio producer and his collection—including two transcription discs of *Sparks of Friendship*—ended up in the Library of Congress. To get the audio released, I had to track down everybody I could

regarding this program because the Library can't provide you the copies unless you have permission from the current rights holders. I wrote a 15-page memo and sent it to the Recorded Sound Division, which holds the audio. They sent it up to the Office of the General Counsel. And several months later they said, okay you can have it. We couldn't find ownership information and said, it's my responsibility if something happened.


Q. So if Owner does surface and wants to sue someone, that person will be you.

That's right, if the person who owns *The Sparks of Friendship* wants to come after me for all the revenue, they're losing. I did talk with both the mother and the granddaughter of the program's producer of the ad agency, Sidney Garfinkel, based in San Francisco. They couldn't find any paperwork. Even if they offer to write a letter, if they don't have paperwork, it won't help with the libraries. I found the audio and Radio Spirits released the set and they were tickled pink by the result. You learn interesting things just from the two shows we have. There's no organ music. The theme music was a female a capella chorus singing a plug for the sponsor. That was a great example of a regional soap opera but there is so much more out there that even dedicated hobbyists haven't looked at. There are local horror programs, dramatic programs in the late 1930s and into the

1940s—hundreds of little theatres that would perform on air. They would license shows from a script library and perform them for a fee. There were many sources including Radio Writers Laboratory out of Lancaster, PA. They had hundreds of scripts that they would obtain from people such as Joseph Kearns, who was a great actor and organist—but also a scriptwriter. His scripts were syndicated by RWL out of Pennsylvania.

Q. What drives you to put so much energy into such obscure programs?

It's a sense of accomplishment or just wanting to get to the end, to a goal. And then you try to meet that goal. And you just keep digging, pushing and calling and going after things. You are telling a story and preserving the legacy of those who were involved in these programs. I also have to add that membership in SPERDVAC with its fantastic script library (originated by Jerry Williams) has played a key role in assisting my research. 📻



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
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tions, 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!

"Except for an ad from the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* there is nothing on *Stay Tuned for Terror*."



Live and direct from International Falls, Minnesota . . .

THE ICEBOX RADIO THEATER

by Jeffrey Adams

Artistic/executive director Jeffrey Adams introduces Icebox Radio Theater, a Minnesota-based audio drama group producing original and classic-style radio plays, emphasizing live broadcasts and community involvement.



REETINGS FROM the great North Woods! My name is Jeffrey Adams, and allow me to introduce my group to the SPERDVAC community. I'm talking about the Icebox Radio Theater, or IBRT for short.

Founded in 2004 in International Falls, MN, the IBRT is a community theater of the air, regularly producing audio drama both in-studio and in live performance. But where we differed from most groups of our type was the sheer volume of plays produced over the past two decades, and in how many of those plays were original.

Founded in 2004 in International Falls, MN, the IBRT is a community theater of the air, regularly producing audio drama both in-studio and in-live performance, original works and re-creations of old-time radio. We began when I moved to this hamlet on the Canadian border and met Bruce Christopherson, the manager of station KXBR through a connection at my church. KXBR was the second FM at Bruce's company, and he liked to use it for community events and experimental programming. I had experience with live radio drama in Oregon, where I had previously lived. Bruce asked if I would be interested in performing a play on KXBR. I expressed interest in doing a series, which marked the beginning of my involvement. Bruce provided airtime, equipment, and a performance space because he enjoyed having live drama on the air.

The first play, "The Cabin Next Door," was broadcast in July of 2004. Inspired by juvenile mystery series like *The Hardy Boys* and *The Boxcar Children*, it told the story of a family vacationing at a lake cabin next door to a creepy, apparently abandoned cabin where mysterious figures come and go at night. I wrote the play specifically for the talent that

came out to our first public meetings, a group that included everyone from teens to DJ's at the station to a retired math teacher with an impressive community theater background.

From that beginning, our plays branched out to many different genres. I am the principal writer and I've never felt confined to a particular type of story so it was relatively easy to pen tales from comedy to science fiction. The region was my main inspiration. We've always reserved the majority of our plays to be "Northland focused," which means focusing on life and legends in Northern Minnesota and Northwest Ontario, Canada. We've done plays about trouble at the international border, monsters in the woods, mermaids accosting fishermen and plenty of plays about Int'l Falls' legendary cold winters.

The IBRT produces both live and studio recorded plays. A studio play is recorded in our home studio with actors gathering for a rehearsal or two, then recording together in a room converted for that purpose. One advantage to studio work is that we can involve actors from outside the area who join us via the internet. We've used actors from Atlanta, Boston, England and even Australia. One young lady from Fort Frances in Ontario (the town directly across the Canadian border from Int'l Falls) performed with us while in high school, and continues to work with us from her new home in Halifax in Nova Scotia. The remote actor's voices come over the internet live allowing our actors in Int'l Falls to play opposite their remote counterparts as if everyone were in the same room. After the dialogue is recorded, sound effects and music tracks are added and finally the finished play is mixed and distributed as a podcast.

A live play, on the other hand, is performed live on stage in front of an audience. Our ac-

tors gather for at least three rehearsals then perform the play (or plays) at one of our local venues. We've performed at our community center's main auditorium and its little theater, outdoors at Smokey Bear Park and in various clubs and restaurants. Our live performances are recorded in real-time and, with minimal edits for refinement, they are distributed as podcasts much like the original audience experienced.

Not long after beginning the IBRT, we incorporated as a non-profit organization taking our cue from other community theaters I had been involved with. As a nonprofit we have the benefit of many funding options. Ticket sales make up a portion of our earnings, as do the two fundraisers we hold every year. We have a membership program in which members pay an annual fee and we also use online crowd funding options such as Patreon. In the past, we have taken advantage of Minnesota's generous grant funding for the arts but prefer to "earn" our keep with support directly from the audience if we can.

This funding goes toward fees for actors and sound effects artists, a monthly stipend for the artistic and executive directors (both of whom are me) advertising, office supplies and equipment. Much of our funds go toward distribution. We have several podcasts, each one organized around a specific genre, a streaming radio station and social media pages on Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and Twitter (uh, sorry, "X"). We also offer a CD subscription service for folks who would rather listen on compact discs. It's a lot, but it's important to us to get our work out to as broad an audience as possible. Sadly, about the only place we don't appear in is regular AM/FM radio.

Of particular interest to me is live broad-

casting. When we perform a play before an audience, we like to broadcast that performance just as all the greats did during radio's golden age. Though our audience for these broadcasts is tiny, it's gratifying to know people all over the world are enjoying our work as it happens. We generally facilitate these broadcasts through our streaming radio station, or via Facebook Live video with a simple visual component to go along with sparkling audio.

For a town of just 5000, International Falls boasts a notable number of talented actors. Our casts include a diverse range of individuals, from senior citizens to high school students. Our frequent live performances serve to introduce new residents to our theatre community. While open auditions are now infrequent, we rely on a dedicated group of actors, some of whom have been with us for over ten years. Nonetheless, we remain receptive to new talent. For instance, Dalton Johnson became aware of our theatre group upon moving to the area for his position at KXBR, and he has since become a regular participant. And I can't forget Justin Kapla, a young man from here in the Falls who first performed with us as a high school student over a decade ago. Justin, who hopes to be a professional voice actor someday, can do

an uncanny Sidney Greenstreet impression which led us to add *The New Adventures of Nero Wolfe* to our catalog.

For music and sound effects, we have a large collection that we've recorded ourselves as well as collections we've purchased. In addition, we now subscribe to an online service that provides both music and sound effects for a yearly fee. And for very simple music cues, I may employ my limited keyboarding skills on the computer to offer some spooky organs or screaming strings. For our live plays, we have done live "foley" sound effects but sometimes prerecord everything for simplicity and sound quality's sake.

For scripts, we generally write our own traversing across as many different genres as possible. But old-time radio re-creations have been a part of our offerings from the beginning. We've utilized several online sources for scripts and I've transcribed many more from the numerous audio recordings available online. We've performed episodes of *Johnny Dollar*, *Nero Wolfe*, *Candy Matson*, *Suspense*, *Quiet Please*, *Lights Out*, and more. Old-time radio is always popular.

But nothing defines the IBRT more than our commitment to live broadcasting. Did you know with a cellphone or computer you can present a play live? I must confess this

is an obsession of mine. To that end, the IBRT maintains a streaming radio station as a 24/7 service accessible to listeners all over the globe. We have organized our plays by genre into a series of free podcasts available 24/7. Horror plays are found in the "Frozen Frights" podcast, comedy in "The Laugh Track" and so on. We've collected all our OTR re-creations in the "Old Time Icebox" podcast which I invite you to seek out via your favorite podcast provider. There are original series as well. And though most of our plays are original, almost everything is done in the classic American radio style. Dialogue, sound effects and music are mixed together to put the listener in the room, a fly on the wall eavesdropping on that week's adventure.

The Icebox Radio Theater is not the only group going before the mic. But I think we stand as a unique and passionate voice in the world of audio drama, blending the nostalgic charm of old-time radio with fresh, original storytelling inspired by life in the Northland. We've remained dedicated to the art of audio storytelling.

We invite you to step into the Icebox and experience a world where anything can happen—right between your ears.

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The IBRT company performs *Nero Wolfe* on stage at the Salty Jester, Int'l Falls, in the spring of 2024., with Jeffrey Adams, Caleb Silvers, Mitchell Erickson, Justin Kapla (as Wolfe) and Dalton Johnson.

That Duck, That Moustache,



Groucho Marx reinvented himself as a solo wit on *You Bet Your Life*, blending unscripted comedy with quiz show elements. The show became a hit, defining his post-Marx Brothers career.

e, and Those Secret Words

by Martin Grams and Steven Thompson

For over a decade, announcer George Fenneman introduced Groucho Marx on *You Bet Your Life* with the iconic phrase: “The one, the only . . . Groucho!” But the Groucho who helmed the long-running quiz show wasn’t quite the one audiences remembered from vaudeville and film. He was a reinvention.



JULIUS HENRY MARX—the real name behind the cigar and painted-on moustache and eyebrows—rose to fame alongside brothers Chico and Harpo—and at times Zeppo and Gummo—with a whirlwind act of anarchic comedy. In films like *Duck Soup*, Groucho’s character was that of a somewhat shady anarchist with painted-on eyebrows and moustache, wiggling both his eyes and his cigar as he loped around spouting heavily scripted “stream-of-consciousness” nonsense and conducting his latest get-rich-quick schemes. But radio never quite knew what to do with the Marx Brothers’ chaotic energy. Harpo didn’t speak—he could; he just never did—and without the full ensemble, Groucho and Chico struggled to connect.

Radio continued to make efforts, though. An early 1930s comedy series with Groucho and Chico called *Flywheel, Shyster, and Flywheel* generated limited interest. Groucho experienced slightly more success a decade later with *Pabst Blue Ribbon Town*, although it was also short-lived. Throughout this time, he remained a regular guest on other shows despite his solo film career attempts not achieving significant success, as seen with the 1947 film *Copacabana*, a film, incidentally, in which Groucho avoided the greasepaint moustache for which he was well-known.

During a break from filming *Copacabana*, Groucho agreed to join the annual two-hour

all-star *Walgreens Birthday Party* special for its 47th anniversary. Bob Hope headlined, alongside Dennis Day, Cass Daley, the Sportsmen Quartet, and Art Linkletter.

Linkletter took up a long segment of the show with what was essentially a special version of his own regular series *People Are Funny*, produced by John Guedel, who was at the studio that night. When it was finally Groucho’s turn to go on in a segment with Hope, he was tired of having had to wait so long with nothing to do and so he ad-libbed a remark to that effect. This cracked up Bob and caused him to drop his script. According to legend, Marx then stepped on it as Hope tried to retrieve it. Marx purposely threw his own to the ground. As the show’s producers panicked, Bob and Groucho deftly ad-libbed their way through their time and the audience loved it.

Off the air, John Guedel—who had never met Groucho—asked him if he could ad-lib like that all the time. That question sparked the creation of *You Bet Your Life*, a quiz show built around Groucho’s unscripted banter with everyday contestants. Drawing on the tradition of radio quiz shows like *Pot o’ Gold* and *Take It or Leave It*, Guedel pitched the concept: the quiz was secondary; the comedy came first. Though initially uninterested, Groucho agreed—on the condition that there would be no script. Eventually, he recorded an audition, launching the show’s unique blend

of quiz and comedic talk show.

On the original audition record, Groucho, known to be a great worrier in real life, was clearly unsure of himself, saying, “Well, here I am, stepping in over my head again. Folks, this is just as new to me as it is to you. I’ve never done one of these shows before, but we’ve got several couples up here on the stage, a lot of people in the seats out front, and the doors are locked, so I’ve gotta go through with it.”

Jack Slattery—already a veteran announcer with Art Linkletter’s *House Party*, also produced by Guedel—served as announcer for the audition tape. The first secret word was “air.”

Despite a few changes, the format of *You Bet Your Life* stayed largely the same as that audition tape throughout its 14-year run on radio and television. It was an audience-participation quiz program in which three couples, usually man and woman, were chosen from the studio audience in a pre-broadcast warm-up to take part in the game.

The couples were often chosen to serve as a team because they qualified for the category on which the questions were based, and they divided their winnings equally. As mentioned, among the features of the quiz program was the secret word, in which every broadcast had a word which the listeners knew but which the contestants did not. During his interview with the contestants, Groucho would award \$100 to divide between the couple if either

happened to speak the secret word.

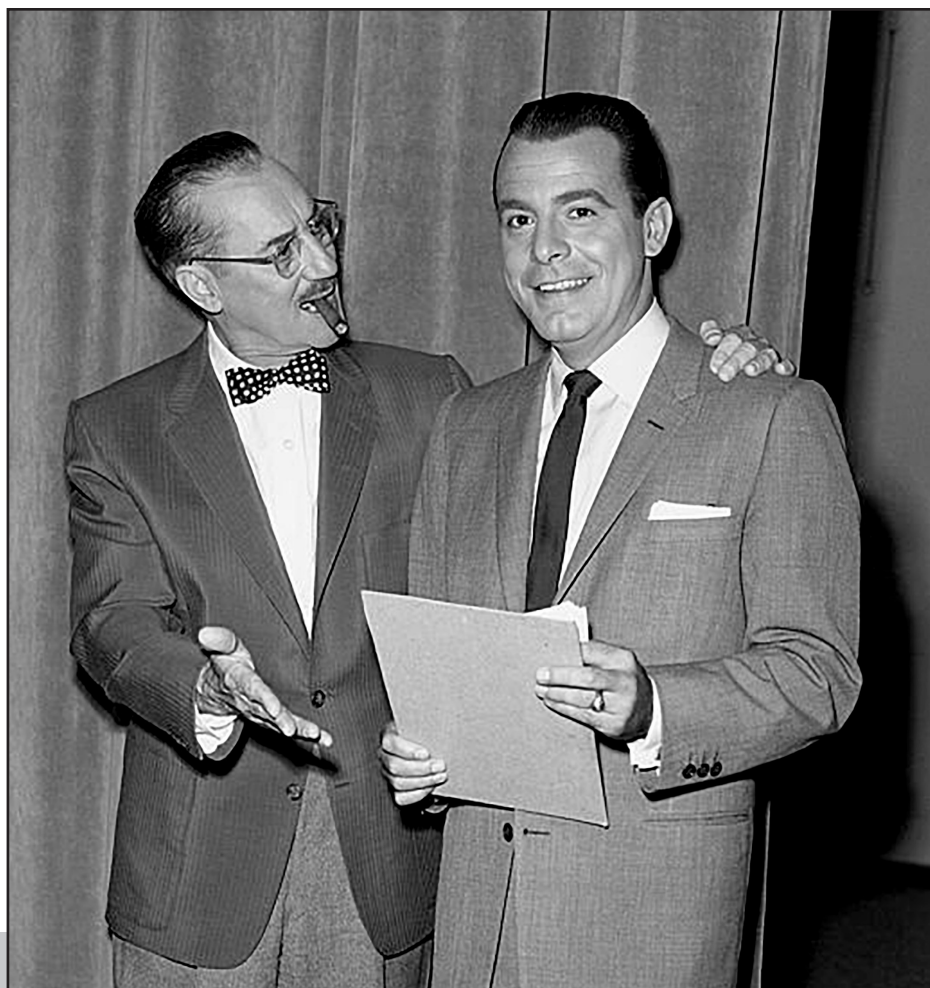
The quiz portion of the program involved a cash reward for which the contestants could wager, betting separately on each of four questions in their chosen category. The higher the winnings, the better chance they would succeed in qualifying for the bonus round. The couple with the most money at the end of the program had a chance to answer the jackpot question which would grow every week the questions went unanswered.

Guedel eventually convinced Groucho to invest in the idea of the series and the two became partners. Episodes were co-directed by Bob Dwan and Bernie Smith. David Brown, writing in the 2002 book, *The World According to Groucho*, wrote that, "Apart from a minor problem early on, when Groucho flatly refused to wear his usual uniform of frockcoat and painted moustache, the preparations went smoothly enough. Co-director Bernie Smith suggested that perhaps Groucho could grow a moustache of his own, and Groucho agreed to that quite happily. He was, after all, going to be in front of a radio audience, and he wanted to underline his performance as that of Groucho Marx the individual, rather than as a member of the Marx Brothers."

At this point Groucho, no longer donning greasepaint and sporting a real moustache, had recast himself as Groucho Marx, the solo wit.

YOU BET YOUR LIFE premiered on ABC radio on October 27, 1947, moved to CBS a year later, then to NBC beginning with the broadcast of October 4, 1950, where it remained for a full decade and more. In 1948, *You Bet Your Life* received the prestigious Peabody award, which cited Groucho as "the Dean of all wise-crackers in this country." Other awards soon followed.

With less operating expenses than many other radio shows, Guedel was able to promote *You Bet Your Life* to potential sponsors at bargain prices. Initial sponsorship of the series came from Elgin-American, a company that made compacts and watch cases, products that Groucho had never heard of. Later, the best-known sponsor of the show was the DeSoto division of the Chrysler Corporation. Their slogan became, "Tell 'em Groucho sent you." De Soto sponsored the program until September 1957 when the show continued under multiple participating alternate sponsors including the Toni Company and Lever Brothers.



After the audition, George Fenneman became the show's announcer and Groucho's on-air sidekick. Like other radio announcers such as Harry Von Zell and Don Wilson, Fenneman was the straight man for *You Bet Your Life*.

Contrary to previously published reference guides, the Wednesday night radio program was not a separate show but was transcribed from Thursday's preceding telecast episode.

After the audition, George Fenneman became the show's announcer and Groucho's on-air sidekick. Like other radio announcers such as Harry Von Zell and Don Wilson, Fenneman was the straight man for *You Bet Your Life*. Despite often being the target of Groucho's jokes, he became a star, regularly featured in fan magazines and newspapers, with one magazine writer describing Fenneman as being "handsome as a film star, as suave as a diplomat, and as knowledgeable as a college professor."

"At the very beginning I was just an announcer, nothing more," Fenneman told *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist Ron Powers. "I was 29 years old, had done some work on radio and was literally standing at the corner of Hollywood and Vine one day when a friend

of mine who worked with Groucho invited me to an audition for the series."

Recalling his first meeting with the comedy legend, Fenneman said, "When I was 14, I was doing Groucho impersonations, like everybody else in the country. I didn't dream that the first time I met him I'd be standing in front of a mike with him."

"Once or twice," Fenneman admitted, he actually topped Groucho. "But I was careful not to try too often. One of the secrets of survival on a show like that was, you always kept in mind who was the star."

Groucho, of course, was hard to top. In 1967, the elder statesman of comedy told William F. Buckley, Jr., "I think most comedians go on the stage in order to please their audience. And I never did."

The initial season received low Hooper ratings and did not meet John Guedel's expectations. Groucho had difficulty consistently delivering effective ad-libs. Additionally, he

COME IN AND MEET GROUCHO MARX



An eclectic parade of celebrities, some already well-known and others about to become known, appeared before the man with the moustache during the run of the show. Here are a few with the (TV) dates:

- Apr 2, 1952 – Eric Guerin, jockey who won the 1947 Kentucky Derby
- Oct 15, 1952 – Russel Z. Hart, Mayor of Santa Monica, CA
- Feb 12, 1953 – Pedro Gonzalez-Gonzalez, who parlayed his appearance into an acting career
- Jan 12, 1955 – Melinda Marx, Groucho's 8-year-old daughter, who would return many times
- Feb 2, 1955 – Edith Head, fashion designer for motion pictures
- Mar 2, 1955 – Joe Louis, the ex-heavyweight boxing world champion
- May 18, 1955 – Josephine Ball, finalist in this year's Miss America contest
- Oct 19, 1955 – Dmitri Tiomkin, music composer for motion pictures
- May 24, 1956 – Ray Bradbury, now-legendary science fiction author
- Oct 11, 1956 – Richard "Lord" Buckley, cult-favorite hipster comedian
- Jul 20, 1957 – Archie Moore, ex-world heavyweight boxing champion
- Jul 20, 1957 – Gordon Scott, actor who played Tarzan in motion pictures
- Jul 27, 1957 – Hoot Gibson, cowboy actor in silent and sound movies
- Sep 30, 1957 – Jack Warner, Jr., of the motion picture industry
- Dec 19, 1957 – Wild Red Berry, professional wrestler
- Jan 30, 1958 – Phyllis Diller, the comedienne's first TV appearance
- Feb 3, 1958 – Francis X. Bushman, actor in silent and sound movies
- Mar 24, 1958 – James MacArthur, actor son of actress Helen Hayes
- Mar 31, 1958 – Ernie Kovacs, a fellow cigar-smoking comedian
- Jun 11, 1959 – Ray "Crash" Corrigan, B-western and serial star
- Oct 29, 1959 – Evelyn Rudie, precocious child star of "Eloise" on *Playhouse 90*
- May 11, 1961 – Harpo Marx, plugging his autobiography, *Harpo Speaks*

struggled with adhering to the time constraints of a live, half-hour radio series.

But it was around this time that Bing Crosby introduced tape recording to the business, mainly so he could record his shows in advance and be off golfing or making a movie. Guedel saw the solution he needed. Each episode of *You Bet Your Life* would be recorded on tape, allowing Groucho to interview the contestants as long as he wanted. Then it would be edited down to fit perfectly in a half-hour slot, preserving only the best of Groucho's often quotable quips.

Elgin-American agreed to stick with the show as it switched networks and watched it jump from 72nd place to 46th place by its second year. When Chrysler-De Soto took over sponsorship, the show jumped to number 11 in the ratings and continued to move higher into the top ten.

One reason for the move to NBC was that the network agreed to develop the show for television as well as radio. On December 28, 1949, the next hour-long taping, #49-13, was actually filmed as a test for the television version. The series would be filmed by Film Craft Productions, whose president, Regina Lindenbaum, later noted that it was among the first TV series filmed before a live audience, pre-dating *I Love Lucy*, which is often given that credit. The fact that the series was filmed resulted in clearer images compared to the fuzzy kinescopes (filmed off the screen from a live broadcast) that dominated the West Coast market prior to coaxial cable linkage that allowed for a live coast-to-coast hookup.

In all, between 26,000 and 28,000 feet of 35mm negative were exposed by eight cameras for each weekly episode. Afterward, it all went to Consolidated Film Industries in Hollywood for developing and printing, then to the film editor who compressed it into a compact, fast-moving 30-minute show, including the commercials.

The only other regular human cast member was behind the scenes and that was Jack Meakin who, along with his "musical madmen," joined the series just before Christmas 1953 and stayed with the program for the rest of its run.

Music for the series was originally per-

formed on radio by Billy May with a live band, featuring a variation of "Hooray for Captain Spaulding," from the Marx Brothers' 1928 Broadway show and the 1930 film, *Animal Crackers*. In 1950, Alexander Laszlo produced a pre-recorded version to reduce costs, but De Soto-Plymouth requested the return of live music. That's when Jerry Fielding joined *You Bet Your Life*.

Fielding, originally known as Jerry Feldman, was a jazz musician, composer, arranger, and bandleader who quickly made a name for himself in radio. He joined the program in 1951, but his rising career was abruptly interrupted in 1953 when he was blacklisted. This followed his decision to invoke the Fifth Amendment during a House Un-American Activities Committee hearing regarding suspected communist affiliations. Fielding later claimed that the committee had hoped he would implicate Groucho as a communist, likely due to Marx's well-known political views.

Fielding resigned when it was suggested that his political issues might create problems for the show. Groucho later expressed regret, stating that he wished they had supported Fielding. "That I bowed to sponsors' demands is one of the greatest regrets of my life," Groucho said. But as the blacklist era came to an end, Fielding's career recovered significantly in the 1960s, allowing him to become a prolific composer of TV and film scores and earning him three Oscar nominations.

The standout star of the TV show *You Bet Your Life* was the duck—a stuffed duck that presented the secret word and dropped down with two \$50 bills for the contestants when mentioned. Groucho joked it was easier to use a duck than an elephant. On radio, they used bells and whistles instead. Named Julius after Groucho's real name, the duck had spectacles and matched Groucho's eyebrows and moustache—one of TV's first recurring visual gags. Incidentally, in 2013, one of the original ducks was valued at \$8000 to \$12,000.

Another recurring gag on the program was the "consolation question." Couples who lost everything in the jackpot round were given an easy, almost patronizing question—something like, "Who wrote *Brahms' Lullaby?" or the



The standout star of the TV show *You Bet Your Life* was the duck—a stuffed duck that presented the secret word and dropped down with two \$50 bills for the contestants when mentioned.

classic, culturally loaded, “Who is buried in Grant’s Tomb?”

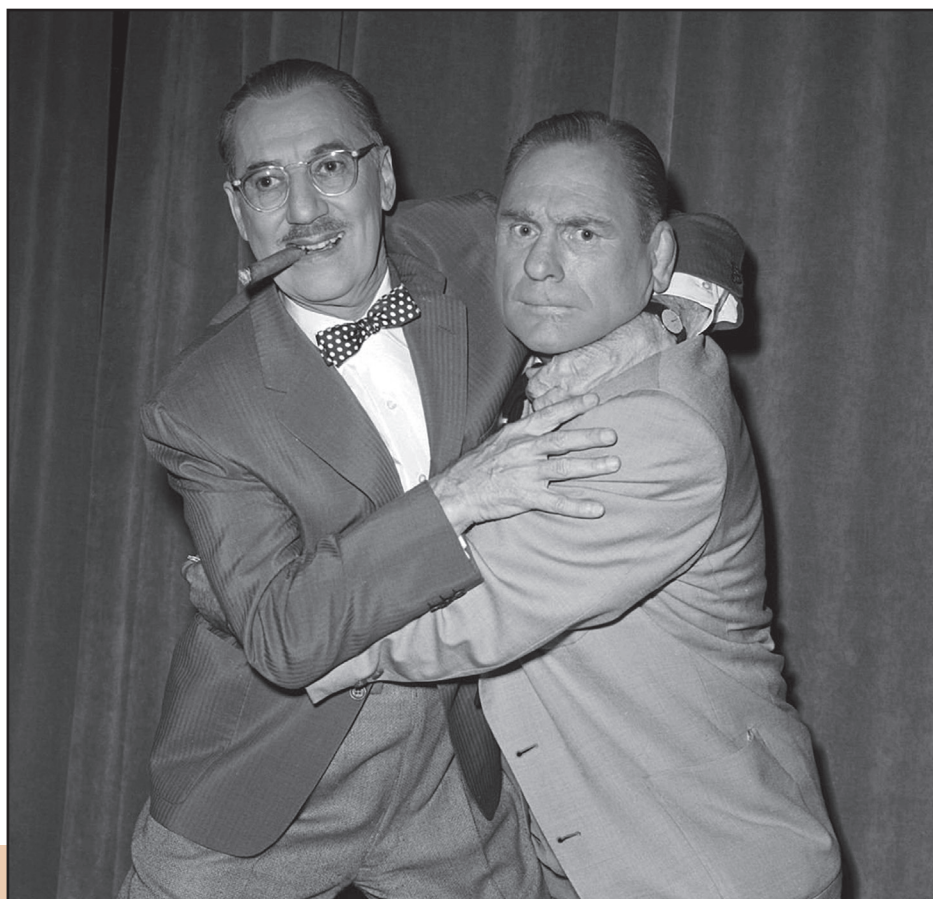
You Bet Your Life wasn’t without hiccups. One week in October 1952, Groucho asked contestants Muriel Stetson and Arthur LaVove the question: “In Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, and *Merry Wives of Windsor*, there appears a cowardly braggart whose good humor and wit have endeared him to millions the world over. For \$1000 I want you to identify this genial fellow.”

The answer agreed upon by the contestants was, “Pistol.” Groucho replied that “Pistol” was incorrect, giving the correct answer as “Falstaff.” After the show, Mrs. Stetson did some research and disputed Groucho’s correction. At first, the producers stuck by their answer which, they claimed, was in *The Encyclopedia Americana*. Eventually, though, Groucho decided to put the issue before a board of five Shakespearean authorities: actors Sir Laurence Olivier, Walter Hampden, and Charles Laughton, as well as theatre critics Brooks Atkinson and Richard Watts, Jr.

Ultimately, the majority opinion awarded the \$1000 prize to the contestants. Atkinson asserted that Falstaff was the correct answer whereas Hampden contended that the wording of the question was flawed. He disagreed with Groucho’s use of the term “appears,” stating that, “To be a character in a play means the actor must be present.” In *Henry V*, Falstaff is mentioned but is deceased and does not appear on stage.

Producer-director-actor Olivier, himself a renowned Shakespearean expert, cabled in agreement, stating that, “The fact is it seems to me that you said, and I quote, ‘There appears a cowardly braggart, etc.’ and I am afraid those first two words make things awkward for you. You didn’t say ‘in spirit’ or anything like that. You said: ‘There *appears*...’” Watts also sided with the contestants while the great Laughton’s response never came.

During the broadcast of January 26, 1957, the duck failed to work when Jan Dietrich said she was the “head” of the flight department for a private plane distributor in Long Beach, CA. The secret word was “head.” The program continued with nobody noticing



One of the zaniest moments in *You Bet Your Life* history came when Groucho faced off with silver-tongued wrestler Wild Red Berry—billed by George Fenneman as Ralph Berry. As the flamboyant grappler waxed poetic about his wrestling triumphs, Groucho deadpanned, “Did you talk them to death?”

but when heard on television on Thursday evening, a viewer, one Earl Riesberg, of the Northwestern National Bank of Minneapolis, noticed the error at once and the next morning telephoned John Guedel. Guedel checked his transcript of the program and found the banker’s report to be correct. The program immediately sent Miss Dietrich the \$100 she did not know she had won. Groucho reportedly quipped, “If I had my way, we’d trade in the duck for the banker.”

Beginning with the broadcast of September 22, 1956, the format of the quiz program changed. The contestants who had the highest amounts of money in the quiz-score received a chance at the jackpot just as in previous seasons but now a big-numbered wheel was

added as a gimmick. This wheel, described as looking like the “Wheel of Fortune” used at a carnival concession, allowed the contestants to pick a number and spin the wheel. If the contestant’s number came up, the size of the jackpot went up to \$10,000.

The largest payoff in the show’s history was \$10,000. The question was, “What is the name of President Eisenhower’s press secretary?” Charlie DiGiovanna, a Dodgers batboy, and Pat McCormick, an Olympic diver, correctly answered James C. Hagerty on March 30, 1959. The show was taped in 1958, shortly before DiGiovanna’s death on December 28. The broadcast was supported by his widow and the Dodgers, who wanted Charlie remembered as cheerful, bright, and as a winner.

“The audience is the straight man,” Groucho once said. “It’s what they say that makes what you say funny. You can’t make up people like that.”

There is a long-rumored story about an episode of *You Bet Your Life* in which Groucho made a witty remark to a woman who said



“The audience is the straight man,” Groucho once said. “It’s what they say that makes what you say funny. You can’t make up people like that.”

she had 17 children. The statement, deemed indecent by many, was likely cut from the broadcast if, indeed, actually stated. This incident supposedly occurred during the 1954-55 season when Mr. and Mrs. Breault and their 17 children were contestants. Yvette Breault appeared with her daughter Flash, later joined by her husband and other 16 children to answer questions.

According to Wikipedia, “Marx’s 1976 memoir recounts the episode as fact but co-writer Hector Arce relied mostly on sources other than Marx himself—who was by then in his late eighties and mentally compromised—and was probably unaware that Marx had specifically denied speaking the legendary line.”

“I get credit all the time for things I never said,” Marx told film critic Roger Ebert in 1972.

AFTER A LONG RUN on the radio and television, *You Bet Your Life* finally left the airwaves at the end of the 1961 TV season, ostensibly so that reruns could go into syndication. This was unheard of at the time as game shows simply were not rerun other than perhaps over the summer, which was done as *The Best of Groucho*.

Speaking many years later to his biographer, Charlotte Chandler, Groucho is reported to have said of *You Bet Your Life*, “It was some of the best stuff I ever did. I really had to think. I never worked so hard.”

In a 1961 letter to his friend Norman Krasna (co-writer of Groucho’s 1948 play, *Time for Elizabeth*), Groucho wrote, “Wednesday night, the 17th of May I will wind up a 14-year career as the world’s most prominent quizmaster. No tears will be shed by yours truly. It’s done wonders for me, psychologically and financially. Physically and mentally, the show has always been a romp. It’s rather odd not having anything facing me after this last show. I have had a number of offers to do different TV shows . . .”

Almost immediately, Groucho Marx accepted an offer to host *Tell It to Groucho*, essentially a retooled version of *You Bet Your Life*. Director Bob Dwan and music director Jack Meakin remained involved. George Fenneman appeared in the unaired 1961 pilot (titled *What Do You Want?*) but was replaced by announcer Johnny Jacobs and two new

assistants: young mountain climber Jack Wheeler, a former contestant, and teenager Patty Harmon (later Joy Harmon), another former contestant. Fenneman was unavailable due to his commitment to hosting *Your Surprise Package* (March 1961-February 1962), a CBS morning quiz show created by Allan Sherman.

Groucho privately quipped about the change, writing that, “We have traded Mr. Fenneman for a spritely young doll with oversized knockers who leaps around the stage with all the abandon of a young doe being pursued by an elderly banker.”

As the title suggests, *Tell It to Groucho* focused more on conversations than games though it still featured a quiz segment. Instead of the secret word and duck, contestants identified faces flashed for a quarter of a second, with up to \$1500 in prize money. Celebrities like Peter Lorre, Vincent Price, Fabian, Rod Serling, and couples like Jayne Mansfield and Mickey Hargitay made appearances. Despite its star power, the show lasted five months on CBS.

A brief 1965 revival in England also fizzled although Groucho himself remained a popular guest on variety and talk shows.

Meanwhile, a younger generation discovered the “other” Groucho—thanks to re-released Marx Brothers films and a 1970 Broadway musical titled *Minnie’s Boys*, co-written by Groucho’s son, Arthur, that offered a nostalgic look at the family dynamics behind the comics. To these audiences, he became an anti-establishment hero, with his greasepaint mustache and anarchic humor striking a chord.

Groucho even returned to the screen in Otto Preminger’s infamous *Skindoo* (1968), playing a gangster named “God”—his first appearance in greasepaint in over 20 years. Though a flop at the time, the film later gained cult status.

Despite numerous revival attempts—including versions hosted by Buddy Hackett (1980), Richard Dawson (1988), Bill Cosby (1992), and Jay Leno (2020s)—*You Bet Your Life* never recaptured its magic. Audiences never cared much for the game itself.

As George Fenneman reminded us week after week, the real secret word was always . . . the one, the only...

Groucho! 🐣

WHAT THE CENSOR SAW—MAYBE

IN THE GOLDEN AGE of American radio and early television, censorship was a powerful and often invisible force shaping what audiences heard and saw. The 1940s and 1950s were governed by strict broadcasting standards, largely overseen by networks and sponsors who were eager to avoid any hint of indecency or controversy. The FCC set broad guidelines, but in practice, it was the networks’ internal censors who combed scripts, monitored live performances, and sometimes removed questionable content after the fact. This conservative media climate sought to preserve a wholesome public image and prevent any content that might offend the era’s family-oriented sensibilities.



Against this backdrop comes that long-rumored anecdote involving Groucho and *You Bet Your Life*, as explained at left. To recap, Groucho supposedly made a sharply suggestive remark to a female contestant who mentioned that she had 17 children. The quip was allegedly cut from the final broadcast, if it was ever actually said at all. This moment is said to have occurred during the 1954–55 season, when Mr. and Mrs. Breault and their 17 children were featured as contestants. Yvette Breault appeared on stage with her daughter Flash and was later joined by her husband and their other 16 children in what became one of the most talked-about (and possibly censored) family appearances in television history.

On many occasions Groucho said he never said it. Guedel and company have never denied nor confirmed the story.

So just what was it that Groucho supposedly said? You have been warned; here it is: the woman contestant tells Groucho that she has 14 children (or 15 or 16 or 17, etc., depending on who his telling the story). Groucho replies, “You have 14 children? Why do you have so many kids?”

“Because I love my husband.”

Groucho then retorts: “I love my cigar too, but I take it out of my mouth every once in a while.”

Again, Groucho denied ever saying it. He once stated that he was more prudish than rakish although he enjoyed double-entendres and innuendo, but he once told Dick Cavett that, “It’s easy to be dirty and get a laugh, but it takes real talent to be clean and get a laugh.”

While variations of this Cavett quotation appear in different places and the exact wording varies, the general sentiment is consistent: Groucho believed that relying on vulgarity or obscenity for laughs was a shortcut, and that truly skillful comedians could be funny without resorting to it.

In essence, his point was that cleverness, timing, and wit were the marks of real comedic talent. As such it is hard to believe that Groucho actually said the attributed quip in public, and certainly on a highly regulated radio and television program.



From Radio to—Yikes!—‘Plan 9 from Outer Space’

THOUGH DUDLEY MANLOVE’S CAREER began with the promise of child stardom and flourished in the golden age of radio, he is perhaps best remembered today not for his commanding voice or his pioneering work behind the microphone, but for his role in one of cinema’s most infamous failures, *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, Ed Wood’s notoriously inept science fiction melodrama, now enshrined as a cult classic often dubbed “the worst film ever made.”

Dudley Manlove’s career as an actor and announcer began early. Born June 11, 1914, in Oakland, CA, Dudley was singing and dancing on stage at the age of five in a program sponsored by the *Oakland Tribune*. Later, he was signed as an actor with the Stewart Motion Picture Company. By the time he was eight, Dudley had appeared in films alongside performers such as Mary Pickford and Dorothy Vernon and starred in a series of comedy shorts.

At nine, Dudley was touring on the road for a series of personal appearances. He managed to complete his schooling while making theatre appearances during weekends and vacations. His first radio work was on Oakland station KLX and the *Faucit Theater*. At the time, Manlove enjoyed radio but was captivated by vaudeville and the musical stage.

At 19, however, Manlove returned to the Bay Area, ready to settle into radio. He was hired as an announcer by KTAB in Oakland, becoming the youngest announcer on the Pacific Coast at the time. In addition to his announcing duties, he produced and directed programs for Bay Area sponsors. He also hosted a Saturday afternoon show of his own, taking the microphone as Uncle Dudley and reading newspaper comics to young listeners.

Dudley was also a violinist and pianist, a student of grand opera, and dabbled in foreign languages among other eclectic interests. While working at another Bay Area station, KROW, he had the opportunity to interview two Japanese schoolgirls. He attempted to conduct the interview in their native language, but the girls responded in English, leaving listeners wondering who was conducting the interview.

Manlove’s voice was also featured in newsreels during this period, providing commentary for Bay Area football games for Universal Newsreel.

By the time he moved to San Francisco’s KSAN, Manlove was delivering five-minute newscasts every hour on the hour. In 1939, he was named the “Number One” news commentator in the region judged on “style, delivery, enunciation, pronunciation, and quality of voice” by a panel of sponsors and advertising executives.

Throughout the 1940s, Manlove’s voice remained a familiar fixture on Bay Area radio. In the 1950s, he began to extend his reach. On

June 29, 1949, NBC began originating *Candy Matson* from its San Francisco station, KNBC. The show starred Natalie Masters as a strong-willed female private eye with Manlove assigned to announce the series. This would become his most memorable radio role. After *Candy Matson* concluded, Manlove remained a fixture at KNBC in various announcing roles, including serving as KNBC’s “Voice in the Night” until late 1954.

By 1955, Dudley had shifted to freelance work, routinely traveling between San Francisco and Hollywood for radio and television commercials and various announcing jobs. As television eclipsed radio, Manlove began picking up one-off roles on TV, including appearances on *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Schlitz Playhouse*, *Official Detective*, *State Trooper*, and *Dragnet*.

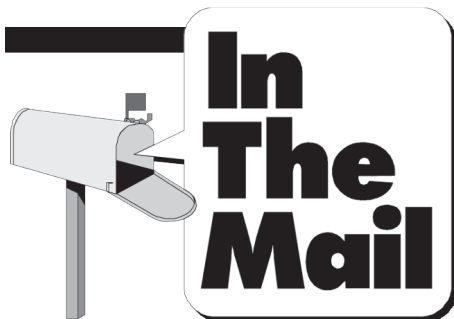
During this period, Manlove was offered the opportunity to appear in what would later be celebrated as one of the worst films in American cinema: *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. His role as Eros in Ed Wood’s 1957 magnum opus brought Dudley a level of enduring recognition that his radio career never achieved, and led to an additional science fiction role as Lagan, a “clicker,” or humanoid, in the 1962 film, *The Creation of the Humanoids*. However, it was the 1994 release of *Ed Wood*, directed by Tim Burton and starring Johnny Depp, that cemented *Plan 9* in the minds of moviegoers. Manlove became something of a cult figure. When Rhino Home Video capitalized on the Burton film’s release that same year with

its Ed Wood collection, it also released a documentary about Wood’s life, *Look Back in Angora*. Manlove was reportedly considered to narrate the film. His connection to Ed Wood and *Plan 9*, coupled with his extensive experience as an announcer, made him a top contender for the role. Ultimately, however, announcer Gary Owens was hired.

Dudley Manlove died two years later, on April 17, 1996. In a macabre resurrection, Dudley took one final bow in 2012. He had narrated a 1957 film called *Final Curtain*, written, produced, and directed by Ed Wood, who intended the film to serve as a pilot for a prospective TV series, but, unsurprisingly, the series never materialized, and the film went missing except for a few excerpts used elsewhere by Wood. Eventually, a copy of *Final Curtain* was rediscovered, restored, and released in 2012. With Wood’s histrionic dialogue and Dudley’s narrative skills honed on radio, audiences are guided through the confused mind of a stage vampire roaming a dark and empty theatre.

While his earlier accomplishments showcased a polished professional steeped in music, theatre, and news broadcasting, it was this unintended foray into cinematic infamy that secured Dudley Manlove an enduring, if peculiar, kind of fame. 🍷





Due to space limitations, we generally do not publish letters to the editor. However, we've made an exception in this case, allowing Mr. Schadow to submit his own corrections—in effect, a personal addendum to Mr. Cox's Bruno Zirato article published in the March/April 2025 issue of *Radiogram*. See the response at right.

Congratulations on another outstanding issue of *Radiogram*. Your handling of the matter of the Cowan's tragic death was most tactful.

There are a few factual inaccuracies in the article Jim Cox wrote regarding Bruno Zirato, Jr.:

Page 8, L col, para 3—Alfred Hitchcock did not direct the performance of "The Lodger" the 1940 *Suspense* audition on the *Forecast* series. Hitchcock was in New York at that time and listened to the broadcast (as it originated from Hollywood). The episode was directed by Charles Vanda who is not mentioned at all in the article, but should have been especially in paragraph 3, R col, same page when many producers/directors were cited. Paul Roberts also not mentioned in the article, was the first producer/director of *Suspense* when the series was moved to New York in 1959. Vanda's involvement in *Suspense* is covered in great detail in this blog post by Joe Webb. <https://suspenseproject.blogspot.com/search?q=forecast>.

Page 8, R col, second to last paragraph—who is the "radio historian" and what is the source (book, article, etc.) of the quote? It would be good to know.

Page 10, middle col, line 5—correct spelling of Hughes' name is Gordon T. Hughes. Also, Richard Sanville was the first to produce/direct *Yours Truly - Johnny Dollar*. Hughes followed Norman McDonnell (one episode) who followed Sanville.

There may be additional items that have eluded me.

Jim Cox has a Ph.D., [and] I expect research from people who hold doctorates (I never finished mine) to be of the highest standard.

Thank you.

Karl Schadow
email

P.S. And thanks to Joe Webb's sharp eye, he noted that Fred Henderickson produced/directed the final 18 episodes of *Suspense* in 1962.

Many Hats—Some Fit, Some Don't

WE'RE SINKING ever deeper into discomfiture.

You may recall that a sizable chunk of the last issue's editorial column was dedicated to corrections. Well, here we are again, in this same awkward and embarrassing position.

Although ol' Ed has managed to preserve a measure of sanity by steering clear of social media, the commentary still manages to find its way to his desk. One might say he's stirred up a hornet's nest, with the stingers coming fast and from all directions even within the ranks of SPERDVAC itself.

Now, regarding Mr. Cox's scholarship, his standing in the field of old-time radio is well established, and we continue to support his work without reservation. While we



THE EDITOR HAS HIS SAY

we welcome thoughtful critique of content and research, we would gently suggest that academic credentials—whether completed or not—are most valuable as a starting point for meaningful dialogue rather than as a measure of authority or expectation. *Radiogram* has always embraced contributions from a wide range of voices: seasoned scholars, devoted enthusiasts, raw fans, and professional historians alike. What ultimately matters are the accuracy and quality of the writing presented at any given time. As with all historical inquiry, new discoveries can lead to revised understanding—and when that happens, we gladly incorporate those findings to advance the shared body of knowledge.

Apparently ol' Ed's recent efforts have given SPERDVAC something of a black eye. We could try to mount a defense, but in this age of social media, once the accusation is out there no amount of explanation can erase it. The pitchforks and torches have arrived—and they're not going away. But still, we press on.

Some of our critics have suggested that we put together a team of what the media now call "fact-checkers." Well, we tried that once—and it ended in spectacular failure.

Back when ol' Ed first took the reins, he assembled a team of copy editors (the term "fact-checker" hadn't even entered the lexicon yet). Their task was straightforward: check grammar and usage, and flag anything that seemed off—in other words, fact-check the content.

The internet was still in its infancy, but email made coordination possible. Still, the newsroom was entirely virtual; these editors weren't separated by desks but by hundreds of miles. To make matters trickier, they were all volunteers. We depended on their generosity, but life—jobs, vacations, illness, mood swings, indigestion, burn-out—often got in the way of timely replies. With ol' Ed breathing down their necks animosity grew and eventually silence.

So what's an editor to do? The deadline looms, and not a peep from a single copy editor. Deadlines know no master, and so *Radiogram* goes to press—ready or not (ol' Ed had a full head of hair when he started).

Naturally, what followed was finger-pointing, excuse-making, and more than a few hurt feelings. In the end, the team dissolved, and the editorial staff was reduced to one. Or as we like to say: "You're on your own, kid."

Two decades later, even with dramatic advances in communication technology, there's little reason to think things would play out any differently. That's just the nature of life—and the unpredictable rhythm of a newsroom.

And so, our solitary editor shoulders the blame, the scorn, and everything in between. At *Radiogram*, the editor *is* the entire editorial team. It has been said that the editor wears many hats but some of them don't fit all that well. Unfortunately for ol' Ed, the fact-checking hat is a floppy headpiece that falls over his deaf ears and covers his short-sighted eyes. His head has become his (Achilles) heel.

Out there somewhere is a dry, barren pasture just waiting for *old* Ed.



SPERDVAC
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