

SPOTLIGHT ON PHIL OLDHAM • HALLOWEEN SPECIAL: A LOOK BACK AT OL' DRAC • STOOPNAGLE AND BUDD



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THE MAKING of the WESTERN THAT NEVER WAS



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from the president

GOOD EVENING, EVERYONE... there's good news tonight! Or morning, afternoon, whichever you prefer. There are indeed some great things going on with SPERDVAC!

First, following our new term limits policy, four new board members have been appointed to fill open positions: Carl Amari, Douglas Hopkinson, Sammy Jones, and returning member Phil Oldham. Each

individual brings a unique skill set that is expected to contribute to the organization's development. Please join me in welcoming them to the SPERDVAC board.

Also, I am happy to report, our California trip to the archives was successful and our assets are looking to be more organized than they have been in recent memory. Our move to the new storage units exacerbated this issue so we will need another trip in early spring with as many "hands on deck" from the board and local volunteers who are in the vicinity of Los Angeles.

Several discs are being shipped to our dubbing team—Doug Hopkinson, Sammy Jones, Scott Mahan, Wally Stall, George Miller, Don Richards, and myself—for transfer. Our archives library will grow quickly in the coming months, and I look forward to sharing our progress with you.

We are currently processing an extensive collection of previously unreleased recordings from Fred Allen, Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy, *Duffy's Tavern*, Burns & Allen, Al Pearce, and more. These materials are notable as many have not been available to the public until now. This project represents a significant opportunity for archival work, and we look forward to sharing the digitized recordings upon their release.

We would like to extend an invitation to collectors interested in contributing discs or reel tapes to SPERDVAC; we are once again accepting such donations. John Gassman is assisting the club with acquisitions and is available to address any questions you may have. For large collections, we will provide a receipt reflecting the estimated value of the items. As SPERDVAC is a registered non-profit organization, all donations are

fully tax-deductible. If you wish to make a donation, please contact me at president. corey.harker@spervac.com, and I will ensure your information is forwarded to John.

New Board Members

New Treasures

Donations Open

Website and Library

Expanded Content

By the time this edition of *Radiogram* reaches you, our new website, online audio library, and membership software are expected to be fully operational. Our vice-president, Zach Eastman, and I are currently finalizing the general library up-

loads and anticipate completion by the end of October. Subsequently, our library will feature first-generation recordings from the SPERDVAC collection, with at least 20 newly restored additions every month. We will continue to employ the restoration methodology exemplified in our recent *Quiet Please* releases. If you have yet to experience these examples, please visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMd4NaNdoVc> for reference. Additionally, for collectors interested in conducting their own restorations, complete raw files will be available for download.

We invite our members to share their preferences for content in our forthcoming audio library. While we understand there is considerable interest in the missing *I Love A Mystery* episodes, as well as network copies of *Guns, Smoke, Johnny Dollar*, and *Suspense* from the early 1960s, these items have not yet been located in our archives. We welcome suggestions for titles or programs that you would like to see fully restored. Your input will be valuable in shaping our collection for the future.

Additionally, alongside our regular additions of drama, variety, and comedy to the library, we will soon be including full big band remotes and contemporary radio drama productions. We recognize that a portion of our membership values these forms of entertainment, and it is important that we preserve them as well.

Thank you all for being an essential part of SPERDVAC.!

Corey Harker



Phil Oldham

by Sean Dougherty
SPERDVAC MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

THE TERM “81 YEARS YOUNG” is almost a cliché in classic radio circles, but there just isn’t a term that applies better to that bottle of energy known as Phil Oldham. Phil believes SPERDVAC and the shared yet diverse interests of its members and the resources provide him opportunities to build on. Phil is a retired TV producer who has embraced keeping audio drama alive by introducing it to new audiences through participation including incorporating the talents of the blind, handicapped and youth in radio re-creations in a run of audio dramas in his hometown of Larchmont, NY and in the process set a blueprint for others. We sat down with him recently to ask, “How do you do all this stuff?”

Q: Let’s talk about the audio dramas you produce in Larchmont and how they came to be.

I started four years ago. The genesis was trying to come up with ways to use classic radio, with the help of SPERDVAC resources, to connect local schools, theatre groups, media, the library and the Counsel for the Blind to create an opportunity for blind and handicapped to be part of the process. When you do these productions, it isn’t just actors and sound effects, right? It’s sound engineers and people behind the scenes, doing promotion and getting partnerships. It’s always been a team effort.

Q. What was your background coming into this? What role do you take in the productions?

My background is in television programming and marketing. If you had a TV show and you wanted to get it on the air, you

brought it to me, and I’d help shape it into a product that fits into the media landscape and then make the sale and hopefully get your show on the air. So, being involved with SPERDVAC for a couple of years at that point and truly enjoying classic radio opened the door. I grew up on classic radio, during the early days of television when radio was actually more interesting. My all-time favorite is *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar*, which continued into the early 60s.

Q. Let’s get back to how you got started with your re-creations.

Attending SPERDVAC conventions and seeing the number of blind members and in the re-creations got me started. No surprise, audio media was their media of choice, and they can and do enjoy participating. You would completely forget that you were watching people speaking because the sound effects and the story lines were so engaging. When SPERDVAC did “Meet me in St. Louis” with a cast of young people, seeing the enthusiasm that they had for it and the expertise they put into it really got me thinking about bringing it home to my community for both the blind and our youth. You can get kids involved in theatre through audio theatre because it’s easy. There are no sets or costumes, line memorization, stage fright and minimal rehearsal time.

I was able to work with SPERDVAC for show selection, scripts, production guidelines and original recordings and work with local audio theatre experts. The first we performed was *Ozzie and Harriet*. That series lasted well into the 60s and Ricky Nelson was a teen idol, so it was easily recognized and a typical family sitcom. It allowed us to use adult, child and blind participants. Through our local Council for the Blind, we had the blind in the cast and the audience. It helped that we also had a local radio engineer who was blind.

To make the shows special and timely we focused on doing



An OTR Christmas tradition, “It’s a Wonderful Life,” is re-created with the aid of student performers and members of the Council for the Blind.

performances tied to holidays—Christmas, Easter, Halloween. To make them more than just re-creations, SPERDVAC board member [and Wallbreakers podcaster] James Scully (an expert on the history of classic radio) provided introductions. We also showed a video related to the productions, such as an O & H holiday TV show, and had a Q & A with prizes to build audience engagement. Our local TV operation is also a partner and tapes each production and shares it with the community.

Q. What kind of audiences did you get?

One of the reasons that the library really enjoyed hosting our productions is that audio theatre was very engaging, and it drew a good-sized audience. It was also supported by the Lions Club, of which I'm a member, and our local media and the Council for the Blind, with a cast from the community. This past Halloween we did a re-creation of a 1930s radio version of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. It was true to the book not the movie. For the video portion, we showed a documentary on Mary Shelley's life and her writing of *Frankenstein*, and had a Q&A and trivia with prizes afterward.

For Christmas we did the Lux Radio Theatre version of *It's a Wonderful Life*. Walden Hughes (SPERDVAC board member)

What we've done is an indicator that we really can get audio, theatre, and live re-creations out there—to show people that they can be done easily and entertainingly.

arranged for Karilyn Grimes, the actress who played Zuzu in the movie, to do a recorded introduction specifically to our audience. After the re-creation we had a video interview with her and the other child actor from the film.

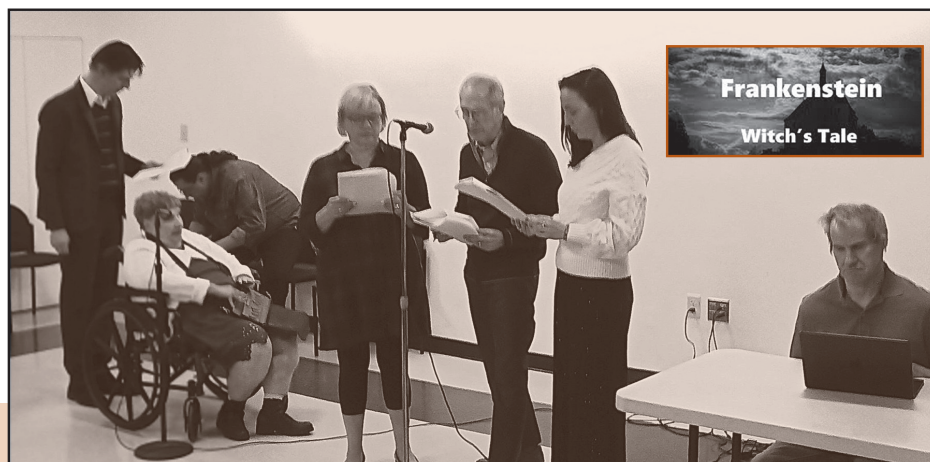
Q. You did a *Twilight Zone* at one point as well, right?

Yes, Halloween, the year before. *The Twilight Zone* is copyrighted so I had to go to Paramount and use my TV connections to get us approval to do "The Monsters [are due on] Maple Street," on the condition that it not be recorded. Following that re-creation, we screened the

2000s-era same episode to show how they evolved the storyline from space aliens to ones more earth bound. Again, all production featured adult, youth, blind and handicapped participants.

What we've done is an indicator that we really can get audio, theatre, and live re-creations out there—to show people that they can be done easily and entertainingly. So the people who've been there have been very entertained and the second for us equally important is really developing the opportunities within audio, theatre, and audio media for our youth and the blind. They are able to enjoy it as well as training to understand that they can participate in it, including professionally. So our audience always included members of the blind community from the Westchester Council for the Blind.

Q. What are some of the accommodations you made for the people for the blind people that are participating in the show?



Members of the cast of "Frankenstein" offer a chilling account of the man who made a monster in his own likeness at a library re-creation of *The Witch's Tale* 1930s thriller that featured performers and technicians from local high schools and the Council for the Blind.

Essentially sound cues and rehearsals so they know where their lines are when they were following it by braille scripts provided by SPERDVAC. Remember that audio is their prime means of responding so they are better at it than we sighted. With its 50-year history, SPERDVAC has the fan base of classic radio yet it also has years of encouraging re-creations of radio shows and has built a library of scripts and production materials to support them. And since many members of SPERDVAC are blind themselves, they're able to take their experience and their abilities to make re-creations truly accessible to all. As mentioned, we are also working with local youth and school theatre programs to introduce classic radio and audio theatre to the new generation.

Q. What are other lessons you've learned that readers who are interested in helping to grow the hobby might be interested in?

There are a lot of organizations that have an interest in developing this type of entertainment and participation for the blind—the Lions Club with support for the blind as its signature cause. Local, state and national councils for the blind, the Audio Publishers Association, the Podcast Academy, the Broadcast Foundation of America, blind professionals who are already succeeding out there. We are working with Hofstra University media department and radio station to develop a media curriculum for the blind—both in classroom and virtually. We are also talking with another leading university media school to join in. It is likely that there are a great many others doing what we are doing. Sharing our stories through SPERDVAC and *Radiogram* is important to growing old-time radio for today.

Q. How close are you (and SPERDVAC) to be able to turn over a turnkey show to a person who wants to follow in your footsteps somewhere else in the country?

SPERDVAC is currently working to do that. We have a collection of shows and scripts that are available in braille and production notes, music and effects. The audio theatre production groups out there and the high schools, drama schools, libraries and community organizations are all touchpoints an aspiring producer can use to take one of these shows to their own community. We can together grow this hobby, one community at a time or one organization at a time. 🍷



DRACULA

The
Anti-Lugosi Gothic



HALLOWEEN SPECIAL ... A LOOK BACK AT OL' DRAC

Dracula's modern ubiquity—spanning films, TV, games, and even cereal—was absent in the 1930s. Then, the vampire's cultural presence was defined by two works: Bela Lugosi's 1931 film and Orson Welles' innovative, atmospheric 1938 radio adaptation.

by Patrick Lucanio

EDITOR

IN CONTEMPORARY popular culture, Dracula enjoys a level of ubiquity that would have been unimaginable in the early twentieth century. The character now appears in a seemingly endless array of films, television series, graphic novels, video games, and even parodic consumer products such as the breakfast cereal Count Chocula made available at Halloween.

Yet this cultural saturation is a relatively recent development. In the 1930s, Dracula's presence was far more limited, defined primarily by two landmark works, one omnipresent in today's culture and the other recognizable to old-time radio enthusiasts: Bela Lugosi's iconic performance in Universal Pictures' 1931 film and Orson Welles' innovative radio adaptation for the *Mercury Theatre on the Air* in 1938. These isolated productions, while represented the character's tentative steps toward the iconic status that Dracula would later achieve rather than evidence of a fully developed cultural phenomenon.

Of these two early interpretations, Welles' radio production is particularly noteworthy for its deliberate departure from Lugosi's performance and its reimagining of the story through the unique possibilities of the broadcast medium. Whereas Lugosi's Dracula cemented a visual and theatrical template for the vampire in American cinema and thus American culture, Welles' radio adaptation necessarily offered an experience that relied on evocative sound effects, layered narration, and atmospheric music to conjure fear

and suspense missing in the film. By doing so, the *Mercury Theatre* not only presented a strikingly different interpretation of Bram Stoker's novel but also challenged the notion—already forming in the public imagination—that Lugosi's portrayal represented the definitive Dracula.

In charting this alternative vision, one by its very nature limited to sound, Welles and the *Mercury Theatre* fashioned a version of *Dracula* that unfolded entirely through the ear, and not simply to retell Stoker's story, but to reinvent it for a medium that trafficked in suggestion and intimacy. In Welles' adaptation, reportedly in collaboration with John Houseman, Dracula is not the hypnotic aristocrat made famous by Bela Lugosi but something more primal and unsettling—a presence conjured less by elegance than by atmosphere and sound.

Welles' framing device immediately signaled a different approach. Instead of a dramatic cape-swirl entrance, the broadcast began with the voice of Dr. Seward, played by Welles, presenting the tale as if it were a true account: "Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Arthur Seward. I am here tonight to bear witness to the truth of certain events, which you may find it hard to believe but I ask you to believe them. I have here certain documents, telegrams, clippings from the press of the day, memoranda, and letters in various hands . . . the history almost at variance with the possibilities of contemporary belief, may stand forth as simple fact."

As the narrative continues, Jonathan Harker (George Coulouris), adrift in Castle

Bela Lugosi's Count Dracula, with his piercing gaze and otherworldly accent, became more than a performance; he became the vampire itself, the image that still haunts our imagination.

Dracula, offers a wry comment as he cuts himself shaving, and the Count, barely containing himself, warns that “doing such a thing in this country could be dangerous.”

With that intimate opening the story’s progression follows a masterclass in auditory storytelling. The tone stripped the story of its theatrical excess so prominent in the Lugosi film (itself based on a theatrical adaptation and not the Stoker novel *per se*) and made it feel disturbingly real—a theme that would define the entire audio production.

Dr. Seward next reports of a shipwreck—a captain lashed to the helm, a black dog leaping from the wreckage—then gives way to the captain’s own grim narration, performed with stark urgency by Mercury veteran Ray Collins.

Back in England, Seward wires his mentor, Van Helsing, portrayed with sharp gravity by Martin Gabel, after noticing that his fiancée, Lucy (Elizabeth Farrell), is mysteriously weakened. Van Helsing notes that she isn’t anemic, but the puncture marks on her neck suggest a darker cause. While Seward is away, Lucy records her own nocturnal entry, underscored by wind, breaking glass, and a wolf’s howl. Her words climax with Dracula’s chilling vow, “You shall be flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood,” followed not by a scream but by her ecstatic sigh, something that is wholly absent in the Lugosi version yet would be exaggerated to erotic levels in the Hammer Films remake *Horror of Dracula* (1958) with Christopher Lee.

Lucy dies, and soon local children arrive home with similar wounds, whispering of a beautiful woman. Lucy, now undead, lures the children with chocolates in chilling, singsong tones, and Van Helsing walks the audience through the ancient lore of vampires. Then Seward and Van Helsing free Lucy of the vampire curse at the graveyard. As Van Helsing prays Seward drives a stake through her heart; her scream, as Paul Heyer noted in *The Medium and the Magician: Orson Welles, The Radio Years, 1934-1952* (2005) rivaled “Fay Wray in *King Kong* (1933) and must have had families shouting, “Turn down the radio!”

Later, Mina (Agnes Moorehead) is attacked by the vampire, and her psychic connection to Dracula was rendered through a clever audio overlay, Welles’ whisper echoing faintly beneath her voice. This aural invasion suggested a horror more intimate than Lugosi’s hypnotic stare in the sense that Dracula was literally inside her words.

The soundscape peaks in the climactic se-

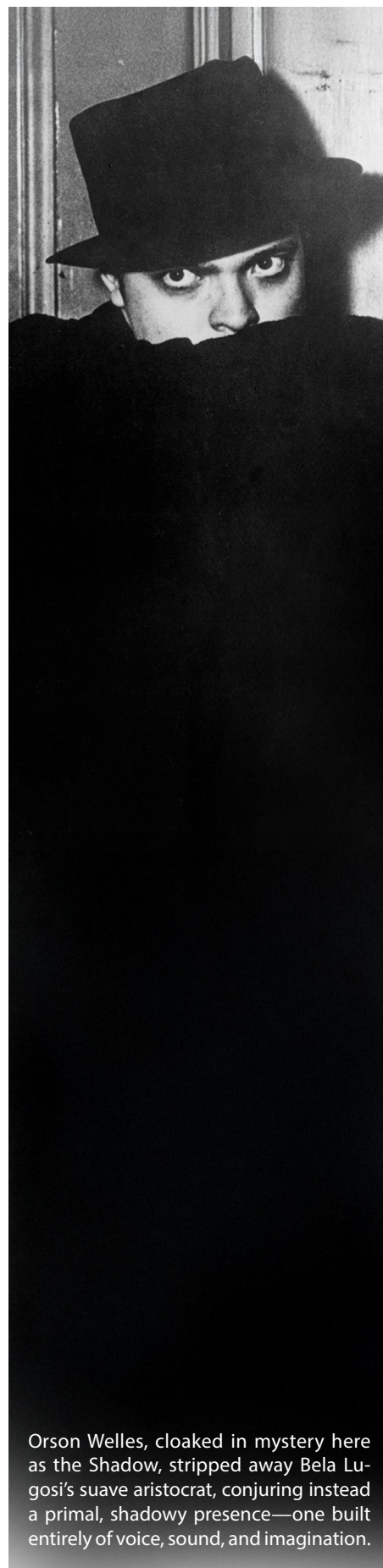
quence, as Dracula flees back to Transylvania, the layering of effects—galloping horses, clattering carriage wheels, and echoing voices—culminates in a switch. It is not Van Helsing or Seward who destroys the vampire. Seward falters at the last moment leaving Mina to take a desperate act of salvation. In a moment of primal catharsis, it is Mina who drives the stake home “with the strength of an animal,” her scream fading into silence as Welles’ voice lingers in poetic, haunting tones followed by Van Helsing for clarification: “whatever influence was at work on her, she must at the last moment have rejected it. For at the exact instant the sun disappeared, it was Mina Harker who drove the stake through the heart of the thing that called itself . . . Dracula.”

In this narrative reversal, Welles seems to draw—whether deliberately or by coincidence—from F. W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922), a silent adaptation of *Dracula*. In Murnau’s film, Mina takes action when the male characters prove ineffective, ultimately sacrificing herself to end the plague of vampirism. By contrast here, Mina survives marking a significant departure from the tragic conclusion of Murnau’s film.

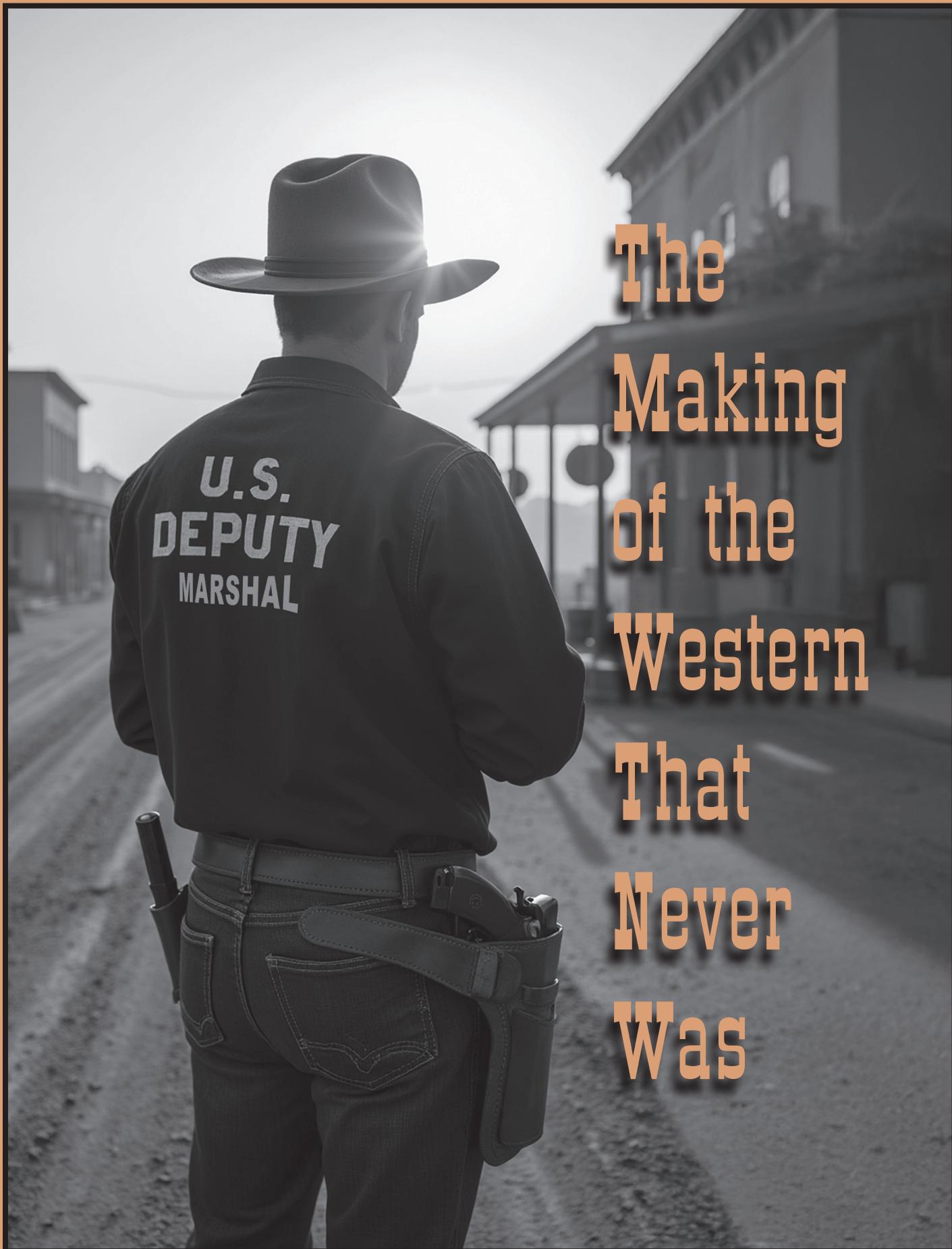
What made Welles’ Dracula so arresting—and so different from Lugosi’s—was its conscious refusal to glamorize the Count. Welles’ Dracula rarely speaks, and when he does, it is quiet and restrained, more hiss than soliloquy. This stripped-down portrayal left space for the listener’s imagination to animate the monster, making him far more frightening. Whereas Lugosi’s Dracula invited fascination and even a slight measure of sympathy, Welles delivered something feral, a shadow slithering across the airwaves; indeed, this characterization echoes the rat-like characterization of the predator known as *Nosferatu* in Murnau’s film whose major visualization is often a shadow. Moreover, Welles’ interpretation is a precursor to Christopher Lee’s predacious take in modern cinema: ambiguous, menacing, and truly unforgettable.

This approach extended to every technical choice. Welles understood that radio horror depended on a balance of suggestion and immediacy. Sound effects, often startling in their realism, were not gimmicks but psychological triggers. The infamous stake through the heart, reportedly achieved by smashing a watermelon with a hammer, remains a testament to his belief that the most effective horror happens in the mind.

Continued Page 15



Orson Welles, cloaked in mystery here as the Shadow, stripped away Bela Lugosi’s suave aristocrat, conjuring instead a primal, shadowy presence—one built entirely of voice, sound, and imagination.



The Making of the Western That Never Was

E.B. Mann, a prolific western writer, attempted to adapt his character “The Whistler” into a radio series, *Boots and Saddles*. Despite partnerships with agencies and producers, promotional efforts, and audition recordings, the show never aired, illustrating the challenges authors faced during radio’s so-called “Golden Age.”

by Gary Coville

RADIO’S “GOLDEN AGE” wasn’t always golden. Disappointment often occurred for many would-be writers and their agents. The scramble to nourish and promote ideas into an actual airborne series frequently ended in frustration and failure. Cutting room floors were metaphorically littered with shattered and discarded audition recordings that failed to attract interest. In many cases, an author’s concept never advanced beyond a typed prospectus.

Boots and Saddles proved to be one of the malnourished dreams of its creator and his representatives. Edward Beverly Mann was a relatively popular writer of western novels who came to prominence during radio’s innovative years. Born in Hollis, KS in 1902, Mann was the son of a Methodist minister. Consequently, Edward and his family were periodically uprooted and relocated whenever his father’s posting changed. E.B. graduated from Decatur County high school in 1920 and began traveling across the country, working in a series of jobs including ranch work, harvesting wheat, and typesetting in a succession of print shops. He even played a little semi-pro baseball.

From childhood, Mann had eagerly soaked up stories of the Wild West. His enthusiasm and interest in the subject seemed limitless. Throughout his wandering years, he continued to absorb as much western history and folklore as was offered. In 1923, E.B. ended up in Florida and enrolled at the University of Florida graduating in 1927. The following year he landed a job with an advertising

agency, Willard Price and Company.

Mann’s writing career began in 1928 with an appearance in the pulp magazine *Ranch Romances*, writing under the byline E.B. Mann. He soon quit his advertising job and took up the life of a freelance writer. The changeover, unfortunately, coincided with the arrival of the Great Depression. Pulp writers typically earned from one to three cents a word when their stories sold, sometimes upon acceptance and sometimes upon publication—assuming they even

received payment. It was an uncertain profession Mann had embarked on, and at a particularly hazardous economic period. In a 1971 piece for *Field and Stream*, E.B. recalled that his first published story netted him \$150, a substantial part of which he used to purchase a desperately needed winter overcoat.

During the next decade, the name E.B. Mann began to appear regularly on a healthy number of western novels with eye-catching titles like *The Blue-Eyed Kid*, *The Valley of Wanted Men*, *Terror of Tombstone*

Trail, *Stampede*, *Shootin’ Melody*, and *Comanche Kid*. A recurring figure in several of Mann’s stories was deputy United States marshal Jim Sinclair Jr., dubbed *the Whistler*. That designation flowed from Sinclair’s tendency to emit a soft whistle at crucial moments, telegraphing his thoughts on the situation he was confronting.

James Reasoner, in his blog *Rough Edges* (March 13, 2023), devotes time to Whistler’s background. According to Reasoner, the character debuted in the April 1933 issue of *Dime Western Magazine* in a story called, “The Death Whistler.” We learn from Rea-



Could it be that we’ve uncovered a long-lost photo of an unknown actor at the mic, auditioning as E.B. Mann’s Whistler for *Boots and Saddles*? Sorry, not this time. The truth? We finally gave in to temptation. We stepped—well, the author did—into the future. The photo above was, *gulp!*, created by artificial intelligence. Specifically, by that stranger-in-a-strange-land called Grok. Ol’Ed confesses to being “grok-smacked” by how convincing it looks—easily good enough to pass for the real thing. Depending on your point of view, we either apologize for using AI or give ourselves a pat on our aching backs for using it responsibly for illustrative purposes—and admitting it!

soner that the Whistler was actually James Bonnet Sinclair, Jr., owner of a ranching empire he had inherited from his father. But rather than settling into the life of an affluent cattleman, Sinclair elected to turn the operation of his ranching business over to others. This decision left Sinclair free to roam the frontier pursuing adventure as a range detective and deputy U.S. marshal. The fact that Sinclair was “almost supernaturally fast” with his guns only added to the character’s mythic appeal.

The soaring popularity of Mann’s creation set against the runaway success of *The Lone Ranger* on radio must have sparked an idea for E.B. Mann: perhaps U.S. deputy marshal Jim Sinclair—better known as the Whistler—was destined for his own adventure on the airwaves. After all, John Reid, the masked Lone Ranger, and Jim Sinclair Jr., the enigmatic Whistler, had made their debuts within just three months of each other. Both were cloaked in mystery, both champions of justice, and both sworn to

<p>Both were cloaked in mystery, both champions of justice, and both sworn to uphold the law with heroic resolve.</p>	<p>uphold the law with heroic resolve. Drawing from a diverse collection of radio materials the author acquired through an online auction years ago, Mann’s efforts to shift his work from print to radio can be</p>
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traced in detail. This collection provides insight into the earliest steps Mann took to bring his character to radio, beginning with a bold pitch and a curious choice of title.

In 1938, Mann entered into an agreement with the Russell C. Comer Advertising Company of Kansas City, MO to market a potential radio series based on his character, tentatively titled *Boots and Saddles*. The title is somewhat curious for a story about a U.S. deputy marshal since the phrase is traditionally associated with cavalry troops. In fact, “boots and saddles” is a bugle call signaling troops to mount up and prepare for action. By 1940, however, the phrase had gained wide recognition through numerous Western films, symbolizing frontier adventure and evoking images of horses, dusty trails, and high-paced action. While the Whistler was a deputy U.S. marshal rather than a cavalryman, the title alone promised audiences an exciting, action-driven Western narrative. The unusual title

Selling ‘Boots and Saddles’

Sam Hammer Radio Productions prepared a 10-page prospectus to sell the program that included background information E. B. Mann, an analysis of the “The Whistler,” details about audience appeal, setting, context, and a merchandising strategy for radio stations. Below are two sections from Hammer’s prospectus for *Boots and Saddles*, showing the intended plans and direction for the program as well as providing examples of the proposal’s content.

The “Whistler”

“The Whistler,” is a fictional counterpart of an actual existing person, and his actual experiences and adventures have furnished us with most of our plots. Stories that were told the author by this person, or extracted from the records of his exploits on file in the Department at Washington. Some dramatic liberty has been taken in preparing these for radio adaptation but for the most part they are factual—and because of this source, contain a certain authenticity, a “believableness” that cannot be counterfeited—and which makes the stories doubly entertaining.

“The Whistler” is a tall, powerful man brought up in the old Western school of Hard Knocks, and the survival of the fittest. He is a fearless man, with nerves of steel, and a commanding presence, a hair trigger mind—and an alacrity with firearms that has never been equaled. Yet he is a quiet spoken, loveable dreamer. The champion of the oppressed, and the defender of women and children—though often loved and loving, he is always a confirmed bachelor! (sic)

He has the intriguing habit—when in a tough spot—or deep in thought—of whistling softly to himself, and, though he never whistles a discernable tune, the sound is always indicative of his mood. Those who know him will translate his whistle into words of wisdom or warning—danger or devotion!

All in all—The Whistler is a most intriguing, admirable and loveable character.

Program Appeal

The power of the Western Story, whether in book, film or radio, to draw and hold a great audience, has never decreased—rather it has increased! Many new “pulp” magazines dealing solely with Western Stories have appeared on the newsstands [and] are enjoying wider circulations. The major film companies no longer make what they called “horse operas”—they now bring forth, well cast and well directed films, that can well be spoken of in superlatives. Such products as: “Stagecoach,” “Oklahoma Kid” and many others.

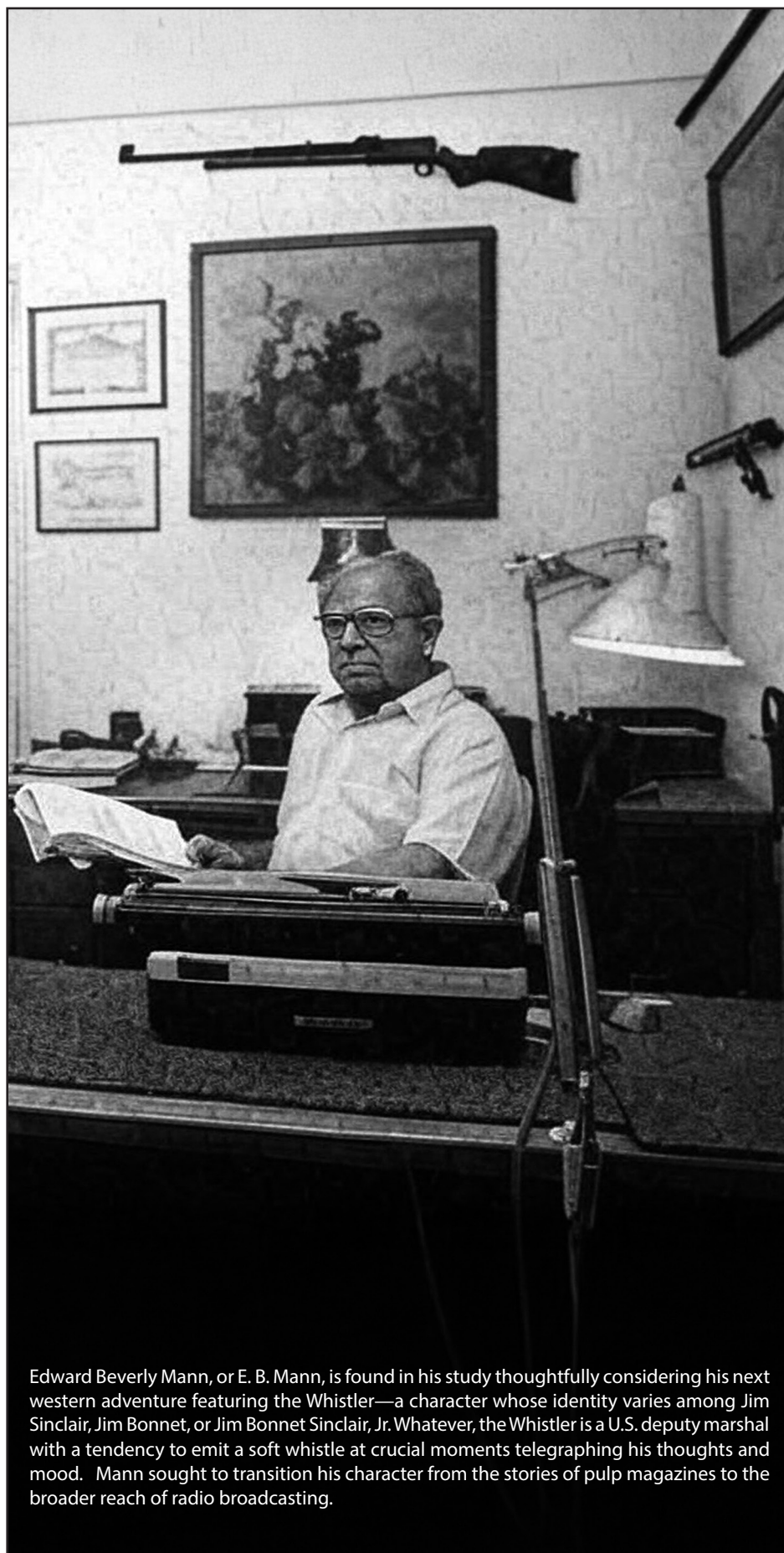
The great popularity of the radio program “The Lone Ranger” and the above mentioned Western Stories, all add up to one result—continued and ever growing popularity for stories of the West!

And, now that we have mentioned the “Lone Ranger”—may we say that this is the only program on the air which is comparable to “Boots and Saddles”—with the advantage in some ways, in the favor of the latter. Most of the stories of the “Lone Ranger” are of the past, while “Boots and Saddles” is of the present, up-to-the-minute variety. The character of the “Lone Ranger” is mythical and somewhat overdrawn, which has a tendency to make them less believable. “Boots and Saddles” lacks this drawback.

Mind you—we think “Lone Ranger” is a swell radio program, and most enjoyable. We take nothing away from its accomplishment, from its glory, from its sheer entertainment! [Note: Spelling of “its” from the original “it’s” has been standardized for clarity].

We believe, however, that in “The Whistler” we have a character that can—and will—grow to greater heights than “Lone Ranger”—that is more human, more believable, and therefore more lasting.

Added interest in “Boots and Saddles” is furnished by a juvenile, in the adolescent stage, that can be developed to whatever extent the sponsor wishes, and which will serve as a closer bond to our juvenile listening audience. There is also a girl—young, vivacious, loveable and wholesome, who can also be brought along concurrently with this boy. We can develop and maintain the family story thread, and still go far afield for our adventures. Truly a happy situation!



Edward Beverly Mann, or E. B. Mann, is found in his study thoughtfully considering his next western adventure featuring the Whistler—a character whose identity varies among Jim Sinclair, Jim Bonnet, or Jim Bonnet Sinclair, Jr. Whatever, the Whistler is a U.S. deputy marshal with a tendency to emit a soft whistle at crucial moments telegraphing his thoughts and mood. Mann sought to transition his character from the stories of pulp magazines to the broader reach of radio broadcasting.

also raises intriguing questions about how much character development was planned behind the scenes.

Although no surviving documentation directly addresses this point, it is possible that Mann—or Hammer Productions—considered giving the Whistler a backstory linking him to cavalry service, perhaps as a former soldier who later became a lawman. Such a detail would not only justify the title but also add depth to the character, even if it was never formally included in the prospectus.

While such creative considerations may have been explored behind the scenes, the practical work of marketing the series fell to K. K. Hansen, from Comer's New York office, who acted as Mann's primary contact. To support the pitch, Mann provided the agency with scripts, book jackets, and other promotional materials. Despite more than a year of effort, the series failed to secure a buyer. On August 15, 1939, Mann formally terminated the agreement and requested the return of all program-related materials.

In a separate letter of the same date to K.K. Hansen, Mann alluded to the withdrawal and expressed his regrets. "Sorry

Subsequent searches have so far failed to turn up any evidence that Boots and Saddles was ever broadcast on either a trial basis or any other arrangement.

things didn't work out as we had hoped they would regarding this program," Mann wrote, "but—that's the way life is! There's no certainty that I'll have any better luck selling it than you did, but, as I told you, it was necessary for me to cancel our past arrangements before I could even try." Mann concluded with a promise that if he ever made any real money from *Boots and Saddles*, he would find a way to show his gratitude for Hansen's efforts.

E.B. Mann terminated his agreement with the Comer agency shortly after a visit from Floyd Buckley, a representative of Sam Hammer Productions. Buckley—best known as a radio and stage actor (see *The Mysterious Traveler*, May 2015)—also held the position of vice president of production at Sam Hammer.

We have a clear picture of Buckley's visit that day and his proposal to E. B. Mann;

it comes in the form of a letter of understanding dated August 15, 1939, written by Mann and directed to Buckley. Mann outlines in detail the agreement reached between himself and Buckley. According to Mann's account, Buckley claimed to have a possible client interested in airing *Boots and Saddles* on a trial basis over a local New York station. Buckley and Hammer would forego any profit to themselves during this trial period. That would be done in the hope that the trial broadcast would generate sales from other clients later.

Mann's stated understanding was that he would receive \$50 for each 15-minute script; three scripts per week would be required. Mann would prepare the scripts sufficiently in advance allowing for recordings to be made and delivered to the client. If the program failed to earn any profit, Mann would consider the \$50 per script fee as payment in full for use of *Boots and Saddles* with all rights in the program reverting to him at the end of the trial period.

There was a fourth letter, also prepared that day following Floyd Buckley's proposal to E. B. Mann. That letter went to Charles

D. McKinnon, sales manager for Decca Records transcription department. Mann informed McKinnon that plans for Decca providing transcription recordings for *Boots and Saddles* were off; Comer advertising was no longer handling negotiations for the radio program. Mann did assure McKinnon that Buckley had promised to either use Decca to produce the recordings for *Boots and Saddles* or would by some other means recompense McKinnon for his previous efforts on behalf of *Boots and Saddles*.

Subsequent searches have yet to uncover any evidence that *Boots and Saddles* was ever broadcast—either as a trial run or under any other arrangement. Archival digging through trade publications, network schedules, and surviving radio logs has produced no indication of an actual airing. The same conclusion is reached in *Radio Rides the Range: A Reference Guide to Western Drama in the Air, 1929–1967* (McFarland, 2014), edited by Jack French and David S. Siegel. These researchers—among the most thorough chroniclers of radio's Western programs—found no proof that the series made it beyond the promotional stage.

Even though they located a promotional announcement placed by Hammer Productions in *Radio Daily* on May 23, 1940, their investigation revealed no further evidence of broadcast activity. It seems the ad may have been a last, determined attempt to generate interest in a program that was struggling to gain traction.

Despite this lack of verifiable airtime, Sam Hammer Radio Productions appears to have put significant effort into selling the concept. The company produced a detailed 10-page prospectus aimed at potential buyers—stations, sponsors, or syndicators—outlining nearly every facet of the proposed series. The document provided an impressive overview of E. B. Mann's background as a writer and storyteller, offering credibility and demonstrating that the project was anchored by an established creator with experience in Western-themed fiction. It went on to analyze the program's lead character, the Whistler, framing him as a compelling figure whose sense of mystery and justice would appeal to young listeners while offering enough grit to satisfy adult audiences.

The prospectus also gave careful attention to setting and context, attempting to carve out a unique space for *Boots and Saddles* within the already crowded Western radio genre. But perhaps most ambitious of all was its merchandising strategy, which presented radio stations with ways to extend the program beyond the airwaves. According to the proposal, sponsors would be encouraged to form "clubs" for boys and girls—youth-oriented fan groups that would not only heighten audience engagement but also help promote sponsor products through contests, premiums, and serialized story elements. The prospectus even suggested that a more detailed merchandising guide could be provided upon request, signaling that Hammer Productions had invested heavily in marketing ideas designed to make *Boots and Saddles* commercially viable.

E. B. Mann's own involvement was clearly substantial, with the proposal emphasizing his willingness to tailor scripts to sponsor preferences. Under the heading "*Program Appeal*," the prospectus stated that both the boy and girl juvenile roles could be adjusted and developed to suit the needs of advertisers. This level of flexibility reflected more than just good writing but demonstrated a

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POCKET BOOK

25¢

THE COMPLETE BOOK

THE WHISTLER

Dramatic stories by **E. B. MANN** about the strangest lawman ever to ride the Western plains

POCKET BOOKS INC.

THREE SHOTS EXPLODED!

A man staggered out on the trail. He sobbed. "Stop it, damn yuh! Stop those guns!"

U. S. Deputy Marshal Jim Bonnet stopped firing. Suddenly he started to whistle a shrill, haunting tune. The wounded outlaw listened in amazement. "My God," he cursed, "You're... you're The Whistler."

Jim Bonnet was one of the strangest lawmen ever to ride the Western plains. Quiet and soft spoken, he had an eye that saw all, an ear that heard all, and a gun that never missed. Here are three dramatic stories about this man known as The Whistler. In one he saves an innocent cowboy, in another he gunwhips a crooked sheriff, and in the third he solves the mystery of a goldless gold mine. But in each his lips whistle trouble for killers and his long guns bark death.

Cover illustration by Lou Marshchett

THIS IS A GENUINE

POCKET BOOK

ROCKEFELLER CENTER 25¢ NEW YORK 20, N.Y.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

From pulp pages to frontier-pulp legend, E. B. Mann brought the law westward with deputy U.S. marshal Jim Sinclair, Jr.—better known as "The Whistler." Debuting in the late 1920s, Mann's sharp-shooting hero stood out for his quiet, tension-cutting whistle, signaling danger—or justice—on the trail. Here the Whistler crosses over to paperback fame in 1954 Pocket Book. Interestingly, Sinclair is identified as Jim Bonnet in this collection of Mann's short stories. Also, according to blurb the Whistler "had an eye that saw all, an ear that heard all, and a gun that never missed." The first two traits, at least, are shared with another Whistler who had a habit of walking by night.

sharp understanding of how commercial radio operated in the 1930s and 1940s, where sponsors often influenced casting, storylines, and even character development to maximize audience engagement and, ultimately, product sales.

This approach echoed the similar strategies already employed by *The Lone Ranger*, such as the Silvercup Bread Safety Club, Cobakco Safety Club, and Bond Bread Safety Club, which in turn echoed the phenomenal success of the Tom Mix Ralston Straight Shooters program earlier in the decade, which set a new benchmark for radio merchandising. In both instances, it should be noted, the series didn't just sell an adventure story but sold a lifestyle. Young listeners could join the "Safety Club" and "Straight Shooters Club," collect badges, decoder rings, and branded gear, and participate in contests that kept them engaged well beyond the airwaves.

By building into *Boots and Saddles* the option to expand juvenile roles to fit sponsor needs, Hammer Productions was clearly borrowing from these sponsors' playbook. They understood that young audiences were not only loyal listeners but also enthusiastic consumers who could be drawn into sponsor-driven clubs, contests, and premium giveaways. This flexibility suggested that the Whistler's world could easily be adapted to include child characters—perhaps as sidekicks or young pioneers—who would serve as identification figures for the show's youthful audience, just as Tom Mix's adventures had inspired legions of "Straight Shooters."

In this light, the merchandising plan for *Boots and Saddles* wasn't just an afterthought; it was an essential part of the pitch. It promised potential sponsors a ready-made framework for turning a radio adventure series into a profitable, cross-promotional enterprise, something that the Tom Mix program had already proven could yield exceptional results.

One curious omission in the *Boots and Saddles* blueprint, however, is the absence of the name Jim Sinclair—despite the fact that the character had been introduced in Mann's fiction. Instead, the proposal refers exclusively to "the Whistler," framing him as a mysterious lawman comparable to the Lone Ranger. By 1940, the Lone Ranger was a cultural phenomenon, and Hammer Productions seemed eager to capitalize on

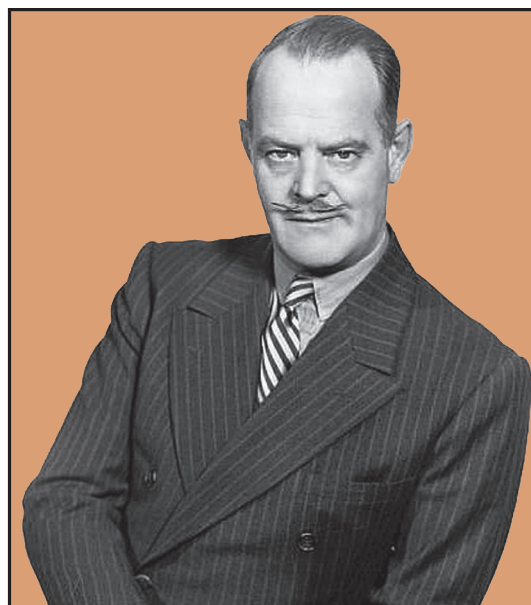
that success by presenting the Whistler as a similarly enigmatic figure whose true identity remained largely hidden. Much as the Lone Ranger's backstory revolved around his rebirth from John Reid into a masked symbol of justice, the Whistler was envisioned as a character whose identity as U.S. marshal Jim Sinclair would be secondary—if acknowledged at all—in the unfolding saga.

This marketing decision reveals the extent to which *Boots and Saddles* was designed with audience recognition and market trends in mind. Rather than relying on Mann's literary legacy alone, Hammer Productions sought to position the Whistler in the shadow of one of radio's most successful Western heroes, hoping to tap into an existing appetite for masked lawmen, frontier justice, and serialized adventure. Yet for all its careful planning, ambitious merchandising, and promotional push, *Boots and Saddles* never transitioned from proposal to broadcast—a lost opportunity from radio's Golden Age that survives only in prospectus pages and a few scattered references.

DESPITE ALL THAT WAS TRIED, *Boots and Saddles* never achieved radio prominence. Numerous factors may have contributed to its failure—competition from established programs like *The Lone Ranger*, the volatile nature of the entertainment industry during the late 1930s, and the high costs of production relative to the uncertain returns of a new series. Whatever the reasons, the program remained a promising concept that never found its audience.

Yet the story of *Boots and Saddles* is more than a tale of a failed radio venture. It provides a revealing glimpse into the inner workings of radio's so-called Golden Age, a time when countless creative ideas were tested, pitched, and often discarded before reaching the public. Behind the polished broadcasts that captivated millions was a landscape filled with rejected scripts, unproduced pilots, and marketing campaigns that failed to gain traction.

Mann seems to have given up on radio after the unsuccessful attempt to transfer the Whistler to radio. Nonetheless, he



Floyd Buckley, vice-president of production at Sam Hammer Productions—best known as a radio and stage actor (see *The Mysterious Traveler*, May 2015)—was an advocate for a radio series based on Mann's the Whistler.

enjoyed a lengthy writing career before his passing in 1989, producing an impressive list of books, several of which revolved around the Whistler. Some of his novels were adapted for films, including *Rustler's Round-up* and *Stampede*. At various stages in his career, Mann served as managing editor of *The American Rifleman*, director of the University of New Mexico Press, and as a columnist for *Field and Stream*.

A different Whistler eventually emerged on the radio—a mysterious, omniscient narrator who observed and commented on the crimes of others. This figure bore little resemblance to E. B. Mann's version, who was conceived as a man of action, a deputy marshal dispensing justice rather than merely watching from the sidelines. While much has been written about the successful *Whistler Who Walked by Night*, the story of Mann's unsuccessful attempt to bring his whistling deputy marshal to the air highlights the determination of writers who sought to move their characters from print to broadcast. These efforts remind us that for every hit series, many more barely took flight, yet each left its mark on the history of radio drama. In this sense, *Boots and Saddles* holds value not for its success, but for the insight it offers into the hopes, risks, and challenges of creating entertainment in the rapidly evolving entertainment industry. 🎧



Unscripted and Unstoppable

The Wild Ride of Stoopnagle and Budd

IN THE 1930S, Stoopnagle and Budd were rated among the most popular comedians on radio. Their whimsical, uninhibited, and unscripted style served as a welcome pressure valve for listeners caught up in the throes of the Great Depression. They referred to themselves as The Gloom Chasers.

Frederick Chase Taylor and Budd Hulick were familiar voices over the airwaves of the Buffalo Broadcasting Corporation in Buffalo, NY. Taylor was a continuity writer and actor while Hulick was a writer and announcer/emcee. Both men were highly adept at improvisation. It would only be a matter of time before Taylor and Hulick found themselves tossed together as a team.

Taylor was adept at imitations. During the 1928 presidential campaign, the Federal Radio Commission reportedly put a hold on Taylor's impersonation of President Calvin Coolidge. The injunction was lifted once the campaign concluded. Taylor and Budd worked seamlessly together because they were both virtuosos at improvisation. For stamina, however, Budd may have held the record. The BBC, that is the Buffalo Broadcasting Corporation not the other one, once kept its wires open for five hours waiting for the arrival of a nationally known aviator who had been delayed by inclement weather. Hulick was forced to extemporize for 5 hours.

The legend goes that one day, Budd Hulick was preparing to announce a show scheduled from a remote location. However, due to poor weather, the program would not make it across the airwaves. With only moments to spare, Budd dragooned Taylor, sat him down in front of an open microphone and introduced him to listeners as Col. Lemuel Q. Stoopnagle. From there the two men launched into a totally unrehearsed and unscripted nonsensical banter. The upshot was that the pair, as of October 27, 1930, had found themselves with a daily 11:30 am half hour series of their own, *Ask for Mail*. Initially broadcast over WMAK, one of the four stations that formed the Buffalo Broadcasting Corporation, the duo became an overnight sensation. Starting on December 1, 1930, Stoopnagle and Budd switched to an evening timeslot on WKBW, another BBC station. *The Buffalo Times* (December 1, 1930) succinctly defined the team's approach to comedy: "Contrary to general practice, the boys carry very little script into the studio, depending largely on their nimble wits to carry them from one situation to another."

Taylor and Hulick would literally "ask for mail" from listeners,

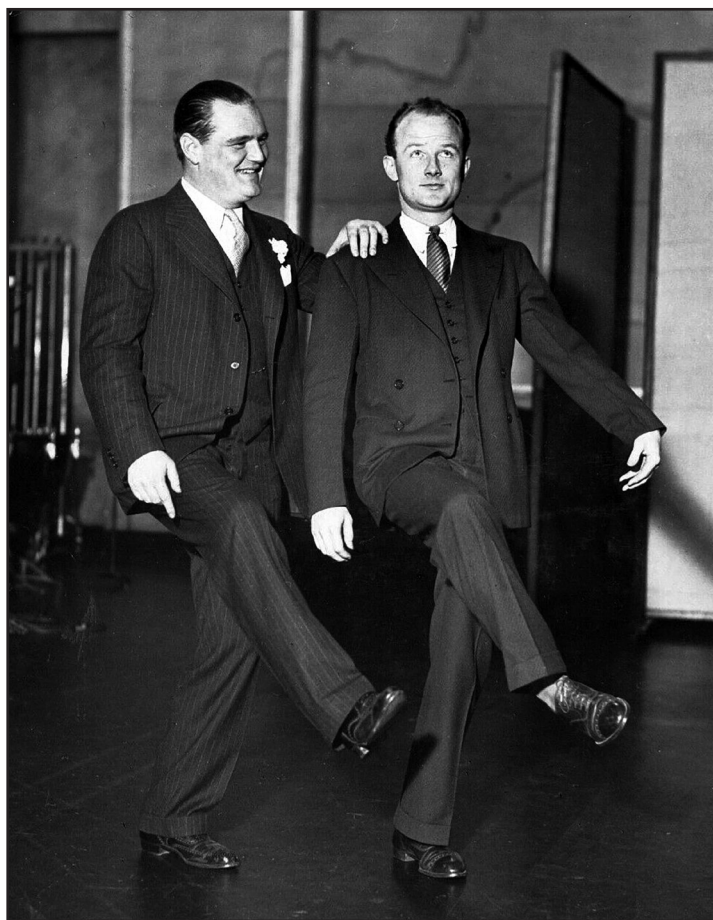
folding the incoming letters into one of their improvised skits. Their daily antics routinely generated in excess of 300 letters each day. Their fertile minds produced a surreal world that made sense only to them and their listeners. The boys captivated audiences with tales of their

private zoo which housed unique animals like the aflidgus, flaps-nock and asbylorm. They would daily do imitations of notable radio personalities, acknowledge and reply to letters and packages sent in by listeners and take phone calls from the public.

The boys excelled in spinning outrageous tales and vouchsafing their authenticity. Press reports would sometimes carry the story as if the events were legitimate. Only the absurdity of the story itself warned readers to beware. They once claimed to have hitched a giraffe to a typewriter and ridden into Canada. The boys' little jaunt into Canada proved something of an international incident as they told it. Apparently, Stoopnagle and Budd upset the Canadians by introducing a wild animal into the country without proper authorization. Furthermore, Canadian officials complained that a typewriter was not a permitted vehicle on Canadian roads. Most grievous of all, the Gloom Chasers had moved Canada's Peace Bridge and failed to return it to its original location.

The popularity of *Stoopnagle and Budd* quickly caught the attention of CBS. In February 1931, Taylor and Hulick signed a two-year contract with the network, making their debut on May 24. When Chase and Hulick reached New York City they continued disseminating the same cockeyed view of the world they had unleashed on listeners in Buffalo. When the Gloom Chasers weren't behind the radio microphone, they claimed to be hard at work in their top-secret laboratory concocting devices for the betterment of humankind. Among their inventions was a siren absorber for recycling warning sounds wasted on false alarms, inverted lighthouses for submarines, and wet envelopes to negate the need to lick stamps.

Chase and Hulick remained fixtures on CBS for seven years starring on their own series and guest starring across the CBS comedy spectrum. By early 1938, however, it was noticed that they were appearing together less frequently. Then came the announcement in February that they were going solo. According to Stoopnagle, all that remained to be settled was what to do with the conjunction "and" which had once connected Stoopnagle and Budd together as a team. Both men would remain active in radio, but the comedic genius released through their synergy vanished with their split.👊



THOUGH LATER ECLIPSED by the meteoric success of *War of the Worlds*, Welles' *Dracula* marked a turning point in popular entertainment. It demonstrated that the absence of visuals could heighten rather than hinder the audience's engagement. By embracing atmosphere and psychology, the Mercury Theatre elevated horror on the airwaves, creating a template that would echo through subsequent decades of audio storytelling.

The broadcast concluded with one final, playful gesture of Wellesian mischief, something that he'd repeat in his notorious *War of the Worlds* broadcast. After signing off, Welles reassured listeners not to be afraid—until the sudden sound of a wolf's howl cut through the studio. "Just the sound effects," he joked, before slipping into Dracula's voice: "But remember there are werewolves . . . there are vampires . . . such things do exist."

It's no exaggeration to claim that Orson Welles' *Dracula* remains a singular achievement in the history of horror and a masterclass in how sound can animate terror. By stripping away the visual trappings that Lugosi had cemented in the public mind, Welles returned the vampire to the shadows, closer to the primal dread of Stoker's original creation. His *Dracula* was not the sophisticated nobleman audiences had come to expect, but something visceral and infinitely more unsettling.

Even now, nearly nine decades later, the broadcast retains its uncanny power. Its layered effects and subtle performances invite listeners to co-create the horror in their minds, proving that the imagination, once sparked, can conjure nightmares far more potent than anything shown on screen. In doing so, Welles' radio experiment not only redefined *Dracula* for its era but also laid the foundation for modern audio drama, reminding us that sometimes the most terrifying monsters are the ones we never quite see but can always hear and see in our minds. 🧛



Early precursor to Welles' take: Max Schreck's monstrous Nosferatu (1922), followed decades later by Christopher Lee's feral interpretation.



THE EDITOR HAS HIS FINAL SAY

MAYBE NOT THE LAST WORD . . . I have one more issue to go. But after 26-years of editing *Radiogram*, I find myself at that moment—the time to step aside and let someone else do it. The red pencil that has hovered over thousands of pages now rests a little heavier in my hand, and it tells me it's time.

To be honest, retiring from this role is no simple task. Editing *Radiogram* has never been just an assignment—it has been a labor of love. I will miss it terribly. I will miss the

challenge of shaping each issue into something coherent, the thrill of uncovering new stories, and, most of all, the camaraderie of this remarkable community.

Over the years, I've watched various boards transition, and in every case, I've had the privilege of working alongside people with a deep passion for old-time radio—many of whom possess an expertise and fondness that far surpass Ol' Ed's modest understanding. I've also deeply appreciated the many contributors whose knowledge and enthusiasm enriched the pages of *Radiogram*. It has been an honor to share their work with you. In particular, I'd like to acknowledge Martin Grams, Jr., Clair Schulz, Everette Humphrey, Dave Parker, Gary Coville, the late Stewart Wright, and, especially, the late Jim Cox. These talented writers not only made my job as editor easier but also elevated this labor of love into something far greater than I could have accomplished alone. And, truth be told, this list is by no means complete. There are so many others—friends, colleagues, and occasional contributors—whose words and support have meant the world to me. To each of you, even if your name isn't written here, *please* know that your generosity, patience, talent and passion helped make *Radiogram* the premier OTR publication that it is.

A final note of appreciation is due to our regular columnist of the past 16 years known as the Mysterious Traveler. He has notified us that he will also be conclud-

ing his column at the end of the year; thus, there will be one final column from the MT. At this juncture, with his permission, we reveal the identity behind the Mysterious Traveler. For the past 16 years, the column has been authored by Gary Coville—the same esteemed contributor

mentioned above, who is widely recognized as a leading OTR researcher as well as my lifelong friend, collaborator, co-author, and colleague. While Gary will be stepping away from his column at *Radiogram*, he will continue to provide

both radio and early television commentary on X: <https://x.com/TravelersRoost>.

Of course, I've had my share of blunders along the way. There was the infamous Howdy Doody commentary in which I repeatedly spelled the puppet's name as "Dowdy," even though I knew better. Sheesh. Then there was the *Box 13* fiasco when I mangled the iconic tagline, "Adventure wanted, will go anywhere, do anything—write Box 13" by substituting *anyway* for *anywhere* in large bold type. Ouch. Shame! Yet, time and again, the kindness of this readership carried me through. If editing a newsletter that acts like a magazine is sometimes like herding cats, then you all made sure the cats were *mostly* friendly.

Although I'm stepping down, I'm not disappearing just yet. I will continue as editor through the end of this year—one more issue—before handing over the red pencil to the next brave soul. A new editor will bring fresh ideas, new energy, and maybe even fewer typos (though let's not get our hopes up). I'll still be around, cheering from the sidelines and, no doubt, occasionally muttering, "Back in my day . . ."

So thank you, SPERDVAC officers and members—the whole 26-year lot of you—for your patience, your encouragement, and your friendship. Editing this newsletter has been one of the great joys of my life. I step away with a heart full of gratitude.

I can be reached at filmosound16@gmail.com. 🧛

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