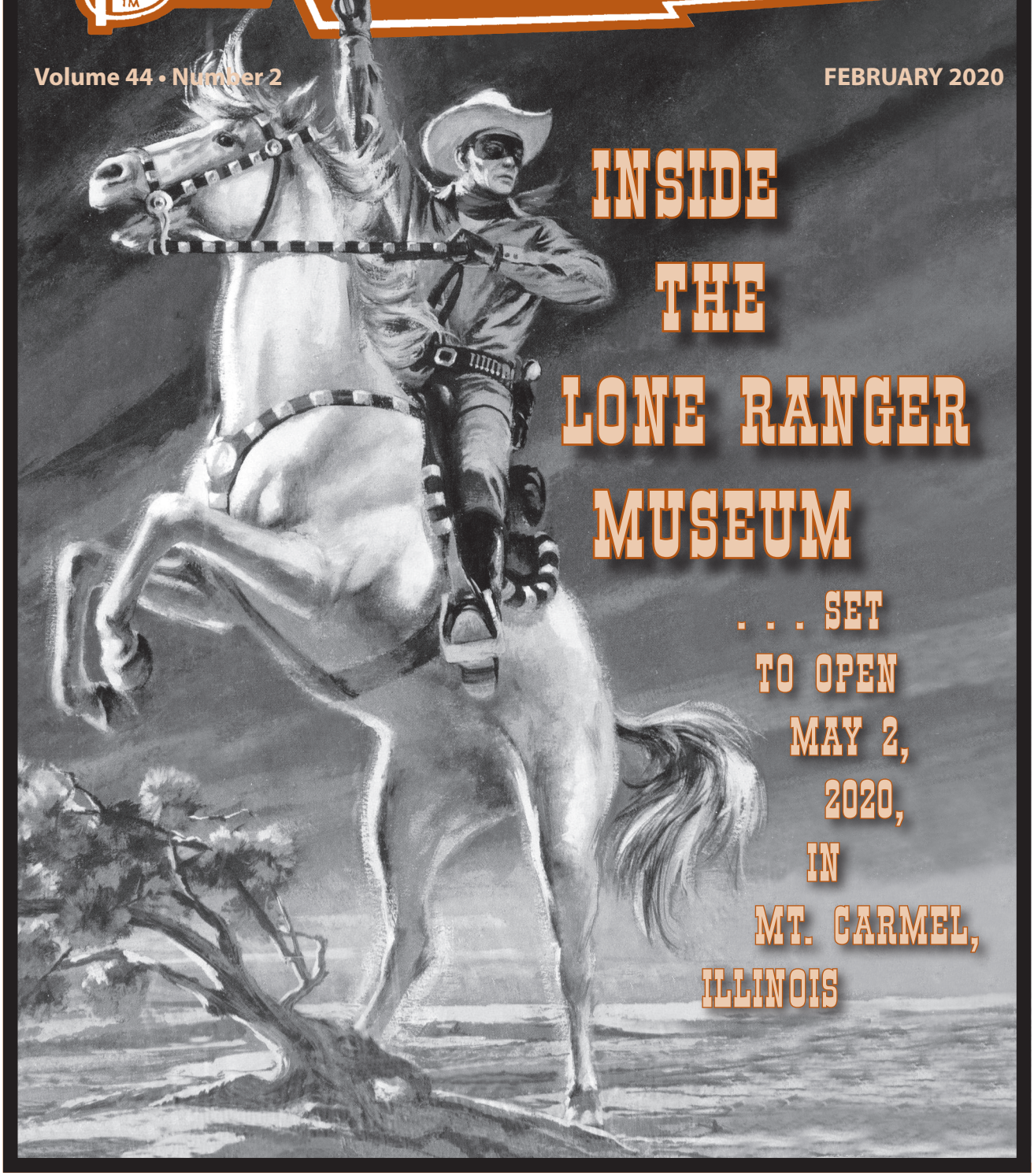
COLONEL HUMPHREY FLACK • 'THOSE WERE THE DAYS' AT 50 • INTERVIEW WITH PARLEY BAER • CHERYL HONIGFORD

sperdvac

RADIOGRAM

Volume 44 • Number 2

FEBRUARY 2020



INSIDE THE LONE RANGER MUSEUM

. . . SET TO OPEN MAY 2, 2020, IN MT. CARMEL, ILLINOIS



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- KENNETH L. SLEEPER
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- MICKEY SMITH *in memory of my beloved wife, Mary*
- C. W. STAUFENBERG *in memory of Paul Rhymer and members of the "Vic and Sade" cast*
- RICHARD STONE
- ROBERT A. SUMMERS *in memory of Yogi Yorgenson & Harry Skarbo*
- JON D. SWARTZ *in memory of Jim Harmon*
- PATRICIA RYAN SWINDLER *in memory of Stuart Lubin*
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- LESLIE C. WEST
- JERRY & BARBARA WILLIAMS *in memory of Michael Rye*
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THANK YOU

RADIOGRAM

Volume 44 • Number 2 • February 2020

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RADIOGRAM

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ADVERTISING RATES. Full page $125; half-page $70; quarter page $40. Rates subject to change without notice.

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The Mysterious Traveler

Flack, the Flim-Flam Man

As the summer of 1947 approached, radio networks were again scrambling to fill the holes that would be left when many series were on vacation. NBC's popular *Aldrich Family* was one of the shows that would need accommodation. To fill the opening, NBC elected to go with a series pitched by Program Productions, a respected radio packaging firm. The program, *Colonel Humphrey Flack,* was based on a character created by writer Everett Rhodes Castle and featured in a popular series of stories appearing in *The Saturday Evening Post*.



Colonel Flack was the consummate endearing rogue and confidence trickster marked by characteristics drawn from Robin Hood and The Saint. Routinely living beyond his means, Flack, assisted by his ulcer-plagued sidekick, Uthas Garvey, would habitually spend each episode digging himself out of his current monetary predicament by swindling "beastly chislers." Each week, regular as clockwork, Flack and Garvey would stumble across innocents who had been taken to the cleaners by tricksters. Flack would then swing into action besting the chislers at their own game. Flack would return the stolen property to its rightful owners while at the same time exacting enough extra cash from the swindlers to solve his own financial needs.

Selected to portray Colonel Flack was the veteran character actor Wendell Holmes. Holmes began his acting career early, appearing at the age of six with a Chautauqua troupe. Assuming the role of Uthas Garvey was another experienced radio actor, Frank Maxwell. Sheldon Stack and Tom Dougal wrote the scripts. Edward King produced the series and Dick Dudley announced. Unable to secure a sponsor, NBC aired the series on a sustaining basis.

The initial broadcast was scheduled for July 3, 1947. The NBC publicity department prepared the conventional package of press materials heralding the proram's imminent appearance on the airwaves. Publicity stills of Wendell Holmes costumed as Colonel Flack were widely distributed to newspapers and magazines along with press releases extolling the virtues of the series. A sales manager for KYW, NBC's Philadelphia outlet, however, proved more imaginative. KYW sent out letters to everyone in Philadelphia and the surrounding suburbs with the surname Flack asking them to listen to the program each week beginning on July 3 at 8:00 p.m. KYW's sales manager, Arthur Schoefield, then followed up with phone calls to each family soliciting their opinions.

The premiere broadcast presented Flack with the task of retrieving Pine Tree Lodge from the clutches of two chislers who had cheated a pair of young lovers out of their home. Flack manages to restore Pine Tree Lodge to its rightful owners and at the same time con enough extra cash from the confidence men to pay off his hotel bill. The following week Flack and Garvey were busy restoring $28,000 to townsfolk conned by a bogus charity.

Reviews for *Colonel Humphrey Flack* were mixed. *Billboard* (July 19, 1947) found the production "a very contrived piece, weak in characterization and trite in formula." The syndicated radio critic, John Crosby, was less harsh in his criticism but hardly enthusiastic. Crosby's criticism went to a perceived weakness in the series concept which he described as "its sameness." Crosby pointed out that Flack "has the charm of the rogue and at the same time he's pitching on the side of the angels. It's an unbeatable combination but it has one flaw. There isn't much variety. Flack always encounters chislers; Flack always wins."

Variety (July 9, 1947) published a more positive assessment. *Variety* asserted the program was "quite a relief from the whodunits flooding the warm summer ozone to hear an airy drama like this one, concerning itself with the amusing adventures of a sly, pompous, walrus-mustached character who lives by his wits and plays Robin Hood on the side." Unlike *Billboard*, *Variety* praised the plot and the scripting. Wendell Holmes as Colonel Flack

Continued Page 14

From The President



HELLO ALL—

•**SPERDVAC WEBSITE**. Thank you, thank you, thank you, to Bryan Haigood who has volunteered and now has almost completed the task of building a brand-new web site for SPERDVAC. The URL is the same: www.sperdvac.com. There is still a lot to do, but I think you will like what you see. It is still a web site in transition, and we hope to have it up and running as I write this..



LARRY GASSMAN
SPERDVAC PRESIDENT

•**CONVENTION 2020**. Yes, it is now official. Make your plans to be with us in November of 2020. Please note the dates have changed slightly. We'll begin with another Meet and Greet on Thursday evening, November 12. The convention will extend beyond Saturday evening to Sunday morning with a breakfast and program to follow. So be with us Thursday, November 12, through Sunday morning, November 15, as SPERDVAC celebrates its 30th convention and its 46th anniversary.

•**OUR NEXT EVENT**. Be with us on March 14, 2020, in Building 126 second floor at the Pantages Theater at the Tibor Ruben VA Medical Center at 5901 East 7th Street in Long Beach CA (562- 826-5373) for our annual March meeting. The Start time will be 2 pm, and we should be finished shortly after 3:30. This event is free and open to the public. Gregg Oppenheimer will direct *Ethel & Albert*: "Mildred Paulson's Overshoes" - 15 minutes; *Richard Diamond*: "The Van Dyke Seance Case" - 30 minutes; and *My Friend Irma*: "Lonely Hearts Club" - 30 minutes. Our special guests so far include Beverly Washburn, Ivan Cury, Alison Arngrim, Stuffy Singer, Bryan Hendrickson, Tommy Cook, Jeanne Russell, Camden Singer, Nancy Foy, Phil Proctor, Melinda Peterson, James Rogan, Jeff Ferguson, Bobb Lynes and Barbara Watkins. More names will be added so please stay tuned.

•**SPERDVAC ARCHIVES CD LIBRARY**. Our thanks to Bob Steinmetz who has agreed to take on the SPERDVAC archives CD library. We thank Jerry Haendiges for his years of marvelous hard work to make it such a popular library. Stay tuned for dates for the library opening later this year.

•**UPDATED SCRIPT LIBRARY**. The updated Script Library is now transitioning to our new web site. The web address is still the same. It is at www.sperdvac.com. If you have downloaded the old library, you will need to delete it and replace it with the one now on the website. There are over 4000 scripts to choose from and the script numbers have changed. This will be the list that we will be building on. There are many more to come and will be adding them as time permits. Thank you for supporting SPERDVAC.

•**FACEBOOK**. Did you know that SPERDVAC has a Facebook page? Please join and like it. We also have a convention Facebook page as well.

•**RADIOGRAM**. We are always interested in material for future issues. Submissions are always welcome. This is your *Radiogram*.

•**AUDIO RADIOGRAM**. If you read the *Radiogram* by means of audio, please let me know. Over the last three years it has been digitally e-mailed to members we have on the list. A huge thank you to Ken Varian, who volunteered as our audio editor. We are in need of a few volunteers who can read the *Radiogram* on tape or as an mp3. The recording would then be sent to Ken. Please let me know if you can help.

•**'SPERDVAC PRESENTS' ON-LINE**. We now have a monthly meeting which you can listen to if you go to www.sperdvac.com. Thanks to Barbara Watkins for putting this together. John Gassman, Walden Hughes, and I have been doing a two-hour show dedicated to SPERDVAC since 2014. Plans are now under way to make that available for listening very soon. Stay tuned!

•**GRANT WRITER**. If you are able to help write grants, please let me know. This will allow us to expand our numbers of special events and add more elements to our programs. Costs are going up and our member base is not what it was five years ago. Currently we have just over 500 members and we want to see more people join SPERDVAC.

•**OTR DOCUMENTARY**. Dave Parker was a part of the radio cast of *The Lone Ranger*. He wrote his doctoral thesis on his experiences on that show. He also produced a documentary video called *Remembering Radio*. He interviewed a number of old-time radio personalities and writers like Norman Corwin, and included some snippets of re-creations of famous shows. See what every housewife was doing as she listened to her friend the radio. You can obtain a copy of this outstanding video by sending a check for $30 (covers postage) to American Radio Theater, c/o Rhea Lutton at 3663 Carr Pl. N. in Seattle WA 98103.

•**CONTACT THE PRESIDENT**. (SPERDVAC) phone during normal business hours: (877) 251-5771—a live person will pick up the phone; it might even be me; e-mail Larry@sperdvac.com (I do check that e-mail often) or LarryGassman@Roadrunner.com. And be sure to like us on Facebook.

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SPERDVAC

Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety And Comedy

March 14, 2020

Golden Age Radio Recreations

TIBOR RUBEN VA MEDICAL CENTER

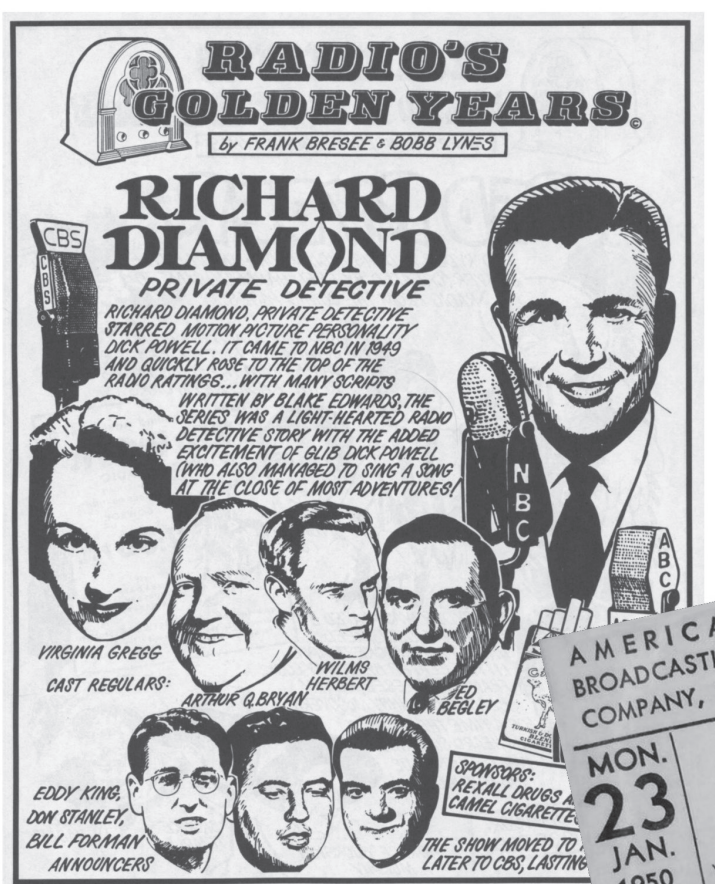
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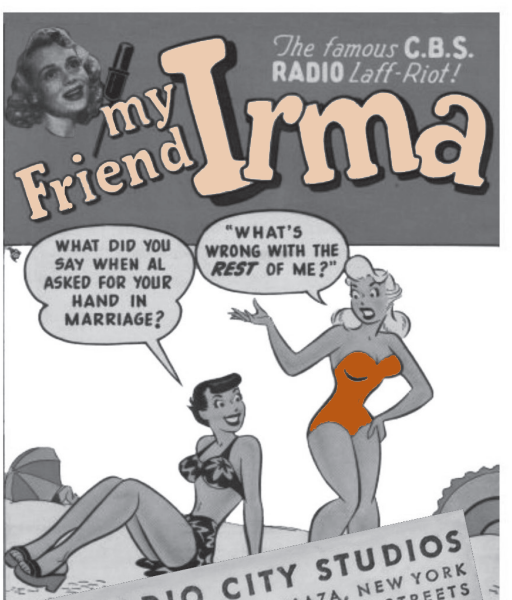
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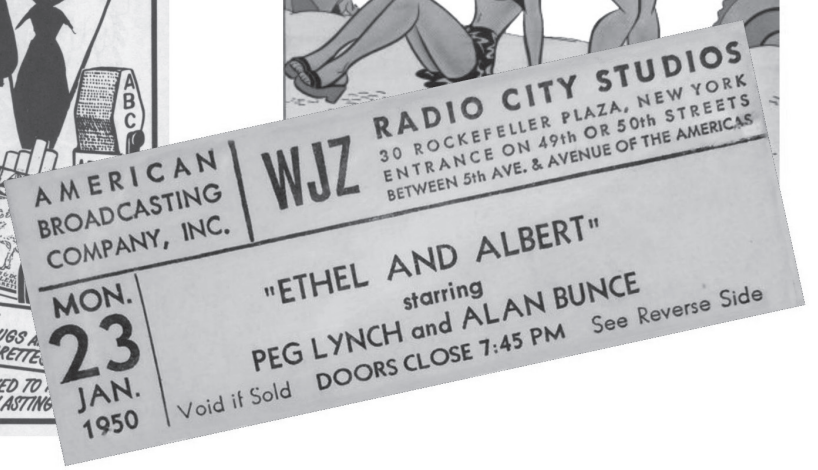
Long Beach, California

Show time is 2:00 PM

Guests Performing for you::
Beverly Washburn:::Ivan Cury:::Tommy Cook
Stuffy Singer:::Jeannie Russell:::Alison Arngrim
Nancy Foy:::Bryan Hendrickson:::Phil Proctor
Melinda Peterson:::James Rogan:::Bobb Lynes
Jeff Ferguson:::Barbara Watkins
Directed by Gregg Oppenheimer







Saturday, May 2, 2020—*50 Years to the Day*

Special Live Broadcast to Celebrate 50 Years of 'Those Were the Days'

'WYXIE Wonderland' Back in Print

Bold Venture Press has released *WYXIE Wonderland* by Dick Osgood, the ground-breaking volume documenting the origins of WXYZ Detroit. The book is available in print and electronic editions.

WYXIE Wonderland by Dick Osgood is possibly the first comprehensive exploration into the inner workings of a broadcasting enterprise. Fifty years of national radio and television history, from 1925 to 1975, are reflected in a single station—WXYZ Detroit—AM, FM and TV.

WXYZ was more than just the birthplace of *The Lone Ranger*, *The Green Hornet*, and *Sgt. Preston of the Yukon*. It was the starting point of investigative journalist Mike Wallace, comedian Soupy Sales, actors John Hodiak and Danny Thomas. This extraordinary book traces the beginnings of five networks; the rise and decline of radio network programming. It sees the radio actor replaced by the disc jockey. *WYXIE Wonderland* explains how the scandal of radio payola grew out of the discovery of rigged TV quiz programs. It tells of a sound created in Texas that revolutionized radio, and how the Top 40 format emerged from a bar in Omaha. WXYZ influenced American culture—and sometimes it *was* American culture.

Osgood was a veteran employee of the broadcasting power-house, and saw much of this history firsthand. *WYXIE Wonderland* gives names and dates, describing events and conflicts that made the programs a reality. Osgood's text recreates the bygone era, and sometimes strips away the nostalgia, exposing the realities of radio's business end. This book has been out of print for years, and copies command high prices on the collectors' market. Bold Venture Press is proud to make this important work available to fans once more.

Information is available at boldventurepress.com.

■Event to feature actors from *Svengoolie*, *The Sopranos*, *Saturday Night Live*, *Mystery Science Theater 3000*

On Saturday, May 2, 1970, Chicagoans heard the debut of *Those Were the Days*, a radio show dedicated to preserving the sounds of radio's "Golden Age," a time radio was a "theater of the mind," allowing listeners to use their imaginations as they heard the top actors, comedians, musicians and writers of the era.



Chicago radio experts Chuck Schaden, founder and original host of *Those Were the Days*, and the program's current host, Steve Darnall, along with WGN radio personalities Dave Plier and Carl Amari gather at WGN during Halloween 2017 to discuss radio's horror shows.

It's 50 years later and radio has changed a *lot* since then. One thing hasn't changed: *Those Were the Days* is *still* on the air, celebrating the Golden Age of Radio, every Saturday afternoon on WDCB. Such endurance in the face of changing times calls for a celebration, and *Those Were the Days* is planning a big one — a special live broadcast that will air on WDCB from 1 to 5 pm on Saturday, May 2, 2020… 50 years to the day since *Those Were the Days* signed on for the first time. This special broadcast will originate from Chicago's Irish American Heritage Center (4604 N. Knox Avenue) as a benefit for WDCB, the radio home of *Those Were the Days* since 2001.

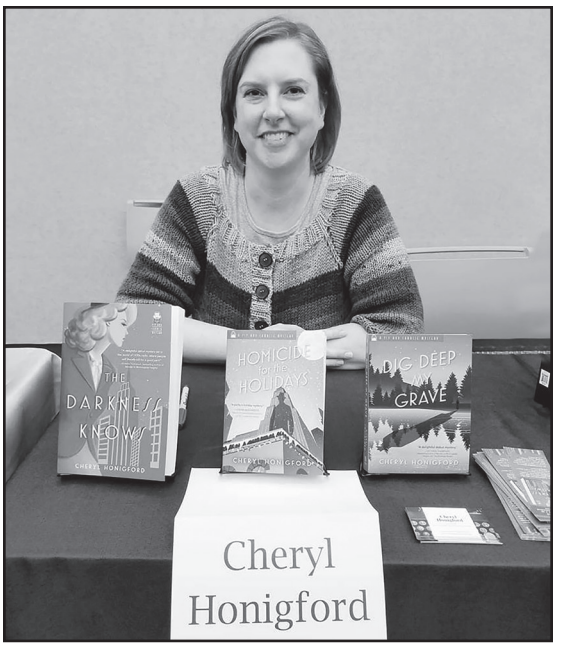
In addition to *Those Were the Days* founder Chuck Schaden, current host Steve Darnall and longtime announcer Ken Alexander, this special anniversary show will present live re-creations of classic moments from the Golden Age of Radio, featuring guests Patty McCormack (*The Bad Seed*, *The Sopranos*), Tim Kazurinsky (*Saturday Night Live*), Rich Koz (*Svengoolie*), Scott Lowell (*Queer As Folk*), Trace Beaulieu and Kevin Murphy (both from the Peabody Award-winning *Mystery Science Theater 3000*). Musical guests will include The Dooley Brothers and the West End Jazz Band, with more special guests to be announced. Tickets for this special live event are available for $50 each and can be purchased at WDCB.org, with all proceeds going to benefit WDCB.

"*Those Were the Days* has always been about taking sounds from the past and giving them a new life, and that's our goal with this 50th anniversary show," says Darnall, host of *Those Were the Days* since 2009. "We're delighted for the chance to honor this milestone anniversary and we're especially thrilled for the chance to celebrate both our show's history and radio's history with some very talented people who share our affection for the Golden Age of entertainment."

Those Were the Days is heard every Saturday afternoon from 1 to 5 pm on WDCB 90.9/90.7 FM. For archived episodes, please visit nostalgiadigest.com.

More details about WDCB's programming and programming are available at: WDCB.org

WDCB, "Chicago's Home for Jazz," is a listener-supported, public radio station that broadcasts more than 130 hours of jazz each week from the campus of College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn. WDCB serves Chicagoland with jazz, blues, roots music and arts programming. WDCB can be heard throughout Chicagoland on 90.9FM, from WDCB's 90.7FM booster signal in the West Loop, via streaming worldwide on www.WDCB.org (and the Tune-In app) and in the city of Chicago via cable television on CAN TV42.



Chicago Mystery Writer Keeps OTR Thrillers Alive

An Interview with Cheryl Honigford

by David Feldmann

CHERYL HONIGFORD is a Chicago-based author whose three novels incorporate a love of and appreciation for mystery fiction and old-time radio. *The Darkness Knows*, *Homicide for the Holidays*, and *Dig Deep My Grave* (published between 2016 and2018) all feature the characters Vivian Witchell, radio actress, and Charlie Haverman, private eye, who get caught up in webs of death and intrigue—all set against the backdrop of the world of 1930s network radio programs. She was kind enough to answer a few questions for *Radiogram*.

D.F. My own interest in old-time radio goes back to childhood. In grade school, I read the AVI novel, *Who Was That Masked Man, Anyway?*, which was really my introduction to the wonderful medium of radio drama. Was there a similar gateway for you or did you come to the theater of the mind more directly?

C.H. The first OTR broadcast I heard was *War of the Worlds* in eighth grade reading class. I was mesmerized by it—well, the first part anyway that sounded real. The part where the reporter is broadcasting while the aliens wipe everyone out at the crash site at Grover's Mill really impressed me—freaked me out. That was also around the time they were showing Woody Allen's *Radio Days* constantly on the Movie Channel, which is a comedy-drama partially set behind the scenes of radio of the early 40s. I must have watched that movie 50 times.

D.F. Who are some of your mystery influences?

C. H. I love golden age mysteries, especially Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers. I also love Josephine Tey's *The Daughter of Time*.

D.F. Your novels feature fictional stand-ins for real life radio programs. Harvey Diamond is, I assume, meant to be Richard Diamond, Private Detective, for example. Were there legal concerns for doing this or was it just a creative desire to create your own titles for the programs in your novels?

C.H. Not legal concerns so much as I didn't want to be hemmed in by historical facts when I was plotting or giving my characters the space to do what they needed to do. I do use real historical locations and events to root the story in Chicago of late 1938/39, but almost everything about the radio station itself is fictional. I used Diamond as Harvey's last name on *The Darkness Knows* as sort of an homage to that type of detective drama And Diamond is a great last name. It's also a lot of fun to be able to create sappy fictional dramas like "Love & Glory."

D.F. What are some of your personal favorite radio dramas and/or comedies?

C.H. I love the scary, strange/unusual OTR shows like *Lights Out*, *Quiet Please*, *Hall of Fantasy*, *The Creaking Door*. But my absolute favorite OTR show is Suspense. I like to listen to a good Jack Benny show every once in a while, too.

D.F. Can we expect another Viv and Charlie mystery or have you done all you wish to with those characters?

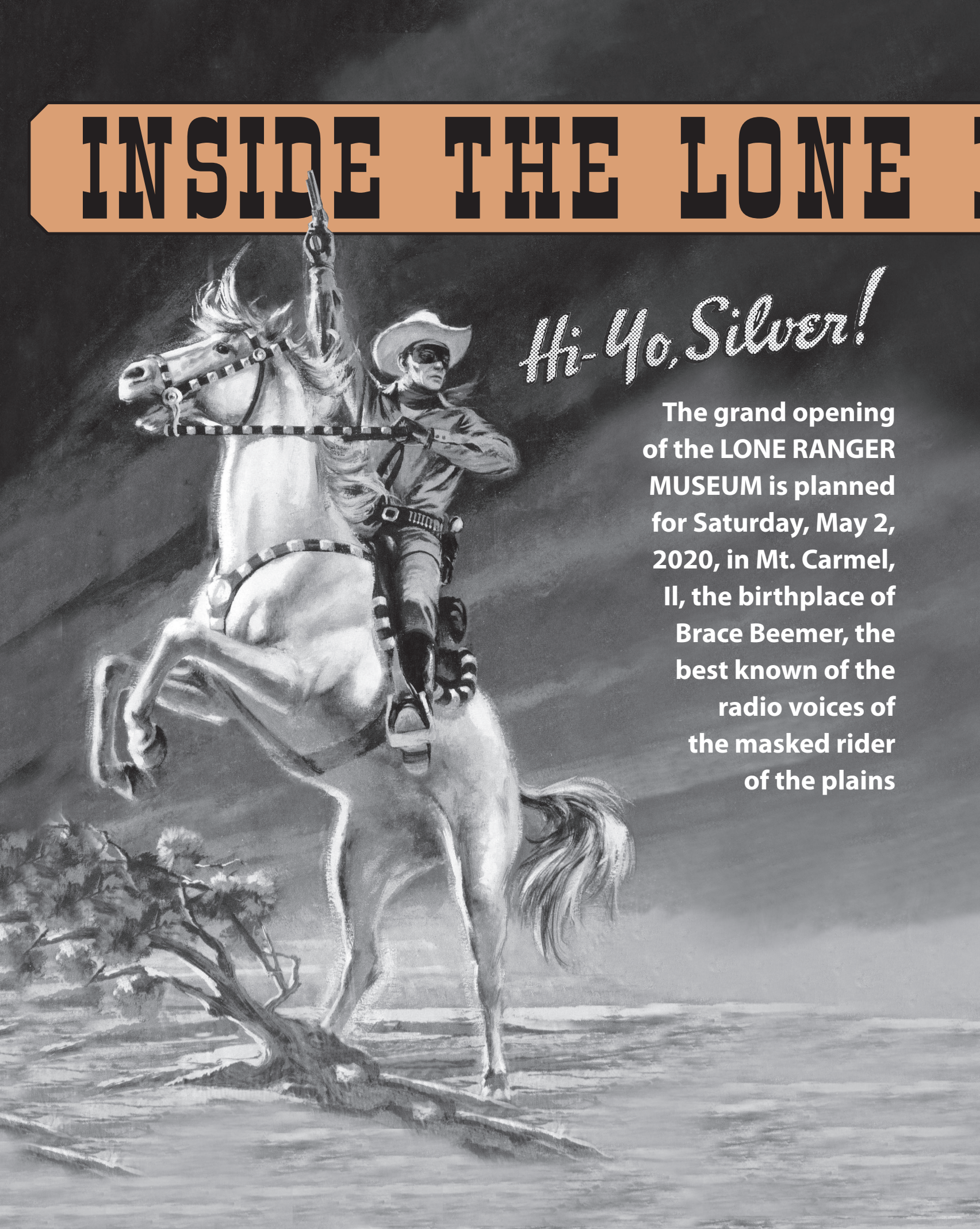
C.H. I have so many ideas for what Viv and Charlie can get up to, but nothing's under contract beyond book number three, *Dig Deep My Grave*.

D.F. Thanks so much for your time. Do you have any parting words for the SPERDVAC community?

C.H. Thanks for keeping old time radio alive!

Born and raised in Ohio, Cheryl Honigford has been writing stories since she could read (and telling stories even before that). She received her BA in Journalism with a minor in English from The Ohio State University. Cheryl lives with her family in the suburbs of Chicago. The Viv and Charlie mystery novels are all available from Sourcebooks (sourcebooks.com). Cheryl Honigford has Facebook and Twitter presence as well as her own website (cherylhonigford.com).

INSIDE THE LONE



Hi-Yo, Silver!

The grand opening of the LONE RANGER MUSEUM is planned for Saturday, May 2, 2020, in Mt. Carmel, Il, the birthplace of Brace Beemer, the best known of the radio voices of the masked rider of the plains

RANGER MUSEUM

by Everette Humphrey

THINGS ARE COMING RIGHT ALONG on the display depicting the history of The Lone Ranger at the museum in Mt. Carmel, Il, the birthplace of Brace Beemer, the best known of the radio voices of our hero. The Grand Opening of the exhibit is planned for Saturday, May 2, 2020, and this will be an exciting time for Lone Ranger fans. We already have visitors from as far away as England inquiring as to the opening date. There is no entrance-fee so everyone will be able to attend. Some have asked why it is taking so long to get ready for the opening. With the thousands of items we have to go through it is a monumental task as I am sure you realize. More information on the opening and any necessary date change will be released later so keep your eyes open for it in this publication.

LIKE MANY OTHERS I grew up listening to the Lone Ranger. When asked to work on this project, I could not say no, but I had no idea that it would entail an average of over 25-hours per week of my time for over two years not to mention the time spent of all the others that have helped to bring the labor of love to fruition.

This display will be different from most since it will emphasize the history of the program from its radio beginnings in 1933 to the Clayton Moore television era in the 1950s. Most other displays center mainly around a collection of Lone Ranger memorabilia but the emphasis here will be to place each item of memorabilia into the historical context of the program. This is very important in understanding the phenomenon of the Lone Ranger in American life of the times. We were very fortunate in being able to obtain an original 1940s ribbon microphone like the one used in the original station WXYZ in Detroit. Moreover, we have received permission from the station to use the station's call letters on the microphone. As has been pointed out in previous articles, you will enter the display through the same door from the original studio that the first "Lone Ranger" entered through to do the first broadcast in January 1933.

Original, one of a kind, art works by famous artists of various periods will be an important part of your experience. There will be popular advertising memorabilia of the times. On display will be items used and collected by the actors themselves from Brace Beemer to Fred Foy and Clayton Moore. You will be able to take photos of yourself in the original doorway or with Silver.

An exciting part of this exhibit will also be the legacy display of Fred Foy, the announcer. His entire collection of memorabilia has been graciously donated to the museum by his daughter, Wendy. This also includes all of Fred's major awards. Fred's voice is the one you hear intoning the famous entrance to the program, "A fiery horse with the speed of light . . ." on both radio and television. A small studio with Fred and Brace at the 1940s microphone is already set up, each in his own clothes and holding an original radio script from the collection of Brace.

The museum is not a large one so while much of the exhibit will be on permanent display there will be an area where the items on display will be changed on a regular basis. That way repeat visits will be a must. The first display in this area will be Lone Ranger clothes, for both children and adults. Later the emphasis will be on the toys. Our present plan is to follow the toy exhibit with an exhibit featuring various sponsors. Individual, labeled binders containing hundreds of photos of each of these areas will always be there for you to look through just in case the area of your particular interest is not on display at the time of your visit.

By the way we are always looking for photos to add to these binders. While we have many items, we are still on the lookout for items we do not have so if you have something you would like to go into the collection please contact Claudia Dant, the curator of the museum, or myself. She can be reached at 5628 Hwy 8, Mt. Carmel, IL. 62863.

Various keepsakes of your visit will be available in case you want something more than your own photos as mementos of your visit.


Merita
Merita
IT'S ENRICHED
BUY Merita BREAD


ON AIR




ENTER THE
LONE RANGER

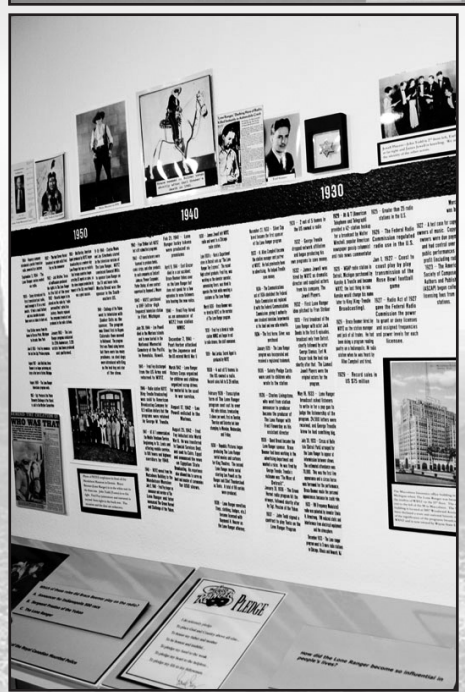

Masked legend
A few of our best items

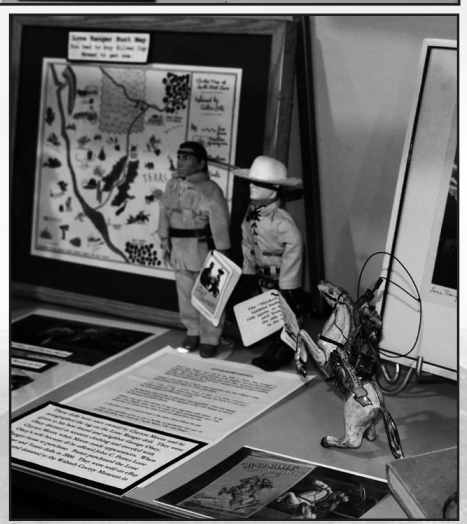

Raised on Radio
305


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Silver loving cups like this were displayed in stores with Silver Cup Bread. Silver Cup Bread was the first sponsor for The Lone Ranger radio program.





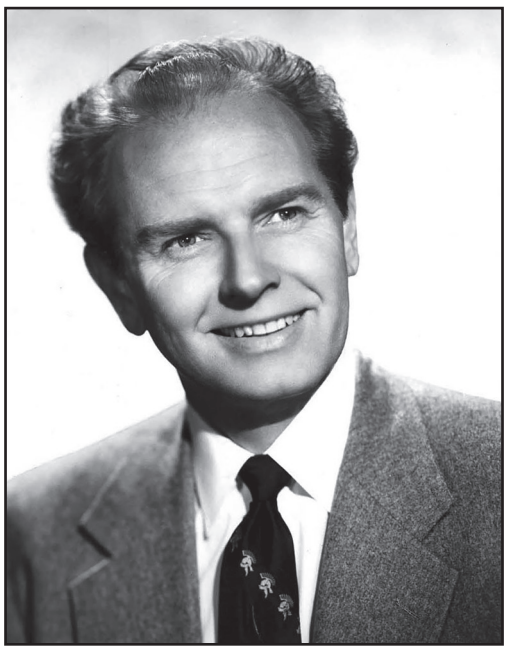




Exhibits inside the Lone Ranger museum include, spanning pages from far left, paintings and artwork, the original WXYZ studio door, Brace Beemer section, original WXYZ microphone, children and adult costumes, portrayers of the Lone Ranger through Clayton Moore, Lone Ranger timeline, figures and figurines, radios,ephemeral memorabilia including a "loaf" of Silvercup bread, and Brace Beemer's saddle as well as an official Lone Ranger child's saddle.







Why, He Even Had a Wild Animal Act

by John Rayburn

TRYING TO COVER everything the late Parley Baer did in show business would require virtually an entire volume. So, we'll condense it somewhat. Here's a special list of OTR shows on which he appeared: *Gunsmoke*, *Lux Radio Theatre*, *First Nighter*, *Escape*, *Those Websters*, *Count of Monte Cristo*, *Honest Harold*, *Screen Directors Playhouse*, *My Favorite Husband*, *Granby's Green Acres*, *CBS Radio Workshop*, *Rogers of the Gazette* and *The Adventures of Phillip Marlowe*. A sampling of TV and movie credits includes *The Young and the Restless*, *Dave*, and even a stint as mayor on *The Andy Griffith Show*. In addition, he was the voice of the Keebler elf for something like 28 years. Your writer had the great good fortune to work with Parley at the Old Time Radio and Nostalgia Convention in Cincinnati, the Friends of Old Time Radio Convention in Newark and in the SPERDVAC convention in L.A. It was an absolute delight just to be around him and hear his wonderful stories. We're pleased to pass along one of our interviews.

J.R. Let's chat about your name first. Parley. Unusual name. I don't think I've heard it anywhere else.

P.B. Well, Salt Lake City was my home and Parley is an old Mormon name. One of Brigham Young's right-hand men coming into the the Promised Valley had the unlikely name of Parley P. Pratt. My father's name was Charles . . . of course, Charley . . . and he had an abhorrence for juniors. He didn't like big Charles, little Charles. So, a friend of my mother's said to name me Parley, it rhymes with Charley. I've run into two people in my life with the name. One was a drummer in the University band, Parley Giles, and one other man I met just in passing. He couldn't believe it, saw my name on a piece of luggage and said that was his name, too, and that I was the only Parley he ever met.

J.R. I got a kick out of it when Willard Waterman (*The Great Gildersleeve*) said, "I call him Barely Par."

P.B. (Chuckle) He never said a truer word.

J.R. I bring that up because there seems to have been a real closeness among all the folks who were involved in the so-called Golden Age of Radio. There was a magic kind of chemistry.

P.B. Yes, we were more than co-workers, we were friends. Y'know, we saw each other frequently, two or three times a week and we didn't know someone was going to be on vacation or out of town or something, and they didn't show up, everyone was on the phone to find out what was the matter. We were solicitous of each other's husbands or wives, we were worried about the kids and whatnot. It was a much more closely-knit form of show business. I think the only thing close to it might have been a traveling company, a compatible group that would be together practically 24-hours a day. We developed some lifelong friendships.

J.R. Since many of you did dozens of shows, you naturally kept running into one another.

P.B. Sure. Willard, of course, was part of the Chicago contingent. For a long time that city was the axis of everything.

J.R. Do you think maybe *Amos 'n' Andy* beginning there shortly after origination of a network caused a proliferation of shows or was it, perhaps, just a central time zone?

P.B. I think time was probably it; it just kind of evolved there. A lot of the big local shows turned into network shows, some of the most successful began that way. *First Nighter* was local and the soaps all came from there at first.

J.R. I have a copy of an original script of *The First Nighter* later on when it was done from the west coast and there's a notation at the bottom for the announcer to make absolutely no reference to the CBS Hollywood studios. Although it started in Chicago, throughout it was always called "the little theater off Times Square" and they wanted to maintain that mythical aura.

P.B. Yeah, and they did. There were many through the years long after it was off the air that would ask if the cast went back and forth to the east coast to do it. For a while, you know, we did two shows each time, one for the east and one for the rest of the country.

J.R. Since the networks frowned on recordings.

P.B. Right. Recordings were only a means of air-checks.

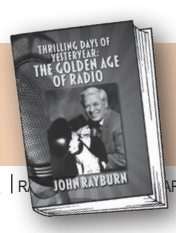
J.R. Bing Crosby is given most of the credit for changing that.

P.B. That is why he changed to ABC because that was the first net that said they'd let you tape.

J.R. He helped the beginning of Ampex equipment that evolved from some German gear.

P.B. Uh-huh . . . probably had a piece of the company.

J.R. When people talk about you, it often concerns the most successful western show in history and many of the non-old-time radio fans think of as a TV creation, forgetting that it was 3 ⅓ years or so prior to that that it began on radio. With some of the finest writing, production, sound effects and acting,



We are pleased to present this interview with Parley Baer conducted by veteran broadcaster John Rayburn and incorporated in John's book *Thrilling Days of Yesteryear: The Golden Age of Radio*, one of several books by John that traces the history of radio's golden age. Additional inteviews will be forthcoming in *Radiogram*.



Parley Baer as the stern Roy Stoner, Mayberry's new mayor, who doesn't quite like the way Sheriff Taylor runs the office in *The Andy Griffith Show*.

it was really a class act when William Conrad had the lead as Marshal Matt Dillon and you were there as Chester.

P.B. Good ol' Chester . . . y'know that show had a lot of unity, a lot of camaraderie. The company that started out with Bill, and nothing changed; it was the same till the end and fortunately, when we recorded our last show, we didn't know it was the final one. We were supposed to do some more. We were about four or five shows ahead, as I recall, and I was doing a *Petticoat Junction* when Norman Macdonnell called me, like on a Thursday, and said, "I've got bad news. There'll be no *Gunsmoke* recording Saturday." I said, "Oh," not too concerned, and he added, "Or any other Saturday in the future." I asked what he meant, and he said we'd gotten the axe. My first reaction was, thank goodness we didn't know we were doing the last one when we did it because it would have been a sad, sad time.

J.R. What a stunned feeling that must have been.

P.B. Well, it was like nine years of your life suddenly cut off. We had the same engineer, sound effects men, director, assistant director, script girl . . . all the same.

J.R. Let's talk about Chester's last name.

P.B. Proudfoot.

J.R. Yes, then in the move to TV because it was an Indian name and Dennis Weaver played the role with a limp I heard someone felt it might be considered a slur so it was changed to Chester Goode. Anything to that?

P.B. Perhaps. But the word got to me this way. The first show I did I was "townsman" but Bill [Conrad] said I had to have a name because he couldn't go around saying, "Townsman, come here, I want to talk to you." So, he named me Chester as he had named "Doc" Doctor Charles Addams because Howard [McNear] played him with just a little bloodthirstiness and Bill got the name from the ghoulish cartoonist. One time, Bill just let me hang on a broken speech on purpose; we used to kid each other. I had a line something like, "As sure as my name is," and he didn't come in and after a tiny pause I added, "Chester Wesley Proudfoot." Proudfoot? Don't know where that came from. When it came to TV the story I heard was that Hal Hudson, a CBS exec who engineered the changeover, said they'd better change the name because Parley did the middle and last names and I might feel there was some ground for a plagiarism charge. That made me mad. I bumped into Hal in the lobby and told him that even though CBS didn't trust me, I didn't mistrust CBS and they could use the name Proudfoot if they wanted to; that was public domain. I really don't know what prompted me to say the name Proudfoot in the first place. Bill hung me out to dry and I just had to come up with something.

J.R. As you look back, are there any regrets or wonderings if there were other paths you might have taken?

P.B. I don't think so. I did what I wanted to do and I've been very, very lucky. I spent a lot of time with circuses, a branch of show business I'm very fond of; even once had a wild animal act. I did my first radio in 1933 on KSL in Salt Lake City; first network show I ever did was *The Whistler*. Fortunately, I was able to make the transition to TV and films. But, I remember Cantor's great line, "If radio is the theater of the mind then (chuckle) television is the theater of the mindless." Y'know, just offhand I can't remember a show I didn't like to do. I think we all felt that way. You can't be any luckier than that.

"I had a line something like, "As sure as my name is," and he didn't come in and after a tiny pause I added, "Chester Wesley Proudfoot." Proudfoot? Don't know where that came from.

I NEVER RAN INTO ANYONE who ever met or talked with Parley who didn't like him and I treasure the memories of his friendship. One of the biggest thrills I ever had in my own broadcasting career I tell about in my book *Cat Whiskers and Talking Furniture: A Memoir of Radio and Television Broadcasting*. It happened at the Cincinnati convention when I worked in a *Gunsmoke* re-creation getting to take the Conrad role as the Marshal while Parley did a reprise of Chester. A portion of the opening alone jumpstarts my memory bank as I recall the announcer saying, " . . . the story of the violence that moved west with young America, and the story of a man who moved with it," and me getting to respond with the well-known Bill Conrad lines, "I'm that man . . . Matt Dillon, United States Marshal, the first man they look for and the last they want to meet; it's a chancy job and it makes a man watchful . . . and a little lonely." Wow! What a kick that was. I still get goosebumps thinking about it.



Parley Baer as Herb Darby, one of Oz's best buddies, in the television version of *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*.



Parley Baer in costume as Chester Wesley Proudfoot, Marshal Matt Dillon's right hand man in the great radio series *Gunsmoke*.

Leonard Maltin to receive Robert Osborne Award at TCM's Classic Film Festival in April

Longtime SPERDVAC friend and honorary member Leonard Maltin is the 2020 recipient of the Robert Osborne award, presented by Turner Classic Movies to an individual who has worked to maintain the preservation and legacy of classic films. As the host of Turner Classic Movies for more than 22 years, Osborne shared his passion and knowledge of classic film to help preserve its legacy.



Maltin's career promoting film history has spanned decades and mediums from books to television series and segments to podcasts. He is perhaps best known for his widely-used film reference books, *Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide* and its companion volume *TCM Presents Leonard Maltin's Classic Movie Guide*, as well as his stint as a movie reviewer for *Entertainment Tonight*. Maltin has written dozens of books, and he is a voting member of the National Film Registry and sits on the board of directions for the National Film Preservation Foundation.

His devotion for preserving the legacy of film has earned him distinctive recognition, including awards from Los Angeles Film Critics Association, American Society of Cinematographers, the Telluride Film Festival, George Eastman House, Anthology Film Archives and San Diego's Comic-Con International.

Maltin will be presented the award during a nitrate screening of the 1933 John Barrymore film *Counselor at Law* provided by the UCLA Film and Television Archive during TCM's Classic Film Festival, April 16 through 19 at the Egyptian theatre in Hollywood.

Maltin is also the author of *The Great American Broadcast: A Celebration of Radio's Golden Age*.

Flack, the Flim-Flam Man CONTINUED

was singled out for his performance.

No recordings from *Colonel Humphrey Flack* are currently known to exist; the series ended its run on September 18, 1947. The following week *The Aldrich Family* returned to the air. Summer replacement series occasionally would catch the imagination of listeners and potential sponsors thereby securing a regular spot on the air. That was not the case with this series. The next year would find Wendell Holmes conning radio listeners as Dr. Watson in *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* under the alias of George Spelvin.

In 1953, *Colonel Humphrey Flack* did return to the air, but this time it was in the form of a television series starring Alan Mowbray in the title role. Two examples of the televised version are currently available for viewing on Youtube.



Advertising mat for television's version of *Colonel Humphrey J. Flack* starring Alan Mowbray in the title role.

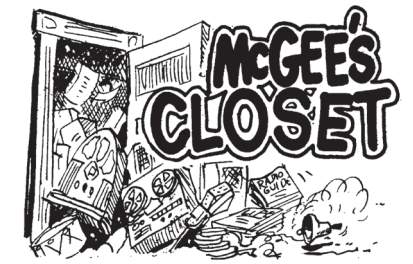


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DEATH NOTICE

STEWART WRIGHT

It is with sadness that we report the death of our good friend, OTR researcher and contributor to *Radiogram* Stewart Wright. At press time details of his passing were unavailable. He will be greatly missed. "Signing off for now . . . ."

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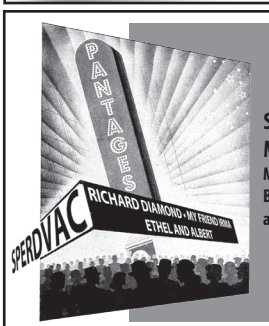
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IMPORTANT NOTICE

CONVENTION 2020 IS NOW SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 12 THRU 15. SAVE THE DATES TODAY AND WE'LL SEE YOU IN NOVEMBER.



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leonard maltin
linda foy invite

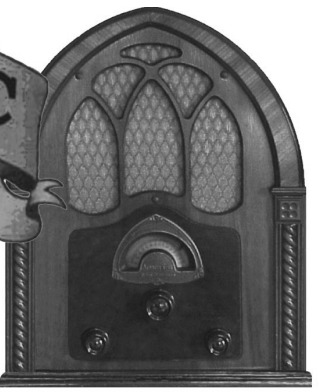




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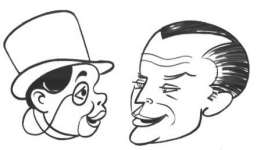


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March 11, 2017
Long Beach Veterans Hospital

SPERDVAC

The Society to Preserve And Encourage
Radio Drama, Variety And Comedy

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