SPECIAL HALLOWEEN ISSUE PLUS THE DAY CHARLIE McCARTHY WAS LEFT AT THE ALTAR

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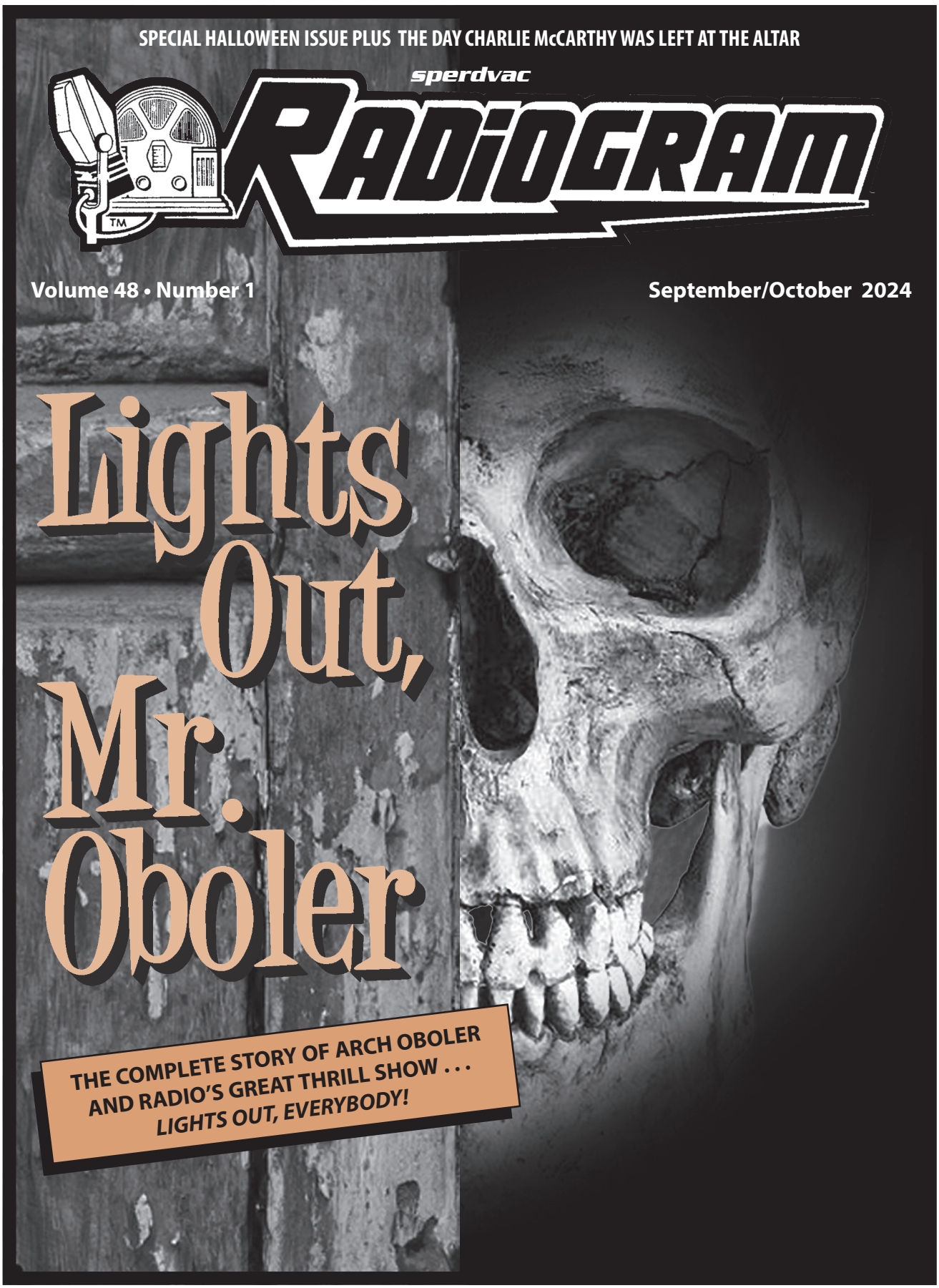
RADIOGRAM

Volume 48 • Number 1

September/October 2024



Lights Out, Mr. Oboler

THE COMPLETE STORY OF ARCH OBOLER AND RADIO'S GREAT THRILL SHOW . . . *LIGHTS OUT, EVERYBODY!*

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A CALIFORNIA NONPROFIT PUBLIC BENEFIT CORPORATION

2625 Middlefield Road #171

Palo Alto, CA 94306-2516

RADIOGRAM

Editor

PATRICK LUCANIO

RADIOGRAM is published bi-monthly by SPERDVAC, the Society to Preserve and Encourage Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy, a California nonprofit public benefit corporation, 2625 Middlefield Road #171, Palo Alto, CA 94306-2516. Dues are $20 for first year and $20 for renewals; $30 American currency for Canadian members. Annual subscriptions to *Radiogram* only are $15 in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, and $20 in all other countries. Editorial submissions are welcome, but the publisher assumes no responsibility for the return of unsolicited material. All editorial-related photographs and artwork received unsolicited become the property of SPERDVAC. SPERDVAC assumes first serial rights for all submissions accepted. Opinions expressed are not necessarily the opinions of SPERDVAC All rights to letters sent to *Radiogram* will be treated as unconditionally assigned for publication unless otherwise stated. The publishers make every effort to ensure the accuracy of information published in editorial material but assume no responsibility for inconveniences or damages resulting from editorial error or omissions. Publisher is not responsible for typographical errors. All photographs and illustrations are believed authorized for reproduction as set forth within.

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from the president

GREETINGS SPERDVAC MEMBERS,

WELL NOW, for those of you who indulge in my little column from time to time, you'll no doubt remember my feelings on nostalgia. As I've said before, "Nostalgia, it ain't what it used to be." Now, I might say that with a wink and a nod, but you'll find there's a little truth buried under that jest. P.B. Shelley once wrote in *To a Skylark*, "We look before and after, and pine for what is not." How true that is.

Why, I recall one night in my youth, sitting up late in front of the television, excited as all get-out for one of those old Universal monster pictures. *The Invisible Man* was slated to make an appearance. But wouldn't you know it, a station employee, in the driest tone imaginable, declared, "Due to technical difficulties, *The Invisible Man* will not be *seen* tonight." Now, I don't believe he was aware of his own cleverness there—but I sure was!

That little memory brings me to the point, and I'll do my level best to keep it as simple as pie. I've been getting letters and inquiries aplenty about our fundraising efforts and, by extension, the 2025 convention. Rest assured, good folks, plans are still in motion. We've just hit one of those pesky, unforeseeable technical snags, but nothing that can't be ironed out in short order. As a non-profit, we are, as they say, bound by red tape—official requirements must be met before we can throw open the gates to our fundraiser. We're in the final stretch now, just dotting the 'I's and crossing the 'T's. The delay is temporary, and the convention dates for May of 2025 remain unchanged.

I've directed our website manager to set up a "convention update" page so we can keep you informed as things progress. And, on that note, let me remind you that this fine organization runs on volunteer power. If you're feeling a tug at your conscience—thinking, "What can I do to help?"—I implore you to reach out to us at *info@sperdvac.com.* A few extra hands, even for just a short while, can make all the difference. After all, many hands make light work, as the saying goes.

Now, for those of you itching to get the fundraiser rolling we'll be sharing the link to the Fundrazr site with you via email and on the website as soon as we're ready. I understand your eagerness, and I share it, but here's the plain truth: the success of this fundraising campaign will determine whether or not the convention happens. We need to raise $75,000 within about 60 days once we launch. I trust you'll appreciate the candor of that statement, blunt as it may be.

We need to raise $75,000 within about 60 days once we launch. I trust you'll appreciate the candor of that statement, blunt as it may be.

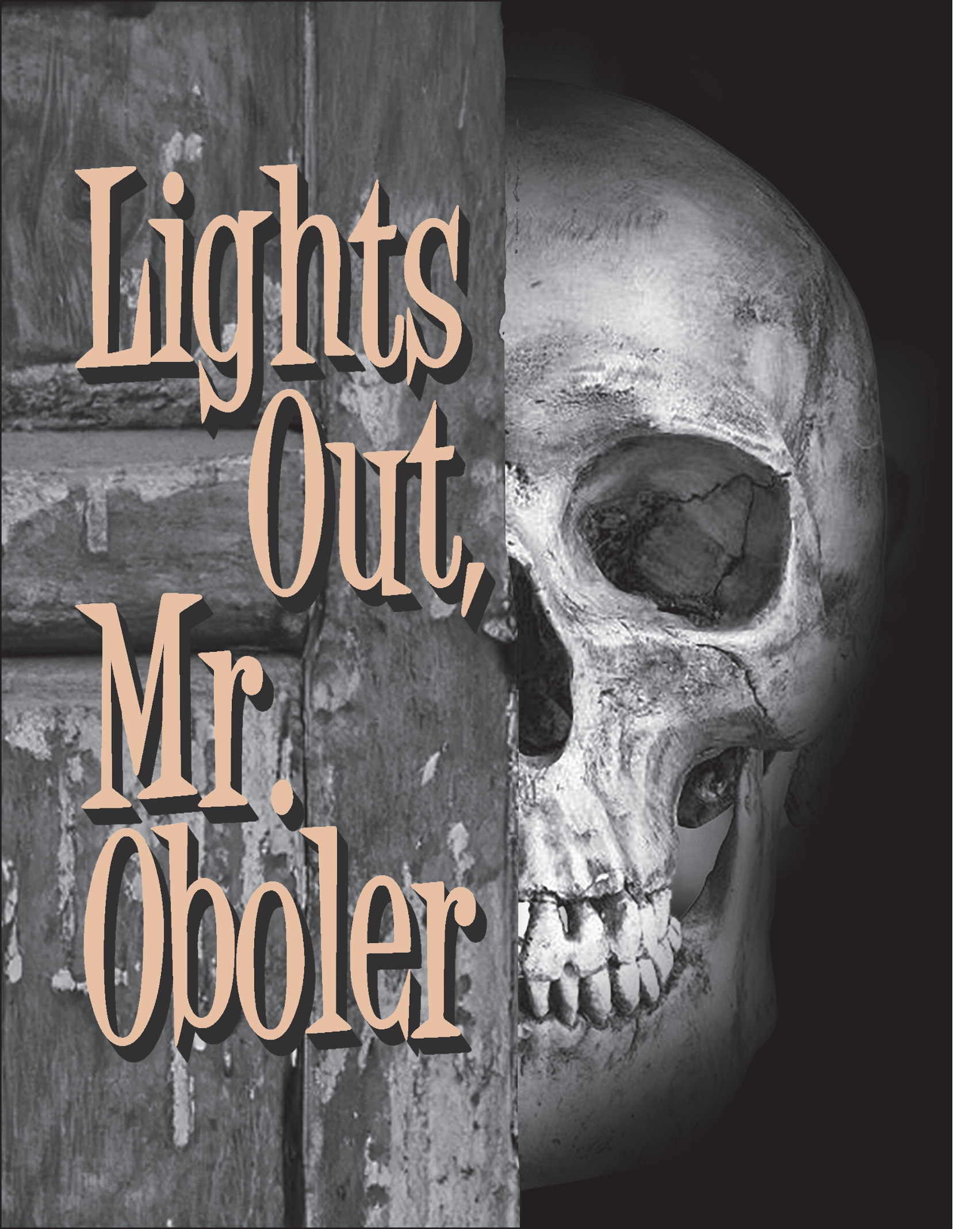
Meanwhile, on the preservation front, we've seen a veritable avalanche of discs, tapes, and other treasures heading into our archives. Collectors, realizing they can no longer manage their collections, are entrusting them to SPERDVAC. And that's wonderful news! We're saving these priceless pieces from disappearing into the abyss of time or worse—a landfill. But, there's still plenty of work to be done. Acquiring the materials is just the beginning. We need more volunteers to help sort, organize, catalog, restore, and digitize the audio so it can be shared with all of you. I daresay our Director of Archives Preservation and Restoration would be most grateful for a few extra sets of hands!

I thank you all for your continued patience and support. Don't hesitate to reach out with your thoughts, questions, or suggestions. And with that, I'll wrap up, as our editor is no doubt waiting patiently for this column.

Until next time, folks—stay safe and stay tuned.

Timothy Knofler

Lights Out, Mr. Oboler



HALLOWEEN

LIGHTS OUT SPECIAL

The complete story of
Arch Oboler and radio's great thrill show,
Lights Out . . . everybody!

by Martin Grams, Jr.

IT WAS THE SPRING OF 1934. *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy* had been on the radio waves for only eight months and the scriptwriter, having completed over 100 scripts of the radio serial, was showing signs of wear. Executives at Blackett-Sample-Hummert, Inc., the advertising agency representing the sponsor, General Mills, were seeking a new scriptwriter to take over the assignment. In May 1934, Arch Oboler, then a resident of Chicago, where the children's radio program originated, was approached with an offer to take over the scriptwriting chores.

Oboler listened to the program for a week, reviewed sample radio scripts, and provided a critique. Oboler claimed the *Jack Armstrong* program lacked the lighter, humorous touches that were so characteristic of high school activities and proposed (should he be accepted for the assignment) to introduce a new character to the program for comic relief, Sammy "Fat" Wells. Sammy would be the best football player Hudson High ever had despite the fact that he was full of harmless pranks and bubbling with laughter. Oboler wrote a multi-page "General Synopsis of Future Story Development" and submitted it to the ad agency. The agency promptly declined. Oboler's proposal was not off the tracks, but certainly not in the direction the producers (and the sponsor) were looking for. Oboler never wrote for *Jack Armstrong*.

Had Oboler received the assignment from the agency, and wrote for the daily *Jack Armstrong* serial, he might not have ventured into the field of horrors and *Lights Out* might well have become a very different program than the one we know today.

Historical hypotheticals applied, this was perhaps for the best since Arch Oboler's future would soon be cemented with a radio horror program called *Lights Out*. Had Oboler received the assignment from the agency, and wrote for the daily *Jack Armstrong* serial, he might not have ventured into the field of horrors and *Lights Out* might well have become a very different program than the one we know today.

As fans of classic radio associate Oboler with the horror anthology, he has often been erroneously cited as the creator of *Lights Out*. That credit, however, should properly belong to Wyllis Cooper.

According to an article in the November 28, 1933, issue of *Variety*, Wyllis Cooper conceived the idea of "a midnight mystery serial to catch the attention of the listeners at the witching hour." Radio station WENR, a Chicago NBC affiliate, agreed to give Cooper a 15-minute time slot at midnight while the competing radio stations were primarily focused on music. More fantasy and supernatural than mystery, Cooper's tales generated a number of letters from radio listeners concerned about the spooky offerings. The network reviewed those letters and confirmed what they were actually curious to know: Were people listening at such a late-night hour? Within four months the program expanded to a 30-minute time slot and the station sought sponsorship from a local business. After a year of terrifying late-night bedtime stories, and no sponsor having signed on the bottom line, the program was dropped in order to ease Cooper's scriptwriting workload especially since another of Cooper's programs, *Immortal Dramas*, was sponsored by a major advertising company. The *Lights Out* program was brought back to the airwaves a few weeks later in spotted increments, including an unsuccessful tryout in New York City to take the program nationwide. It finally was picked up nationally in April 1935, over NBC. Cooper remained the sole writer through May 1936, when he accepted an offer to go to Hollywood and write screenplays.

Very little survives from the Chicago/Wyllis Cooper era but a number of his 1934-1935 radio scripts would later be recycled for use on *Fantasies from Lights Out* (summer of 1945), two additional revivals of the series in the summers of 1946 and 1947, and a number of episodes of *Quiet Please* (1947-1949). Most often, Cooper's style consisted of

Wyllis Cooper (alternately Willis), creator of *Lights Out*, in his later role as head of NBC's young program development division, confers with his assistant, Tom Bennett, and NBC vice-president, C. L. Menser. According to *NBC Transmitter*, the networks house organ, the prime duty of the young program development division was "to create new shows and put them on the air. To do that it has to find new talent, new ideas, and new programs. It is not an easy job." From the September 1943 *NBC Transmitter*.

a first-person narrative, sometimes with a stream-of-consciousness approach.

Beginning with the broadcast of June 3, 1936, Arch Oboler would take over as the new scriptwriter for *Lights Out*. Oboler, initially hoping to maintain the style of Cooper, carried over the stream-of-consciousness technique for many of his radio scripts. Oboler would be paid $50 for every half-hour script he provided to NBC, later contracted to $75 beginning November 18, 1936, then $100 by September 1937. Oboler would not be the only writer for *Lights Out* during this time period, but he certainly wrote the majority of the scripts.

Oboler's first script for *Lights Out* would ultimately become one of the most talked about over the years, "Burial Services," broadcast June 3, 1936. Because a recording is not known to exist, we have only the radio script to consult. Following the signature opening of 13 chime notes, the audience is introduced to two gravediggers who have been asked to prepare a coffin for services. The young woman, Jeanie, had died of apparent heart failure on the morning of her wedding day. In the background, the pleas of the supposedly deceased, who lies comatose, paralyzed, unable to speak or move, beg to be heard or observed. As men and women gather for the burial service, exchanging words of encouragement, the casket remains closed. For the benefit of the audience, the inner thoughts of those same characters reveal a different story. Jeanie's mother wanted her daughter dead to inherit a fortune. Tom Randolph, Jeanie's fiancé, now finds himself with the adoration of Jeanie's sister, Irene. The only kind words spoken during the drama are those of the minister. At the conclusion, Jeanie gives one last attempt to alert the people who attended her service, but the casket was closed shut. As the casket is lowered in the grave, and the minister delivers the final words, one of the undertaker's assistants remarks, "Gosh, Joe! She did look alive!"

"*Lights Out* brings you stories of the supernatural and the super-normal . . . dramatizing the fantasies and the mysteries of the unknown. We tell you this frankly so if you wish to avoid the excitement and tension of these imaginative plays, we urge you, calmly but sincerely, to turn off your radio now."

Following the "Burial Services" broadcast, the network received letters from multiple listeners who felt the horror was too realistic and should not have been broadcast. Despite the fact that the program was a late-night horror offering designed for adult listeners, it would be this incident that would later prompt Oboler to issue a warning before every *Lights Out* broadcast that he scripted during the 1942-43 season: "*Lights Out* brings you stories of the supernatural and the super-normal . . . dramatizing the fantasies and the mysteries of the unknown. We tell you this frankly so if you wish to avoid the excitement and tension of these imaginative plays, we urge you, calmly but sincerely, to turn off your radio now."

Like Cooper, Oboler would soon make the trip to Hollywood to write for numerous programs including the Rudy Vallee variety program, *The Chase and Sanborn Hour* starring Edgar Bergen, *Your Hollywood Parade*, *The Texaco Star Theater*, and *Good News*. Among the many dramatic sketches which Oboler would provide for the guest stars on those programs, Oboler would, in December 1937, pen Mae West's now-historically-notorious "Adam and Eve" sketch for *The Chase and Sanborn Hour.*

In the spring of 1938, Boris Karloff signed a contract to make five guest appearances on *Lights Out*, a program which rarely had any celebrities make guest appearances. Known for playing killers and ghouls on the silver screen, the actor's appearances on any horror program were considered gold for both sponsors and the network. Arch Oboler was being paid $500 per *Lights Out* script by that point and the network agreed to pay $750 per script if Boris Karloff played the lead (contract between Oboler and NBC was dated March 28, 1938). The five broadcasts originated from WMAQ in Chicago where Karloff was in town for the stage production of *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

Among those five consecutive broadcasts were two that are noteworthy to mention for the fact that the radio broadcasts do not exist in collector hands. In "Three Matches" (April 13, 1938), young Sally Taylor is slated to marry the wealthy Eric Marden (Karloff), whom no one in society likes. Marden is 30 years older than Sally. At the cathedral, Marden waits impatiently for Sally to arrive only to have her be a no-show. A telegram arrives indicating that she was appreciative for him helping her, as

well as her sister, Jean, but that she could not marry Marden on the grounds that she truly loved Vincent Rogers. When the members of the family learn the news, Marden is subjected to laughter and embarrassment. Sally goes on to marry Vincent.

One month later, the newlyweds return from their honeymoon. To show he holds no ill feelings, Marden invites the lovebirds to his cabin high up in the mountains, away from society. The countryside is lonely and desolate. When Vincent and Sally share a laugh, the psychotic Marden takes the laughing personally and pulls a gun, shooting Vincent and Sally dead. After arranging for their car to go over a cliff and explode, burning in the rubble, Marden laughs madly as he plans to marry Jean Taylor.

Weeks pass and Marden woos the young lady, then arranges for marriage. After their wedding, the two venture up to Marden's lonely cabin. Realizing she made an error in judgement by marrying Marden, Jean flees into the storm to escape. Marden, however, figuring Jean will return when she realizes she has nowhere to go, tries to stay warm by lighting a number of matches to get a fire started in the fireplace. Every time he lights a match, he catches a glimpse of Sally and hears her ghostly voice. When her ghostly figure shows up at the door, Marden beckons her in. He soon discovers, as she holds him in embrace, that her wedding dress is on fire. Her face turns into flames. Eric Marden suffers horrible and agonizing pain. As his body, scorched and dead, lies on the ground, the voice of Sally can be heard with a triumphant finality in the way she speaks, "Eric . . . now there's nothing left of you . . . to rot!"

In the episode titled "Night on the Mountain" (broadcast April 20, 1938), Karloff played a convicted felon named Roger Thomson who, having been found guilty of murder, was executed in the electric chair but not before begging for a second chance. Lying in the morgue, Thomson discovers the electricity that coursed through his veins never killed him but instead made his blood bubble. Thomson is now a walking vampire who bites the neck of the doctor, the prison guard, and anyone else who stands in his way. Drinking the blood of his victims to stay alive, the killer hides in a cave up in the mountains where bats flew out to feed. Thomson waits until the police dragnet dies down, then makes for a cabin in the woods. Hoping to seek revenge against a woman named Ruth, whom Thomson loved and killed to get, the walking vampire wanders the forest and grows so weak that at one point he has to attack a young boy and drink the youth's blood. During his climactic encounter with Ruth, Thomson discovers that she is indeed in love with him and not the man he killed, whom he thought was her secret lover. No longer wanting to exact revenge against her, Thomson returns to the prison where the warden once again has to walk the condemned man to the electric chair and this time Thomson is begging for the electric current.

Arch Oboler and his good "professional" friend Boris Karloff go over a script in the NBC studios. Known for playing killers and ghouls on the silver screen, the actor's appearances on any horror program were considered gold for both sponsors and network.

Boris Karloff's friendship with Arch Oboler remained more professional than personal. Karloff enjoyed acting before the microphone as it never affected his screen career and such acting assignments added income to his bottom line. After a brief discussion, Oboler and Karloff agreed to continue a series of horror dramas, penned by Oboler, using the *Lights Out!* name, if Oboler would be able to get a sponsor to afford Karloff's fee.

In a letter dated May 18, 1938, Oboler told Karloff that "the fantasy series is still doing well; they tell me it should happen by the end of July." On August 30, Oboler wrote to

Karloff: "Believe it or not, the R and R agency is even more enthusiastic about the program than ever. I'm to have a conference with the sponsor sometime within the next few days at which time definite plans for the fall are to be made."

Sadly, the deal never went through. On December 23, Oboler wrote back to Robert Kendall of NBC notifying the network that, "I am cancelling the agreement dated March 28th, 1938, authorizing you to sell my services on a program titled *Lights Out* starring Boris Karloff."

The "R and R agency" referenced by Oboler in his letter was the Ruthrauff and Ryan advertising agency. Boris Karloff instead made more than a dozen appearances on a new horror/mystery program, *Inner Sanctum Mystery*, through the years of 1941 and 1942. By the spring of 1942, Oboler would revisit his proposal to Ruthrauff and Ryan. Whether he had intentions again of getting Karloff to play the lead in a number of these proposed broadcasts remains unknown, but Oboler's pitchman skills succeeded on all fronts.

Through the ad agency, Sterling Products (the makers of Ironized Yeast), agreed to sponsor a weekly horror anthology titled *Lights Out*, based on the stories Oboler pitched both verbally and in writing. On June 14, 1942, Sidney Strotz of NBC arranged for an agreement between the network and Arch Oboler, thereby giving the playwright permission to use the title *Lights Out* and certain literary material that was connected with the program for use on a proposed revival even if the program aired over another network. A letter dated September 5, 1942, granted Oboler the right for a sum of $100 per broadcast.

For a number of weeks, Oboler created a number of proposals, including an audition script where the horror host was called "The Professor," and who beckoned the sponsor's pitchman into his study to hear another tale. Based on inter-office memos and letters to and from the agency, Oboler's pitch to the sponsor was to mimic the success of *Inner Sanctum Mystery*.

PROFESSOR: Ah, good evening, Mr. Wells. I have been expecting you!

ANNOUNCER: Good evening, Professor!

PROFESSOR: Here, let me take your hat and coat. Now, come . . . sit down . . . your favorite chair is waiting for you.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you.

PROFESSOR: (RATHER EXCITED) Mr. Wells, tonight I have a most amazing story for you and our listeners. Yes, in all my years of studying the human mind and its strange workings, I have never run across a more extraordinary case than that of Professor Wolstadt.

ANNOUNCER: Wolstadt? I don't believe I've ever heard of him.

PROFESSOR: Few people have heard of him . . . or his amazing invention . . . a machine that was designed to benefit mankind but ended by devouring living bone and brain and tissue.

ANNOUNCER: (STARTLED) What?

PROFESSOR: Ah, I must warn you . . . I must warn everybody! It is a weird and terrifying tale! One that may well shake your sanity! Assuredly, it is not a story for children, or for anyone who fears to delve into the dark mysteries of the future! And many people are afraid, Mr. Wells.

ANNOUNCER: (MUSING) Yes . . . in fact, many people today are afraid of what their own immediate future may mean . . . they're worried because they haven't the strength to do their work . . . because they're so weak and worn out all the time. (TO AUDIENCE) If that's true of you, friends, if you're miserably thin and nervous and rundown, and if it's only because you're not getting enough Vitamin B and iron from your food, then ask your druggist right away for Ironized Yeast tablets. They've worked wonders for thousands of men and women who only needed more of these substances . . . helped them gain glorious new strength and energy, and five, ten . . . even more pounds, often in a few short weeks! That's the one, the only, Ironized Yeast. Remember, with I Y on the package and on each tablet . . . . And now, Professor . . . how about your story?

PROFESSOR: You are quite prepared to hear this strange tale?

ANNOUNCER: Quite!

PROFESSOR: Then . . . LIGHTS OUT!

Sterling Products was sold on the idea under two conditions: the budget would be kept low for the weekly series and Oboler would be contributing all of the original radio scripts himself. To help with the budget, Oboler eliminated the horror host of The Professor and settled on being the host himself, who would introduce each story on a weekly basis. The contract with the sponsor was on a 13-week basis through Ruthrauff & Ryan, Inc., for their client, Ironized Yeast Co., Inc. The sponsor reserved the right to renew or cancel the program in 13-week increments. The series would originate from radio studio of KNX in Los Angeles. It is those Ironized Yeast radio broadcasts that collectors of classic radio broadcasts today associate with the *Lights Out* name.

The *Lights Out* revival would air over CBS from 1942 to 1943, for a total of 52 weekly broadcasts. Some of Oboler's best work has been captured on these broadcasts through extant recordings, but behind the scenes Oboler struggled to keep his head above the water. Soon after the ad agency signed the contract for the CBS time slot, Oboler discovered the speed of writing an original radio script at the rate of one per week was exhausting. Worse, original proposals he pitched to the sponsors were too challenging to adapt into a feasible radio play. It was easy to propose a ghost story; it was difficult to implement that into a practical radio play.

Among the early proposals that never became episodes of *Lights Out* was "They Disappear," about a young actress who is the essence of evil. One day she opens a door and walks not into the next room, but in a world outside of our world, which was peopled by the creatures of "The Dark," people who live upon the flesh of evil just as normal people live upon the flesh of cattle.

Another skipped proposal was "Dead Man," which concerned a man who murders his best friend and disposes of the body perfectly by removing the head so identification would not be possible. But the murderer would be haunted day after day by the specter pleading in ghostly wail, "Where is my head?" The terror would not be strong enough to make the murderer visit the police and confess, but he would take his own life in the same manner as he had taken the life of his friend.

A third one that never came to fruition was "The Groom," the story of a newlywed couple who board a train and, while the shades are

SATURDAY'S HIGHLIGHTS

■ Arch Oboler directs Ann Shepherd and Raymond Edward Johnson.

Tune-In Bulletin for August 26, September 2, 9, 16 and 23 !

August 26: The Newport Casino Invitation Tennis finals are on NBC-Blue today, with Bill Stern describing them. . . . CBS has Ted Husing describing the finals of the National Doubles Tennis matches from the Longwood Cricket Club.
September 2: Labor Day week-end—the last holiday of the summer—starts today. . . . And to celebrate there are: Air races—the National air races from Cleveland, on NBC. Horse races—Saratoga Cup in New York, over CBS from 4:30 to 5:00.
September 9: Harry James and his band open tonight at the Sherman Hotel's College Inn in Chicago, with a CBS wire.
September 16: CBS has Ted Husing talking from the North Shore Country Club near Chicago, where the National Amateur Golf playoffs are being held.
September 23: Art Mooney and his orchestra open at the Henry Grady hotel in Atlanta, broadcasting on CBS.

ON THE AIR TONIGHT: Arch Oboler's Plays, on NBC-Red at 9:30, written and directed by Arch Oboler.

NBC really took Shakespeare seriously when it began this series of dramatic half-hours. In it, "The play's the thing," and no mistake. Some of radio's most original and provocative writing goes into the unsponsored thirty minutes between 9:30 and 10:00 tonight.

Arch Oboler first gained fame as the writer of the spooky Lights Out series at midnight on NBC. Hollywood was impressed, and gathered him to its bosom—but Arch soon broke loose and returned to New York, where he is perfectly happy writing and directing a play a week. He could make a lot more money in the movie capital, but he prefers to stay where he can write exactly what he wants to write.

There's never any doubt in his mind about how he wants his plays produced, either. A mild-mannered and comfortable sort of person away from a radio studio, he becomes a stern taskmaster at rehearsals. Actors in his plays soon learn to leave at home their ideas of how a part should be done. Arch knows how *he* wants it done, and that's enough. He's always right, too, as you'll agree when you listen to one of his perfect productions.

Other writers and many an actor listen in religiously every Saturday night, and famous actress Nazimova was so impressed that after turning down many a guest starring spot on the air she called Oboler and asked him to let her be in one of his plays. She wouldn't take a fee, either.

Time means nothing to Arch. Seeing that his program doesn't run past the allotted half-hour is the only detail to which he pays no attention; that's the job of NBC production engineer Whitney, who holds the stop watch. Usually, though, the play has been rehearsed so carefully that it runs off exactly on time. Arch is passionately interested in musical background and sound effects. Muriel Pollack, the NBC staff musician who supplies organ music for the plays, is so well-educated in the literature of music that she can think of a phrase or a melody for any mood Arch wants to create, and play it off from memory for him to hear. Frequently he demands sound effects that the technicians have never been required to create before, and probably never will again. For instance, once he wanted the sound of a person being turned inside out. They finally solved that by stripping a wet rubber glove off a man's hand, held close to the microphone.

Not a very tall man, Arch likes to direct rehearsals standing on top of a table. He won't permit any studio audiences—says they distract the actors and the director.

Brief appreciation for the radio work of Arch Oboler in the October 1939 edition of *Radio and Television Mirror*. The writer includes the oft-repeated story of stripping a wet rubber glove of a sound effects man's hand to suggest a person being turned inside out. Ah yes, the theatre of the mind.

pulled up, settle into their compartment. The man explains how he does not know anything about his past, who he is or where he came from. The reason he married her was due to great loneliness. She laughs until the train comes to a tunnel, and then she screams. The conclusion was never provided in Oboler's proposal, just the story concept.

One of Oboler's proposals was titled "I Killed John Alvin," but the network and sponsor deemed that story too gruesome, forcing Oboler to quickly write an original concept titled "Mungahra," dramatizing the story of a man who returns from Australia with a huge diamond in his possession and a conscience that plagues him since the jewel was acquired after committing murder.

Among other originals written for the program was "The Story of Mr. Maggs," which concerned a meek little man who purchased a trunk filled with horrors at an auction. This story was originally used for the audition of the series that would help sell the program but would not be dramatized on-air until three months after the program premiered, and then with the ending re-written.

Oboler's 1938 *Lights Out* script, "Chicken Heart," was originally planned as the series opener, but an original concept titled "What the Devil?" would ultimately air as the premiere. The half-hour version of "Chicken Heart" is considered by many as more gruesome than the abbreviated rendition on Oboler's *Drop Dead* LP record. In the half-hour version, the flesh grew tentacles that stretched across the room to grab the scientists by the leg and drag them into the flesh, to be dissolved and absorbed by the monstrous creation.

"What the Devil?" would ultimately become a tour de force for Oboler's horror anthology. It told the story of a man and woman, both married and fleeing together from spouses whom they deserted back home. Driving across the country, the two discover they are victims of a menacing driver with road rage, who looks a little like the Devil but they question their sanity because of a guilty conscience. After a few hair-raising scrapes, the couple ultimately falls victim to the menacing driver with a fatal accident. The story concludes as two police officers, looking over the scene of the accident, report of the two casualties and the imprints of cloven hooves that were found burned into the pavement.

According to a memo dated October 29, 1942, after the first four broadcasts, the spon-

sor expressed dissatisfaction with the opening line, "If you frighten easily." Even though the phrase was approved by the censorship department at CBS in New York, the sponsor hoped the opening would be re-written to avoid the suggestion of horror at the very beginning of every broadcast. The sponsor, of course, feared that people would change the channel and not hear the commercial breaks. Oboler objected but understood that sponsors often provided such feedback, even critical ones.

On November 4, Don Stauffer of Ruthrauff & Ryan wrote to Oboler to delicately request that every episode "not always have death be the climax." This was because of a radio review in *Daily News* in which the radio critic publicly asked why all of the plays on *Lights Out* so far have ended in death. Oboler merely stated that that was the type of program the sponsors had paid for.

In December 1942, the sponsor started to panic when more than one radio station decided to cease broadcasting the program. Arthur Church of KMBC advised the network that he was having serious complaints about *Lights Out* on the grounds that it was a questionable program to be broadcast at the 7:00 p.m. slot in Kansas City, at time at which children comprise a large part of the audience. The sponsor feared station cancellations might become a trend.

Church listened to the broadcast of December 8, which he claimed had, in his own words, dealt with "suffocation, suicide, murder, tombstones, graves, coffins, funerals, dead bones," and phrases such as "the maggots in me" and "in the grave I learned to kill." Beginning with the week of December 15, KMBC aired something else in that time slot. Affiliates with CBS were contracted to have discretionary power in refusing any program they felt was not in their own or public interest. The sponsor would pay not for the time slot but for the total number of estimated listenership. With less stations meant a smaller bill to be paid at the end of the month, but such situations defeated the purpose of sponsoring a time slot altogether.

During the first four months of the program, a total of six radio scripts were original. The other 11 were repeats of prior *Lights Out* episodes from 1936, 1937, and 1938. Don Stauffer of Ruthrauff & Ryan confessed to Arch Oboler in a letter that, "We are almost entirely using scripts that you wrote years ago. Frankly, Arch, I am amazed that you have used as many old ones as you have. When we started this series, it was your own suggestion that we only use the old ones occasionally and then only repeat the outstanding successes."

In defense, when Arch Oboler submitted "Meteor Man" for the broadcast of December 22, 1942, he told the ad agency that this was originally an eight-minute sketch for a variety program back in 1936. What he failed to reveal was that the half-hour rendition was dramatized on *Lights Out* on the evening of June 16, 1937. Oboler promised new stories following "Valse Triste" at the end of the month ("Valse Triste" was dramatized back in March of 1938 with Boris Karloff in the lead).

By this time the sponsor was concerned over the general line of letters from listeners who did not understand the endings of the programs. No sooner did the sponsor address their concern, the January 1943 rendition of "Valse Triste" would generate the largest volume of mail delivered to the network. The majority of the listeners stated the conclusion did not have a logical ending and sought an explanation.

The concern of repeat dramas eventually prompted Oboler to create a list of scripts done for *Lights Out* during the 1936-37 broadcasts, plus an accounting/list of how much rewriting was necessary on old scripts to justify the cost of scripts being dramatized for the Ironized Yeast sponsorship. Justification came in the form of typed summaries from Oboler, citing the origins of his plots. Through that submission, we now have origins for some of the stories dramatized during the 1942-43 season.

"Murder in the Script Department" (broadcast May 11, 1943), came about because Oboler wandered into the Script Department of CBS and suddenly discovered that the girls had a fanciful idea that he wore a forked tail coiled over his arm and had two horns under his hat. The play, then, was an author's subtle revenge. Since *Lights Out* was never broadcast over CBS until the Ironized Yeast sponsorship, the ad agency was no doubt appreciative of the origin.

"Execution" (broadcast April 27, 1943) was originally written for and served as a message from the Treasury Department. Oboler wrote the script for Elizabeth Bergner as her first American radio broadcast and concerned itself with events that took place in the marketplace of a French village. The play received much fan mail and Oboler felt he was justified restaging it again.

"The Spider" (broadcast May 18, 1943), was set in an equatorial jungle back in the time when something jabbering up in a palm tree was a monkey, not a Japanese sniper. This play was first written when Oboler started to be an entomologist, and so, when he wrote about insects, he was with more than passing interest and knowledge.

Oboler by this time was recycling *Lights Out* radio scripts from 1938, which were not included on the list provided to the ad agency. "The Spider," "Superfeature," "The Ball," "Cat Wife," "Screen Test" and others that followed were among the 1938 scripts. "Screen Test," however, was re-titled "The Projective Mr. Drogan" and while no explanation can be found as to why Oboler would re-title the drama, it is believed this was an attempt to mask the fact that this was also recycled.

Beginning with the broadcast of January 19, 1943, the series originated from New York instead of California. Betty Winkler reprised her role as the female protagonist in "Cat Wife," which she did in a prior rendition alongside Boris Karloff in 1938. "Cat Wife" was probably dramatized more often than any other *Lights Out* script, (including *The Footlighters Club*, broadcast locally over WTOP in Washington, D.C. on October 15, 1944), and was even recycled for an audition radio script of *The Sceptics Club*, starring the mentalist Dunninger, as part of an anthology series with the famed mentalist as the horror host. The radio play would also be adapted into a stage play by Oboler, re-titled "Cat Woman," but never produced for the stage.

To add insult to injury, CBS ultimately swallowed a $500 loss for Oboler's "Alter Ego," a radio play originally written for Bette Davis,

Arthur Church of KMBC advised the network that he was having serious complaints about *Lights Out* . . . [claiming the show, in his own words,] dealt with "suffocation, suicide, murder, tombstones, graves, coffins, funerals, dead bones," and phrases such as "the maggots in me" and "in the grave I learned to kill."

adapted into a short story for *Radio Mirror* magazine, and would eventually be made into a major motion-picture titled *Bewitched* (1945). The play had been dramatized a number of times on other programs and required a license as a result of the original contract terms with another network. When the sponsor insisted the drama not be performed on *Lights Out* because it was clearly a repeat and not an original, discussions between Oboler and the network ultimately led to CBS swallowing the loss. The network not only paid the $500, but an additional $13.75 for organist fees despite the fact it was never broadcast.

Of all the original stories created for the 1942-43 series, two of them do not exist in recorded form. The first of those two was "The Mirror," broadcast January 12, 1943, and was (according to Oboler) two years in the writing. The play was originally scheduled with Norma Shearer, Miriam Hopkins and Bette Davis in the lead, but Oboler was never able to find the right conclusion for the story. With necessity the mother of invention, Oboler created an ending to his satisfaction and dramatized it on *Lights Out*. The other original that is considered a "lost" episode is "The Cliff," detailed below.

In "The Mirror," a man named Joe, sitting in prison awaiting the hangman's knot, confesses to the priest of the terrible secret that plagued him. Soon after meeting the bewitching Sherry, the two lovebirds got married. But soon after they entered his home, he knew there was something wrong. Sherry acted bizarre upon learning there were mirrors in the house, and she insisted on the mirrors being covered up before she could enter. Upon returning from work the next day, Joe discovered the mirrors in the house were smashed—the house was dark, every shade pulled down. It was then that Joe learned of Sherry's past. When she was 12, she was gifted a small mirror as a gift and when a face appeared in the mirror, she followed instructions from the voice and found her father's gun and shot and killed her brother. Now grown up, she finds herself plagued by the face every time she looks in the mirror—any mirror. Joe, disbelieving her story of a face in the mirror, arranged for her to look at her reflection in another mirror and it was then that Joe saw the same face, a face of a creature from the dawn of time. Sherry, panicking, claimed the face was telling her to kill Joe but instead she ran towards the mirror. When the glass shattered, she disappeared. Joe, lighting a match to find her, accidentally set the house on fire, where the law arrived to take him into custody for the supposed murder of Sherry. Joe, finishing his story to the priest, explained that he knew who the face was, and claims that Sherry went with the face "back to Hell."

Arch Oboler returned to aural drama in the early 1960s by adapting some of his *Lights Out* horror stories anew for this Capitol Records LP titled *Drop Dead!* for the home market.

Arch Oboler recycled three episodes in February of 1943, two of them re-titled to possibly mask the fact that they were being recycled. Oboler was forced to put up a defense for "The Sea," however; when that episode was not re-titled, the sponsors caught wind of the scheme.

"He Dug It Up," broadcast February 9, 1943, was an original for the series and a postponed story set in pre-war London. When Oboler first wrote the script, it was shelved as a result of the Boston fire, and while the timing was of coincidence, Oboler did not want to be accused of capitalizing on catastrophe. Oboler wrote a number of radio plays with London as the locale. He and his wife went on their honeymoon to London, which inspired him to write a number of radio plays with the city prominent in the dramas, including foggy mornings and such landmarks as the Tower of London.

In March 1943, Oboler turned in a radio script titled "Superfeature," and his indication of providing little rewrites was evident to his letter to Lee Cooley of Ruthrauff & Ryan: "I haven't re-written the part of Slew simply because rather than re-write every damned word of dialogue, all I have to do is hand the part to an actor who will play it absolutely straight. In other words, playing the part without any southern accent will completely wipe out any negro implications."

"Superfeature" would eventually be broadcast on April 6, 1943, and is of historical amusement when you consider the drama is about a character that detaches itself from the screen and comes down the aisle. This use of three-dimensional pictures would be used to greater length when Arch Oboler would later become involved in *Bwana Devil*, considered the first 3-D feature film ever made.

In May, Oboler cancelled an original drama he had written titled "Russian Front" because of its war background. "I have come to the conclusion that the listening audience wants escape, not war stories, so, in spite of the fact that 'Russian Front' was largely done, I am cancelling it," he wrote to Lee Cooley of

Ruthrauff & Ryan. He scheduled "Organ" as a substitute, which was a repeat of a 1937 *Lights Out* drama.

By June, the sponsor was having reservations about the program. A fright series was too limited in appeal to attain a higher Crossley rating than the peak the program received, despite the fact that *Lights Out* averaged higher than *Inner Sanctum Mystery*. While executives at Sterling Products received the results they had hoped for, their concern was whether the program exceeded expectations to warrant a renewal.

"We should try an experiment of no horror for at least eight weeks, and then wait and see the Crossley reports," Oboler proposed. "I have found that using a play that already has been broadcast apparently has no bearing on the Crossley dip, but a certain type of extremity in the play does." The first of such experiments was "The Ugliest Man in the World." Oboler felt the story was more psychological than horror, even with a love story in it. To help with the program transition, this was the first episode of the series in which music was used. This also explains why, towards the end of the series' run, horror was not depicted in many of the episodes. Oboler began recycling material that was dramatized on other programs.

By mid-June, at the request of Sterling Products, Arch Oboler began incorporating the sponsor's product into his narrative and delivery more often than he had in prior broadcasts. This was because most actors were paid scale ($12.50) while actors providing voices for the sponsor's commercials were paid $30. John Lake provided the signature voice for many of the broadcasts but every time the series shifted from one coast to another, the ad agency attempted to cut costs. Announcer Frank Martin was paid $6 per broadcast (a total of $12 due to West Coast repeat). By May 4, the ad agency was not happy regarding the cost. They reminded Oboler that the program was contracted at $1,350 per show and it was understood that Oboler would be supplying the signature voice. Instead, John Lake and Frank Martin were doing the job. Worse, the agency had agreed to pay $50 per week for the announcer job to Oboler and then learned Frank Martin was being paid $6 per broadcast which was *in addition* to the $50 price already allocated.

For comparison, the average cost to produce the series was $1,400 per episode (broadcasts of December 11, 24 and 31, 1942), although higher for many broadcasts.

MEETING OF THE MINDS. The two poet laureates of radio drama, Norman Corwin and Arch Oboler, discuss radio writing at an NBC reception for Mr. Corwin in a New York bookstore in July 1939.

Broadcast of October 19, 1942	$1,460
Broadcast of October 23, 1942	$1,579
Broadcast of November 20, 1942	$1,686

Adding insult to injury was the "clerical error" when an accounting executive at MCA Artists discovered that John Lake had not been on the program since May 18, 1943, but his name was still being included in Oboler's additional charges for episodes, including the broadcast of June 29.

"I don't like to put anyone on spot like this but after all seven scripts have been rejected by CBS there is just little justice on my side," Oboler wrote in a Western Union telegram dated June 16. As a result, Oboler rewrote the ending to "The Cliff" before it could be approved and dramatized. "The Cliff" is the second of two original stories written for the 1942-43 series that does not exist in recorded form.

In "The Cliff" (broadcast July 6, 1943), the opening scene is at the end of a mountain trail. It is night and, at the edge of a cliff that lifts 500 feet above a river below, stands a man and a girl. Julie holds a gun on Mac Weber and it is she who insists he step off the edge of the cliff. Julie was seeking revenge for when, five years ago on that very night, her lover, Joe, was killed. Joe discovered his employer was counterfeiting money but had to choose between working for the wrong side of the law and financially affording the luxuries for his girlfriend or going to the police. Five months later, Joe and Julie were married but Joe was framed for the crime by Weber, found guilty in a court of law and sentenced to the hangman's noose. It was on the five-year anniversary of Joe's execution that Julie met Weber in a bar. Using her wiles, she lured him to her car and drove him up to the cliff. As she stands there now with the gun pointed at Weber, Julie reveals her motives. Before she can force the crook to walk off the cliff, the ghost of Joe appears and lunges for Weber, pushing him over the cliff.

"The Immortal Gentleman," broadcast August 31, 1943, was clearly a repeat because (like "Alter Ego") the play was publicly associated with a major Hollywood actor. Franchot Tone played the lead in the original production. Oboler later recalled how his physician sister once told him, "I've never known a terminally ill patient who, unless enduring extreme pain when death was imminent, would not plead for just one more breath

ARCH OBOLER, famed radio writer now movie-maker, hawks the stereo realist camera in promoting his 3-D motion picture, *Bwana Devil*, the film that started the 3-D craze in the early 1950s.

of life." Later, Oboler admitted that he had never been in the position of "wanting one more heartbeat. I have always been personally neutral on the subject of living forever—but apparently my subconscious hasn't been." This was the inspiration for the radio play.

The 1942-43 series would come to an end when Sterling Products decided not to renew the contract after the concluding 52 weeks. The decision was arrived at on two counts. First, the inability to clear *Lights Out* as a show on the Canadian Broadcasting System. Ruthrauff & Ryan had attempted multiple times over the preceding year and failed. Canada was an important market in the eyes of the sponsor and the ad agency. Second, while *Lights Out* was considered the highest-ranking program in the history of the sponsor, certain quarters of the company questioned whether the association of the program with their product was truly reaching the right audience. By this time, a competing company sponsoring *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (Carter's Little Liver Pills) had also dropped sponsorship. If Carter dropped sponsorship of a weekly horror program, Sterling felt they should follow what was becoming an industry trend.

Upon learning of the ancellation, Oboler's ego kicked in and he insisted to Heagan Bayles of Ruthrauff & Ryan that any press release about the program's cancellation blame it solely on the inability to clear the Canadian network, thus avoiding any suspicion that Oboler's talents might have been a contributing factor.

In a letter dated September 2, 1943, Bayles wrote to Oboler: "I am very unhappy about the fact that a decision has been reached to drop *Lights Out* for Ironized Yeast. A year ago, Don and I were really excited about the prospect of having you with us. No one could have asked you to work harder or be more cooperative and *Lights Out* has really done a swell job in the year it has been on the air commercially."

One of the last episodes of the series was meant to be a drama titled "V-Day" which had been done on *Free World Theatre* just a few weeks earlier, on June 27. "V-Day" was the story of a young German boy who anticipated the day of victory and faced the defeat of his own country. Oboler was not primarily concerned with closing the program on a note of triumph in light of world affairs, but rather to save time writing another original radio script. The network declined and insisted Oboler write an original story.

In light of the cancellation, Oboler felt the $1,550 budget spent for that particular broadcast to produce another original play was futile and instead chose a cheaper route, recycling "The Word," which was dramatized prior on *Arch Oboler's Plays*. "The Word" would be rescheduled for September 14 and Oboler chose to redo "Glacier Woman," a 1937 *Lights Out* script, for the final broadcast of the series. The sponsors again disapproved, insisting on getting their money's worth with an original story. "I never liked 'Glacier Woman' as a play," he later explained to the ad agency, venting his disgust for not being allowed to recycle another *Lights Out* play.

For this reason, an original would be conceived, "The Author and the Thing," whereupon Oboler played the role of the lead protagonist, a radio scribe who faced off against a monster of his own creation. This was, of course, semi-autobiographical in nature, venting his frustration against the network and sponsor during the course of producing 52 weekly *Lights Out* installments.

On October 1, 1943, an executive at NBC sent a letter to Oboler alerting him in writing the reminder of the terms of the contract. "Inasmuch as the arrangement or contract under which *Lights Out* was broadcast over the facilities of Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc. came to an end on last Tuesday night, September 28, 1943, we are writing to confirm that all rights and literary material in connection with *Lights Out*, including the right of using the title, have reverted to the National Broadcasting Company, Inc."

Regardless of the fact that the 1942-1943 Ironized Yeast series consisted of both originals and repeats of earlier *Lights Out* dramas, most of the radio broadcasts from this run exist in recorded form. While most of the 1936-1938 dramas do not exist in recorded form, it is pleasing to note that the use of recycled scripts gives us a perspective we might otherwise not have.

As indicated prior in this article, Wyllis Cooper would be responsible for scriptwriting the three summer revivals (1945, 1946, and 1947), not Arch Oboler. One of Oboler's radio scripts, "And Adam Begot," would later be adapted for the television rendition of *Lights Out*, and Oboler himself would recycle some of his scripts for the 1962 LP, *Drop Dead: An Exercise in Horror*.

Oboler would later write a teleplay in 1958 adapted from "What the Devil?" which was never produced. Rod Serling would contact

page 15 ➡

Poor Charlie . . . Left at the Altar

IN THE FALL OF 1952, radio was battling for attention. Television was overturning the natural order of things. For those working in radio, each new television aerial popping up on a neighborhood rooftop was another sign of the impending eclipse. It was hard to take; television was offering pictures. However, Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen were about to offer audiences a storyline that would momentarily rival anything television could offer.

To prove radio could still attract an audience, Edgar Bergen and his wooden chum lured Marilyn Monroe to the microphone. Marilyn's eagerly anticipated appearance was slated for Sunday, October 26, 1952. What would transpire was anybody's guess but millions tuned in to find out. The last time Charlie had come up against anyone as seductive as Marilyn was 15 years prior when Charlie and Mae West inflamed the censors and West found herself banned from radio. Perhaps, alluding to that earlier episode, one press release stated in part tthat, "anticipating vigorous competition for Miss Monroe's attention, Charlie is earnestly brushing up on his repertory of masculine wiles, wolf whistles and romantic chitchat for the great day."

Unfortunately, many of the details and nuances of this first encounter between these two stars are left to the imagination. This broadcast, like many others from this era in the series, is "lost" for the moment, The significant takeaway, however, is that Charlie and Marilyn became engaged on that Sunday evening. Press reports later claimed that it required four CBS soundmen utilizing an assortment of sirens and whistles mimicking the kiss between Marilyn and Charlie sealing the deal.

The McCarthy-Monroe engagement sparked press speculation in the days that followed. The Associated Press (November 1, 1952) reported that studio bosses at Twentieth Century-Fox seemed onboard with Marilyn's upcoming radio wedding. It was her on-going romance with Joe DiMaggio that had been upsetting them, fearing that a Monroe-DiMaggio marriage would detract from Marilyn's glamorous appeal.

Charles Denton, Hollywood Reporter for United Press, scored an interview with McCarthy and Bergan on the forthcoming marriage (November 2, 1952). In what must have come as a relief to Twentieth Century-Fox, Charlie announced that Marilyn would continue to work. "Certainly, I'm gonna let her work. I love the girl. I don't want to interfere with her career—or her income," Charlie said. Bergen was unhappy with the marriage and confessed that losing McCarthy would be like having his pocket picked. Charlie reckoned Bergen would invite him back to the program with a 50-50 partnership.

The next week, singer Tony Martin occupied the guest spot. The focus was all on Charlie and the upcoming wedding. Martin took over the arrangements for Mcarthy's bachelor dinner. Bergen was still opposed to the wedding plans. Edgar wasn't alone in his disapproval of Charlie's marriage. Decatur, Il columnist David Felt, writing in the *Herald and Record* (October 29, 1952), derided the stunt, complaining that, "Marilyn Monroe on the radio is a waste of time and her 'appearance' on the *Bergen-Charlie McCarthy* show Sunday night was distinctively minus. Bergen should give more time to Mortimer Snerd."

Despite such opposition, Marilyn returned to the air on November 9, 1952, to take her marriage vows with Charlie. This is the one extant episode in the Charlie and Marilyn story arc. In this episode, the couple has arrived at the wedding venue eager for their union. Outside, however, a large and angry mob had gathered in protest. Radio reports were also coming in from Gabriel Heatter, Walter Winchell and Arthur Godfrey conveying more displeasure at the impending wedding. From England, Winston Churchill, declared the day "America's darkest hour" and extended sympathy on behalf of the British Empire. All the characters were brilliantly played by voice-actor Dave Barry.

To escape the protests, Charlie and Marilyn eloped to Las Vegas. A justice of the peace (Jack Kirkwood) was on hand to officiate. Unfortunately, the wedding proved a no go. Charlie was unable to meet the necessary medical requirement; he had no blood in his veins, only sap.

The following week's broadcast finds Charlie despondent over losing Marilyn. Hoping to cheer the grief-stricken fellow, Tony Martin made a return visit and took Charlie on a bachelor's tour of romantic Paris and Italy. Charlie's heart was not so easily mended, as he eventually explained to Bergen:

CHARLIE: You know, Bergen, I'm like Joe DiMaggio. I'm in love with baseball and Marilyn Monroe. I keep dreaming about them—first Marilyn, then baseball, then back to Marilyn. And it's all very frustrating.

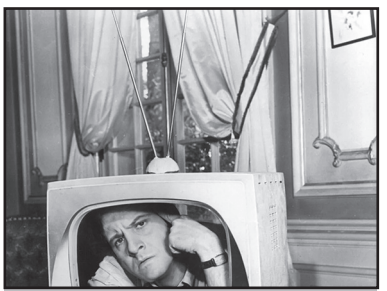
BERGEN: How does dreaming about a game of baseball frustrate you, Charlie?

CHARLIE: I don't get to first base there either.

It was left to newspaper columnist Tom Danson to put the finish of the McCarthy-Monroe *affaire de Coeur* in perspective: "And because Miss Monroe makes such darned good copy, we played along with the publicity gag, right to the very end . . . . One look at this Monroe gal—and could you blame me?"

Lights Out, Mr. Oboler CONTINUED

the author a short time after, wanting to present an adaptation of the radio play for the final season of *The Twilight Zone*. Regrettably, there was a producer shake-up during the final season and the television adaptation (dated June 11, 1963) would never be produced. Fans of the television program who have read the script agree it would have been a perfect entry for the series.



Hans Conried trapped in his TV set in Oboler's *The Twonky* (1953), or what Arch Oboler thought of television.

Throughout the 1970s, Arch Oboler found himself the plaintiff against a number of factions for what he felt was plagiarism against his radio works. No greater a lawsuit was there than the one that he filed against Universal Studios for *Duel*, a television movie starring Dennis Weaver, directed by Steven Spielberg, claiming the story was lifted not from a Richard Matheson short story, but his radio play "What the Devil?" The studio settled out of court, with neither party agreeing to any wrongful acts under the terms of the settlement. The lawyers for Universal insisted Oboler was trying to make a quick buck "with a nuisance suit," while Oboler held a grudge against Hollywood in general as horror anthologies were slowly attempting a comeback.

"Over the years I have found myself plagiarized many times," Oboler later wrote. "I say this advisedly because this is a fact. I attribute this literary thievery, especially in the case of the television writer, to the implacable deadlines he faces. Also, I have made it easy for the plagiarist to enter my garden since so many hundreds of my stories have floated on the airwaves available to the entrapment of any lifted aerial wire. Ordinarily I shrugged off the plot lifting, but once in a while the genteel stealing hurts."

Many years later, Oboler assembled a book titled *Lights Out*, reprinting 13 of his radio scripts, and dedicated the book "To Willis Cooper, who started it all." Among the scripts were "Burial Services," "Cat Wife," and "The Sea." Oboler wrote brief summaries about the origins and about the importance of each radio script, reprinted verbatim in the book, taking a jab directly against Universal Studios and Steven Spielberg in the entry introducing "What the Devil?" The book was never published.

Having seen *Twilight Zone – the Movie* in 1985 Oboler wrote a story treatment for his own trilogy of horror tales for a made-for-television movie proposal titled *What the Devil?* With a concept similar to *Amazing Stories* and the made-for-television movie *Trilogy of Terror*, Oboler's proposal featured an adaptation of "Cat Wife," "Special to Hollywood" and "Chicken Heart." This, too, never came to fruition.

"What the Devil?" remains one of the most significant dramas from the 1942-43 *Lights Out* series and thanks to Radio Spirits, the long-lost radio broadcast was released commercially in a set of CDs. For those who have been looking for a few radio horrors to listen to this Halloween, this particular episode is a gem worth purchasing from the company.

Arch Oboler . . . radio's radical

Always a radical when it came to ideas and presentation, Arch Oboler broke all the rules of radio. He wrote a script for Boris Karloff called "The Ugliest Man in the World," in which Karloff talked, uninterrupted, for 30 solid minutes. He wrote a script for Irene Wicker on the outlawed subject of childbirth. It was called "Baby." He wrote impressionistic plays based on the music of Debussy. He wrote "Humbug," Steel" and "Dark World," adjudged the best there is in radio writing, and studied by leading radio writers.

Then he was called in to write the chilling *Lights Out* scripts, which he did so well that when he quit, after not quite a year, he had over 100 *Lights Out* fan clubs scattered over the country. He quit because he couldn't write thrills that would out-thrill the previous thrills.

The most important thing that Oboler brought to radio was the effective use of the monologue. The most thrilling example of this was in "The Ugliest Man in the World," where he used the stream of consciousness technique, in which the actor is supposed to be thinking instead of speaking.

—Jack Sher. "Imagine! The Strange Story of Mr. Arch Oboler." *Sacramento Union*. September 3, 1939.

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