

GATHER 'ROUND THE RADIO
E-NEWSLETTER FOR THE METROPOLITAN
WASHINGTON OLD-TIME RADIO CLUB
THE GRTR STUDIO EDITION



THE UP THE DOWN STAIRCASE ISSUE
JULY 30, 2023

THE SET-UP

Hello fine listeners, and welcome once again to the mythical confines of the GRTR Studio where we broadcast information and inspiration about radio, music, nostalgia, personality, books, and beyond. Terry Gross continues to be our inspiration. Listen to her "Fresh Air" radio show, live or podcast; check your NPR listings for a station where you can tune in.

You remember the shrill phrase that would echo through the hallways as deadlines approached:

“GET ME REWRITE!”

That’s how I felt a few days ago. I had my broadcast notes ready in the Mud Room. And then the rains came with blowing wind and lowering skies, water rushing down the hillside and flooding the porch on our tinpot studio. It didn’t breach, thank goodness, but I spent plenty of time shoring things up and sweeping away the sticks and leaves.

So this is the new normal. Bert, Fred, and Beverly have arrived, and they’ve brought scones and Costa Rican coffee from the Poor Cousins Bakery. Fred is coaxing the creaky old sound board through its squawks and hums, and he’s piping in a tune from the 1970s, evocative of the days of boomboxes and dual cassette decks. It’s Steely Dan, in their own words “languid and bittersweet.” They are singing the praises of “FM”: “...no static at all...”.

Lots of material in the Dusty Courier Pouch, including Bob Cockrum’s latest issue of *Radio Recall*, Aug-Sep23. Fits right in with my notes, because I had planned to go through the articles in Jack French’s August 2012 *Radio Recall*. Extraordinary, both. This is going to be a glorious afternoon!

ON THE AIR

Fred fades the music and Beverly signals network feed.

Hello, everyone, and welcome to the broadcast! Plenty to talk about, both archival and contemporary, highlighting writers, researchers, and old friends. Bert is at the table here with me and he’s looking at his archival copy of Jack’s *Radio Recall*.

GRTR

Well, Bert, what have you noticed about these 12–pages from 2012?

Bert

I went right away to the “Editor’s Desk,” page 11. Jack wrote about how much he enjoyed putting these articles together, and he said, “...thanks to new contributors Stan Claussen from Washington state and Dan Riedstra, a researcher who knows the Chicago broadcasting history...”. Editors are always looking for writers!

GRTR

The other short entry page is page 3, the Voice of the Listener. Contributors to the journal write letters, too, in this issue Kathy Hammel, John Abbott, Ryan Ellett. And the Vietnam era Army DJ, Adrian Cronauer wrote in: "...how goes things with the MWOTRC?"

Bert:

If I may, I'd like to take a minute to read a bit of info that Martin Grams sent to Jack for the issue. Seems there was a dispute in the 1930s about who could use the name "Silver," for their horse. Who would win, Buck Jones, or the Detroit-based George Trendle whose "Lone Ranger" was on WXYZ? In his 1936 film "For the Service" Buck Jones called his horse Silver. But going against Trendle's clout in court was not what Jones could afford. So after that he called his horse "White Eagle." And Trendle kept his miserly reputation. Jack gave the piece the jaunty title: "Buck Jones Versus George W. Trendle: Who Ya Bettin' On?" Trendle doesn't escape. Jack dubs him "the Miser of Motown."

GRTR:

And we can jump right to Bob Cockrum's issue of *Radio Recall* from April 2023 where Martin Grams, Jr. has more to tell about George W. Trendle and his ways with legal matters, especially the title of his stories of the Yukon, namely that "to combat infringement" he was advised to use "Sergeant Preston" in the title. Martin writes about the Quaker Oats sponsorship and the growth of offering premiums, "...even when such premiums had no bearing on *Sergeant Preston...*". The state of Ohio took the stance that a premium called "a square inch" of the Yukon was "foreign land" and a license was needed to sell it. Over to you, George. Martin offers a precise sidebar about Trendle's lawyer, one Raymond J. Meurer who gave advice about "...his Detroit station WXYZ and and the productions emanating from there."

FRANK MORGAN'S HAPPY PLACE

Frank has made the most of the opportunities that the Club has offered to him. He sends out notices about Zoom schedules and is instrumental in lining up speakers for programs at the Friday meetings. He has also taken on the "First Fifteen" segment of the meeting. That in itself involves extensive research into a subject and twirling the knobs to get the audio-visual segment functioning.

However, in the April 2022 issue of *Radio Recall*, Bob Cockrum gave him space to confess; no, not about always going past the 15-minute time, but about his status as a researcher: He writes:

Confessions of a Novice OTR Researcher

At some point in my life, I would really like to be an old-time radio researcher - one on the order of Martin Grams, Karl Schadow, Joe Webb, John Abbott, Michael Hayde, or Jack French. I have an inquiring mind but not the ability to visit the facilities, museums, and universities that house the collections of writings or materials relating to OTR. At least, not while I work 50 hours a week. At the top of my research "bucket list" is the Library of Congress, home of all OTR materials that would be of interest to me. I have visited the library as a tourist, of course, and strained my neck to enjoy the beautiful artwork that adorns the public area. But I long to get to the other side of the wall - to where the good stuff is, the original source material that is the holy grail for researchers. When I do get there, I'd better have a good idea what I want to see or I'll surely have a "hamana, hamana, hamana" Ralph Kramden moment. When I was offered the opportunity to present a "First Fifteen" at club meetings on a regular basis, I accepted the challenge it posed - living up to the high standard Jack has set for such a long time. My go-to source for basic information about a program has been John Dunning's "Encyclopedia of Old Time Radio" - a valuable starting point for information about thousands of programs.

NOTE: The full text of Frank's searching : *RR* April 2022,p.10-11.

I agree with Frank and his viewpoint. I enjoy being in touch with top-flight researchers and bringing them to people's attention as an appreciation. Keep up the good work, Frank!

JOHN DUNNING, THE BOOKSHOP AND BEYOND

John Dunning passed away, May 2023. Bob Cockrum and Joe Webb each wrote very moving portraits of John Dunning and his importance in the field of collecting, broadcasting, and researching radio shows. The tribute is in the current *Radio Recall* August 2023 p. 3.

MUSIC BRIDGE AND NETWORK FEED

Fred is piping in excerpts from Sir Edward Elgar's moving and mournful choral work "The Dream of Gerontius."

The Dayton Dragons are hanging tough in the A-Level Developmental League, a few games over .500. Good coaching is the key, they have given training to more than twenty pitchers this season: arm strength, accuracy, pay attention to your catcher: earn a spot in a higher league.



Their parent club, the Cincinnati Reds are playing well with great hitting, pitching, and most important, camaraderie among the players.

GOOD WORDS AND ADVICE FROM A WRITER.

My friend and longtime Club member, Jim Cox, wrote me a letter some time back. He and his wife live in Louisville and in years past they would take trips to Florida. He and I met once when I was on a cycling holiday in Tampa.

Hello Mark. Saw your name in Bob Cockrum's latest epistle and it was a reminder that a lot of water has traveled under the bridge since we were last in touch.

I think of you now and then during baseball season and still have a warm glow from that evening we collaborated in St. Pete at a Rays game eons ago. And we shared a meal at my favorite Colonnade restaurant overlooking Tampa Bay along Bayshore Blvd. Would you believe developers got hold of that waterfront oasis a few years ago, bulldozed the place down, and put a luxury high-rise apartment complex in its space? I could hardly believe my eyes!

I continue to whip out some freelance articles for several editors these days, though little of it is for OTR anymore. My interests run the gamut of history, politics, religion, baseball, trains, country music, OTR and a few more disciplines. I do lots of reading and work at the computer every day. I'm 83 but still have what I consider the trio of imperatives for a writer--mind, eyes, fingers. It also helps to have appealing stories to tell.

How inspiring is that? I'm sure that Jim will agree that his few words of history and encouragement are worth sharing. I have a book of his, a veritable encyclopedia of train travel: *Rails Across Dixie*.

In fact, Bob and Jim collaborated on putting Jim's article in the *Radio Recall* issue of February 2022. Page 4. It's about daytime radio shows.

Painting by Karl Spitzweg, Vienna (fair use)



MANC GIVES THE CLUB A CHANCE

Here is information that Frank Morgan has sent:

Each year the Club is given the opportunity to present a program at the Mid Atlantic Nostalgia Convention (MANC) in Huntsville, MD. It is our official monthly meeting.

This year, on Saturday, September 9th, the Club will pay tribute to Jack French for the enormous contributions he made to the Club. Jack was also very well-known within the OTR community as an expert on the subject of OTR, an author, a convention speaker and panelist, and a performer.

Fred Berney is preparing a brief video about Jack. Then we will return to a format that Club members have enjoyed for years – performing a radio recreation. This year's recreation is special. Cathy French has graciously given the Club permission to perform a "Lone Ranger" script written by Jack.

Rob Farr has agreed to direct the program and he needs our help.

If you are interested in trying out for any of the parts, please contact Rob at his email address: RobFarr53@yahoo.com

Part of the fun of doing recreations is the live sound effects. Mark and Marsha Bush will teach you what you need to know and how to do it. If you are interested in joining the sound effects team, please contact them at: bush3265@gmail.com

The Club always follows up its performance with a twenty question Quiz. The person with the first correct answer to a question receives a Payday candy bar. So, here are more opportunities for you to lend a hand. We will need someone to prepare and present the Quiz and one, preferably two, to give out the candy.

It will be a fun day. If you have not attended MANC before, this year is a great time to be there. Admission for Club members that day is free. There will be time both before and after our program for you to meet the celebrities appearing at the convention and walk among the many vendor sites.

I'M READING AS FAST AS I CAN

Jill Lepore is a wonderful writer. She appears often in "The New Yorker" magazine and recently wrote about Paul McCartney's photographs.

I attended a lecture that she gave at Wilkes University here in Wilkes-Barre. She researches and writes on a variety of subjects.

I'm reading her 2015 book *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*. She researches the Marston family and the public advocacy and controversy towards the suffrage and feminist movement.

Thursday Sept. 7th, at 7 PM at MANC there will be this presentation:

7:00 pm A HISTORY OF WONDER WOMAN

Hosted by Robert Greenberger, who wrote and edited more than 100 books and anthologies, many within the D.C., Marvel and Star Trek franchises. Robert will deliver a slide show presentation about the origin of Wonder Woman and the character's evolution over the years, from the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Bronze Age, and the modern take as evident in today's comics. The character transitioned to live-action television, animated cartoons, merchandise and even big screen movie renditions. Did you know Wonder Woman once retired from her costumed alias? Did you know Wonder Woman once committed murder? Then you are in for a real treat.

MUSIC BRIDGE AND NETWORK FEED

Beverly is eyeing the clock and tapping her pencil on her clipboard towards network feed. Fred is piping in another song from Steely Dan:

They've got a name for the winners in the world / Well I've got a
name when I lose / They call Alabama the Crimson Tide / You can
call me Deacon Blues / I cried when I wrote this song / Sue me if I
play too long.

That wraps it up from the tinpot studio in the Poconos.
Keep those cards and letters coming!
Soup and sandwich in the Mud Room?
But of course!

Thanks ever,
Mark A.
Wilkes-Barre PA