

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



THE ROBIN HOOD'S BARN ISSUE

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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.

People are scurrying about, eyeing their phones for news of the latest atmospheric river. They're darting across in the middle of the block, stocking up their pantries and finding their scrapers and brushes. Blustering rain and cloudy skies are blowing through the Poconos, snow is in the offing. College basketball has gone mad; when do they find time to do their homework?

My two-day work week is good, volunteering at neighborhood historical societies. It's a quiet job in crowded rooms, sorting through photograph files and newspaper clippings.

Bicycle clubs were in the news in the early 1900s. Men and women would rally round in their finery for a parade around the town square; or on another day, pedaling those big wheels to a park for a picnic. Mining engineers were busy as well, laying cinder and sand to build a trail on an abandoned coal field gravity railway line. Like the Weather Channel says, "Get into the out there!"

I've heard from Bert and that's good. He and Beverly and Fred are driving north, bringing some scones from the Poor Cousin's Bakery. In the Mud Room now we find that the Dusty Courier Pouch has good items: from Dr. Joe Webb, a bit from the GRTR Archives, and a letter from a dear friend.

ON THE AIR

Beverly is signaling network feed! We gulp our coffee and hurry-hurry like geese to the studio. Fred has tuned us up and is piping in "Will o' the Wisp," by Manuel de Falla, from a 2017 concert by violinist Lucia Micarelli. She and her chamber musician friends played to a lovely gathering in Santa Barbara.

Hello everyone and welcome to the broadcast!

Frank Morgan keeps us up to date with reports of the Zoom goings-on, and with the research of Joe Webb.

Frank writes:

Our friend Dr. Joe Webb provided me with the following information about the program *Suspense*. Most everyone is a fan of that program, so, as Dr. Joe suggested, I am sharing the information with you.

The Hitch-hiker -- a beloved *Suspense* script that wasn't really one. Today's Suspense Project post explores the curiosities and paradoxes around this special broadcast that may have helped *Suspense* move from a Summer replacement series considered for cancellation to a spot in the CBS Fall schedule. This Lucille Fletcher script has an interesting history, and the *Suspense* broadcast may have had the smallest listening audience of the four times the script was performed! How did this famous script starring Welles end up being broadcast **THREE TIMES** on **THREE DIFFERENT SERIES** in just **ELEVEN MONTHS**? Why wasn't Welles' appearance promoted by CBS? What's the inside joke uttered by that punster Welles? It's all explored in today's post...

<https://suspenseproject.blogspot.com/2023/01/1942-09-02-hitch-hiker.html>

This link goes to Dr. Joe's resources for classic radio enthusiasts and fellow researchers.

<https://bit.ly/drjoeotr>

JOHN REISER, MAN OF THE HOUR

John is a long-time friend of the Club and in his own modest way he continues to contribute in many ways. John and Frank Morgan are the current holders of the Cawelti Award. John mails out the print copy of *Radio Recall*, and on occasion he attends the Zoom meetings. At meetings over the years he has shared his knowledge of the world of radio engineering, such as the manuals he used in his career and the *QST* journal of the American Radio Relay League.

John's dear wife passed away recently and he has been occupied with family and such matters. He and Jack French correspond from time to time, and John has said that he always enjoys the lectures that Jack presents at his apartment complex.

In 2013 John wrote a letter to Jack in response to a *Radio Recall* article about Rosa Rio, an organist who played at the yearly FOTR conventions. Here is the letter, with a particular family aspect in the real and unnerving world of music in the theaters of Chicago in silent movie era. It's the family ties we know and the comfort we can give to John and his family.

Beverly will kindly settle in at the microphone and read John Reiser's recollections:

BEVERLY:

Thanks, Mark. Here is the fascinating story that John wrote:

Hello Jack,

The item on Rosa Rio brought back fond memories of my childhood and my mother who was also a pipe organist during the 1920's and early 30's at the major theaters in Chicago. She spoke fondly of Rosa and I am sure they shared cue sheets and I believe they recorded for the same label. I don't know how close they were but they knew each other. I am sure they crossed paths many times during their guest appearances.

All the major radio stations in Chicago -- WMAQ, WGN, WBBM and WLS -- had theater organs with an organist on duty 24 hours a day. Many of the theater organists also worked at these stations

and my mother was also on the staff of the Sears–Roebuck Station WLS (the world’s largest store), also known as the Prairie Farmer Station.

At that time Caesar Petrillo was organizing the musicians in Chicago – sometimes in a rather rough way. My mother had to personally play for him with both prepared and sight–reading scores as well as improvise all kinds of cues that would accompany the silent film action. Sometimes “union organizers” would enter a theater during a film showing and physically remove the non–union player from the organ console and the union player would continue right on. My mother said that is how she got her first theater organ position. She also suspected that there were a few broken hands during the “organizing” process.

During the summer months many of the theaters closed during the summer polio epidemic season. The theater organists would then go on tour giving organ recitals at the resort areas where many of the wealthier city families resided during the summer. My mother had a large box of glass slides that were projected on the screen when she played showing the music program and song words. As a personal note, my father was an avid theater pipe organ enthusiast and happened to offer to entertain one of those touring Chicago organists during her visit to his town, followed by frequent trips to Chicago. The rest is history.

With the introduction of sound films during the early 1930s the need for theater organists diminished, however my mother continued to play when the theaters also had additional entertainment or to give occasional recitals in the area theaters that maintained their pipe organs. I recall going with her to the theater during the morning while she practiced or worked with the pipe organ technicians in making repairs or adjustments.

Signed, John Reiser.

MUSIC BRIDGE AND COMMERCIAL

Thanks so much, Beverly. Now Fred is piping in a lovely song by Melody Gardot, subtle and melodic, with her ensemble:

“River waking in the morning light/ Lays her boats around the bend / Shimmers once or twice to move this pen...”

The Dayton Dragons are practicing hard for the new season, weeks away. They are at the Reds camp in Arizona; plenty of community-appreciation events are lined up for the season at Day Air Park in Dayton.

Of particular interest is with the A-Level Tampa Tarpons and the success that Rachel Balkovec has achieved as manager of this NY Yankees farm team. She is the first woman to be named to lead a team in the Major and Minor League system. Her team will play in the Florida League.



“It's pretty special,” Yankees manager Aaron Boone said Thursday. “She's earned her way over there and she commands a lot of respect and has earned that on the player–development side by her impact on players in a lot of different areas.

“I'm definitely aware [of my impact],” Balkovec said Friday morning. “Thankfully, I've had about 10 years to prepare for something like this. So, it's been ongoing

throughout the years of all young women reaching out, overwhelmingly reaching out.



ARCHIVES, GRTR JULY 13, 2016

CLARK GREGG

This actor is Everyman and he plays the part to perfection. With a plain face, a little-boy haircut and faint smile, he can play a neighbor, a businessman, a lawyer, in a crime story or in domestic turmoil. He was in the wonderful David Mamet film “State and Main.” He is his own boss in “Trust Me” (2013) which he wrote and directed.

His character is an agent who had success as a child star and then got left by the wayside. He tells his story to his neighbor (Amanda Peet) and only briefly: His big chance (to have second-billing to Jan Michael Vincent) fell through, so he “has wandered around this town like a ghost for the past thirty years.” He tries to be ruthless for his child actor clients but is forever outdone in quick brutal art-of-the-deal dialogue with Allison Janney, Felicity Huffman, and Sam Rockwell. A young client of his says, “Ang Lee, is he important?” He can’t land her the part. His righteous if bewildered vision (butterflies wafting across a vacant lot) is his only solace and as his end draws nigh he sprouts wings.



MUSIC BRIDGE AND NETWORK FEED

The clock sweeps towards network feed.

Thanks everyone for tuning in! Keep those cards and letters coming!

Neil Hannon is an extraordinary British songwriter. He pays tribute to the Beach Boys sound with his summertime song, "The Pop Singer's Fear of the Pollen Count." He loves being outside, hay fever's here for the ride, first your head explodes then you need to blow your nose.

You feel that his band might just break into, "Help Me, Rhonda."

Thanks ever,

Mark Anderson

Wilkes Barre PA