

GATHER 'ROUND THE RADIO  
E-NEWSLETTER FOR THE METROPOLITAN  
WASHINGTON OLD-TIME RADIO CLUB  
THE GRTR STUDIO EDITION  
SEPTEMBER 13, 2017  
THE AMETHYST ISSUE



### 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.

Here in the Mud Room, Chuck and Joanie and I are welcoming our guest for the broadcast, Karen Lee, who has traveled across the Hudson, over the Poconos, and down the Susquehanna, to visit with us here in the studio. We're enjoying coffee and Danish right now, and shortly we'll talk with Karen about her life and how it has revolved around her love of radio; and also, her travels and her career pursuits. Plenty of memories in store today, and some future notes, as well. Chuck has tamed the squawks and hums on the old sound board and he's piping in some stirring chords from a suite by Hector Berlioz, which fashions a musical journey for Byron's dreamer, "Harold in Italy." Joanie cues us to network feed. Fade.

### ON THE AIR

Hello, everyone, and welcome to the broadcast! We're very happy to welcome our guest, Karen Lee, a member of the Club for just about a year now, and she has some wonderful memories of radio, family, and her childhood. The dusty courier pouch is full, with a nice packet from John Abbott, and Jack French has written in. Martin Grams and Bert Rude are in touch with us, as well.

First, though, we need to clear some space at the table, so that we can sit and have a nice talk with Karen Lee. Thanks for sharing this time with us, Karen!

KAREN LEE: Nice to be here, thank you. Your studio is a flight of fancy indeed! And there is a creek out back!

GRTR: It's our own little acre, that's for sure. Thanks for the notes you sent! Let's take a cue first from your childhood and the way you remember the big wooden console radio that brought you so much pleasure.

KAREN LEE: Oh, yes, I loved everything about that radio, the dials for FM, AM, and SW; and the hum and the static when I first turned it on. I imagined it was a spaceship console and that there might be encrypted

messages from outer space. I would turn the knobs and listen to anything that came on.

GRTR: What sort of programs did you find?

KAREN LEE: Actually, the first voice I remember announced, "This is the BBC World Service." The news from overseas fascinated me, and I would locate the countries on my globe.

GRTR: That would be fun. I wonder if that sort of early world-wide listening helped inspire you towards your career as an anthropologist?

KAREN LEE: Well yes, I think so, but television also, you know, those TV travelogues? And I guess from listening to old-time radio programs. You recognize "Chandu the Magician"? That was a favorite, a really neat show. I was completely captivated.

GRTR: I never heard it, but I read about it in my John Dunning encyclopedia. He gave it a good write-up, "one of a kind," he wrote, with the exotic locales like Egypt, and the mysticism. He even spelled out that distinctive signature that opened the show, after a gong sounded.

KAREN LEE: So you know it?

GRTR: I saw it written in the Dunning. Let's give it a go, OK?

GRTR and KAREN LEE (*in unison*): "*CHANNNNDOOOO....the Magician!*"

KAREN LEE: All we needed was the gong!

GRTR: Some people out there will want to give us the gong after that!

KAREN LEE: Oh no! (*Joanie and Chuck laughing in background*) But it is interesting that in my career I worked in many places world-wide, but distinctly in Egypt for a good part of the time.

GRTR: That career groundwork sprang from an energetic upbringing, it seems.

KAREN LEE: I guess so, sometimes you just don't know any different. I grew up in New York City and Connecticut. In the city, our apartment was not far from the Dumont Television Studios. My father was a newspaperman, and occasionally he would take me along when he went to Dumont to cover a story. So there were shows on Dumont that I would watch along with my little brother.

GRTR: Very nice, and I wanted to show you a photo that I found browsing some images. Is this the Dumont sign over the entrance to the building in New York?

KAREN LEE: Yes, my goodness, that's it! "The Nation's Window on the World."

GRTR: Excellent! I'll put it in the next newsletter that we send out after each broadcast. A nice touch of the urban experience.



GRTR: What Dumont shows did you watch?

KAREN LEE: I liked Bishop Fulton Sheen, because I thought he dressed like Ming the Merciless. Morey Amsterdam was another favorite, you see, because my brother and I were not allowed to swear, but we could yell, "Amster-DAMN!" and we wouldn't get scolded. We watched all the

Dumont shows, and we wrote and acted out our own episodes. We thought we were hilarious.

GRTR: Well, I'm sure!

KAREN LEE: Summers were nice for us when I was growing up. We went to Connecticut and got to listen to OTR shows. Johnny Dollar was special, and we were always thrilled when the story took him to our vicinity. It was like he was working right down the street.

GRTR: So you liked mysteries and detective shows also?

KAREN LEE: Oh yes, Sherlock Holmes and Nero Wolfe were favorites. And you know how people talk about the images that radio conjures up? I really liked the images in my mind of the detectives' book-lined studies. I've always loved books, and those shows fit right in.

GRTR: In your notes, you mention "The Shadow."

KAREN LEE: Sure! Who could forget, "The weed of crime bears bitter fruit. Crime does not pay. The Shadow knows, heh, heh, heh!" And when I heard "I Was a Communist for the FBI," I wanted to do that too.

GRTR: Another part of your youthful career plans?

KAREN LEE: My mother explained to me, however, that working for the FBI was not a noble ambition, since my father was a Communist. So, I was fearful and at the same time fascinated when I listened to shows about Communism and espionage.

GRTR: In your travels, did you learn other languages?

KAREN LEE: Early on I took French language lessons from a shortwave broadcast. I wanted to try to understand my parents, who spoke French when they didn't want me to know what they were saying.

GRTR: Marvelous, so tell me about your response when your teacher asked you to write about whom you would like to meet.

KAREN LEE: I was very straightforward. I said, The Shadow, Sherlock Holmes, and Superman.

GRTR: And there was a parent- teacher conference after that?

KAREN LEE: Yes! The teacher told my parents she was concerned that I didn't have a good grip on reality.

GRTR: Well, I'm certainly happy that you took the quantum leap of imagination to come visit us here in the GRTR Studio. Joanie is signaling us for commercial break, lots to cover there. Stay tuned everybody, we'll talk more with Karen after the break. She was a great Brooklyn Dodgers fan, and had an early version of desktop publishing, with her own Dodgers newsletter!

### MUSIC BRIDGE AND COMMERCIAL

Chuck is piping in one of Liszt's Hungarian rhapsodies, and now we have the latest information from Martin Grams about the annual gathering of nostalgia devotees, the Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention, which is coming up this Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> of this month.



**MANC will be at the familiar Hunt Valley Maryland hotel,  
the Hunt Valley Delta Marriott  
(Formerly the Hunt Valley Wyndham)**

<http://mgram1.wixsite.com/nostalgia-convention/celebrities>

It's a wonderful lineup of seminars, film showings, radio script recreations, and interviews with such stars as Shirley Jones, Cindy Williams, and the fellows from the hit show CHIPS. The history of "The Man from U.N.C.L.E." will be discussed; The career of Rod Serling will be presented. That's a sampling. All events are written up on the web-site.

Save Saturday at 12 Noon on your calendar, and join our own MWOTRC members for a script recreation ("Chicken Heart," from the *Lights Out* series), along with a quiz show and prizes. Happily, the hosts of the Big Broadcast (WAMU-FM, and streaming, Sunday nights, and archived) gave their listeners a very nice summary of the MANC and the Club's program. With the WAMU listener-base, people may well be making plans for the easy Route 83 trip to Hunt Valley.

#### CLUB PLAYERS RETURN TO CULPEPER SEPTEMBER 30

The renown of the MWOTRC Players continues. Performances of classic OTR shows, in full regalia of costumes, sound effects and amplified sound, have garnered fame and good press, from the Lisner Auditorium to Capitol Hill, and the hinterlands of Culpeper Virginia

September 30 is the date for an evening show at the Library of Congress Audio-Visual Preservation facility. Word has it that the show has sold out (it will be a reprise of the *Lights Out* "Chicken Heart" story). Of note is the excellent review, written by Player's member Rob Farr of the Club's 2016 show. Joanie will step up to the microphone and read Rob's review, from the GRTR of May 2016:

Over the years, the Metropolitan Old-Time Radio Club has performed live, Golden Age radio recreations for audiences as varied as senior citizens to seasoned attendees of OTR conventions. But perhaps no venue has been so high-profile as the Library of Congress Packard Theater in Culpeper Virginia. Culpeper is the site of the National Audio-Visual Conservation

Center, where the nation's visual and sound heritage is archived in former civil defense vaults built deep into Pony Mountain.

Led by long-time member Michael Hayde, on April 16 the club made its second appearance at the Packard Theater, the previous outing occurring in 2015 with recreations of *Dragnet* and *My Favorite Husband*. Last month's performance was the first time the program was augmented with live organ accompaniment provided by Ben Model, who usually accompanies silent films at the New York's Museum of Modern Art, McLean's Alden Theater and the Library of Congress. The organ at the Packard is a rich and flexible instrument capable of sound effects from church bells to train whistles.

The sold-out house witnessed live performances of *John's Other Wife* (soap opera), *Little Orphan Annie* (juvenile adventure) and *Pat Novak for Hire* (crime drama). The bill of fare was chosen to introduce a selection of genres to an audience unfamiliar with old-time radio. Even attendees who occasionally listen to WAMU's *Big Broadcast* were treated to an authentic demonstration of how of how Golden-Age radio broadcasts actually worked, complete with director's cues, cast members deftly shuttling back-and-forth before microphones, and sound effects created with tools such as coconut shells, aluminum sheets and rain sticks. For those effects that could not be reproduced on stage, pre-recorded sound was used, yet even this was authentic to the era as practical effects were often augmented by sounds played back from disc or, by the 1950's, tape. Each program had its own unique set of sound patterns, requiring a crew of five ably led by Mark and Marsha Bush.

The ensemble cast, many of whom have been performing in club recreations for years, delighted the audience with costumes appropriate to their characters. For example, actress Wendy Wilmer had three costume changes as she transformed from a 5-year-old girl to Little

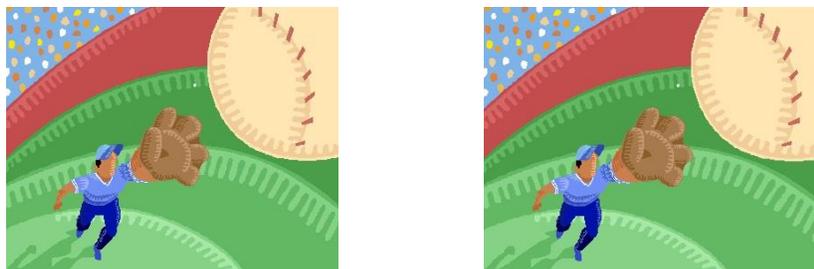
Orphan Annie to a sultry *femme fatale*! During the costume changes, Ben Model serenaded the audience with music that might have been heard by a studio audience of the era. The audience was also treated to a talk by the curator of the sound division about the Library's extensive collection of wire recordings and transcription discs.

As an added bonus, a secret message was included in the program along with a photograph of Little Orphan Annie's 1936 decoder badge and a pencil. Several in the cast later remarked how amazing it was to see 200 modern-day audience members assiduously writing down their numbers to decode Annie's four-word message.

For members of the MWOTRC who couldn't make it to Culpeper, plans are afoot to perform the same slate of programs before a Washington audience in the Jefferson building of the Library of Congress. Stay tuned for more information!



Thanks, Joanie, and now, back to basics, back to baseball. Our sponsor, the Dayton Dragons finished up a rewarding season. Hope spring eternal for the Class A players. They had a winning season, but lost in the semi-finals of the League playoffs. In the elimination game against the Fort Wayne Tin Caps, our Dragons ran up against an imposing pitcher who stood 6-foot-8 and who could sling the ball from any and all angles. The Dragons were as valiant as they were baffled. Good luck to the Tin Caps as they advance to the championship!



## ABOUT THOSE BROOKLYN DODGERS, KAREN LEE, PART 2

Good, now we know that the Dragons front office is happy with our coverage; they'll keep us on for next season.

Karen, let's pick up the thread: you've written a nice memory of your days in New York, following big-city baseball, and the Dodgers in particular. It's a gem, just as you wrote it. Would you read it for us, please?

KAREN LEE: Thanks, and here it is, baseball all those years ago.

I loved baseball (and still do). My parents were Yankee fans and our neighbor was a fan of the NY Giants. To be contrary, I said I was a Brooklyn Dodgers fan. I discovered that I really did love the Dodgers. How could I not love men called Pee Wee, Campy, Duke, Oisk and "Reliever - Clem - Labine?" The games were mostly on radio. Early on, I remember, the announcers recreated the play by play from tickertape which could be heard clacking in the background. The pre - and post -game shows were done by the great Marty Glickman. When Don Newcombe was pitching, before the first pitch Marty would say "we're witcha Newk." I waited all week to hear that. I wish I could find recordings of those broadcasts. I listened to, kept scorecards and wrote articles about almost every Dodgers game. They were day games and around 5pm. our phone would begin to ring as neighbors, home from their jobs, would call me to find out what happened in the games. I began publishing a Dodgers newsletter, typed on my dad's old typewriter. It sold for 25 cents an issue and I had quite a few

subscribers. It has been only recently that I've forgiven the Dodgers for leaving me.

I know you're just about at sign-off, so, to you and Joanie and Chuck: I had a wonderful time talking with you.

#### MUSIC BRIDGE AND NETWORK FEED

Thanks so much, Karen, what great memories, and a great afternoon here in the Studio. Joanie is tapping her pencil on her clipboard, and the clock sweeps forward. One more note, though!

Our web-master John Abbott sent me a nice packet of photographs and commentary of the recent solar eclipse. He's professional-grade with a camera, and he traveled to a wildlife refuge in South Carolina. Surely, though, his footprints there have been wiped out by recent storm surges. Good going, John!

Chuck is piping in music composed by the German chanteuse Ute Lemper, where she sings the words of Portuguese poet Paulo Coelho, done up nicely with a chamber music ensemble. Coelho's words are of solidity and change, as mountains are sculpted by the wind and rain; and we change too, in our own measure of time. The song is called "Change," and there's some awesome high desert sound effects. Fade to close.

Thanks for listening, everyone, keep those cards and letters coming! That's all for now from the little tin pot studio down by the creek. Soup and sandwiches in the Mud Room, anyone? But of course!

