

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



THE 3 R'S ISSUE

May 18, 2020

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.

Difficult times for everyone these days, and we're putting our best foot forward with resilience and resourcefulness; read on, hopefully this will be a respite. Chuck and Joanie are taking some well-deserved time off. I have enlisted some local Club talent from along the Catoctin Range to help me out. Fred, from his house a ways north of here, will handle the sound board and the broadcast signal. Bert and Beverly, from their house down the valley, will watch the network feed and do our readings.

Some of you Clubbers held a fine meeting by Zoom the other evening; we'll have a report on that. A new Club member, Larry Maupin from Ohio, has sent us an essay via the Telex; it's a write-up of a favorite radio show about a murder in London. This is good on two counts: first, Larry has recently joined the Club; and second, he responded right away to my appeal to Clubbers to send me in some material.

ON THE AIR

Hello everyone and welcome to the broadcast. Fred is piping in a lovely song from Franz Schubert's 1827 song cycle "Winter Journey" (*Winterreise*). This one is called "The Post," and the piano gives high sharp insistent notes: a post horn signaling the coach and horses coursing through the forest. Jonas Kaufmann sings: "From the road a post horn sounds / But yes! The post comes from the town / Do you want to look out again and ask how things are going there?" And as if on cue, Beverly joins the broadcast from her and Bert's living room. Fred fades the Schubert and Beverly begins.

Beverly

Hi, Mark, the signal is strong here, good going, Fred! I'm reading here an announcement from Club president Michael Hayde. He wrote it a few weeks ago, before the Zoom meeting. Michael writes:

SPECIAL NOTICE REGARDING MWOTRC MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Dear MWOTRC Members,

As you know, the COVID-19 coronavirus has disrupted our activities as a club. Meetings have been indefinitely postponed owing to directives put in place by our elected officials. Moreover, the virus has caused worldwide economic hardship and we are well aware that many of you, our esteemed members, have been impacted.

Therefore, the club officers have unanimously agreed to the following: All MWOTRC members in good standing as of this date, April 23, 2020, shall have their membership extended for one (1) year without cost.

We hope this gesture will reduce at least in a small way some of the stress you have been under during these difficult days, and we look forward to the time when we can meet again and celebrate together the era of Old-Time Radio, the ultimate "Theater of the Imagination."

Until then, stay healthy and be safe.

Sincerely,
 Michael J. Hayde, President
 Jim Pasquale, Vice-President
 Joanie Langdon, Treasurer & Membership Chairman
 Denis Roma, Recorder

GRTR

Thanks very much, Beverly, nicely done! And so the word has gone out. Take heed, all you Clubbers; and make sure that Joanie has all your up-to-date information!

THE VAUNTED CLUB MEETING BY ZOOM

Jack French and Wendy Wilmer were instrumental in getting the Zoom connection together for the recent Friday evening meeting. Jack and Wendy also wrote up the report, the final copy of which I recently took off the Telex machine. Beverly will once again step up to her in-house microphone and read it. Before the report, Beverly will read an email from a Club member in Florida who tuned in to the meeting by an audio stream from her home.

BEVERLY

Thanks, Mark. First, I will read an appreciation of the Meeting written by Melanie from Florida: She writes:

Can't zoom at the moment so joined by phone.

Really enjoyed it.

Shouldn't replace regular meetings but should continue on a regular basis.

Allows for much more participation and inclusion of guests.

Link to YouTube was appreciated.

Melanie Aultman
Gainesville, FL
Member 10 + years??

And now, watch out! I'm reading the report written by Jack French and edited by Wendy Wilmer.

On May 8, 2020, our club marked an historic membership event: our very first monthly meeting conducted in cyber space via Zoom. Since this tech-service requires either a computer with an internet connection or any telephone (including landline) to participate, any of our members could attend. Many found their way on and enjoyed the festivities. In fact, it was larger attendance that most of our regular meetings in Arlington, VA. Zoom only counts number of devices jumping in, not the number on the couch enjoying the meeting, so although we don't have a firm number on attendees, but it was certainly north of 48 people.

Wendy Wilmer initially got the whole thing off the ground, and since her household has a Zoom account, she as sponsor, was our co-host, along with Michael Hayde, our President. Their duties included welcoming each new entry into a "waiting room" and then granting them access when the meeting started. Correctly assuming there would be a lot of chit-chat at the beginning, as each member greeted one another when they popped up on the screen, Michael eliminated the traditional "First Fifteen." This segment consisting of playing a complete 15-minute OTR show, and briefly discussing its background, usually kicks off our monthly meeting. As is common in most "shake-down cruises" there were a few glitches at the Zoom beginning and it was about 16 minutes before the guest speaker, Jack French, could get into the meeting.

When Michael introduced him, Jack appeared on the screen in western attire, including a cowboy hat. He justified his costume by saying that half of the programs he would be discussing were westerns. Jack's topic was "TV Shows That Generated a Radio Show." He explained that while over 150 radio shows were eventually made into a television program, only eight radio shows were derived from an earlier TV version. Those he discussed were: Hopalong Cassidy, Wild Bill Hickok, Howdy Doody, What's My Line, My Little Margie, Tales of Tomorrow, Have Gun-Will Travel, and Tom Corbett, Space Cadet. Jack also played audio excerpts from six of these eight radio programs, using his ancient wood-burning cassette player.

Probably the most special thing about this Zoom meeting was its opportunity for out-of-area members to attend a club meeting for the very first time. In effect, folks from as far as 3,000 miles away were a real part of this meeting and were just as close to the officers and the speaker as those on their Virginia couches. For many of them it was their first chance to put a face to a name they had known for years. Bob Cockrum of Temple, TX and Melanie Aultman of Gainesville, FL commented on that opportunity, as did others. As for Frank Morgan, West Chester, PA, and Bob Flood of TX, while their distances away have permitted their attendance at few regular meetings, they had a particularly good time, as did "first-timers." Scott Tanner, Edmonds, WA, called the Zoom session a great way to engage with all the members and he plans to attend all future Zoom meetings. "First-timer" Jim Widner, from the area near Dayton, OH, loved the meeting and joked that the only way to make it better was to "have virtual snacks."

Our next meeting, again on Zoom, will be in early June and all will be invited with the details of how to join in the fun.

GRTR:

Thanks, Beverly, that was a very nicely done! You can take a break now, and we'll give your husband Bert the next reading. Meanwhile, Fred is piping in that great Cole Porter tune, "Anything Goes."

It's a catchy tune; my rendition is played by Vince Giordano and his jazz ensemble. Porter's best lines are very historical: When the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock, they had no idea that someday, Plymouth Rock would land on them!

Anything goes!

A WORD ABOUT BERT

Bert Rude is a past-President of the MWOTRC, dating from around 2015 and 2016. He wrote a series of Club emails, called "A Greeting and a Meeting." In 2016 Bert was a guest of mine in the GRTR Studio, when I lived in Pennsylvania. We had a lively and wide-ranging talk. He told us about his early discoveries about radio: the big wooden console radio in his grandmother's house, and the fact that it had a short-wave function! That got Bert going on listening to shortwave in whatever language and collecting QSL cards. So all you folks out there listening to this broadcast of the GRTR Studio, send in a QSL card to Bert; or to me, or to Fred. Much appreciated!

LARRY MAUPIN FROM OHIO

Now we will listen to Bert, who will read Larry's essay about a British radio show.

BERT

Larry wrote this piece and Mark did some minor editing. Larry writes:

A NOTEWORTHY NINETEENTH-CENTURY MURDER CASE

I have recently concluded a study of famous murder cases and trials that occurred in 19th-Century Great Britain and that, in most instances, have been the subject of one or more old-time radio episodes. A couple of these include murderers who had a benign and even sweet disposition unless provoked.

One is the subject of an episode of *Crime Classics* broadcast on November 25, 1953 and entitled "The Killing Story of William Corder and the Farmer's Daughter." The episode opens as follows: "The year is 1827, and it's spring, and it's evening, and it's warm." The principal characters in this drama are Maria Marten, a mole-catcher's daughter who lived in Polstead, Suffolk, Surrey, and William Corder, a handyman and by nature an entrepreneur.

Corder seems to have had an affectionate and playful disposition, more rogue than murderer. In the episode he makes enough money through gambling, theft, and forgery to purchase a bakery, then advertises for a wife in the local papers. A number of eager candidates apply, he selects one and marries her, and seems to have cherished her for the rest of his life.

Before Corder moved to London, however, we learn that Maria had attempted to blackmail him into marrying her. But it seems that he went on his merry way instead. Eventually Maria's mother, back on the farm in Polstead, has a series of three dreams in which Maria reveals that William has murdered her and buried her remains in the corn room of a red barn located adjacent to the Marten property. Corder was subsequently arrested, tried, and hanged. He remained gregarious to the end, chatting with the executioner while awaiting his fate. When the trap malfunctioned, Corder obligingly tried to help fix it.

The production is enhanced by sounds and visual images which bring an intimacy and immediacy to the narrative, In the beginning, a cricket chirps loudly while Maria is in a barn hayloft by herself. Maria is a giggler, and when she and William have romantic moments, he proves to be a sweet-talker who laughs frequently and calls her "a dilly girl" and "Birdy". William was always cheerful and went about his work whistling merrily. The narrator says that "everybody loved him" around the farms of Polstead because of his disposition and because he was a handyman who could mend anything.

After Corder moves to London, he exerts his charms on the wife he attracts by advertising in the local papers. As they stroll along Leadenhall Street that spring, we can hear the clip-clop of horseshoes on the pavement. His adoring bride calls him "a duck. A dilly duck. A love." Back in Polstead, Maria's mother laughs out loud over a letter from her that was actually written by Corder. Just prior to his execution he writes a letter to his wife apologizing for the shame he has brought upon her and asking to be given a decent burial in silk garments and in a mahogany coffin. When Corder is hanged, the trap door is sprung like a pistol shot.

My sources for this are the excellent episode of *Crime Classics* itself, and for general background Richard D. Altick's scholarly work *Victorian Studies in Scarlet: Murder and Manners in the Age of Victoria*: (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1970), pp. 29-31.

GRTR

Thanks, Bert, that was nicely done. And a shout-out to Larry for a nice write-up, and inspiration to other Clubbers to send stuff in!

MUSIC BRIDGE AND NETWORK FEED

It's an encore of Brazilian and French art songs. Liat Cohen the guitarist produced the album, called "Rio Paris," and she got three super-star friends to sing with her. Natalie Dessay, the wonderful singer from the Met, famous for her character roles is joined by Agnes Jaoui, and Helen Noguerra to sing, indeed pay homage to Villa-Lobos, Baden Powell, Antonio Carlos Jobim and other great composers. Here's "Bidonville – Consolacao," sung as a trio, about a tranquil harbor town; and in true world harmony style, the opening verses are in French, and Portuguese verses ring down the end. Hands across the water; a world saved by song.

Beverly signals to Fred and he fades the music to network feed. Soup and sandwiches in the Mud Room? Not exactly, but rest assured that Beverly, Bert, Fred and myself will enjoy nice meals in our homes!

Signing off; our sponsor the Dayton Dragons are still in business helping out in the community. They will stick with us for sure. Stay well and safe, best foot forward!

Keep those cards and letters coming!

Mark Anderson

Frederick Maryland