

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



THE SAN SOUCI PARKWAY ISSUE  
SEPTEMBER 8, 2022

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.

I’m here at the Studio sweeping the water off the patio. More than a hatful, we might say, if you ask about the rain. The levee system along the Susquehanna is working, so we won’t be a 30-second video clip on the Weather Channel. Our broadcast team of Fred, Beverly, and Bert have carpoled north and texted me that they stopped at the Poor Cousins Bakery in Hazleton. The fresh carrot cake will be a treat.

ON THE AIR

Beverly has cued us into network feed. We have left the Mud Room a mess and scurried with our coffee down the hall to the studio.

Fred is piping in an excerpt from "Cantata Memoria" by the Welsh composer Karl Jenkins with choir and orchestra of Pentyrch, Wales. They sing of sadness in the midst of time remembered:

And once upon a time / When time was together

When the world was nearer / And the skies were clearer

Once upon a time / When time was forever and tomorrow never

In that once upon a time that was yours and mine.

Hello everyone and thank you all for tuning in!

The mood in the OTR community these past weeks has been somber as we shared the news of the death of Jay Hickerson, and yet we are joyous and fervently thankful for having known him and the wonders he did perform.

The dusty courier pouch is overflowing with tributes to Jay, who died on August 3<sup>rd</sup> of this year at his home in Leesburg Florida. We shall sort through the emails and hope to present a look at a life well-lived.

Further, we honor the tradition of research as it is so ably demonstrated by so many names in our community. An archival interview with Jack French will bring to the fore the researcher's persistence and the attendant disappointments of contacting the corporate sponsors – nay, the guardians! - of OTR materials.

Because it is early September and world events have us in the midst of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, an archival piece from the GRTR of November 2020 will give today's world a perspective in the shadow of the invasions of Poland, 1939, and New York, 2001.

JAY HICKERSON: RADIO HISTORIAN, EDUCATOR, SPORTSMAN, MUSICIAN

That's a life fully lived to his extraordinary 87 years, from Connecticut to the mid-Atlantic and Florida. From his early years as a tennis champion, to his years of teaching and heading up music associations, to serving in the Army National Guard, to organizing OTR conventions, Jay achieved high levels of accomplishment and was, through it all, incurably modest.

I knew about Jay from my years in this Club, and yet only saw him once, in the hallways of the Friends of Old-Time Radio 36 convention in Newark, 2011. He

was at the check-in desk, watchful, helpful, and determined; in my own words, a “shirt-sleeve executive.” A fellow next to me in that busy line, said to me, “...this man is so unflappable! For thirty-six years Jay has shown us clamoring OTR devotees that his devotion to the cause would overcome the strife of putting it together.” Truer words were never spoken!

Jay regaled us with his piano melodies that 2011 Saturday night as he rang down the curtain on FOTR 36. His renditions of "Thanks for the Memories " and "We'll Meet Again" filled the hall. The crowd could only sing along and applaud his efforts for more.

Tributes to Jay are as follows:

- “...the best legacy that anyone could have is that Jay has done something so unique, so uplifting that a generation will remember, that makes him a uniquely American hero.
- “Jay touched so many lives, with his music and his entertaining at so many assisted-living and nursing homes...”
- Jay Hickerson made magic happen. And we were his audience.
- I just heard and have sent a quick e-note with prayers. From a rare example of a work of the Bard that we presented in those halcyon days at Newark:  
"I owe more to this late man than you will hear me say now... I will find time..." God rest him, and comfort to Karen, as well.
- Very sad news. End of an era.

Not to be overlooked are the facts that Jay published several books and a newsletter for OTR collectors. He was a consultant for the Ken Burns documentary “Empire of the Air.”


Jay earned a place in the index of John Dunning’s *On the Air: An Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*, p.662, where Dunning touts Hickerson’s series log of “Theatre Guild on the Air.”

Martin Grams compiled and published a full-color 72-page booklet history of the Friends of Old-Time Radio (FOTR) convention, from its early days of a few people meeting at a hotel in Connecticut to the subsequent success of conventions in Newark. Martin, ever the consummate historian and genius of print-ready layout, includes a concise narrative and numerous photos and stories of the famous nostalgia stars who attended, took part in script recreations, and generally commingled with fans over the years.

MANC CONVENTION AT HUNT VALLEY MD SEPT 15, 16, 17

Martin also continues the great tradition of gathering together nostalgia enthusiasts. The lineup of guest stars and vendors is impressive.

**Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention**  
**September 15 to 17, 2022**



**Hunt Valley Delta Marriott, Hunt Valley, Maryland**  
**Call or Text: 443-286-6821**

MELISSA GILBERT (Little House on the Prairie)  
 BOB EUBANKS (The Newlywed Game)    BEVERLY WASHBURN (Old Yeller)  
 NANCY KOVAK (Jason and the Argonauts, Batman, Star Trek)  
 LINDA GAVE SCOTT & SHARYN WYNTERS (Westworld & Batman)  
 SUSAN GEORGE (Dirty Mary, Crazy Larry, Straw Dogs)  
 JIMMIE WALKER (Good Times)    MINDY COHN (The Facts of Life)  
 CONSTANCE TOWERS (The Horse Soldiers, Sergeant Rutledge)  
 LYNN-HOLLY JOHNSON (Bond girl)    SAM JONES (Flash Gordon)  
 GREG EVIGAN (B.J. and the Bear)    LINDA THORSON (The Avengers)  
 ROBERT FULLER (Laramie, Wagon Train, Emergency)  
 JENNIFER SAVIDGE (St. Elsewhere, JAG)    LAURA CAYOUILLE (Green Lantern)  
 JAMIE FARR and LORETTA SWIT (M\*A\*S\*H)

[www.MidAtlanticNostalgiaConvention.com](http://www.MidAtlanticNostalgiaConvention.com)

### MUSIC BRIDGE AND COMMERCIAL

Beverly is tapping her pencil on her clipboard, signaling network time!  
 Fred is piping in a song from folksinger Ray La Montagne; it's "Winter Birds" from 2008 and it captures the feeling of the bitter and changing weather that has blown through here of late:

The stream can't contain such withering rain  
 And from the pasture the fence is leaning away.  
 The clouds crack and growl like a cat on the prowl  
 Crying out "I am...I am..." over and over again.



DAYTON, OHIO—

Dayton Dragons infielder Tyler Callihan has been named the Midwest League Player of the Week for the week of August 29-September 4.

Callihan played in all six games during the week. He batted .458 (11 for 24).

The Dragons are holding tough, playing hard but they will not win any awards this season. The front office is making sure that their presence in the community is visible and continuing. Getting their skills together, they are a tribute to the community who make it a packed stadium and happy family outing!

### RESEARCH IS THE KEY

#### GRTR

We OTR enthusiasts are fortunate to have in our midst researchers who are persistent and inquiring. Tune into the Club's monthly Zoom meetings to learn more about the favorite topics of researchers.

It's too numerous to mention all the hard-working names, so I shall suffice with an archival essay from Club member Jack French, from the GRTR issue, November 2017.

Here is Jack French's story about his quest for material about the Tom Mix phenomenon. Bert Rude will do the honors of reading Jack's typescript, from the GRTR Archives:

BERT

Thanks, Mark. It's an interesting bit of history that Jack has written up, from the early days of Clubs, newsletters, and collecting. And getting a foot in the door of an executive of a corporate sponsor.

Reading Jack's essay:

I was born in 1936 and grew up with radio. As a young kid I listened to Tom Mix, Superman, and Captain Midnight every weekday afternoon and on Saturdays to Archie Andrews and House of Mystery. On Sundays, my whole family listened to True Detective Mysteries and The Shadow. In junior high I listened to Straight Arrow and Bobby Benson. In college in the 50s, I listened faithfully to Gunsmoke and Johnny Dollar. Then about 1960, dramatic radio died at the hands of TV and I never heard another such radio show until 1972.

That year I was an FBI supervisor in St. Louis, MO. My secretary, knowing of my love of OTR, gave me a birthday present of a record album containing four 15-minute kids' adventure shows, including Tom Mix and Superman. I was delighted since I had no idea that these shows are still available in audio form. I thought perhaps there were some OTR groups that might have more of these recordings I could obtain. I went to the local library and examined the "Encyclopedia of Organizations" and under the category "old time radio groups" they listed only two: North American Radio Archives (NARA) in L.A. and the OTR club of Buffalo. I flipped a coin and thus joined North American Radio Archives.

At that time clubs only dealt in reel-to-reel which members rented from the club. This was rather unsatisfactory since you could only listen to the tapes.....you couldn't make copies unless you had two machines and they were not cheap. I was unwilling to purchase a second one so I could not accumulate any copies of my own until a few years later, when NARA switched to cassettes. From then on, my collection expanded rapidly.

About this same time, I started my independent research into OTR. I knew that Ralston Purina sponsored the Tom Mix radio show from 1939

to 1950 and of course, the Ralston headquarters had always been in St. Louis. On my lunch hour I walked over to their headquarters and was surprised to learn how little they actually knew about "their" program. They caused my first big "Ah hah" moment in OTR research, pointing out that everything on the Tom Mix program was done by their advertising company. And my luck held, the advertising firm, Gardner Advertising Company was not only in St. Louis, but the advertising rep who oversaw the radio show, Charlie Claggett, was still employed there.

I got an appointment with Claggett, a grey-haired senior executive with an astute memory. We talked for about a half hour before I asked "So, do you have any audio copies?"

Answer: Nope, not a one.

Next question: "Do you have any of the old premiums?"

Answer: Nope, gave 'em all away to the grandkids years ago.

Question #3: "Do you have any of the scripts?"

Answer: "I saved every single one and my old office was filled on three sides with director's copies of every episode."

(Hurrah! I shouted silently.)

Claggett continued his story: "Trouble is when we moved to this new office space just three weeks ago the Gardner Advertising people hired an outside firm to do the moving over the weekend. They were given clear instructions as to what was to go to the new office and what could be discarded. Some nincompoop misread our instructions and my almost-twenty years of Tom Mix scripts went to a landfill."

(Sound of my heart dropping into my shoes.)

But Charlie was still a treasure trove of details on the Tom Mix series which I got from him in a series of interviews. I then wrote these up in NARA NEWS for my club.

After that I continued my independent research on more of my favorite programs including Bobby Benson, shows with an RCMP hero, Sherlock Holmes, and anything with a girl detective. When I stumbled across a Candy Matson episode in the mid-80s, I began to focus on that series also.

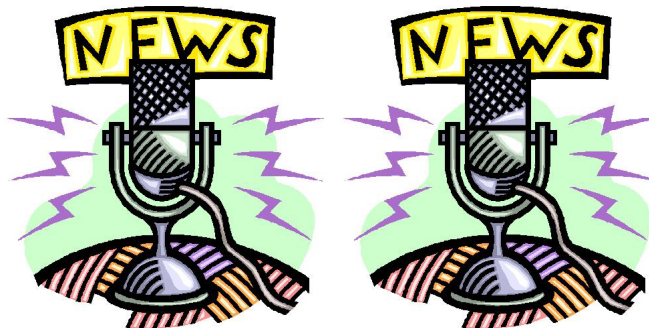
I've done a lot of OTR research and writing ever since. I edited NARA News for about 14 years; it only came out four times a year but I had to fill 64 pages in each issue, at least half of which I wrote under various pen-names. After I joined MWOTRC when it was formed in 1984, I later edited its journal, RADIO RECALL, for about a quarter of a century.

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Thanks, Bert, excellent reading. And now is the time to acknowledge that archival material and current events can converge, or in our current world view, collide.

I put together the following essay for the November 11, 2020, GRTR.

Beverly will step up to the microphone and read this where old news still rings true.



BEVERLY

Thanks, Mark, it begins with this title:

New York, 1939 and 2001



In a radio documentary broadcast on September 1, 2019, the BBC took on the 80-year problem of the W.H. Auden poem called “September 1, 1939.” The panel wrestled with its “difficult edges and stark paradoxes” almost to exhaustion. Those experts were supported in their commentary by news clips, jazz singers, ambient SFX, control tower audio, and most of all, introspection.



It is a tumultuous 28 minutes, discussing life as it is encompassed in Auden’s 99 lines. To wit: nine stanzas of eleven lines each. That is the most orderly aspect of the entire proceeding. A lounge piano is heard. Then the title: “September 1, 1939,” and a reader begins with lines from the last stanza: “Defenseless under the night / Our world in stupor lies.” Then, a clip from a BBC news broadcast: “These are today’s main events. Germany has invaded Poland and bombed many towns.”

The studio scholars say variously that this is a war poem, but a war poem about civilian life. It is also a confessional poem, if we like the idea of Auden the elite classicist traveling to join the popular front in 1930s Spain; then wondering how he can connect with the “dense commuters” and the “authoritarian skyscrapers.” (stanza 7)

Nicely personal, we say. Then about 3 minutes in, we hear the control tower audio, tracking United Flight 93. We are jolted into thinking about events larger than ourselves. We contemplate democracy and its fragility; and now looking back through the long corridor of time, we can “only connect” our fears and responsibilities. Auden quotes Thucydides (stanza 3) and a panelist says that Thucydides wrote about war and saw it as a “eulogy for democracy,” because dictators see the path to power: destroy democracy, and step right in.

A quote from Stanza 3.

Analyzed all in his book,  
The enlightenment driven away, the habit-forming pain,  
Mismanagement and grief:  
We must suffer them all again.

The panelists track Auden and his “cry for veracity,” One says that it’s great because “poetry is a clear expression of mixed feelings.” He is a scholar and yet he still wants to relate, get to know: “...the strength of Collective Man.” He comes to America and helps make

patriotic films for the U.S, government. He calls the populace “the Just,” and the final lines are: Stanza 11.

May I, composed like them  
 Of Eros and of dust,  
 Beleaguered by the same  
 Negation and despair,  
 Show an affirming flame.

The program is brilliant, a primer in sound mixing. The final four minutes are given to further reading of lines, lounge singers, the insistent clacking of telegraph keys and the screeching brakes of a subway train. Comments are breathless; and Scott Simon speaks about “the Auden Broadcast,” on NPR, where he read an abridged text of the poem on the evening of September 11, 2001.

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Thanks so much, Beverly, nicely done!

We are approaching network feed. Fred is piping in songs by Sting from his album *The Bridge*. Lovely ballads, including “The Water of Tyne,” which he sang as a child. The flowing waters cleanse and heal, the Scottish highlands beckon, and in the coming months “...the flowers of the forest will lie cold in the clay.” Sting knows the history and the melodies; and as I prepare this blog for sending, word has reached us that Queen Elizabeth died today September the 8<sup>th</sup>, at her home in Scotland.

Beverly takes us to network feed. Thanks to all for tuning in; keep those cards and letters coming! Soup and sandwiches in the Mud Room? But of course!

Mark Anderson, for the Club