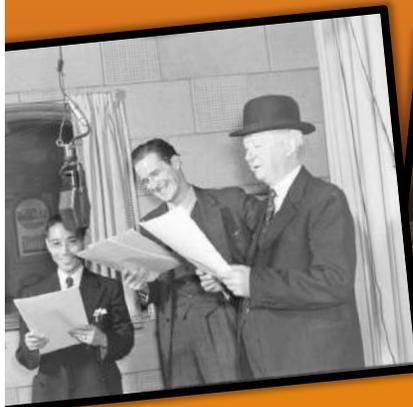


RADIO RECALL



October 2017, Volume 34, No. 5



THE MYSTERIES OF ROBERT ARTHUR

Robert Arthur once wrote that “suspense is that quality in a story which makes you want to keep on reading it to find out what happens. By this definition any good story, of course, has suspense in it. A love story can have suspense – does it end happily? A mountain climbing story can have suspense – does the hero get to the top or does he slip and fall over a cliff?” Such was the brief exploration in the mind of a writer who today is synonymous with *The Mysterious Traveler* radio program. Together with producer-director David Kogan, Arthur scripted more than half of the stories for the eerie program that was broadcast weekly over the Mutual Broadcasting System.

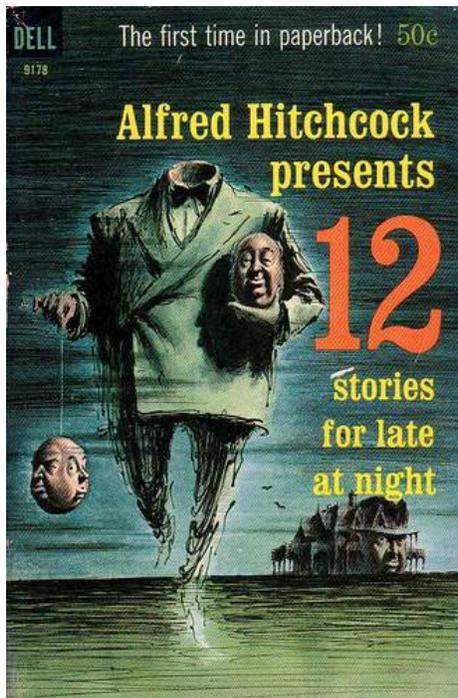
Robert Arthur’s accomplishments, however, extended beyond a single radio program. Prior to his radio career he was a prolific writer of hundreds of short stories and novellas for pulp magazines. From science-fiction to detective fare, Arthur made a living hammering the keys of his typewriter and submitting stories to the editors of national magazines.

Many of these stories were recycled for radio programs including *Dark Destiny*, *Just Five Lines* and *Murder by Experts*. He also recycled plots and characters from his published short stories for *The Shadow*, *Nick Carter*, *Master Detective* and *Suspense*. What adds to the confusion is deciphering which came first... the radio play or the short story? Answer? Both.

“Calling All Corpses,” published in the October 1948 issue of *Dime Mystery Magazine*, was an adaptation of an original radio play, “Welcome Home,” dramatized on both *The Mysterious Traveler* in 1943 and *The Sealed Book* (circa 1945).

[HTTP://WWW.MWOTRC.COM/](http://www.mwotrc.com/)





“Death Thumbs a Ride” was originally published in the January 1942 issue of *Weird Tales*, then adapted into an episode of *The Mysterious Traveler*, re-titled “The Haunted Trailer,” for broadcast on June 3, 1952. The radio version featured a number of minor revisions when you compare the extant recording of that broadcast to the printed page. The radio version would later be re-written into short story form as “The Haunted Trailer” for *Alfred Hitchcock’s Ghostly Gallery* (Random House, 1962) and again in *A Red Skel(e)ton in Your Closet* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1965) and again in *Red Skelton’s Favorite Ghost Stories* (Tempo, 1970).

“Death Laughs Last,” broadcast on *The Mysterious Traveler* on the evening of September 24, 1944, was based on the short story, “The Dead Laugh Last,” published in the August 1942 issue of *Detective Novels Magazine*.

Also adding to the confusion is the fact that Arthur wrote under numerous aliases. Robert Forbes, John West, Anthony Morton, Andrew Fell, Jay Norman, Joan Vatssek, A.A. Fleming, Andrew Benedict, Pauline C. Smith, Andrew Saxon, John A. Saxon and Mark Williams have been verified among his pseudonyms. Further digging in the coming year may reveal a few more. The purpose of a pseudonym, by the way, was for writers to collect more money for their stories – including two or three submissions appearing in the same issue of the same magazine.

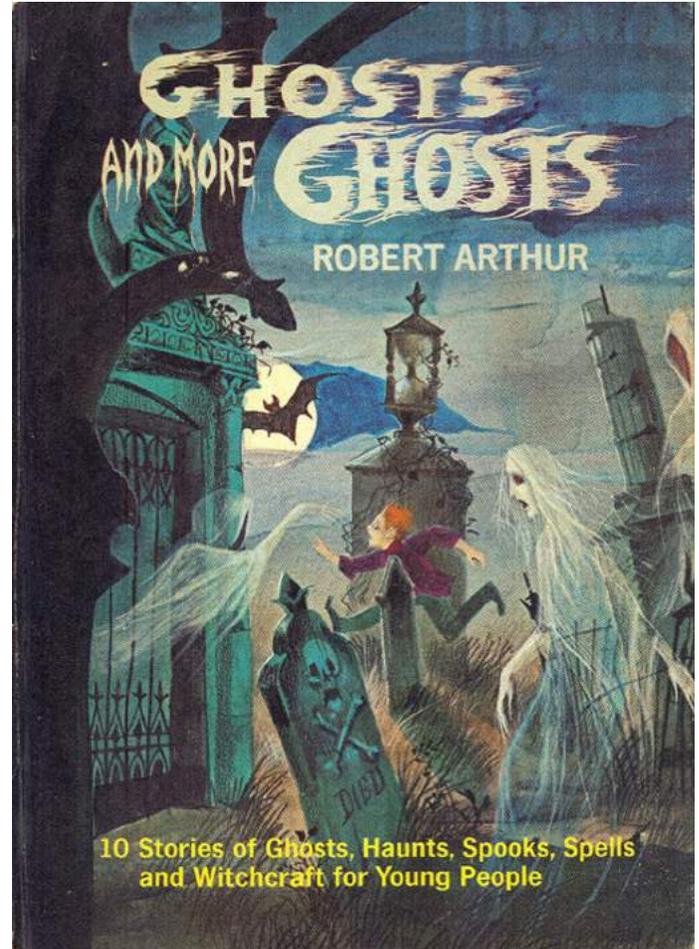
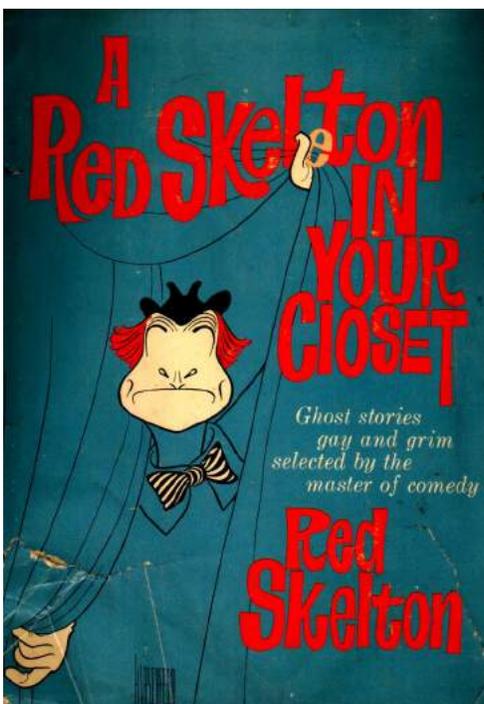
Many of Arthur’s stories were reprinted in paperback and hardcover anthologies. When *The Mysterious Traveler* merchandised a series of five mystery magazines, Arthur was the editor and many of his stories appeared within those pages. During the mid-fifties, Arthur also ghost-wrote for Alfred Hitchcock for a series of hardcover and paperback anthologies. You can tell which ones Arthur ghost wrote and edited because one of his stories appeared in each of those anthologies and the copyright page always acknowledged “the invaluable assistance of Robert Arthur in the preparation of this volume.” These included *Alfred Hitchcock Presents: Stories They Wouldn’t Let Me Do On TV* (1957) and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents: My Favorites in Suspense* (1959).



THE MYSTERY OF ROBERT ARTHUR (CONTINUED)

Beginning in 1964, Robert Arthur began writing a series of children's books in the hopes of cashing in on the success of such popular publications as *The Hardy Boys* and *Rick Brandt*. *Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators* was comprised of a total of 43 books. Arthur wrote the first nine, and number eleven. (Other authors assumed the task following Arthur's departure.) Even in the *Three Investigators* books there are brief summaries of "legends" and hauntings that were originally featured as plots on *The Mysterious Traveler* radio program.

Arthur was twice honored by the Mystery Writers of America with an Edgar Award for Best Radio Drama; 1950 for *Murder by Experts* and 1953 for *The Mysterious Traveler*. Regrettably, recordings for the majority of his radio contributions do not exist in recorded form. No recordings are known to exist of his contributions for *Adventure Into Fear* (1945), *The Teller of Tales* (1950) and *Mystery Time* (1952).



On *The Mysterious Traveler*, *The Sealed Book* and other programs, Arthur and Kogan shared joint authorship but like Lennon and McCarthy, scripts were written solo. This Halloween, when you take time to listen to an episode of *The Strange Dr. Weird* or *The Mysterious Traveler*, remember that many of the stories have a pulp magazine origin.

For fans of *The Mysterious Traveler* who cannot get enough of the creepy stories, books such as *Ghosts and More Ghosts* (1963) and *Mystery and More Mystery* (1966) provide additional tales that were used on *The Mysterious Traveler*... but do not exist in recorded form.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR



If you love a good ghost story during this time of the year, the list below contains half a dozen old-time radio dramas that are worth listening to. It seems every year about this time a discussion recurs regarding the best horror dramas on radio and everyone seems to have a difference in opinion. The titles selected below are not among the common denominators and were selected for various reasons. *The Witch's Tale*, for example, is a bit talky for the first few minutes but if you have patience to stick along for the ride, you will be rewarded. "The Black Door" episode of *Suspense* was also recycled from *The Mysterious Traveler*, but the original does not exist in recorded form, providing us with a rare treat.

The Witch's Tale, "The Devil Doctor" (broadcast January 8, 1934)

Mystery in the Air, "The Horla" (broadcast August 21, 1947)

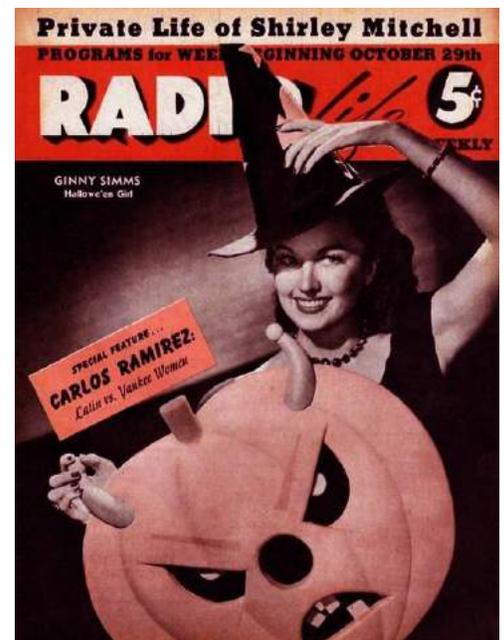
Suspense, "The Black Door" (broadcast November 19, 1961)

The Mysterious Traveler, "S.O.S." (broadcast May 2, 1950)

Suspense, "Ghost Hunt" (broadcast June 23, 1949)

Mercury Summer Theater on the Air, "The Hitch-Hiker" (June 21, 1946 version)

As a result of a recent preservation project for *The Mysterious Traveler*, this month's issue is devoted to the macabre with a fascinating article about Robert Arthur's radio contributions, and his stories as they originated from the pulp magazines. Just one of many examples of how radio scribes recycled their own material through various mediums. (Take note: Robert Arthur was not the only radio script writer to do this over the years.) Karl Schadow provides us with a fascinating article about *Dark Venture*, one of those psychological thrillers that has been often overlooked and requires a brief revisit. And we take a moment to remember the late June Foray and her contributions not for animation voices, but for radio.



To contact the editor, Martin Grams, Jr., e-mail: martingramsjr@icloud.com



You may not know her by name, but you knew her voice. June Foray passed away in late July at the age of 99. They say it is not what you take with you, but what you leave behind. For June, she left behind a legacy of recorded sound that will preserve her talent on both radio and television. For a generation who grew up watching *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle*, she became a pop culture icon with a great sense of humor. For fans of old-time radio, she remains in our hearts for her contribution to the art.

She was the voice of many classic animated characters including Rocky, the flying squirrel, Natasha, Nell Fenwick, Looney Tunes' Witch Hazel, Granny from the *Tweety and Sylvester* cartoons, Cindy Lou Who from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, Mother Magoo in the *Mister Magoo* series, Jokey Smurf... heck, you name it and she probably did it. She also provided the voice of the demonic doll Talky Tina in an episode of *The Twilight Zone* titled "Living Doll." Her performance as Mrs. Cauldron on *The Garfield Show* earned her a Daytime Emmy at the age of 94, in 2012. But few obits on the Internet made note that her career starting on radio.

For the *Charlie McCarthy* broadcast of May 26, 1946, Charlie had to babysit a newborn baby and June supplied the voice of the crying infant. Among her other radio credits: *The Life of Riley*, *Let George Do It*, *The Lux Radio Theatre*, *The Cavalcade of America*, *Command Performance*, *The Screen Director's Playhouse*, *Rocky Jordan*, *The Adventures of Philip Marlowe*, *Night Beat*, *The Railroad Hour*, *Lassie*, *The Phil Harris and Alice Faye Show*, *You Were There*, *Rocky Fortune*, *Our Miss Brooks*, *The CBS Radio Workshop*, and many others.



Ed McConnell and June Foray

That is June in the female role in the second audition for *Gunsmoke*, starring Howard Culver, titled "Mark Dillon Goes to Gouge an Eye."

You can hear June in the Auto-Lite commercial for the December 29, 1949 broadcast of *Suspense*, titled "The Bullet."

Guess who provided the female latin dialect for the October 26, 1952, broadcast of *Amos n' Andy*? She reprised the role for the January 2, 1955, broadcast as well.

She was perhaps most prominent on two radio programs as a series regular: *The Stan Freberg Show* and *Smilin' Ed McConnell's Buster Brown Gang*.

LAUREL AND HARDY ON RADIO



Name any Hollywood celebrity and you'll most likely find a lengthy list of their radio credits – Laurel and Hardy included. Any attempt to compile a definitive list is futile – there are always new entries constantly being discovered and added... and recordings if you dig deep enough. That is exactly what happened to author John Tefeller who was doing research and unearthed some rare recordings that have never been heard since they were originally broadcast. The most unique is a full 70-minute interview with Stan Laurel from 1957, recorded one week after Oliver Hardy passed away. You hear Stan's thoughts and feelings about his good friend, as well as recollections and funny stories of his old days in vaudeville and being an understudy for Charlie Chaplin. Though his voice sounded older and his voice weaker than the glory days of filmmaking, it is still riveting to hear.

About a year ago, John authored a large hardcover book, *Laurel & Hardy On Stage! Rare and Unreleased Live Performances: 1942-1957*. With exclusive essays by Randy Skretvedt and Peter Mikkelsen, along with photos of the boys during the war (entertaining American troops), a documentary about their stage tour and an exact reproduction of Stan Laurel's personal script (plus photos), a documentary regarding their days in Denmark (along with photos), Stan Laurel's scrapbook of his performance days at Copenhagen, and a lengthy essay about their work on radio, you can imagine how in-depth the book goes into. The best photo in the book are the boys at KFVD, playing the role of disc jockeys, moments after the Our Gang kids (a.k.a. Little Rascals) had their photo taken in the same room at the same microphone.

Also with the book you get two audio CDs with recordings of the boys doing their stage routine in 1942, live performances of their Copenhagen performance (October 1947), the pilot episode of *The Laurel & Hardy Show* (NBC, recorded March 6, 1944), and that 1957 interview. There are a number of connections between the 1944 unaired pilot and their motion-picture, *The Big Noise*, which began filming March 28. But I won't spoil the fun here. It is better if you read the book and discover for yourself. My only complaint is the fact that the book is somewhat thin but considering all of the materials inside are real and rare treasures, accompanied with two CDs, this is worth the purchase price.

Because most major publishing companies prefer to cater to the mainstream market, this is not the kind of book you would expect to see on the shelves of Barnes and Noble so I suggest you visit John's website and order a copy direct. And ask him to autograph it for you.

www.TefellerPublishing.com

or call 1-800-955-1326

or email at john@tefteller.com

● Jerry Beck maintains the Cartoon Research blog, a wealth of information about vintage animated cartoons and discoveries in archives. A recent article launches a new series of articles about radio catch-phrases in vintage animation. You can visit the page at:

<http://cartoonresearch.com/index.php/radio-round-up-the-johnson-wax-program-presents-fibber-mcgee-and-molly/>

● The 12th Annual Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention recently featured an article about radio's *Renfrew of the Mounted* in the convention program guide, given free to every attendee at the show. You can read the article for free if you want to download a pdf of this year's program guide at the link below.

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

● A recording of Arch Oboler's "Chicken Heart" was re-created on stage at the 2002 Friends of Old-Time Radio Convention and like many radio re-enactments, is now available for listening here:

<https://www.mixcloud.com/sheptapes/gotham-radio-players-live-at-friends-of-old-time-radio-02-10-26-lights-out-chicken-heart/>

There is a brief history at the beginning of the recording explaining why we have heard a cut-down version (8 minutes) from "Chicken Heart" for many years. This version offers a full 30-minute rendition. The same script was dramatized at this year's Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention by the talented MWOTR Club members and will no doubt be available for listening soon, for comparison.



● Master recordings from Bing Crosby's daytime radio show, CBS 1954-56, have been remastered and archived. Not many of the radio programs from the daytime rendition circulate in collector hands. Thankfully, 160 songs from 16 recording sessions are now available on a multi-CD box set, with collectible booklet, and received a limited printing of 20,000. If you have every Crosby album released commercially, you will be pleased to know this set has rare Crosby performances never heard in decades, not found on those albums. You can order your set here:

<http://www.mosaicrecords.com/The-Bing-Crosby-CBS-Radio-Recordings-1954-56-245/productinfo/245-MD-CD/>

By Karl Shadow

You have just been appointed program director of the West Coast Division of a major radio network. Your task is to improve the output and quality of its productions. To achieve this goal, you draw upon the experience you gained while an employee at a current rival. That is exactly what J. Donald Wilson accomplished at ABC when he created *Dark Venture* after successfully launching *The Whistler* at CBS.

In the early 1940s he joined the CBS production staff, conceiving both *The Whistler* (in 1942) and *The Adventures of Bill Lance* (1944). In April of 1945, Wilson began a four-year stint with the Blue Network (soon to become known as the American Broadcasting Company). *Dark Venture*, a weekly series of 30-minute dramas, was promoted as a psychological thriller. Wilson initially produced and directed the program, as well as authoring many of the early yarns. He soon hired Larry Marcus as the series' chief scripiter, who would often collaborate with fellow radio writer Robert Webster Light. During WWII, Marcus penned programs for the U.S. Army Air Force. Prior to *Dark Venture*, Marcus wrote for *The Whistler* and *Suspense*.

Periodically, scripts for *Dark Venture* were also provided by Dwight Hauser, Margaret Coleman and Fred Howard. In the fall of 1945, Wilson turned over the directorial duties to Leonard Reeg, a long-time member of NBC's Hollywood staff. Appointed to the Blue Network's production crew when the two NBC webs diverged in 1942, Reeg was a producer for the successful *Red Ryder* program.

Publicity Photo Top Right:

Actress Betty Moran and script writer Larry Marcus holding a press book for the series.



Dark Venture premiered on June 5, 1945, enjoying a healthy run on the network until December of 1947. During these thirty-one months, all of the episodes originated from the studios of KECA in Hollywood. The cast included such notables as Jeanne Bates, Lurene Tuttle, Charlie Lung and Bill Johnstone, to name a few. On occasion, performances from screen actors were heard on the program, including William Tracy and Carl Harbord.

For the first ten months, *Dark Venture* was a regional feature – limited to ABC's Pacific Coast network, which consisted of 15 stations in five states. Beginning February 19, 1946, the program was heard across the nation on a major coast-to-coast hookup. Two months into the expanded coverage, *The New York Times* (April 7, 1946 edition) published Larry Marcus' compliment to the wisdom of his audience, who demanded scripts that would involve "believable characters and natural situations out of which will spring movement and suspense... to tell an honest story of emotional upheaval."

PSYCHOLOGICAL TERRORS (CONTINUED)

On April 16, 1946, *Dark Venture* gained a sponsor, The Wildroot Company, through its long-time advertising agency, Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn, to promote the then-famous Cream-Oil Hair Tonic. Sponsorship lasted a year until April 8, 1947.

Dark Venture was one of eight enterprises (including *Policewoman* and *Counter Spy*) developed in-house by the new ABC network. The focus on crime and mystery was a popular genre at the time; cheap to produce. Initially it cost ABC \$850 per week to assemble each episode. Wildroot paid \$1,185 per weekly broadcast to add more talent to the series.

Today, fans of the program are familiar with extant recordings adapted for use by the Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS), and broadcast without commercial copy, as part of the *AFRS Mystery Playhouse*. Hunter Galloway was the series' narrator for those recordings, replacing the already predominant and omnipresent narrator in similar fashion to *The Whistler*. Considering both programs were created by the same person, this comes as no surprise.

In April of 1947, following the conclusion of Wildroot sponsorship, and with mystery programs facing criticism from civic-minded organizations that claimed such programs were the root of the recent rise in juvenile delinquency, the host was changed to Ed Holloway, a newspaper reporter who would find himself involved in the capers. Actor John Newland, who would later host television's *One Step Beyond*, played the role. By July the format of the program reverted back to the prior, with the nameless host – still played by Newland.

When the program went off the air in December 1947, newspaper columnists and radio critics devoted sections of their columns to cry an injustice, expressing disappointment that such a fine program would cease too early.

In 1951, J. Donald Wilson attempted to revive his creation with an audition recording titled "The Urge," about a businessman who conspired to murder his partner, while undergoing a mental breakdown. Sadly, the pilot never sold and *Dark Venture* never returned to the airwaves.

This article, presented in part was first published as the program guide which accompanied the *Dark Venture* CD set (#46972) released in 2016 by Radio Spirits, Inc. <http://www.radiospirits.com/>

Photo on Left:
Director Leonard Reeg (left)
with Norman Field (right)
portraying policeman.

Photo on Right:
Betty Moran (left)
and Dwight Hauser (right)



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MWOTRC was created in 1984 by Jim Burnette (1945-2001), our President Emeritus. Annual dues \$20 to locals and \$15 to others, and seniors. Regular meetings are held at Trinity Episcopal Church, Columbia Pike and Wayne St, Arlington, VA the second Friday evening of every month, except June and December, when meetings are held Saturday noon at a local restaurant TBA.

UP-COMING EVENTS

October 7, 2017 The Happy Trails Film Festival

Held at the Holiday Inn in Roanoke, Virginia, this one-day film festival salutes the days when cowboys were role models to look up to. Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Charles Starrett and many others. Twelve celebrities have been confirmed including the daughter of Roy Rogers. Vendors, panels and more. There is no official website for the event except on Facebook, but you can call them on the phone at (540) 389-9400 for more information. At least one vendor will be selling old-time radio shows at \$1.00 per CD and .25 cents per audio cassette.

<https://www.facebook.com/Happy-Trails-Virginia-Style-event-October-7-2017-1541899332801398/>

November 4, 2017 Pulp Adventurecon

One day vendor venue with fifty tables of various books, pulps, magazines and other retro pop culture. Located at the Ramada Inn off exit 7 off the New Jersey Turnpike (I-95). Extremely easy to find. 10 am to 4 pm.

<http://www.boldventurepress.com/pacon1.html>

November 4 and 5, 2017 Radio Preservation Task Force

The task force will be holding its second annual conference on Capitol Hill, with featured participants from the public, private, and educational sectors. The conference will focus on strategies for preservation and classroom implementation of historic federal, noncommercial, and local radio recordings.

<https://radiopreservation.org/>



Howard Duff as Sam Spade

A missing episode of *The Adventures of Sam Spade* has been found. Originally broadcast on the evening of May 30, 1948, “The Prisoner of Zenda Caper” exists today because of a home disc recording. Home recorded discs are not produced on expensive professional equipment like the studios used so they were not made for full audio range and low background noise. While this particular recording is not fully intact, the quality is pretty good and benefits from being transferred in a digital age where the shortcomings of that era’s technology can be adjusted for. Home recordings were airchecks which meant that the station had to be tuned in well and the equipment had to be connected to the recorder. Good home recordings are a treasure as they often fill in missing shows that are not otherwise available. A case in point where something is better than nothing... even if the technology is not perfect.

Indiana University’s Lilly Library safeguards one of the largest troves of recordings from the radio career of Orson Welles. With a recent \$25,000 grant from the National Recording Preservation Foundation and the nationally recognized Media Digitization and Preservation Initiative, the original sounds of Orson Welles at the apex of radio and his career will again find an audience. The project is “Orson Welles on the Air” and the library recently completed digital transfer of every recording in the archive.



Orson Welles

In the late 1970s, longtime Welles associate Richard Wilson wanted a good home for his collection of Welles’ radio career, which filled his garage in California. The Lilly Library happily obliged, acquiring box after box of production materials, photographs, radio scripts and 324 lacquer audio discs of Welles’ radio broadcasts. This includes what was formerly considered “lost” or “un-circulating” broadcasts of *The Campbell Playhouse* and an almost complete run of *The Doorway to Life*. Most important is the clean-up process at the time of transcription/transfer. The first Mercury Theater radio production of 1937, “Dracula,” has been available for decades but always in scratchy sound. The new transfer has been sampled and is extremely clean. The recordings will soon be available on the library’s website within the next year, and the sound quality for many of these vintage recordings will be an upgrade worthy of downloading.

FIRST CLASS

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RADIO RECALL



Orson Welles

RADIO RECALL

IN THIS ISSUE!

The Mysterious Traveler's
Robert Arthur

Remembering June Foray

"Psychological Terrors"
by Karl Schadow