

MR. RADDO

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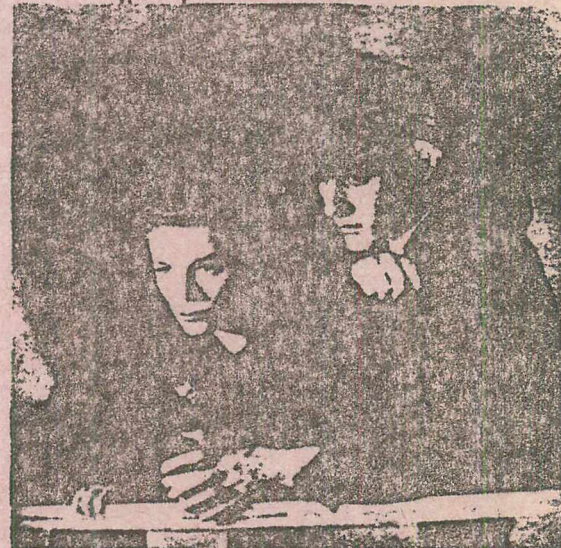


Mandell Krammer
"Johnny Dollar"
(here with David
Harding, Counter-
spy - left)



Ed Prentiss
CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT

The Shadow
(Brett Morrison)



Charles Flynn
"Jack Armstrong"



Curtis Bradley
"ADVENTURES OF TOM MIX"



Horton Yathorough
as Doc
Michael Raffetto
Jack - I LOVE A YOUNG MAN



THE LONE RANGER
(Bruce Beemer)

EDITOR'S NOTES

Why a fanzine about old time radio?

In science fiction circles a fanzine is properly a fan magazine about SF. Purists like Robt Bloch insist this is the only type of legitimate fanzine. Yet there are others about comic books, folk singing, even Fandom itself. I think a fanzine about the art of radio drama is a valid addition to this group... Even in the purest sense, a radio fanzine would qualify because radio is linked to imaginative stories more than any other dramatic form. Because there was liberty in audio plays, it was almost always taken by even the most mundane. (Even the Lone Ranger helped discover atomic energy with Project Andromeda.) ... Of course, the main reason for a radio fanzine is because I want to do it, and fan publishing offers one of the last areas for the luxury of such personal freedom.

RADIOHERO is the name because I think it implies that now virtually vanished medium. It is a name to conjure with, not to be stuck with. The magazine won't be only about male adventurers. By association, RADIOHERO will properly include heroless anthologies like Stay Tuned for Terror, Ma Perkins and soap operas, shows like Gildersleeve and Arthur Godfrey.

RADIOHERO No. 2's Science Fiction Heroes Dept features a good and long (long and good) article on Superman on radio, sidelighting the comics and screen, by Don Glut, editor of the noteworthy Shazam (35¢ ea, 3754 N Magnolia Ave Chicago 13 Ill). Redd Boggs deals with the early days of Buck Rogers, and I will offer The Further "Adventures by Morse" comparing Carlton E.'s less famous series ABM with similar episodes in I Love a Mystery. Rick Sneary may be talked out of an article on Latitude Zero. Outside the dept, Ron Haydock covers a different type RADIOHERO - Jack Benny... So long out there in Radioland.-JH

RADIOHERO

NO. 1

Editor:

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Redd Boggs

Don Glut

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RADIOHERO is intended as a place where information and items associated with the Golden Age of Radio can be exchanged. Recordings of radio programs, their trade and sale offers solicited; as are articles for these pages.

FLYING HEROES D E P T.

SS-1

OF THE SECRET SQUADRON

By RON HAYDOCK

Engine roaring, an airplane swoops past
the face of a chiming steeple clock --
it's

CAP-TAIN MID-NI-ITE-IGHT

For more than ten years he soared into sky-high adventure at the stroke of midnight, leading the battle against the enemies of America, safeguarding defense industries and munitions plants striking fear into the evil hearts of subversive agents the world over.

He was commander-in-cheif of The Secret Squadron, a daredevil group of adventuresome pilots almost unknown to the general public but trusted implicitly by our government. His real name was Captain Albright, a pilot of World War One who valiantly carried a vital message through enemy lines at midnight, thus saving the Allies from defeat.

Now he was known only as Captain Midnight, the director of important work in connection with the defenses of democracy. And the former World War pilots who rallied around him formed his Secret Squadron, the sole purpose of which was defending America from foreign spies and armed enemies.

Captain Midnight's radio adventures originated in the late 'thirties and continued through to 1950. Ed Prentis, who started in radio in 1932, and today is a movie-TV character actor, starred as the dauntless flying hero until the very last season when Paul Barnes assumed the role.

The series was written and created by Robert M. Burrt, who also brought Jimmy Allen and Sky King to radio. (Incidentally, Burrt called Midnight's personal airplane "Sky King" before he applied the title to another air hero.)

Among the many Secret Squadron members were three in particular who stood side-by-side with Captain Midnight in all of his adventures: Chuck Ramsey (SS-2), a young man who was Midnight's co-pilot, played by Jack Bivens (who took WWII off for the role of a real-life Air Force officer, one on the Hiroshima A-Bomb run); Joyce Ryan (SS-3) whom Captain Midnight had found unconscious on the beach of a lake in Michigan, played by Marilou Neumayer, herself a licensed pilot in real life; and Ichabod Mabie Mudd (I.M.Mudd)-SS-4 -- the Captain's faithful greasemonkey, the Squadron member who was responsible for devising the famed Mystery Dial Code-O-Graph badges.

And if there was anything more exciting to Captain Midnight's radio fan than the hero's adventures themselves, it was those Code-o-graph, sent to listeners as a radio premium in return for the wax seal from a jar of Ovaltine, Captain Midnight's chocolate-flavored sponsor. At the same time you recieved the badge, you were automatically enlisted in the Captain's Squadron and given the Secret Squadron Manual for the respective year.

A letter from Captain Midnight himself was always in the manual:

"I'm happy to have you with us as we take off for exciting new missions ahead. The secret signs and signals, the flying formation, the new secret codes you are entitled to know are all explained in this code book and manual. Learn them well -- for you are the keen-eyed flyers of tomorrow, the skippers of giant airliners and atomic-powered ships that will girdle the world. You are the men and women who will scan the airwaves with powerful receivers to bring in dot-dash and complicated code messages from planes, ships, and from transmitters in faraway countries. America needs you -- healthy, alert, and well-trained to guard her future. You will take your place soon -- but only when you are skilled and ready. Use your Code-O-Graph regularly -- learn how America's secret messages are kept secret through the use of codes. Learn now -- so you can do a better job in the days to come. Listen for further instructions which I will send you by radio in code -- so no enemies or outsiders can understand.

"CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT
"SS-1"

The Code-O-Graphs were used at least once a day by all Secret Squadron members. The Captain saw to it.

At the conclusion of each day's chapter, there would be a coded message from Captain Midnight which would tell you something of what to expect when you tuned in tomorrow. The Code-O-Graphs, whether whistle-shaped or the customary badge form, beyond a doubt were the most practical and oft-used radio premium ever.

The radio series was heard at various times throughout its ten year-plus history; on NBC-Red at 4:45, NBC-Blue at 5:45, but in the middle forties settled down to the 5:30 time slot on Mutual sandwiched in between Superman and Tom Mix and his Ralston Straight Shooters. During the last season -- 1950 -- the show switched from a daily 15 minute serial to complete half-hour stories on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Captain Midnight's arch-enemy was Ivan Shark, who with his deadly daughter Fury and Chinese servant Fang were forever plotting the downfall and utter destruction of Midnight and his world-wide Secret Squadron league. In one adventure, Shark managed to steal the Secret Squadron Code Manual and his hopes for Midnight's death were villainously high that now he could intercept Midnight's coded messages and plan an attack from which the heroic flying leader could not possibly escape.

Unfortunately for Shark, he had gotten hold of the Manual in late December, and by the time he was ready to put his fiendish plan into operation it was the new year and O'valtine was offering radio fans Captain Midnight's brand-new, completely different Code*O-Graph and Secret Squadron Manual.

Shark (played by Brois Aplek) was the head of an international spy ring, a nefarious organization of espionage agents almost as efficient in its administration as Captain Midnight's Secret Squadron. He received financial aid from various foreign governments who relayed rewards for his evil cunning in wresting from the United States vital military secrets and documents.

But no matter what type of plot Shark and Fury cooked up, Captain Midnight, Chuck, Joyce, and Ikky always managed to be on hand at the crucial moment, defeating Shark though never quite able to at long last put him behind bars.

Captain Midnight had another continuing villain in the insidious personage of The Barracuda, a man of mystery, who had once won his way into the confidence of the Chinese government only to then betray China to its enemy, Japan. He was a ruthless white man who built up his own vast criminal organization for his own personal gain, not unlike Ivan Shark. Who he really was, or where he came from, no one knew.

And not even his Japanese cohorts in crime knew that he one day planned to control the entire length and breadth of their own country.

Captain Midnight originally came to grips with The Barracuda when he and his three SS friends flew to Japan in search of a missing Squadron member. The Barracuda, capturing Chuck and Joyce, told them there was no room for Captain Midnight and his Secret Squadron in Japan, and they must all leave the country at once or face the penalty of death. The mysterious mastermind, it was later revealed, the one responsible for imprisoning the missing SS member.

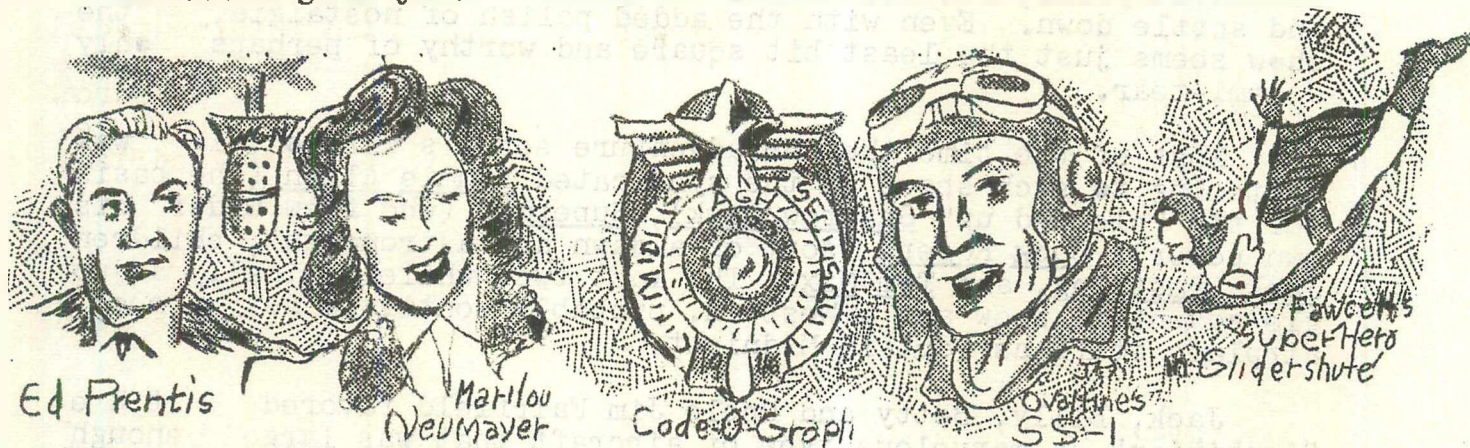
America's flying champion, of course, never gave up the search for the Squadron prisoner, and in the end, The Barracuda never did realize his dictatorship.

Captain Midnight, following his original success in radio, soon began appearing in comic books published by Dell and Fawcett, and in 1942 was the subject of a 15 chapter serial from Columbia Pictures, featuring Dave "Tex" O'Brien. With the advent of television and the subsequent retreat of radio, Midnight was poorly adapted into a TV program starring Richard Webb. The series, after its initial run was changed (because of sponsor conflict) by re-dubbing all dialogue references toward Midnight to Jet Jackson.

But whether in comic books, movies, or television, there was really only one Captain Midnight -- the hero heard on radio, known to us as SS-1, the defender of American Ideals, Truth, Justice, and Liberty. At the striking of midnight, he roared into action

against America's enemies, like Ivan Shark, The Barracuda, and a host of others, defending the United States from those who would conquer it.

He did a good job.



(Capt Midnight Copr Wander co)

THEY ALSO FLEW . . .

"CX4 to control tower, CX4 to control... this is Hop Harrigan... coming in!"

"... And so, Sky King has won out once again in his constant fight for justice!"

"... Tune in tomorrow for another in the closing chapters of the Sparrow and the Hawk..."

More was closing than the book of the Sparrow and the Hawk on radio, although this CBS show was one of the few to admit it. During the days of Hop Harrigan, Sky King, Captain Midnight, and the rest there were two kid shows on radio almost nobody apparently ever heard. These were Cimarron Tavern (a frontier Fenimore Cooper type) and The Sparrow and Hawk air adventure show.

These were sustaining shows on CBS containing no violence and a lot of accurate historical and scientific information. That is to say, they were pretty dull. Presented merely as an attempt to offer some kind of token resistance by CBS to the blockbuster kid hits on three rival networks, they were as bland and inoffensive as comic books under the early Comics Code thought control mania. The Old Scout (whatever his name) on Cimarron would spend fifteen minutes explaining to The Boy that you should eat lemons to avoid bari-bari on a long trail. And on the only other CBS kid serial of my memory, the Hawk would tell the Sparrow (whatever their names) that you pushed forward on the stick to go up -- for the entire chapter.

With thrills galore like this, the stupid kids didn't know what was good for them, and even this token opposition was dropped.

Being a dial twister, I did hear generally only an occasional chapter of these two shows from time to time, and when the announcer told that the Sparrow and the Hawk were in their "closing chapters" I listened for the last few weeks. For my effort, I heard how the Sparrow was finally going to get to become a full-feathered pilot, and his uncle, the Hawk, was going to get married and settle down. Even with the added polish of nostalgia, the show seems just the least bit square and worthy of perhaps only a demi-tear.

Most of the time the CBS adventure serials were on, I was listening to such shows as the syndicated Jimmie Allen (the basis for the "cleaned up" Sparrow/Hawk), Superman (who flew under his own power), Buck Rogers (sort of a dawn age astronaut, children), Jack Armstrong, and Tom Mix. The last two, while nominally a jungle adventure show and a Western, probably contained as much airplane stuff as Captain Midnight.

Jack, Billy, Betty and Uncle Jim Fairfield favored the "Amphibian", a marvelous type of aircraft that was large enough to apparently include lavish sleeping quarters, a laboratory, a private brig, and a small but representative zoo. Still, the plane was quite good for stunting and dogfighting. I remember the disenchantment I recieved in school when I found out an amphibian was primarily an animal like a frog, not the exclusive name for Jack Armstrong's airplane.

While the Amphibian was capable of all the wondrous things previously mentioned, it was ordinarily used as a camping site in the middle of some tropical river from which to make scouting forays against the cannibols and to return to in a hail of poison darts.

To go from Wheaties to Shredded Ralston, Tom Mix was a cowboy, of course, but in the contemporary setting he enjoyed, he was also a pilot -- and a frequent passenger on other occasions. One of the earliest Tom Mix episodes I recall was one in which Tom (probably Russ Thorsen back then) and a pilot are trapped in the middle of a forest fire while his Straight Shooters wait helplessly at the TM Bar. "Woe is me," mutters the Negro cook, Wash (Caucasian Forrest Lewis) while Tom's ward, Jane (Jane Webb) cries "Ooh, Tom..." The other TM Bar ward, Jimmy sighs "Gosh..." as the Old Wrangler howls "Thunderation!" in frustrated fury. Even Pecos, another younger hand, can only say exasperatedly "Jimminty." (And he -- Curley Bradley -- was due to become resourceful Tom Mix himself in a season or two.) Fortunately there is somebody in the group with some brains -- Tom's Wonder Horse, Tony. He starts through the flames towards Tom and finally Pecos gets the idea, and starts riding through the flames with a fresh propellor strapped to Tony's side to replace the broken one on The Chief Straight Shooter's DOWNED plane. (Tony, it was explained, could not carry all three men to safety on his blistered back.) Meanwhile, Tom Mix has set a backfire to give himself and the pilot some extra time. Pecos comes through, and it looks as if Tony may have to be left behind for a time until Tom rigs up a harness under the aircraft and carries the Wonder Horse to safety along with everybody else. By this time, before the fast moving scripts by George Lowther started, I think, the forest fire had been raging for a couple of weeks, near being declared a national disaster.

Of course, during the air-minded 'thirties and 'forties, it was difficult to find a radio hero who could not pilot a plane as at least a part-time skill. Terry Lee and Pat Ryan winged over the Orient on Terry and the Pirates. Their comic strip compatriot Inspector Dick Tracy not infrequently took over the stick from Pat Patton (who was "not as good" as Dick). In later years, even Little Orphan Anne played a "Joyce" to a Midnight of another name, Captain Sparks (Quaker Puffed Wheat "Sparkies" sponsored). Capt. Silver, another sub-major character, carried the "Skyhound" on deck of his ship, The Seahound. Don Winslow of the Navy did more flying than sailing during radio's afternoon adventure hour.

And of course, who can forget how on Carlton E. Morse's I Love a Mystery Jack Packard brought down his aircraft safely near the "Temple of Vampires" with "as pretty a piece of flying as you could want to see" -- according to Doc Long. Or how Jack and Doc's plane crashed on the island with the weird widow who had "No ring, No Ringfinger, No Husband". Or the helicopter pirates boarding Jack's airliner on I Love Adventure.

All these memorable shows had flying sequences, but there were only a small band of full-time flying heroes on radio.

Besides The Sparrow and the Hawk, two other aviators flew in -- each from a World War. Capt. Midnight winged in from the First, and Hop Harrigan landed during the Second. (A post-WWII aviator, Sky King, lasted on radio late enough to have some unofficial conflict in the Korean Action.)

Hop Harrigan was always a pretty realistic show with few if any mad scientists or fantastic inventions. Yet, unlike Sparrow/Hawk, Hop Harrigan was always an interesting and exciting show. The justifiable griping of Hop comes to mind, joined in by Tank Tinker, his mechanic and part-time gunner (a character originally or unoriginally called "Icky" same as Capt. Midnight's sidekick in the original All-American Comics strip basis for the show). Just as V-E Day in Europe was dawning, the two were transferred to a hotter field of battle, the Pacific. Complaints were under-standable.

After the war, unlike many real-life servicemen, Hop adjusted to civilian life admirably, and set up a small flying field and pilot school. Indulging in air races, helping inventors with new types of planes, and of course encountering the usual assortment of crooks, spies and smugglers, Hop and Tank managed to fill an interesting quarter hour. But competition was getting rougher, and popular new shows like Sgt Preston of the Yukon and Sky King squeezed Hop Harrigan off the airways he was America's Ace of.

There was a very brief series of Blackhawk half-hour radio stories on ABC (notable for a babble of foreign accents from the lesser Blackhawks, Military Comics-style) but Sky King was the last adventure hour network serial aviator, and one of the last characters of any kind to be created for radio.

Sky King was strongly influenced by the Tom Mix show; it was the tale of a modern-day rancher with a young boy and girl, and an old hand on his spread. Of course, the flying angle was extremely played up, but still derivative of Tom Mix. The boy girl were Sky's niece and nephew, Penny and Clipper, and "the old hand" foreman Jim Bell. In the early serials about the Flying Crown Ranch, Schyler King (his name was Sky King -- he wasn't the Sky King) was just out of Naval Aviation in WWII, back home on the range only to encounter a fantastic menace with a name like Count Morbid.

Later, when all the kid shows began copying the Lone Ranger with complete half-hour stories instead of 15 minute serials, Sky King became even more fantastic -- and one of the most condensed shows I ever heard by 1950. In actually only 25 minutes (five out for news or something) Sky King packed in as much plot and travel as Capt. Midnight used to take a year for. Always starting and concluding with Western elements like cattle stampedes, gun fights, and hard-riding horseback chases, the middle of the story might concern a flight to Europe to track down a Paris stoolpidgeon with some info, then a flight across Africa in the prop-driven Song Bird or the jet Black Arrow, a crash landing, Sky and Clipper swinging Tarzan-like through the trees, fighting off hostile natives, reaching Algiers to be treated to intrigue there, finally returning to America for a cowboy shoot-out in the streets of Grover, Arizona. Wildly improbable, it was nevertheless a fascinating tour de force in romantic adventure for me until it went off radio in the early 'fifties. (The television series, while bearing little similarity to the wireless exploits, is one of the more tasteful action show entries on video.)

The first Sky King on radio was Jack Lester in Chicago when the show was announced by now TV M.C. Mike Wallace. The last radio King was Earl Nightingale, an improbable but true name for an actor playing an aviator, who is now a Los Angeles radio commentator. Beverly Younger and Jack Bivens, once Chuck and Joyce on Capt. Midnight, managed to find a few seasons more work as Penny and Clipper.

They didn't announce they were the "closing chapters" of Sky King, but along about 1952 they were. Only Sgt. Preston (then played by rerun idled Lone Ranger, Brace Beemer) outlasted Sky King as the last kid adventure show to be done live.

While I've tried to touch on Sky King, Hop Harrigan and the rest, I hope others out there in Radioland will help fix their memories more firmly with definitive articles on each.

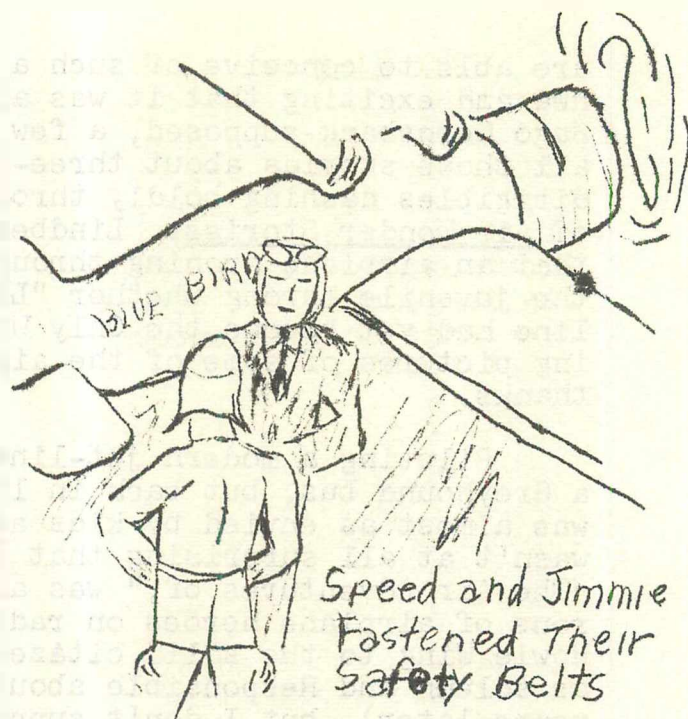
Until then, as Peirre Andre used to close Capt. Midnight....
Hap-pee Land-innngs....

-- J. H.

FOR THE LOVE OF

JIMMIE ALLEN

By
REDD BOGGS



"The Air Ad-ven-tures of Jim-mie Al-len!" Every afternoon-- at least every afternoon that meant anything on the radio when we were young: i.e., Monday through Friday -- the announcer pronounced those syllables at the beginning of a 15-minute kids' show that came on about 5:00 or 5:15 o'clock. If he sounded less portentous than Paul Douglas did when he boomed out "Buck Rogers in the Twen-ty-fifth Century!" a bit later in the afternoon during the same era, his voice was nevertheless strained and shaky enough to promise all the thrills and excitement your heart could stand.

I am sitting here playing the Jimmie Allen theme song in my mind; I remember it even after a quarter of a century, but I never learned the name of it. All I know is that it was played by a band or an orchestra and reproduced in the lowest-fi west of Irkutsk, and that it was a march of some sort. I'm fairly certain it wasn't "The Stars and Stripes Forever" or "The Washington Post," but that doesn't narrow the field very much, does it?

During my nonage in the midwest, "The Air Adventures of Jimmie Allen" was sponsored by the Skelly Oil Company. Skelly Oil isn't a nationwide outfit, and the program was sponsored in other areas -- and other eras -- by other products such as Weatherbird shoes. A gasoline manufacturer is an unlikely sponsor for a kids' radio show, but evidently Skelly Oil believed that the kids -- for the love of Jimmie Allen -- would browbeat the old man into driving in and filling up his 1929 Whippet Six at the nearest Skelly station. It sometimes worked with my dad, at any rate.

Yes, there were still 1929 Whippets, not to mention Graham-Paiges and Oakland-Pontiacs, chugging around the midwest in those far-of days. This was in the first half of the 1930's, if you

are able to conceive of such a prehistoric era. Aviation was so new and exciting that it was almost science-fictional -- or so Hugo Gernsback supposed, a few years earlier, when he published all those stories about three-motored biplanes and many-gondola'd dirigibles dashing boldly through thunderstorms in the pulpypages of Air Wonder Stories. Lindbergh's flight to Paris was so recent that an airplane droning through the sky excited speculation among the juvenile throng whether "Lindy" was piloting it. Nary an airline had yet become the Only Way to Fly, and in fact, after seeing pictures of some of the airliners of that era, I'll walk, thanks.

Piloting a modern jet-liner is about as glamorous as driving a Greyhound bus, but back in 1933 or therabouts the airline pilot was almost as envied by kids as a fireman or a G-man. Thus it wasn't at all surprising that Jimmie Allen, youthful hero of "The Air Adventures of," was an airline pilot. There were squadrons of airplane heroes on radio during the 1930's and '40s, from Howie Wing to the solid citizens on "Flying Time" (who were about as solemn and Responsible about flying as Arthur Godfrey was years later), but I don't suppose any others were forced to spend their time hauling passengers and mail between High, Mass. and Deathly, Ill.

Indeed, the script-writers of "Jimmie Allen" speedily found the formula rather restrictive, and as soon as Jimmie won his wings as an airline pilot, they sent him scooting off to the far horizons in airplanes faster than tri-motored airliners. He was on leave from the airline longer than Mr Eisenhower has been from Columbia University.

The show was syndicated and transcribed, and because of this it had a somewhat longer life than many kids' radio shows. The original sequences probably didn't last longer than three seasons, four at the most, but -- like many popular TV series of a later era -- the show survived in re-runs. It played here and there on radio stations within earshot of listeners with retarded interests till sometime in the 1950's, and for all I know may be running even yet on some remote radio station. Over the span of at least two decades, the show probably ran through entirely three times or more.

"Jimmie Allen" was scripted by Captain Willfred G. Moore and Lieutenant Robert M. Burt. According to a Writer's Digest article a year or two ago, Burt wrote practically everything on radio that dealt with flying aside from the song "Come, Josephine, in My Flying Machine" and -- like Dick Calkins of the comic strips "Buck Rogers" and "Skyroads" -- was a bonafide expert on aviation. After "Jimmie Allen" he wrote "Captain Midnight" and many other shows.

The script-writers may have been experts, but the unnamed and unknown artist who illustrated Jimmie Allen in the Air Mail Robbery (Whiman Publ. Co., 1936), a Big Little Book that contained a free fictionalization of Jimmie's earliest air adventure, assuredly was not. The book contains one blooper I have gazed at for hours, being fed intravenously: a picture purportedly depicting

Jimmie and his pal Speed Robertson "fastening their safety belts" The two men are shown standing alongside Speed's little racing plane, the Blue Bird Special, tugging desperately at their belts holding up their pants like people caught in the throes of sudden diarrhea.

As the Big Little Book title indicates, Jimmie Allen always met with the radio hero's normal quota of bandits, swindlers, saboteurs, spies, kidnappers, and triggermen. That is to say, he had hardly dispatched one bunch before a fresh supply arrived from the script department.

But between adventures involving airmail robberies and such things, Jimmie was shown during the show's first season serving his apprenticeship as a pilot trainee at National Airways' Kansas City terminal. At the beginning of the series he was a telegraph messenger, "a wide-awake, clear-eyed youth of seventeen," at the airfield. He soon became a co-pilot, then a pilot, flying "the great new planes of National Airways."

Aside from this business, the big excitement during the first year of the program centered on the grueling transcontinental race in which Jimmie and Speed Robertson were both entered. You may be astonished to learn that this race was won by Jimmie Allen. Veteran pilot and former World War I ace Speed Robertson was a regular character on the show. The only other characters who appeared at all regularly were "Flash," the slow-moving but thorough and dependable airplane mechanic, and Jimmie's girl friend, Barbara Croft. But they didn't appear on nearly every instalment as did Speed Robertson.

Either late in the first season or sometime in the next, Jimmie and Speed wandered away from National Airways and turned up in Hollywood to perform as stunt-flyers for an air-war movie that bore a suspicious resemblance to "Wings." This rather lengthy sequence involved a former buddy of Speed's, an ace pilot in the Great War, who had somehow lost his nerve and was trying to regain it long enough to fly in the movie. He was such a sympathetic character that one could tell instantly that he would eventually regain his courage and perform triumphantly -- or at least that Jimmie and Speed would be able to cover up for him if he fouled up. But the fellow was actually killed off by flying his Spad into a burning house during a filmed sequence, and this bit of realism shocked the hell out of me. I don't remember, but I suppose Jimmie and Speed turned their paychecks over to his widow. Such altruism is expected of radio heroes.

The following season Jimmie and Speed were commissioned to perform the Lindbergh-like job of surveying routes for a new airline in China. The early portions of this adventure were almost documentary in tone as they were depicted flying their big plane across the Pacific, following the path blazed shortly before by the TWA Clippers. But once they reached China, the show grew melodramatic once more. Jimmie and Speed became involved in a small hot war somewhere in Outer Mongolia between two Oriental war lords, and spent several months dodging bullets and flak,

escaping from rat-infested dungeons, and making like characters out of "Terry and the Pirates." This Far East adventure, which I think I listened to during the 1935-1936 season, seemed to me at the time (I was but a mere boy) the most exciting Jimmie Allen story of them all. But this was also about the time that, for one reason or another, I lost track of the program. I seem to remember vaguely, down in one invaginated lobe of my extra brain that the show continued on our local station for at least one more season, but I didn't hear it.

Like most radio shows for the small fry, "Jimmie Allen" gave away its share of "premiums" in its day. I don't know about its sponsors in New England, California, and other barbarous regions but the Skelly Oil Company always eschewed bulky utensils and gadgets such as Orphan Anne Ovaltine mugs, Jack Armstrong pedometers, and Tom Mix magic lariats in favor of leaflets and pictures that could be mailed or shipped in big bundles to each Skelly dealer. You always obtained your "Jimmie Allen" premium, not by writing in to your local radio station, but by "hurrying right down" to your local Skelly service station -- you were supposed to have your dad drive in, but that wasn't necessary -- and asking for it.

During Jimmie's Transpacific flight mentioned above, the Skelly Oil Company published several Newsletters actually signed by Jimmie and Speed which contained their goshwow impressions of Hawaii, Wake, and Midway islands, and provided maps showing their island-hopping progress across the ocean. Early in 1936, as I recall it, Skelly provided any fan who wanted one with an \$5.00 glossy publicity still showing the entire cast of the Jimmie Allen movie that was released about then. I can remember only that an actor named Grant Withers was featured in the picture. I don't remember which role he played, but I strongly suspect that it was not that of Barbara Croft.

I recall far more vividly the series of premiums offered by the program during two successive spring seasons. Both series were a series of leaflets, running from 12 to 15 chapters, featuring original adventure stories starring Jimmie Allen and his buddies. The chapters appeared weekly, each on one sheet of cheap newsprint folded into fourths. On the outside fold appeared the chapter title and a rather crude illustration. The other three folds on that side contained ads and features. The story itself appeared when you unfolded the sheet and read the inside of the sheet. The first year the story was ordinary low-grade fiction such as one might find in a Big Little Book. The second year the story was done in illustrated form, in the style of the comic books which were just becoming popular in that era.

The earlier story was a fast-action spy melodrama in which Jimmie Allen managed to save for the United States the amazing secret invention of a certain mad scientist. This genius had developed a tiny pellet that when dropped from a plane at high altitude caused a heavy fog to form almost instantly. Such an invention could be used in those pre-radar days to muffle a city under layers of heavy mist, safe from bombing attack, and Jimmie

battled hordes of mysterious spies for many weeks before he won.

The other story, done in comic book form, was set against the same Far East background in which Jimmie and Speed adventured during all of one radio season. It concerned the appearance in the Oriental skies of a strange, lightning-fast aircraft in disk shape. As portrayed by the artist, this aircraft closely resembled the flying saucers, fact or fiction, that streaked across the skies a dozen years later.

I am sorry that these premiums got away from me even more completely than have recollections of the "Jimmie Allen" radio program itself. As you can easily realize, both stories in these leaflets were science-fictional, and copies certainly belong in the Fantasy Foundation.

THE END * FLYING HEROES DEPARTMENT

JOHNNY DOLLAR:

RADIO'S LAST HERO

A ringing telephone, a brisk answer "Johnny Dollar" and another action — packed expense account by America's fabulous freelance insurance investigator lead to the final signature: "Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar"



On September 30, 1962 the last episode of Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar was heard on the CBS Radio network, just before the last Suspense. These two twenty-five minute programs were the final hour-minus of network radio drama (non-documentary, non-religious-merely entertainment). As mentioned elsewhere in RADIOHERO, The Shadow once again rides the radio waves but these are transcriptions of shows done twenty years back. When radio got down to its last Dollar, it was the last series character installment to be done in regard to date of original broadcast. It could well be

argued that this show evidenced radio's senility, but even Johnny Dollar can not be completely dismissed. As a prototype, and in some individual episodes, Johnny Dollar represents some worthwhile elements.

The longevity of Dollar (from at least 1949 on) can be attributed to the fact that it apparently was a CBS-owned property that CBS used to fill in any empty time slot on radio -- right down to the wire when they only had two time segments to fill on Sunday evening.

As far as I know, Dollar never enjoyed any great popularity, but its ratings must have been good enough to keep it on the air. Apparently, the original Dollar was a radio actor named Charles Russell. A 1949 CBS photo I have lists him as the star of the "new" series. At that time the show came from Hollywood, as it did until 1961 at which time it was shifted to New York. During its Hollywood stay, The Russell episodes were fast-paced, full of wise cracks and a running feud with other radio detectives like Sam Spade and Pat Novak for Hire (an early Jack Webb series) in which Dollar would disparage a private eye with Spade's then well known badge number or make uncomplimentary remarks about a bum who rented out boats (Novak).

Deciding to pep up the series' appeal with a big name star, Edmond O'Brien was given the starring role and added some depth to the character in the Jaime delWyle productions. Wriggley's gum sponsors for a time, then retreated. A less expensive star, John Lund came along, then finally a radio actor.

Bob Bailey played Dollar for longer than any other actor -- from around 1953 to 1961. During this run (mostly written, produced and directed by Jack Johnstone -- who earlier was responsible for radio's Superman) Dollar was first a half hour show, then a Mon. thru Fri. night strip (1955) for 15 minutes of serial and back to a one-a-week half-hour story.

Johnstone's production and scripts were spotty to say the least. He went from bad potboilers to some very creditable detective stories with good characterization and suspense, and sometimes with super-scientific or fantasy elements (it is noteworthy that almost all radio detective shows or series character shows of any sort dealt at some time with fantasy, while T V shows almost never depart from their machine-made mundane format).

Probably what kept Dollar from ever endearing himself to radio listeners to any great extent was the fact that he was the only continuing character on the show. The Lone Ranger has his Tonto, Jack had Doc and Reggie, even Sam Spade had Effie. But Dollar was really a loner.

Of course, as written by Johnstone, there were some in and out characters who did appear with some degree of regularity -- Lieutenant Randy Singer, a N. Y. cop; Smokey Sullivan, a reformed firebug and stoolpidgeon for Johnny; the investigator's girl friend, Betty; also an eccentric millionaire; a Tugboat Annie-type who had a boat off the California coast; a fishing guide at

Dollar's favorite resort; another stoolpidgeon -- Peter Lorre -- type; Jack Johnstone's brother who discussed Jack's writing of Johnny's radio show; and various insurance agents who periodically called on Dollar. But these were all pretty routine and faceless characters, generally not even always played by the same actor -- "Randy Singer" was played in Hollywood by Russell Thorson ("Jack Packard") and Forrest Lewis ("Doc Green" on Tom Mix) at times, and in New York, just recently by Martin Blaine, star of FBI in Peace and War, and by Al Hodge, TV's Captain Video.

When the show was shifted to New York and Bob Bailey was left in Hollywood, Robert Reddeck (Rettig?) played the part only a few weeks (3 or 4) before the role was taken over by Mandell Krammer. Krammer, of course, was Peters on David Harding, Counter-spy -- Harding's right hand agent, and as such, one of radio's best-remembered voices. He lent a great deal to the role of Johnny Dollar.

Even though in New York production was shifted first to the hands of Bruno Zurato, Jr., then Fred Hendrikson, Jack Johnstone continued to write the stories.

It seemed to me that when cancellation of these final network dramas was announced, Johnstone tried to put a lot more into his scripts, writing perhaps for posterity or personal satisfaction. But then in understandable depression, it seemed, the story level dropped.

The final adventure concerns Johnny Dollar's pursuit of a safe-cracker. Finally tracking him down, the criminal hurls a bottle of nitro at Dollar which the investigator shoots in mid-air.

The explosion is perhaps significant.

But as the rumble dies away, Dollar reveals he has escaped "miraculously". This information seems to come as an after-thought.

Shortly before its radio cancellation, Blake Edwards of Peter Gunn completed a TV pilot film of Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar which evidently did not sell as a series. Dollar belongs to the past, like radio, it seems.

Recently, Edmond O'Brien appeared with Hollywood disc jockey Bob Crane, and a listener called in, asking if O'Brien hadn't played Dollar in "the old days of radio". O'Brien admitted it. Of course, he hadn't done the role for years, but Johnny Dollar, from the "old days" of radio had been off the air only a few weeks.

Nostalgia may polish the memory of Johnny Dollar already, but in these barren days, he was, as many commented, "better than nothing at all".

-- J. H.

THE SHADOW RETURNS

- T O
RADIO



By JIM HARMON

"Who knows what evil lurks
in the hearts of men? THE
SHADOW knows!"

For twenty-five years, from the early 'thirties until the mid-'fifties, The Shadow knew the innermost secrets of men, plus one of his own -- the process for clouding men's minds so that they could not see him.

Appropriately, The Shadow was one of the few radio programs to be directly replaced by a television show. During the height of its popularity, the Rin Tin Tin show parented a radio version of its video self, which went into one of the select spots in radio (the canine epic being one of the by then fully sponsored radio segments). This was The Shadow's spot, 4 o'clock CST Sunday afternoons on Mutual. Originally, newspapers announced the master of invisibility would be shifted into the slot immediately ahead, but for some reason the show was discontinued. As the years went by and more and more shows were abandoned by radio, even the most ardent fans of radio supposed that Lamont Cranston had been retired forever from his secret career as a Mysterious Aide to the Forces of Law and Order.

Then in the Fall of 1962 on Station WGN Chicago (and perhaps others, although I know of no specific ones) The Shadow was back on radio. The programs at 5:30 PM Sundays are recordings of the original broadcasts during the '30's and '40's, and are of somewhat faulty sound quality -- the clicks and muffled tone might have prevented their broadcast during the prime years of radio, but evidently WGN wisely decided the audience would put up with some surface noise to hear this great old program again.

The Shadow is unique, to my knowledge. There are a few religious-based dramatic entries on radio (Family Theatre, etc.) but in the special sense many of us use the term, the Shadow is the only radio program now on the air.

When the only radio shows left were the recently discontinued crime shows, Johnny Dollar and Suspense, many complained that it was certainly unfortunate that the last programs had to be so undistinctive as Dollar and a Suspense series that didn't live up to the great old title.

Today, few radio fans could quarrel with the lone representative of radio drama. While it was not audio drama of any great artistic achievement, it is at once typical of dramatic radio and superior to its average. Not only is The Shadow a mystery series, Lamont Cranston's girl friend Margo Lane resembles such soap opera heroines as Helen Trent -- and there are even touches of typical radio domestic comedy in the exchanges between Cranston and Margo, who alone knows to whom the voice of the invisible Shadow belongs. The Shadow himself is a detective and a fantasy character with near supernatural powers. He is the original masked crime-fighter in any medium, forerunner of such costume heroes as Superman and the Lone Ranger.

The return of such a hero is, among other things, of socio-psychological significance. Our society is confronted with a present with many unpleasant aspects, and more and more, we seek escape into the nostalgia and the safety of the past. Old comic book characters returned, sparked by The Flash. The Saturday matinee heroes and villains of twenty years ago parade in Screen Thrills and Fantastic Monsters (together in FanMo, at least, with radio heroes like I Love a Mystery's Jack, Doc and Reggie). And radio was a big part of the adventure of childhood to many of us.

Evidently, from a closing announcement on one of the Shadow shows I have sent to me on tape, WGN has met with an ecstatic response to its re-broadcasts of the Shadow. "Young parents write in to say how pleased they are that their children can know the thrills of imaginative radio listening." There are "Shadow parties" on the grounds of Northwestern University.

Escapism, within sane limits, is a necessary activity of sentient creatures. In escaping into the past by one of the memorable programs of childhood, Chicagoans are helping preserve an important artform, almost completely disappeared in 20th Century America -- radio drama.

While we all had our favorite radio program -- be that favorite I Love a Mystery, Tom Mix, Jack Benny, Lights Out, Captain Midnight, Ma Perkins or Information Please -- The Shadow always ranked high. A few grimly determined intellectuals disliked it, no doubt, but the general listenership liked it. Some unimaginative types complained about the "far-fetched" scenes with the invisible Shadow himself, but listened for the story of private eye Lamont Cranston. Others who had no interest in a routine crime story followed it solely for the fantasy element

offered by Cranston's power of invisibility. Women sat through the violence to share the tribulations of Margo Lane. The Shadow had something for almost everyone.

The Shadow originated on radio -- according to Quentin Reynolds' book, The Fiction Factory. Back in the early 'Thirties, an hour long anthology went on the air featuring stories from the various Street and Smith detective magazines like Detective Story Magazine. Some producer of the show came up with a host for the anthology to introduce the stories (a host similar to The Mysterious Traveler or Raymond on Inner Sanctum which followed in a few years). That host, with his infinite knowledge of the wickedness of humanity, was called The Shadow. The role was performed by young, somber-voiced Orson Welles, the actor-director force behind the movies' definitive American classic, Citizen Kane, and radio's newscast-like "Invasion from Mars" which sent many radio listeners in 1938 screaming into the streets. Popularity sailing, Welles' Shadow host earned the whole show, his own S&S gazette.

By 1941, Welles was doing his own Mercury Theatre on the air and the role of Lamont Cranston, the wealthy young man about town who had the strange power to become the Shadow, was played by Bill Johnstone, also the masculine star of such soap operas as Big Sister. Then in the 'forties, the part was taken over by Bret Morrison, who had written, produced and directed a very, very early radio series based on Dracula. I understand that in private life, Mr. Morrison is an exceedingly gentle individual given to flower arranging and the like, but he came on strong as The Shadow. The change in him as he came into the studio to do The Shadow was reportedly remarkable. Today, Morrison dubs English voices onto the sound tracks of Bridget Bardot movies and the like. He appeared on the third-to-last Suspense in Sept. 1962.

Morrison's last performance live as The Shadow was a short run on a Chicago TV station, hosting the Dick Tracy animated cartoons. Explaining his absence from the airwaves "The Shadow" explained he had done the invisible bit so much, it got so even he could not see himself, and he had just faded away like an old soldier. He even faded away from this TV show soon, but just possibly this might have helped reawaken Chicago's interest in hearing The Shadow once again -- on radio.

Others in the Shadow radio cast included several actresses as Margo Lane. One was Grace Mathews, also radio's Big Sister -- thus when Bill Johnstone was Cranston, the stars of Big Sister and The Shadow were the same. Police Commissioner Weston's voice belonged to actor Santos Ortega, as did the sometimes voices of Perry Mason, Nero Wolfe, and Ellery Queen's Inspector father. Another character (played by Lawson Zerby -- "Frank Merriwell" Saturday mornings -- at times) was Brooklynite cabbie Shrevie.

On the radio, The Shadow's chief characteristic was his invisibility, but it should be noted that in some other media that invisibility was less certain.

The several motion picture versions of The Shadow presented a variety of responses to his complete transparency. In The

Shadow Strikes, (Grand National, 1937) former silent star Rad La Rocque wore a visible costume similar to the one in Shadow Magazine. Lamont Cranston wore similar costume crimefighter garb in the 15-chapter Columbia serial of 1940, featuring Victor Jory, and called simply The Shadow (first of the fifteen episodes was "The Doomed City", but by the last, "The Shadow's Net Closes"). Monogram's "B" Shadow features starring Kane Richmond changed from an active gun-and-fist fighting cloaked phantom in the first of the series, to closing with the image of an apparently unseen voice cast in only a shadow on the wall. Included among these productions were The Shadow Returns, 1946, and in 1947, Behind the Mask and Missing Lady.

The last Shadow film at this writing is of particular interest since it was not only a theatre film, but the unsold pilot for a potential Shadow television series.

The Invisible Avenger was a "Republic Presentation" of 1957, starring Richard Derr as Lamont Cranston, and Mark Daniels as his Oriental teacher of such skills as invisibility, Jogendra -- an entirely new character replacing his more interesting companion, Margo Lane. While for some technical legal reason there was no direct reference to Cranston as "The Shadow", campaign posters are sub-headed "The Shadow Man Strikes". What Cranston struck at was a plot to assassinate exiled Santa Cruz President Pablo Ramirez and his daughter, Felcia, by the South American's power-hungry twin brother who has seized power in their country. Tricked aboard a yacht in New Orleans harbor, the exiles are rescued by Cranston, this time in a state of complete H.G. Wells' invisibility.

While the movies offered some variation on The Shadow's power, in the Shadow Comics magazine and the newspaper strips, he was always presented as being truly invisible -- when he was The Shadow, he was printed entirely in blue ink (no black outlines, even).

The Shadow is, comic-book fans please note, the oldest popular double-identity character. Batman is obviously only a comic-book version of The Shadow, and Superman, Green Lantern, and all mysterious aides to the forces of law and order owe much to the Cloaked Master of Darkness.

Shadow Comics, Vol. 3, No. 3, June 1943 features The Shadow meets Monstrodamus: Story by Maxwell Grant (the standard magazine house name on all Shadow stories), Illustrated by Jack Binder. Monstrodamus, who has lived for centuries, thanks to his "Elixir of Life", dispatches a prehistoric flying reptile, a pterodactyl (you pronounce it "ter-o-dak-til" we are informed) to gobble up villagers. The Shadow investigates Monstrodamus' weird castle by autogyro (sort of a kerosene-powered helicopter) WHILE Margo Lane and Cranston's young assistant (exclusive to comics) Skeet are trapped and tossed in quicksand. Trapped himself, The Shadow is confronted by Monstrodamus. The bald, white whiskered villain turns loose a small bird-like monster on the slouch-hatted, black-cloaked Shadow, informing him: "The very glance of the Basilisk means death! Gaze, Shadow -- and die!" "Turn the page slowly, reader -- even in picture form, the glance

of the basilisk is dangerous!!!" a caption informs us. Turning timidly, we find the Shadow turning the Basilisk's fatal gaze on itself with a mirror, hoisting Margo and Skeet from the quicksand on an elevator, and angering another prehistoric monster -- a dinosaur -- with pistol fire into destroying Monstrodamus' castle. "Was that the end of Monstrodamus?" inquires Margo. Cranston replies; "Unfortunately no. His Elixir will enable him to survive. I still must find a way to destroy him!" But if The Shadow knows how, he has to wait for another story to prove it.

There were quite a few more Shadow adventure strips until the comic magazine was discontinued in 1949 along with Shadow Magazine, only as a "policy" move of Street and Smith -- away from pulps and comics to prestige slicks. (Only Astounding Science Fiction miraculously escaped this mass axing.)

The Street and Smith pulp line was a great one, read at one time or another by almost everybody now over 20 who was ever sick, or scared, or lonely during his childhood, and who liked to read about people who were never any of those things. Street and Smith produced the first "pulp" story, the first "dime novel in a "newspaper" of theirs over a century ago. It was a Buffalo Bill story, and Buffalo Bill Weekly rans down into the early '30s. Nick Carter was a dime novel series, then a pulp magazine. Like so many S&S heroes it was a radio show too. Kid Wolf of Wild West Weekly rode the airwaves, even Doc Savage made radio, at least locally on WOR New York. Many of us who started reading about the superhuman Man of Bronze, Doc Savage, went on to the more mature science fiction of Astounding, but most of us continued to read the Shadow Magazine at least irreligiously. Who knows why? Perhaps only The Shadow himself.

These magazine stories offered another variation on The Shadow's image. Here he only wore a black cloak and slouch hat and skulked through the darkness with such dexterity to become practically -- but not literally -- invisible.

Yet some elements of the Shadow magazine novels made up for his lack of literal invisibility. His relationship with Margo Lane seemed less chummy here; she was only one of his vast network of agents, including the cab driver, Shrevie, Harry Vincent and many others. Like other copying pulp heroes, The Shadow was a master of disguise, and his agility at shinnying up a skyscraper was awe-inspiring.

The February 1946 issue of The Shadow Magazine presented Crime Out of Mind by Maxwell Grant (probably one-time professional magician, Walter Gibson, who wrote most of the Shadow novels). The story includes some enlightening information on how stage mentalists apparently read minds. When two crooks who are trying to find out a mentalist's secrets for a crime plot threaten a girl, The Shadow takes a hand.

... It was living blackness, cloaked in the sable-hued garb that symbolized The Shadow! ... The Shadow let go with a hard, side arm throw, sending the loaded .45 ahead of him as he completed his whirl to produce another automatic from

beneath his cloak. By then, the Shadow's fling had scored.

Dirk's wrist, coming downward with his fist, was met by a jarring missile that not only numbed his knife hand, but carried upward to snatch the blade right out the assassin's grasp. As knife and gun jounced and clattered together, it was Dirk's turn to become vocal, which he did with an infuriated bellow.

If The Shadow preferred to toss unorthodox objects that happened to be at hand, so did Dirk. In this instance, Dirk preferred blondes, so he chucked the only one available. As the girl came flying headlong, The Shadow gave a sardonic laugh and with it seemed to dwindle, only to come upward from his stooping twist to pluck the girl almost as she struck the floor.

All with one sweeping swingabout, The Shadow was again in action, this time with a limp but uninjured girl draped over one arm, while his other hand was thrusting its automatic straight Dirk's way... .

Lamont Cranston goes on, with the help of Margo and his other agents, with the aid of his disguises, to bring all of the criminals to justice.

Regarding disguises, while it seems difficult for some people to follow, according to the pulps The Shadow's real name was not Lamont Cranston, but actually Kent Allard. (In the comic books, Superman's real name is Clark Kent -- yet his real, real name is "Kal*El" in his native Kryptonese.)

Kent Allard was only posing as Lamont Cranston. There was an actual Cranston who had never been the Shadow at all, and had never appeared in any of the stories. This Cranston was away traveling in Tibet or some such place for years. He was merely letting Allard pose as him, giving him access to his fortune, in order to aid Allard in his fight against evil. Of course, The Shadow had used the name Lamont Cranston so much that he had even come to think of himself as Cranston. But in a few of the magazine stories (witness The Shadow Unmasks, Vol. XXII, No. 5, Aug. 1, 1937 for the initial reference) his true identity as Kent Allard, World War One aviator, presumed dead, and his pose as Cranston, is revealed.

Yet it is as Lamont Cranston and with the power of absolute invisibility we think of The Shadow -- The Shadow of the radio.

After The Shadow radio show contracted from its hosted hour anthology to the half hour radio (unlike TV) felt was maximum for series character programs, it did become pretty standarddized.

The Shadow himself -- exclusive of his civilian alter - ego Cranston -- usually appears only twice during any one story. The first time is to interview some reluctant witness, making him give out information to the awesome, bodiless Voice. The second appearance is at the climax of the play, to expose the murderer and generally to rescue Margo Lane. 23

Brooding menace, the overall quality of The Shadow's audio plays often suggested supernatural horror. Usually, the supernatural or superscientific element is exposed as a hoax, but occasionally one of the horrors is real.

One early episode I recall was about a sculptor who killed his female models and mixed their blood with the clay he used to mold them -- a device used elsewhere since then.

Unfortunately, most of the writers of the series (probably because they were mystery writers, not science-fictioners) generally took little advantage of the possibilities of the Shadow's invisibility. The earliest vivid picture I recall having created for me was The Shadow stopping a jailbreak -- with a gun seemingly hanging by itself in mid-air.

Of course, the problem of Villain's getting around the Shadow and his invisibility was dealt with a few times. But whether the device was as simple as a thick carpet to show up the mind-clouding Cranston's footprints, or an early hypnosis-immune television camera, or alien planet invaders' radar-like devices of pre-World War Two vintage, The Shadow knows the way to protect himself.

The stories began "doing more" with The Shadow himself when I began noting science fiction names behind several stories, such as Max Ehrlich and Alfred Bester. Bester used a sequence with a paralyzed girl very similar to one in his novel, The Demolished Man. One of his scripts had The Shadow visiting a strange woman who had a "clearing house" of information for all the secret societies in the world. Cranston anticipated trouble in gaining information from her, but the old woman was eager to help The Shadow -- "the Master of us all".

Perhaps the most powerful Shadow story I recall concerned a man who was gifted with the touch of death. A brush of his fingertips was lethal. He ran the city ragged before The Shadow drove him to run into some live electric lines. It was a typical horror movie plot, but very effective -- at least to the boy I was then.

Those stories are lodged in the attic of my memory but the re-runs on WGN offer a fresher source of Shadow exploits for review:

Carnival of Death offers a phantom who runs a "ghost train" peopled with corpses beneath a carnival House of Horrors; Sandhog Murder is a case in which Cranston and Margo apparently meet death in a tunnel cave-in beneath the river; The House that Death Built, a weirdly booby-trapped mansion; Death Rides High, featuring airplane combat in an alien smuggling case; lycanthropy running amok in The Werewolf of Hamilton Mansion; train robbers after the fabulous Giant of Madras jewel; and a ghostly clergyman The Black Abbott.

One of these recent replays is worthy of special note. The Shadow's Revenge starts off with the murder of Cranston's loyal aide, Shrevie, then the loss of Lamont's power to become The Shadow, and an unsuccessful attempt revealing his true identity.

The first act curtain is the murder of Margo Lane. What this all must turn out to be is now obvious, but even so, this story marks an interesting experiment with the character.

For a closer still examination of an individual Shadow radio play, we can go to The Writer's Radio Theatre 1940-41, edited by Norman S. Weisner (Harper). The Ghost Walks Again, by Jerry Devine, lists in the cast Bill Johnstone and Marjorie Anderson as Cranston and Margo with Richard Widmark, Everett Sloan and Kennie Delma ("Sen. Claghorn" of the Fred Allen Show) in supporting roles. A ghost is haunting a New England town, spreading fear and committing murder. Margo is captured by the killer who is disguising himself as the ghost.

EDWARD: In the days of the Puritans they had a very satisfactory method for dealing with meddlers... they branded them upon the forehead...

MARGOT: NO ... NO ...

EDWARD: Soon, young lady, soon you shall feel the searing agony of that brand biting into your flesh!

MARGOT: You're mad... you're mad!

EDWARD: (Laughing) You won't feel the pain too long ... no ... you see, after you are branded I have another treat for you ... the press ... the torture press!

MARGOT: You let me out of here!

EDWARD: The branding iron is glowing now... it is ready to use!

MARGOT: You can't do this... please!

EDWARD: (Laughing) Prepare yourself ... prepare yourself , Miss Lane... I have the iron ready now...

MARGOT: Keep it away from me... (Screaming) Keep it away!

SHADOW: Drop that iron, Mr. Darrow!

EDWARD: Who was that?

SHADOW: Release that girl...

EDWARD: No... No! Let go of my arm! ... Let me finish my work!

IRON DROPS TO FLOOR

SHADOW: There ... your work is finished, Mr. Darrow!

EDWARD: Who are you?

SHADOW: (Laughs) I am the Shadow!

EDWARD: The Shadow! I've heard of you...

But Edward hadn't heard that The Shadow was invincible. He gave him some more trouble, the result of which Edward perished in the burning building from which Cranston and Margo barely escaped. ("Margo" incidentally is the most usual spelling of Miss Lane's first name.)

Obviously, judging from the strictest standards of literary values, The Shadow is the boldest of pulp adventure. Yet the value of radio is that the audience can put more into the play than the author and cast. With radio, the greatest creative artist involved is the listener.

The Shadow was at one time in the movies, in a bi-weekly pulp magazine, a monthly comic, daily newspaper strips, hardcover novels such as The Living Shadow, Big Little Books like The Shadow and the Living Dead, and symbolized on associational premiums. Through the magazine, pins and cards were offered in The Shadow Club. And over the radio, there was at least one premium offered, a ring I still own. It is of glow-in-the-dark plastic with twin Shadow images forming a band that hold up a unique stone — not the hardened carbon of a diamond but the plastic representation of soft carbon "Blue Coal". That household fuel is one of radio's best remembered sponsors.

But all these other things are gone, and The Shadow is back where he started, and where he belongs.

To me, it seems that a man you can't see will always be the ideal radio hero.

THE END

A I R M A I L . . .

BILL THAILING, BOX 352, STATION D, CLEVELAND 27, OHIO: Apart from that recent Arch Oboler LP ("Drop Dead" with Lights Out selections) there's nothing else available concerning old radio shows on commercial release. At least that is what I thought until the other day. Then I ran across two records that I think you might be interested in... Radio's Great Old Themes and More Radio's Great Old Themes on the Columbia label. They contain nothing but the theme music from dozens of radio shows, but they are well worth the (price)... One contains the theme music from I Love a Mystery along with an album portrait of Barton Yarborough... Jim, remember a couple years back we were talking about exactly when ILAM was first programmed. I remembered it as being in Oct 1939 but you thought it was at least several years earlier. Well, I finally got the exact dope on this. Browsing through a thick volume at the public library titled VARIETY Radio Directory, Vol IV 1940-41, p.304, I FOUND THE FOLLOWING entry: I Love a Mystery... 16 lines of info., and then... Started Jan 16, 1939 (Pacific coast only); coast-to-coast broadcast started Oct 2, 1939... - Bill

