



Broadcast News

May 2008

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PRESIDENT'S PAGE

By Jim Collings

President's Column May 2008

I'd like to report that our annual meet in Midwest City last month was a success. I believe that attendance was down slightly, but it was still a good meet. I think everyone got something for their collection or for their restoration needs. And those who brought swap items sold many items and hopefully made some room to find more. The contest had some very nice displays, but there were a lot fewer entries than previous years. I like to bring a few things so there are some nice items on display, but I'm not happy when I win too many ribbons. I've won my share and want others to display their nice sets. You'll find the listing of winners elsewhere in this issue. We had quite a few collectors from out of state, Texas, Arkansas, and Kansas. Special thanks go to those who traveled a long distance. Without your support the meet would not be as successful. Also, thanks to those who worked behind the scenes to get everything right for the meet, and who donated items for the auctions, and money for coffee and donuts. You are probably aware that these donations cover a lot of the expenses in renting the building, allowing us to offer free admission. Any suggestions for improvement of our meets are welcomed and can be discussed at the next meeting.

I just returned from a trip to the Indiana Historical Radio Society meet in Kokomo, Indiana. I had never been there before, but found collectors that I knew from other meets. The number of vendors was slightly more than at our meets, but the offered items were more geared toward parts, and test equipment, with fewer sets, but the sets offered were generally nicer than at our meets. Higher prices accompanied the nicer items. I was there for only the Friday night session, and a contest was scheduled for Saturday morning which I did not get to see. I was not the only one on the way to the Estes auction the next day. Apparently there were collectors from Dayton headed that direction also.

The Estes auction in Burbank, Ohio was nice. It was not one of the spectacular auctions with loads of early collectible items, but there was a little of everything. That made it nicer for most attending, as there was a large variety of equipment including bakelite sets, battery sets, cathedrals and tombstones, televisions, horizontal woods sets, tubes, parts, ham equipment, audio equipment, advertising items, and paperwork. There were some very unique sets offered, that I had never seen before. The most expensive item was an RCA CT-100 color TV from 1953, which sold for \$4500. I filled the car and had fun!

The program for our May meeting will feature morale Radios. These radios comprised a very small group of receivers manufactured expressly for use of servicemen during World War II. Radios in this

category of vintage sets were sometimes referred to as “troop entertainer” and “morale boosters”. Frank Karner and Tom Laszynski will be presenting this program. If you have any morale sets, your contribution to the program will be welcomed. It should be an interesting topic, but as usual, you can bring anything that you wish to show or talk about. See you at the meeting on Saturday May 10th, at the Hometown Buffet on NW Expressway at 6 PM! Don’t forget to bring some items for the donation auction.

The OKVRC Monthly Breakfast will be held at 8:30 AM, Wednesday morning, May 7, at the new Denny’s just off of I-40 and the Douglas exit on Douglas Blvd. The address of the restaurant is 3130 S. Douglas Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73150

OKLAHOMA VINTAGE RADIO COLLECTORS (OKVRC)

The Oklahoma Vintage Radio Collectors (OKVRC) publishes the Broadcast News monthly for the presentation of historical information and enjoyment of club members and friends. Articles on subjects of interest to radio collectors, news of club activities, and restoration information are always welcome. Articles should be sent to the Broadcast News Editor, c/o OKVRC, PO BOX 50625, Midwest City, OK 73140-5625 or e-mailed RXRADIO@AOL.COM. Unless otherwise noted, articles can be reprinted freely, as long as proper credit and reference is given. Electronic copy of articles can be obtained from the editor of Broadcast News.

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MEMBERSHIP:

OKVRC Membership is \$12.00 per year. You are invited to join us in our celebration of Vintage Radio by sending your check to OKVRC, PO BOX 50625, Midwest City, OK 73140-5625.

As a service to OKVRC members, the month of your membership expiration date is printed on the mailing label. Below is a sample label:

Expires 10/09
John Q. Collector 1234 SW 56th Street Choctaw, OK 73123-1234

If your expiration date is highlighted, your membership has expired and you are in jeopardy of being dropped from the Broadcast News distribution list.

Report for the OKVRC Swap Meet of April 12th 2008 Jim Tyrrell, Secretary OKVRC

The first full OKVRC Convention and Swap meet since April 2007 attracted about eighty club members and guests. Some even came from out of state. Most of you remember that last October we were forced to hold a reduced event in the Midwest City Community Center parking lot. This was because the center itself was unavailable due to repairs. This year OKVRC members were greeted by a

freshly renovated center with brand new floors and many other improvements. All of the activities that we were unable to offer last fall, including the auction and contest, were offered again this time.

There were three rows of sale tables offering a wide selection of sets for sale, ranging in age from the early twenties to the mid sixties. There were also plenty of parts, tubes, and radio-related books and literature for up for grabs. A silent auction along with the regular auction was held, and many radios and radio-related items changed hands. The contest as always, was lots of fun, as everyone got to see some of the most prized items from our member's collections on display. Please see the list of winners included in this month's newsletter to see who won the ribbons. A drawing for door prizes finished off the morning's activities.

Thanks to everyone who made the trip, particularly to those who traveled from out of state. Hope to see you at the Hometown Buffet on May 10th for our next regular club meeting and dinner!

OKVRC CONTEST AWARDS

	Category		Item	Winner
1.	Battery/Crystal Receivers, 3 Tubes or less	Blue	DeForest P-500	Jim Collings
		Red	National Airphone 1 tube	Jim Collings
2.	Battery Receivers, 4+ tubes	Blue	Echophone F	Jim Collings
3.	Tombstone and Cathedral Receivers	Blue	Emerson 60	Eric Coon
		Red	Philco 84	Ed Jones
4.	Horizontal Wooden Receivers	Blue	Stromberg Carlson 130-R	Gene Robinson
		Red	Zenith 6D414W	Gene Robinson
		White	Farnsworth ET-066	Ed Jones
5.	Metal Sets		none	
6.	AC/DC Bakelite/Plastic Receivers	Blue	Truetone Stratoscope	unk
		Red	Gilfillan 1281	unk
		White	Radiola 61-7	Ed Jones
7.	Transistor Radios	Blue	Bell Kamera	Jim Collings
8.	Console Receivers		none	
9.	Art Deco and Novelty AC Receivers	Blue	Belmont 93BR463A	Chuck DePaepe
		Red	Belmont 6D111	Ed Jones
10.	Foreign Made Receivers, Equipment	Blue	Brown Type H3 Horn	Jim Collings
11.	Homebrew	White	Crystal receiver	Jim Collings
12.	Accessory Items	Blue	Octagonal Wooden Horn	Jim Collings
		Red	Western Electric 600A Ring Mike	Jim Collings
13.	Operating Receivers		none	
14.	Open	Blue	Old Radio Parts Display	Fielding Grigsby
15.	Best Restoration		none	
15.	People's Choice		Emerson 60	Eric Coon
16.	Best of Show		Emerson 60	Eric Coon





More Remembering Mae West By Sherry Cowden

In last month's issue, we followed along as Mae West paid her dues in vaudeville from the time she was a small child until she was 32 and on the brink of finally breaking into The Bigtime. The vehicle that launched Mae West's stardom was her self-penned play, "Sex," which debuted on Broadway April 16, 1926. In addition to writing and starring in it, she produced and directed the play. Written under the pseudonym Jane Mast (her

middle name and the two first and last letters of her stage name), it told the story of a waterfront prostitute who “lost her reputation and never missed it.” From this point on Mae would write many of her productions (including movies). “Sex” set the theme for the rest of Mae’s writing career, with a story that pushed the boundaries. Her female leads were “sinners,” but they were strong independent women who lived life fully and unashamedly and never seemed to have to pay the consequences of their wanton lives. They used their sexuality as a tool to wrest power from men – but with good-hearted humor. In one of her later movies, “Klondike Annie,” Mae West’s heroine demonstrates some redemptive spiritual qualities. This may have reflected Mae’s personal lifelong spiritual quest. She was interested in spiritualism and hosted séances and other esoteric explorations into the unknown. She later contended that throughout her Hollywood years she quietly, and without the trappings that would make the public recognize her, attended weekly services at Hollywood’s Church of Christ the King. Despite her advertised advocacy of sexual freedom, much of her personal life seems remarkably tame. She didn’t attend Hollywood nightclubs and never drank or smoked. Like the many nights she spent alone writing rather than in the arms of some amour, these things did not fit her public image and so they were not publicized.

The critics panned “Sex,” but the public bought tickets and it eventually played 375 performances. However, its risqué material also drew the attention of the authorities; the show was raided and Mae was prosecuted on morals charges. In April 1927 she was convicted of public obscenity and sentenced to 10 days in jail. The warden was apparently a fan and allowed her to keep her silk underwear and even invited her to the family dinner table on occasion. More seriously, Mae met other women inmates and for the first time was exposed to an underclass she did not know existed. She was moved by these women’s stories and would later use her jail experience in her writing. She began to offer a helping hand to those she met in prison and to others. Like the rest of her personality, her generosity had a duality – she was variously reported to be quite generous and at other times frugal and selfish. After her success in movies, she brought her father, sister and brother to Hollywood, gave her siblings jobs, and supported them the rest of their lives.

Mae was an early feminist and was supportive of human rights for women, gays, transsexuals, and blacks, and her plays and movies reflected this. She parodied society’s restrictions, especially its sexual ones, with humor. Her next play was called “Drag” and was touted as a comedy about homosexuals. Although Mae was now a star, she did not appear in “Drag.” It too was popular with the public, but it never made it to Broadway after being closed down by authorities during tryouts. It did have a successful out-of-town run. Her next play, “The Wicked Age,” an expose of rigged bathing beauty contests, was a flop and closed after 19 performances. But Mae West came back full force in “Diamond Lil,” which created a persona that would become prominent for the rest of her career. It was about a diamond-loving good-natured woman living in a Bowery saloon/brothel and being kept by its owner, Jordan. Unbeknownst to Lil, Jordan is also running a white slave ring that shanghai and sells young girls. A Salvation Army Captain, Cummings, comes into the saloon in search of souls to save. Lil is attracted to him and tries to seduce him, thus generating her most famous line, “Say, why don’t you drop in and see me sometime.” He declines her favors, but Lil, aware of her own power says, “Oh, you can be had.” It turns out that Cummings is really a detective. He arrests Jordan and, having discharged his official duties, returns for Lil. “Diamond Lil” would enjoy many stage revivals over the years, always with Mae in the lead. It would also become her first starring role in motion pictures, with Cary Grant in the role of Cummings, and with the story sanitized by the censors in the Hays Office. The Hays Office, with its Production Code, policed the moral content of films. The Hays Office was aware of the salacious reputation of “Diamond Lil” and was determined it not be translated into a movie, so one concession the producers made was to change the title to “She Done Him Wrong.” The saloon setting no longer doubled as a brothel, the white slave ring became a counterfeit money ring, and songs and lines considered offensive were cut out.

Mae didn’t appear in her next play, “The Pleasure Man,” another venture that was raided and closed down, midway through its third performance. Its most threatening aspect was the climactic scene in which the title character suffered an offstage castration. Charges were brought as a result of this raid, and Mae was forced to make another court appearance. This time she was acquitted after the play’s performers testified that the policeman who had witnessed against them had misunderstood certain controversial words. They performed cleaned-up versions of their lines for the court. It was during this time that Mae’s beloved mother died. She later described this as the worst experience of her life. She dealt with her grief by writing a novel, “Babe Gordon.”

Her final play, "The Constant Sinner," about an interracial romance, debuted December 1931 and ran 64 performances. After battling the Broadway keepers of American morals, it was time for Mae to move to Hollywood and engage their West Coast counterparts.

Mae's first movie role was in a George Raft film. Raft was an old friend from their early days when both were hanging out with mobster types in New York nightclubs. Mae played his ex-girlfriend in "Night After Night" (1932), and since she didn't like her role as provided, she promptly rewrote it. In her first scene, a hat check girl says, "Goodness, what lovely diamonds!" Mae saucily replies, "Goodness had nothing to do with it" – a phrase that would become the title of her autobiography. Although her part was small, she was a sensation with the movie audiences, and George Raft said "She stole everything but the cameras." "She Done Him Wrong" (1933) for Paramount pictures was her second film, and it earned an Academy Award nomination and made her a movie star. It contains one of the most quoted lines in movie history – "Is that a gun [often reinterpreted as a banana] in your pocket, or are you just happy to see me?" Her next movie, "I'm No Angel" (1933), again costarring Cary Grant, outperformed "She Done Him Wrong." In "Angel," Mae delivered the line, "When I'm good, I'm very good. When I'm bad, I'm better." Together, these two films helped save Paramount from impending financial ruin. Her next movie, "Belle of the Nineties" (1934), saw her playing another Diamond Lil type character. "Belle" was followed by "Goin' To Town" (1935). The censors tried very hard on this one, but Mae managed to slip a few things through. In one scene her character Cleo confesses, "For a long time I was ashamed of the way I lived." Another character says, "You mean to say you've reformed?" "No," Cleo replies, "I got over being ashamed." Mae would say that she was most proud of her next film, "Klondike Annie" (1936) which "successfully intertwined sex and religion with sin and redemption in a tale that explored the primary components of American identity: race, class and gender" (J. Watts, 2001). By this time, in addition to the Hays Office and various church groups, Mae West was also under attack by publisher William Randolph Hearst who instructed his newspaper empire to mount an editorial attack against "Klondike Annie." His reasons were probably many, including that she was drawing business away from films he was backing, but his negative campaign only succeeded in giving the film free publicity and making the public more curious to see what the fuss was about. Mae West's next film, "Go West, Young Man" (1936), costarring Randolph Scott, had a contemporary setting. Her last film for Paramount was "Every Day's A Holiday" (1937). Until she found another film property that interested her, Mae revived her old act and successfully toured the country.

Everyone who loves old movie comedies remembers Mae West's next movie (for Universal Studios), because it pairs her with W.C. Fields in the classic "My Little Chickadee" (1940). Both stars were used to being headliners and were notoriously difficult to please. They each demanded input into the script. By this time, Fields' reputation as a heavy drinker was well established, and Mae extracted a promise from the studio that if Fields appeared drunk he would be sent home for the day. The first time he showed up inebriated, Mae commanded, "Pour him out of here;" Fields tipped his hat to her as he was removed. Stories abounded of conflict between the two greats. It was reported that shared scenes were actually filmed separately and spliced together. But both stars insisted that they worked well together, and they did seem to respect each others' talents. The storyline of "My Little Chickadee" paired Mae's character Flower Belle Lee with Fields' Cuthbert J. Twillie, a snake oil salesman that she mistakenly believes is rich and so entices him to marry her. At the end of the movie, when Flower Belle gives Twillie back his ring and tells him the marriage was performed by a fake minister, a reversal of sorts takes place. As they say goodbye for the final time, Fields, as Twillie, says "Anytime you're near the Gampain Hills, you must come up and see me sometime." Mae responds, "Oh yeah, yeah, I'll do that, my little chickadee." Although the critics were not impressed, fans made the film a popular success.

"The Heat's On" (1943) for Columbia Pictures would be Mae's last film until 1970. She didn't like the script but did it as a favor to help out the producer. She was at her slimmest in this film, and at nearly 50, appears quite youthful. Although initially not well received, the film has since become something of a cult favorite. Mae West's film career now suffered from several maladies, not least of which was her own intolerance for material submitted to her. She also stubbornly insisted on trying to get the studios to star her in a film she had written about Catherine the Great, and they were not interested. Since her arrival in Hollywood she had represented herself as being several years younger than she was, and her age was beginning to catch up with her as well. Hollywood no longer saw her as a sex symbol, and Mae West never saw herself as anything else. She was a personality, and the kind of roles that fit that personality could only be repeated so many times.

But Mae West was not finished. In producer (and future husband of Elizabeth Taylor) Mike Todd, she finally found a producer for a play about Catherine the Great. She starred in the spoof "Catherine Was Great" on Broadway in 1944, taking it on tour in 1945. She still had great appeal across America and toured numerous times with "Diamond Lil" and in other plays and revues that she wrote. She had a popular Las Vegas act, singing and reprising some of her famous material, surrounded by a "chorus line" of body builders. She returned to the movies in 1970 in the screen adaptation of Gore Vidal's novel "Myra Breckinridge," starring Racquel Welch. The film was about a young man, Myron, who undergoes a sex change operation and becomes Myra. Mae's role was that of a Hollywood talent agent. The movie was a critical and box office failure, but when Mae made personal appearances for the film, she still drew crowds. She received good reviews for her part and gained a new set of younger fans. The movie has since become a camp classic. Mae would return to the screen for a final time in 1978 in "Sextette." She was 85. Although Mae West had maintained her appearance and health over the years, her age was taking a toll. She had trouble remembering her lines and sometimes appeared disoriented. However, her spirit had not flagged, and when a scene called for her to cry when a man leaves her, Mae balked. She said that Mae West would never cry over a man. She would just yell, "Next!" The film was not successful, but, like "Myra," has since become a cult film.

Mae West toyed with ideas for television, but ultimately only made a few guest appearances. She was a smash in a surprise appearance on 1958's televised Academy Awards, singing "Baby, It's Cold Outside" with Rock Hudson. She did a sketch on Red Skelton's show, appeared as herself on an episode of "Mr. Ed," and was on the "Dick Cavett Show." She made a record album in the 1950's, two more in the 1960's, and a final one in 1973. She wrote several books and her autobiography, "Goodness Had Nothing to Do with It" was published in 1959 and was reissued in the 1970's in a best-selling updated version.

Although in her later years, with her long blonde wigs and heavy makeup, she was seen as a caricature of herself, she maintained a surprisingly youthful appearance. She personally supervised her fan mail and corresponded with many of her fans. She listed her phone number in the Los Angeles directory so her fans could call her. It was during the period of her 1950's nightclub act that she met the man who would become her devoted companion for the rest of her life. Paul Novak had been one of the body builders in her act. Commitment to one partner didn't fit Mae's image of trying on men like party dresses, so publicly he was presented as her butler, bodyguard and chauffeur -- all functions he did perform, along with anything else she needed. He saw his purpose in life as taking care of Mae West, and he apparently did so with considerable tenderness. In the late summer of 1980, Mae slipped on a rug getting out of bed and hit her head. She was hospitalized and diagnosed with a concussion and stroke. She rallied for awhile and joked that she "fell out of bed dreaming about Burt Reynolds." In November she suffered another stroke and on November 22, 1980, with Paul Novak by her side, she died in her Hollywood apartment. She was 87. Not only was she honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, Mae West's name has been immortalized in a number of ways -- from the lyrics in a Cole Porter song ("Anything Goes") to the nickname World War II GIs gave to a life vest. Appropriate for a lady whose buoyant life kept her legend afloat.

Resources: *Mae West: An Icon in Black and White*, J. Watts, 2001; *Mae West: "It Ain't No Sin,"* S. Louvish, 2005; websites -- www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mae_West; www.maewest.nl/Career.html; www.imdb.com.

OKVRC CLASSIFIED ADS

Send all ads to editor OKVRC, Attn: editor, Broadcast News, PO BOX 50625, Midwest City, OK 73140-5625 Or E-mail directly to RXRADIO@AOL.COM

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- WANTED:** Parts for a 1925 SUPER ZENITH 27. This is similar to the Super Zenith VII, except for the AC power supply, meter, etc. I need the AC power supply (Maybe there are 2 used?) and perhaps some small parts. THANKS! Frank Karner (405) 769-4656 fkarner@cox.net ,

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