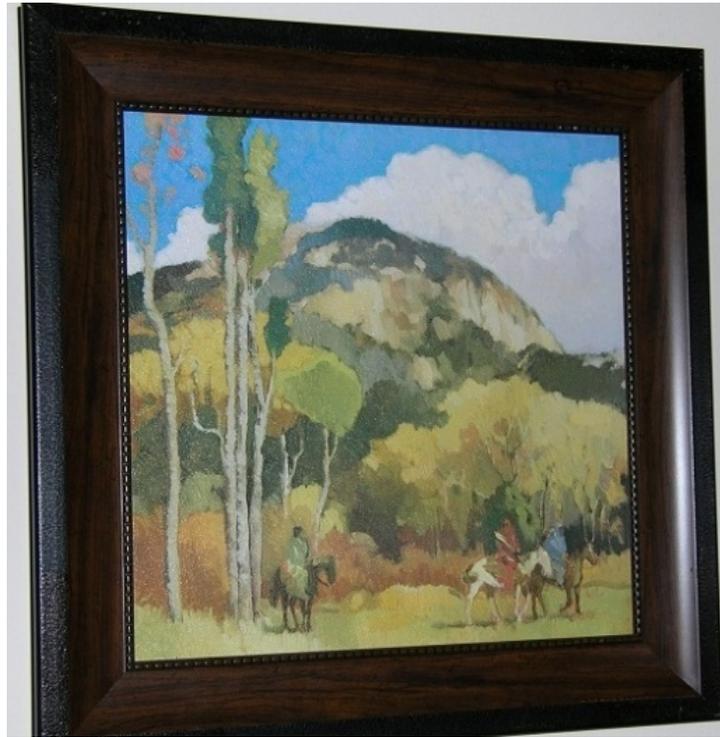


GATHER 'ROUND THE RADIO
E-NEWSLETTER FOR THE METROPOLITAN
WASHINGTON OLD-TIME RADIO CLUB
THE GRTR STUDIO EDITION



THE STEWART WRIGHT ISSUE

JANUARY 16, 2020

THE SET-UP

Hello fine listeners, and welcome once again to the mythical confines of the GRTR Studio where we broadcast information and inspiration about radio, music, nostalgia, personality, books, and beyond. Terry Gross continues to be our inspiration. Listen to her “Fresh Air” radio show, live or podcast; check your NPR listings to find a station where you can tune in.

Sad and somber feelings are upon us here in the Mud Room, as the news of Stewart Wright’s death finds its way around the OTR community. Joanie and Chuck motored their way along the sparkling fast creek, and now we’re having coffee and scones as we look at several tributes for Stewart from the dusty courier pouch. Chuck is piping in “Cantata Memoria” by the Welsh composer Karl Jenkins with choir and orchestra of Pentyrch, Wales. They sing of sadness in the midst of time remembered:

And once upon a time / When time was together
 When the world was nearer / And the skies were clearer
 Once upon a time / When time was forever and tomorrow never
 In that once upon a time that was yours and mine.

ON THE AIR

Joanie is signaling network feed and we settle in for tributes. Look for more tributes and memories of Stewart in the February *Radio Recall* with editor Martin Grams Jr.

Word has come in from Walden Hughes concerning the Yesterday USA audio files:

Larry, John and I did a nice long interview with Stewart a while back and we could share it. That might give some info on Stewart's radio work.

John Gassman suggests we should gather all of Stewart's articles and have them posted on a web site. Can we locate many of them from the different clubs?

Jack French has sent in this tribute:

Stewart was one of the most diligent OTR historians and researchers of our era. He generously shared his data and research in articles in various OTR pubs. Stewart was a long-time resident of Colorado and had a vast collection of OTR printed materials, computer archives, and audio copies.

Jack also sent along this information:

As most of you know, Stewart was one of several contributors to *RADIO RIDES THE RANGE*, the 2014 book compiled by David Siegel and myself. We asked each contributor to submit a one paragraph bio for inclusion in the book. Here is how Stewart wrote himself up.

Stewart Wright is a retired cartographer and geographic researcher who lives in Colorado. He has been collecting vintage radio shows for nearly 40 years and researching and writing about a wide range of old-time radio topics for over 20 years, especially "Gunsmoke" and other westerns. Stewart is an active member of various radio clubs, including the Radio Historical Association of Colorado. He has also written extensively about the various contemporary radio series of Jim French Productions in Washington State.



STEWART'S WRITING

Over the years I read Stewart's articles in *Radio Recall*; I learned a lot! In the April 2017 issue, Stewart wrote the Page One feature: "The End of an Era," in which he chronicles the closing of Jim French's series of radio dramas, *Imagination Theater* in Seattle. There are statistics and dates about Jim's writing and producing; and Stewart himself has compiled broadcast logs of *Imagination Theater*, including a note about sharing the logs. Stewart recounts the early days of his friendship with Jim and the esteem with which the industry rightfully viewed "Gentleman Jim." Stewart was also mindful of the personal troubles that beset the French family. He is forthright in telling us first of Jim's surgery and hospitalization, and second, about the unexpected illness and death of Jim's wife. Stewart wanted the coast to coast listening audience to understand and sympathize with the necessary closing of *Imagination Theater*. Now our great OTR community is showing our own respect and esteem for Stewart.

Ever helpful, Stewart offers up a veritable how-to on research.

The title of this article tells it all:

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS ABOUT JEFF REGAN, INVESTIGATOR:

An Exercise in Old-Time Radio Research. By Stewart Wright (*RR* June 2013)

Stewart makes this essay a nice mix of detail and anecdote. He cautions:

“An on-going activity throughout the research project is information entry and evaluation...It is a winnowing process, separating the accurate information (the wheat) from the inaccurate (the chaff).” Then Stewart includes a quick anecdote from a script about the surname of Jeff Regan’s boss. He writes, “The correct spelling of Regan’s parsimonious and officious boss is spelled Lyon, with a ‘y.’ In a broadcast Regan tells a receptionist, “His name’s Lyon, like in the zoo, only with a ‘y’.”

Stewart continues on about the travails that only dedicated researchers will undertake, such as travel, finding the libraries, and photocopying. Our own OTR friend Jim Cox will second the motion on that. Jim and Stewart exchanged ideas on research and writing, and Jim realized that Stew was intent on pursuing data that nobody else found. Jim writes:

“I listened intently, and he rattled off big plans he had for going hither and yon...that particular conversation was a delightful interlude.” We may have crossed paths some more at subsequent OTR conventions, but those are the experiences that stand out in my mind. In all of them he was a gentleman who demonstrated a passionate desire to pursue hard-to-find facts and, while doing so, to offer his help in any way it could be useful to others of our tribe.

MUSIC BRIDGE AND A PLAY READING IN GAITHERSBURG

Chuck is piping in an orchestral change of pace, the rousing ballet music from Aaron Copland’s “Rodeo,” where soaring strings and xylophone urge us onward.

There’s a play to be put on soon in Gaithersburg. Jack French has a part in it, and he has sent this information:

Jack French is in the cast of a staged reading of a new comedy, “Prepping for Widowhood”, by Robert Davis.

*The reading will be performed at the Best Medicine Rep Theatre, at 2:30pm on **Sunday, March 1, 2020.** It will be directed by Catherine Aselford.*

The address of the theatre is 701 Russell Ave (Lake Forest Mall) Gaithersburg, MD 20877.

Website for this theater is <http://bestmedicinerep.org>

Admission is free. Hope you can make it. This is a genuinely funny and enjoyable play.

This humorous play tells of the problems of four senior women who are widowed or divorced and how they resolve the difficulties of being single. It also deals with the concern of adult children whose parents seek companionship on the Internet, as well as the awkwardness of a "first date" for people in their 70s.

I've read the script and the playwright's dialogue is sure-fire and recognizable. For example, one character refers to "the cartoon redhead who's an orphan and learns to sing and makes it to Broadway." What's in a Manhattan? A dash of bitters and a dose of despair. Later we hear: "Falling in love is like stepping onto a boat. You get there and realize it's the Titanic." Jack's part brings humor and his character (Joe) is bemused and insightful; and he also does some heavy lifting. He is spot-on when he talks about the luck that makes relationships last.

This line of Joe's rings true for the ages: "...think of yourselves as really lucky to have put in the effort to make and keep these friendships."

REMINDERS:

- See the show at the Lake Forest Mall, Sunday March 1 at 2:30 PM.
- Look for the February 2020 **RADIO RECALL** where editor Martin Grams Jr. will present his researched articles, and tributes to Stewart Wright.

All for now. Joanie is signaling network feed. Chuck is piping Stephen Foster's incomparable "Beautiful Dreamer." Keep those cards and letters coming!

Soup and sandwiches in the Mud Room? But of course!

Mark Anderson

Reading PA