

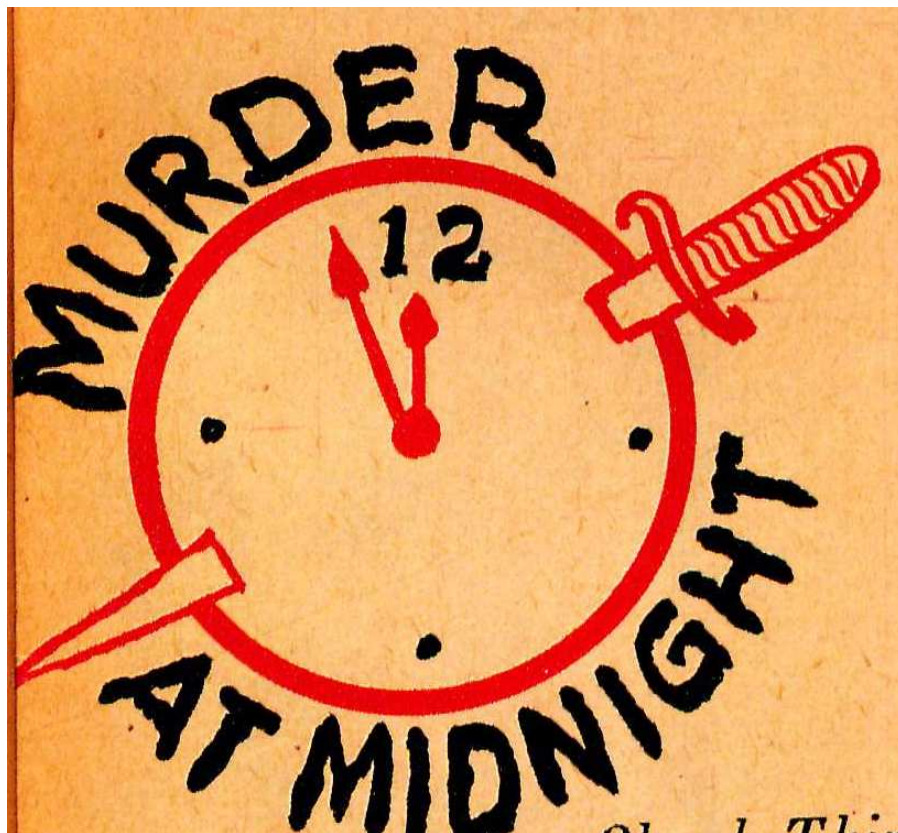
## *Murder at Midnight: Killing the Competition Pt. 1*

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A front page headliner in the May 3, 1946 issue of *Radio Daily* heralded the announcement that Alfred J. Hollender and Joseph W. Bailey of Louis G. Cowan, Inc. had successfully negotiated with World Broadcasting System (WBS) president Percy L. Deutsch and the firm's sales manager Herbert Gordon to produce and distribute a new transcribed thriller series. Ensuing publicity had the program billed as: "more than just a collection of the best mystery dramas ever produced - either live or recorded." This new venture, *Murder at Midnight* was the inaugural enterprise by the firm recently founded by the radio producer who had major accomplishments with previous programs.

A native of Chicago, Louis G. Cowan had been involved in the entertainment business

for fifteen years as a ballroom promoter and later as a radio producer. In 1940, he conceived one of the medium's most iconic query programs which evolved into a major success, *Quiz Kids*. During World War II, he was chief of the New York Office of the Overseas Branch of the Office of War Information and opted to pursue radio interests in Manhattan following the end of the war. Along with the two executives cited above who resided at the New York office, Cowan named long-time associate John Lewellen, vice-president and manager of the Chicago office to form Louis G. Cowan, Inc. (*Radio Daily*, February 13, 1946). Other members of Cowan's New York headquarters included Daniel Saidenberg, Music Director; Eliza Merrill Hickok, Publicity Director; Rachael Stevenson, Research Director and Program Coordinator Mary Watt. Though it does not cover *Murder at Midnight*, Martin A. Gardner's book on the *Quiz Kids* (McFarland, 2013) provides a comprehensive



history of Cowan's career through the mid-1950s. With current offices in all major media centers, WBS had been a leading participant in the production and distribution of transcribed programs since the early 1930s for both dramatic and musical series. A history of WBS and other related firms may be found in Alex Russo's *Points on the Dial* (Duke University Press, 2010).

This article, the first of two parts documenting the history of *Murder at Midnight* was inspired by an announcement in the Fall 2018 issue of this publication which dealt with the reassessment of the status of the series' extant audio. The current discourse will endeavor to present an overview of the chronology of the program including a sample of the vast array of sponsors and comments from the critics.

Recording of *Murder at Midnight* had commenced in mid-April of 1946. During the next nine months a total of fifty-two, 30-minute dramas would be waxed. The program was promoted via full page ads in major trade publications citing many of the key players. Included in this campaign was Robert Newman who was contracted as the chief scripter. Ultimately, a dozen other writers would also contribute their works. (A detailed study of the respective authors and their crafts will be presented in Part 2 of this treatise.)

Noteworthy is that Robert Newman and his fellow scribes were included in a *Radio Life* (October 27, 1946) profile of the series. This was indeed a rare occasion for the Hollywood-based magazine to provide such analysis of a transcribed, syndicated program that was produced outside of Southern California. For *Murder at Midnight*, the



Anton Leader and WBS control booth engineer Alvin Butow

anonymously written portrait focused on the "Blood-Thirsty Triumvirate." The first of these individuals was director Anton M. Leader. At the time he was selected for this post, Leader had built an impressive radio resume as a production director initially at WMCA in New York and then for Roger White Productions. In 1941, he joined the NBC production staff where he was instrumental in the success of both *Words at War* and *Home Is What You Make it*, among many others. In 1945, he resigned from network duties to engage freelance opportunities which included *You Make The News* and *Radio Reader's Digest*. The second of the *Radio Life* trio was musical director Charles Paul purported by *Variety* (July 17, 1946) to be earning \$75,000 per year (nearly \$1.5 million in 2019), as one of the highest paid musicians in the country. Among his numerous radio credits encompassing the mystery genre were *Inner Sanctum*, *Mr. & Mrs. North* and *House of Mystery* while those of daytime serials included *As The Twig Is Bent* and *Road of Life*. The third link in the triangle was announcer Raymond Morgan, a former Long Island minister



Charles Paul

who changed careers to become a radio actor and was heard in various 'heavy' roles on a plethora of shows from the washboard weepers including *Right to Happiness* to night time dramas such as *Gang Busters*. Of note are the omissions in the *Radio Life* biography, which lacked any mention of both Louis Cowan and WBS. Moreover, the program's originating center and transcribed nature were also absent. It did state however, that the series was being broadcast by the local KFI at 9:30, Friday evenings.

This NBC outlet was the first in the nation to air *Murder at Midnight* with broadcasts that commenced in mid-May. Though the firm bankrolling the series on KFI is still to be determined, the list of sponsors compiled for the program during the late 1940s is quite diverse. In addition to major network affiliates (such as KFI) the series was heard in numerous smaller markets including WFPG (Altoona, Pennsylvania) and KLXF (Butte, Montana) sponsored by the William F. Gable and Hennesy's department stores, respectively. Zale's Jewelers advertised over KROD (El Paso, Texas) as did Brundage Pharmacy via KERO in Bakersfield, California. On

KMBG (Honolulu, Hawaii) there were murders not only during the play itself but also during the commercial copy as furnished by the local office of The Terminix Company. *Murder at Midnight* was also presented to an audience outside of the continental U.S. by station KIFW in Sitka, Alaska.

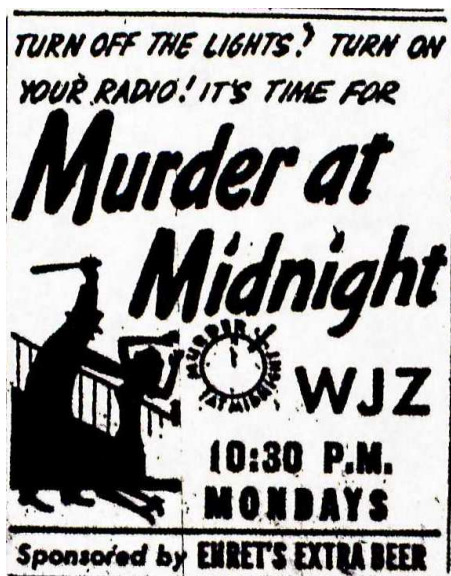


Raymond Morgan

As business continued to boom, Robert S. Michels announced (*Broadcasting Telecasting*, May 5, 1947) that he had increased the sales division staff of the Cowan firm and also consummated negotiations for the sales rights of *Murder at Midnight* to All-Canada Radio Facilities Ltd. One of the initial sponsors of the series in Canada was Garbert's (furriers) which slated the program on CFAC in Calgary, Alberta.

The commodity which had the greatest number of individual sponsors was that of the brewing industry. Considering the major markets, Birk Bros. was the advertiser on WGN (Chicago) while Acme Breweries paid the bills on San Francisco's KFRC. On a regional basis brands of Cold Spring Brewing were promoted in New England via WHDH (Boston), WLLH (Lowell) and WCSH (Portland). The firm that garnered

the most press in the trade was the George Ehret Brewing Company which sponsored the program on WJZ in New York.



Print ad promoting Ehret's sponsorship on WJZ

Though many print and online references state this was a network program for ABC, it was strictly a local WJZ venture. The misconception regarding the network status may have been derived from the many newspapers which utilized New York City station listings in their respective radio logs arbitrarily assigning network status to virtually all New York programs.

Moreover, *Murder at Midnight* is not listed in any of the ABC advertising portfolios during the 1940s. The Ehret business profited greatly through its advertising campaign with *Murder at Midnight*. This was trumpeted by Fred J. Hamm of ad agency Moore & Hamm, Inc. who correlated ratings to sales in the March 1947 issue of *Radio Showmanship*. Ehret's position in terms of sales for all brewers in the New York area jumped from twenty-second place to twelfth.

Additionally, *Murder at Midnight* became the top program in the Monday, 10:30 pm slot despite network competition from *Dr.*

*IQ* (NBC) and *Sweeney & March* (CBS).

However, the picture of the Ehret sponsorship was not all rosy as the advertisements were taken to task in a non-bylined *Variety* (August 6, 1947) exposé which proclaimed them as: "One of the worst cases of the failure of the agency and sponsor to trim their commercials to fit the show. This is a blood-bath program and the plugs - particularly the jingle sung by four girls - sound silly." The critique also faulted the middle commercial for breaking the show's suspense. This was a common complaint throughout radio's history for commercial programs of this genre.

As a transcribed, syndicated enterprise, *Murder at Midnight* was the recipient of a fair amount of criticism. Following the program's initial audition for the New York press, Saul Carson (writing as *Cars*. in *Variety*, May 29, 1946) offered this opinion for potential buyers: "For anyone interested in slotting a half-hour of cold chills and creeps, this series is it . . . you've got a show of network quality." Carson's concluding remarks stated: "There's other good creeper stuff on the air but little that beats this wax series." In his "Main Street" column (*Radio Daily*, May 24, 1946), Sid Weiss was most optimistic regarding the program's potential: "...for sheer psychological suspense we'll match it with anything now on the air. It's powerful stuff aimed for the late trade, and if you liked Arch Oboler's "Lights Out" series, wait'll you get an earful of this." Following several months of broadcasts on WJZ, radio's most esteemed pundit John Crosby (*New York Herald Tribune*, June 16, 1947) noted that the Cowan firm: "...is peddling two highly successful shows." Accompanying *Murder at Midnight* was a comedy, *The Smiths from Hollywood*. Crosby also mentioned the top ratings status of the mystery thriller. It is ironic that upon his initial mention of the series (*New York Herald Tribune*, January

17, 1947), Crosby facetiously posted that the program was not on at midnight and that there were no murders in a particular episode. However, he did note that it was: "...a very nice little horror story."

Conflicting viewpoints from listeners concerning the merits of the series were published by *New York Post* Radio Editor Paul Denis. In his March 1, 1947 column an ardent fan opined: "...holds me spellbound - the finest mystery program in acting, directing, plot." This was followed two weeks later (March 15, 1947) with: "Murder at Midnight features old stories and should change format." Evidently, this particular member of the WJZ audience was not in favor of script rekindling. This initial cycle of reviews was climaxed by Albert Williams who in a 1947 piece in the prestigious *The Saturday Review of Literature*, aptly summarized the program as: "... a quite high-class, adult mystery thriller, capably written, expertly produced, and in every way as good as the chillers that wealthy national advertisers shoot down the networks to you."

*Murder at Midnight* also garnered interest in a 1948 *Advertising & Selling* report by Ernest Whitney of the St. Louis-based Gardner Advertising Agency. In his assessment of the plattered mystery field, he recommended eight programs for consideration by potential sponsors. Six of these featured exploits of a single character (e.g. Eddie Ace, Boston Blackie) while the remaining two were anthologies. The first, which was released in 1945 was *The Haunting Hour* produced by the NBC Radio-Recording Division; the other was of course . . . *Murder at Midnight*. Noteworthy is that the former was promoted as "Mystery at its best." Though episodes of both series commenced with the sound of distant tolling bells, *The Haunting Hour* was much more subtle in nature with its narration and music than the hard-hitting Cowan enterprise.

In May of 1950, *Murder at Midnight*

became a sustaining venture on the Mutual network broadcast Monday's at 9:30 pm (Eastern). This undertaking prompted additional critique. Writing as *Gilb.*, George Gilbert (*Variety*, May 3, 1950) was not overly impressed with the program: "... is just another routine chiller series . . . was marked by standard writing devices used in horror pix a decade ago." June Bundy (*The Billboard*, June 3, 1950) had the opposite opinion of the series: "... an effectively scary airer, conveys much of the genuine eeriness of the old *Witch's Tales*." She struck a comparison between *Murder at Midnight* and contemporary thrillers: "... less tongue-in-cheek than the current run of punfull spook shows, this series is dead serious about its ghost stories, which should appeal to dialers who like their horror stuff straight."

The Cowan firm continued to oversee their prize mystery package until Harry S. Goodman Productions negotiated to obtain the distribution rights in the mid-1950s (*Broadcasting*, April 12, 1954). The Goodman firm continued to offer *Murder at Midnight* into the early 1960s.

Part II of this series will explore the scripts writers and each of their respective episodes along with providing identification of cast members.



Print ad for Risk Bros./Trophy Beer. Note differences in text versus Ehert's Beer copy from previous page.

## *Murder at Midnight: Killing the Competition Pt. 2*

*By Karl Schadow ©2019*

In Part 1 of this series, (*The Old Radio Times*, Winter 2019) a brief profile of *Murder at Midnight* was presented which included executives of the producing firm, Louis G. Cowan, Inc. and also principal crew members of the series. Additionally, a timeline of the program's tenure on the etherwaves was delineated with highlights of radio station and sponsor involvement along with selected comments from the critics.

This concluding part cites key features of all fifty-two episodes which was compiled by research of extant audio (thirty-four episodes) and analysis of scripts of all fifty-two dramas. A complete collection of these scripts was examined at the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Additionally, several scripts were also scrutinized that were held in the Robert Newman Papers, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University. The information as outlined for each episode is as follows: episode number, title, author, recording date, copyright details, audio status, plot, and cast. Also included if applicable, are additional uses of the script.

#1 "The Dead Hand" by Robert Newman, recorded April 19, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received April 30, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU2897. Extant audio:



Louis G. Cowan

Yes. Plot: Following an accident in which he lost a hand, a concert pianist will not settle for a mere artificial limb as a replacement. Cast: Berry Kroeger (Roger), Betty Caine (Lona), Barry Hopkins (Dr. Martin) and Frank Readick (Hook). The script was previously broadcast as "The Hand" on *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (January 30, 1945).

#2 "The Man Who Was Death" by Robert Newman, recorded April 26, 1946. Script Copyright Claim

received April 30, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU2898. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: In order to capture the true essence of his subject matter, a demented sculptor employs devious means to obtain his models. Cast: Frank Behrens (Jan Rolfe), Agnes Young (Aline, Mrs. Dolan), Lawson Zerbe (Detective Jordan), Amzie Strickland (Nancy), Robert Lynn (Peters, Sgt. Hanrahan). The script was previously broadcast as "The Mask of Death" on *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (March 15, 1942).

#3 "The Secret of XR-3" by Max Ehrlich, recorded May 6, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received May 9, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU3023. Extant Audio: Yes. Plot: The life of a circus midget longing to become normal takes a drastic turn when he



Ruth Gilbert

meets a prominent physician. Cast: Karl Swenson (Gargo), Charles Webster (chaplin, pool player #2), Martin Wolfson (Petroff, pool player #1), Ruth Gilbert (Rhoda) and Roger De Koven (Dr. Mead, pool player #3).

#4 "Wherever I Go" by William Morwood, recorded May 10, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received May 12, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU3046. Extant Audio: Yes. Plot: After killing his wife, a husband is constantly in the presence of an unusual stranger. Cast: Berry Kroeger (Gordon), Adele Ronson (Ellen, operator), John Gibson (The Stranger, hotel clerk) and Barry Hopkins (trooper).

#5 "Trigger Man" by Max Ehrlich, recorded May 13, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received May 12, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU3047. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: Previously known for being a coward, a hoodlum suddenly becomes a ruthless gunman. Cast: William Quinn (Charlie),



Alice Yourman

(November 1, 1942).

Spencer Bentley (Reilly, Mike), Alice Yourman (Mrs. Reilly, superintendent), Frank Behrens (Donelli), Ted Jewett (Doc Leonard, cop), and Mandel Kramer (Bummy, doctor). The script was previously broadcast as "Death Keeps a Deadline" on *The Shadow*

#6 "Death's Goblet" by Sigmund Miller, recorded May 17, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received May 23, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU3271. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: Does a non-descript wineglass exert special powers over those who drink from it? Cast: Eric Dressler (Harvey) and John Griggs (Arthur).

#7 "The Heavy Death" by Robert Newman, recorded May 20, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received May 23, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU3272. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: A nuclear physicist is able to transform himself and his experiments into instruments of death. Cast: Frank Readick



Charles Webster

(Shill Sullivan), Charles Webster (Dr. Cardan), Lon Clark (Sgt. Roe, Matson) and Roger De Koven (Dr. Vance).

#8 "Nightmare" by Joseph Ruscoll, recorded May 24, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received May 28, 1946, assigned

Registration No. DU3320. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: A woman's bizarre dream wanders from hamburgers, to an unfinished novel to a murder perpetrated by her husband. Cast: Elspeth Eric (Helen), Walter Vaughn (Ernie), Eleanor Phelps (Betty), Jack MacBryde (policeman, cook) and Nat Cantor (Joe). The script was subsequently broadcast as "I Dreamt I Died" on both *The Mollé Mystery Theatre* (November 14, 1946) and *Murder By Experts* (September 12, 1949).

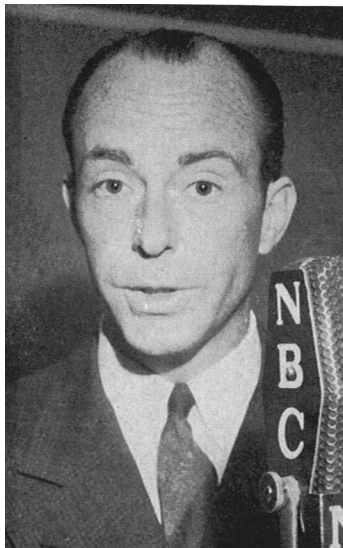
#9 "The Dead Come Back" by William Morwood, recorded May 27, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received May 28, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU3321. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: An escaped convict is haunted by a tune he first heard while committing a previous crime. Cast: Joseph Julian (Lefty), Ed Jerome (Doc Padgett, Charlie), Wendell Holmes (superintendent), Paul Mann (George, Tom) and Barbara Anderson (Ruth).

#10 "Terror Out of Space" by Robert Newman, recorded June 3, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received June 4, 1946,

assigned Registration No. Du3395. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: In attempting to establish radio contact with the moon, astronomers encounter unconventional aliens. Cast: George Petrie (Lt. Larkin) and Peter Capell (Prof. Martell).

#11 "The Creeper" by Joseph Ruscoll, recorded June 6, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received June 11, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU3503. Extant audio: yes. Plot: A policeman's wife is terrified that she

will be the next victim of a serial killer. Cast: Ann Shepherd (Georgia), Carl Frank (Steve), John Gibson (Perley), Kermit Murdock (newscaster, doorman), Martin Wolfson (druggist, Jimmy), Elsie Mae Gordon (Mrs. Stone).



John Gibson

The script was previously

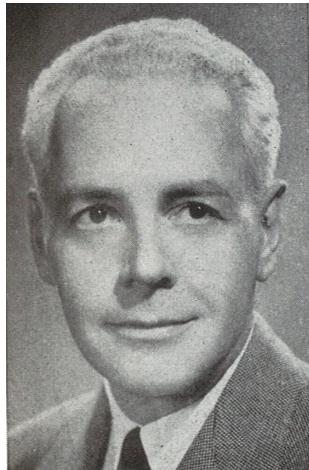
broadcast under the same title on *The Mollé Mystery Theatre* (March 29, 1946) and subsequently aired on several other programs.

#12 "The Man Who Died Yesterday" by Robert Newman, recorded June 7, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received June 11, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU3504. Plot: A hitchhiker preoccupied with reaching an important destination, has the uncanny ability to foretell the future. Cast: Stuart Brody (David), Mandel Kramer (Walt, policeman), Frances Heflin (waitress, Hazel) Joseph De Santis (newscaster, doctor) and Don Hirst (cashier, attendant).

#13 "Till Death Do Us Part" by Joseph Ruscoll, recorded June 10, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received June 11, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU3505. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: Is it the wife who wants to kill her husband, or is he the one who wishes to dissolve their marriage in a fiendish manner? Cast: Elspeth Eric (Ruth), Eric Dressler (Frank) and Maurice Tarplin (cab driver, Inspector Wade).

#14 "Murder Is A Lonely Business" by William Morwood, recorded June 13, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received June 16, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU3641. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: A couple resorting to unsavory means in acquiring a wealthy uncle's estate is thwarted by a mysterious laugh. Cast: Helen Shields (Grace), Wendell Holmes (Fred), Carl Emory (minister, Ronnie) and Cameron Prud'homme (Uncle Edward).

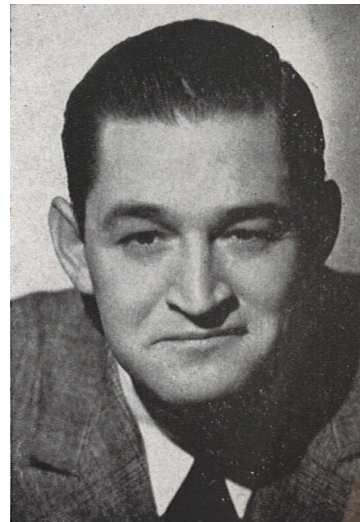
#15 "The House Where Death Lived" by Robert Newman, recorded June 14, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received June 16, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU3642. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: A researcher of psychic phenomena is obsessed with his investigations in a haunted house. Cast: Berry Kroeger (Dr. Goff), Abby Lewis (Jean, woman), Edgar Stehli (Calhoun) and George Tiplady (Sanders, cop). The script was previously broadcast under the same title on *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (June 6, 1943).



James van Dyk

#16 "The Kabbala" by Robert Newman, recorded July 30, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received July 28, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU4314. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: An ancient Arab scroll provides unexpected results for those who exploit it. Cast: James Van Dyk (Dr. Rudd), Martin Blaine (Dale), Ellen Fenwick (Barbara), Kermit Murdock (Arab, attendant), Harald Dyrenforth (Prof. La Forde). The script was previously broadcast under the same title on *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (June 8, 1941).

#17 "The Ace of Death" by Max Ehrlich, recording date unknown. Script Copyright Claim received July 28, 1946, assigned Registration No. 4315. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: A passerby prevents a man from committing suicide by convincing the



Ted De Corsia.

despondent person that there is a more dignified manner in which to die. Cast: Karl Swenson (John Evans), John Griggs (President), Ted Jewett (Frederick Whitney), Cameron Prud'homme (Mr. Thompson, Mr. Benedict) and Ted De Corsia (Mr. Dennison).

#18 "The House That Time Forgot" by Sigmund Miller, recording date unknown. Script Copyright Claim received August 7, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU4485. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: In purchasing their dream house, a newlywed couple discovers that it contains a peculiar time-keeping

piece. Cast: Vinton Hayworth (Fred), Elsie Hitz (Eva), Rod Hendrickson (Mr. Smith), James Monks (Richard Holloway), Marion Shockley (Mrs. Holloway) and Neil Fitzgerald (Gabriel). The script was previously broadcast as "The House By The Sea" on *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (June 27, 1943).

#19 "Death Tolls A Requiem" by Max Ehrlich, recording date unknown. Script Copyright Claim received August 7, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU4486. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: A man resorts to dire means to obtain the wealth he believes is rightfully



Michael Fitzmaurice

his. Cast: Michael Fitzmaurice (Arthur), Arthur Maitland (Mr. Brooks), Ed Begley (Peter, foreman), Maurice Tarplin (Frank, Prof. Alvin) and Burford Hampden (Dr. Williams). The script was previously broadcast as "The Bells Toll Death" on *The*

*Shadow* (December 13, 1942) and repeated on that same program as "Death Rings a Requiem" (August 30, 1953).

#20 "The Thirteen Floor" by Winifred Wolfe, recording date unknown. Script Copyright Claim received August 16, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU4550. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: A conniving woman desperately attempts to escape the clutches of the boyfriend she sent to jail. Cast: Ann Shepherd (Kitty) and Paul Mann (Nickie).

#21 "The Mark of Cain" by A. S. Ginnes, recorded August 22, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received August 24, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU4698. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: Has the recent killing spree been committed by an escaped lunatic or his sly twin brother - a newspaper reporter? Cast: Berry Kroeger (the Brothers Sturgess), Maurice Tarplin (Dr. Portman, Lt. Rogan), Carl Emory (Stillman) and Earl George.

#22 "Red Wheels" by Jack Gordun, recording date unknown. Script Copyright Claim received August 28, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU4729. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: Is it conceivable that the wheels of a bus in which a superstitious hoodlum is riding



Craig McDonnell

will lead to his doom? Cast: John Sylvester (Freddy), Craig McDonnell (Smolley, bus passenger #2), Frank Behrens (Joe, dispatcher), Floyd Buckley (cop, bus passenger #3), Agnes Young (clerk, bus passenger #1), Bill Zuckert (bus driver) and Alen Drake

(truck driver, desert rat).

#23 "The Line is Dead" by Bafe Blau, recorded September 5, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received September 8, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU4851. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: An eccentric man with a condition that often mimics death is determined not to be buried alive. Cast: Mr. & Mrs. [Betty Caine] Raymond Edward Johnson (Mr. & Mrs.

Albert Lockridge), Will Geer (minister, Mr.



Alney Alba

Burton), Maurice Franklin (Dr. George), Alney Alba (nurse) and Lon Clark (Oliver Wentworth).

#24 "Death Across the Board" by Robert Newman, recorded September 12, 1946. Script Copyright Claim

received September 18, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU4973. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: A psychotic chess fancier plays his latest match with the highest possible stakes. Cast: Eric Dressler (Dr. Strand), Luis van Rooten (Raphael, Valenti), Roland Winters (Chief Adams, Felix), Norma Chambers (Alice) and Eda Reiss Merin (lady in black). The script was previously broadcast under the same title on *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (June 5, 1945).

#25 "Murder Out of Mind" by Sigmund Miller, recorded September 19, 1946. Script Copyright Claim (citing Miller as correct author) received November 6, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU6086. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: Via a most unusual method, a husband attempts to drive his wife insane. Cast: Alan Hewitt (Carl), Charlotte Holland (Mary), Joseph Holland (Dr. Heller, mailman), Edward Kalish (The Voice, Detective) and Fay Baker (Irene).

#26 "Death's Worshipper" by Jay Williams, recorded September 26, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received September 25, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU5035. Extant audio: Yes.

Plot: A woman fears for her life when her archeologist husband performs ceremonies honoring Hindu gods. Cast: Bess Johnson (Kate) and Carl Emory (Quentin).

#27 "We Who Are About To Die" by A. S. Ginnes, recorded October 1, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received October 11, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU5275. Extant audio: Part 1 of 2. Plot: The reading of a poem amongst a group of friends has a profound effect upon their individual lives. Cast: Gregory Morton (Dr. Boyd), Stefan Schnabel (Aram Hiller), Peggy Sanford (Fritzi), Frank Behrens (Paul, truck driver), Eleanor Phelps (Edith) and Lamont Johnson (Harry Jordan).

#28 "The Black Curtain" by Max Ehrlich, recorded October 5, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received October 11, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU5276. Extant audio: Part 1 of 2. Plot: A variation of the proverbial love triangle between a patient, his physician and the physician's wife results in unintended consequences. Cast: Eric Dressler (Don), Santos Ortega (Dr. Fortescu), Winston O'Keefe (Dr. Radcliff) and Norma Chambers (Annette).



Ruth Yorke

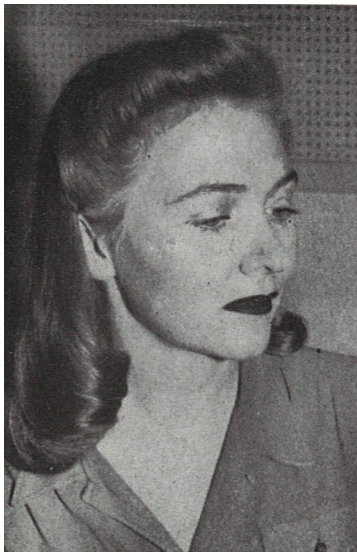
#29 "The Ape Song" by Peter Martin, recorded October 8, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received October 11, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU5277. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: An African big-game hunter has special plans for his prize creature that go

far beyond zoological study. Cast: Raymond Edward Johnson (Crane Folliot), Ruth Yorke (Cecily, woman on street), Alfred Shirley (Dr. Murchison), Joseph Boland (program vendor, guard) and Maurice Franklin (Sam, Jake).

#30 "The Man With the Black Beard" by Sigmund Miller, recorded October 10, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received October 11, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU5278. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: A beleaguered woman's dream turns to reality when she meets a man sporting unique facial features. Cast: Mercedes McCambridge (Evelyn), Lamont Johnson (Charles), Joseph De Santis (Dr. Lieber, morgue attendant), Cameron Prud'homme (cemetery attendant, Mr. Blakely) and Earl George (cab driver, elevator operator).

#31 "Death Ship" by William Morwood, recorded October 15, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received October 18, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU6039. Extant audio: No. Plot: A jinxed sailor and a cursed ship find one another most compatible company. Cast: Jimmy Tansey (Shorty), John Sylvester (Frank), Ann Shepherd (Mable), Alan Hewitt (Jim), Julian Noa (man, Mr. Creel) and

Margaret Burlen (Mrs. Creel).



Abby Lewis

#32 "Outcast" by Max Ehrlich, recorded October 17, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received October 18, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU6040. Extant audio; No. Plot: What is the reason experimentation with a new plant

species leads a botanist to sequester himself from society? Cast: James Monks (Philip), Martin Wolfson (Franz, Hanley), Abby Lewis (flower vendor, Rhoda), John Griggs (Lt. Dolan) and Donald Bain (dog, mouse). The script was previously broadcast as "Touch of Death" on *The Shadow* (February 28, 1943) and repeated on that program May 19, 1946.

#33 "Fatal Interruption" by Bafe Blau, recorded October 22, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received October 18, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU6041. Extant audio: No. Plot: A biochemist unknowingly circumvents the plans of someone who wishes to murder his boss. Cast: Dick Nelson (Collins) and Betty Winkler (Andrea).

#34 "The Dispossessed" by Jack Gordun, recorded October 24, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received October 24, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU5593. Extant audio: No. Plot: How is a pianist able to perform at Carnegie Hall after he was murdered? Cast: Lamont Johnson (John Bradley), Jack Hartley (Stake Burns), Sandy Strouse (Joe Gruber), Alun B. Williams (Crandall, Paine), Ralph Camargo (Mr. Gray, doctor).

#35 "The Black Swan" by Leon Meadow, recorded October 29, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received October 31, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU5720. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: A ship that is blamed for the murder of



Jim Boles

several people is finally thwarted during its last voyage. Cast: Lawson Zerbe (Amos Bradley, Fred), James Boles (Philip and Henderson), Joseph Latham (Capt. Caleb), Gen Phillips (Sarah) and Joan Copeland (Miss Brewster, Abby).

#36 "Island of the Dead" by Robert Newman, recording date unknown. Script Copyright Claim received November 6, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU5853. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: A parolee concocts the ideal revenge for the trio who had previously framed him. Cast: Clyde North (Simon Sloan), Maurice Tarplin (Harrity), Charles Webster (Richards) and Sandy Strouse. The script was previously broadcast under the same title on *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (March 13, 1945).

#37 "The Dark Chamber" by Robert Newman, recorded October 31, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received November 6, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU5854. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: Brought together as an experiment by a fanatical psychiatrist, two strangers together must outwit their torturer in order to survive. Cast: William Quinn (Joe Watson), Ruth Last (Betty Grant), Harold Young (Dr. Helming), Maurice Brenner (Ben) and Tom Hoier (Ryan). The script was previously broadcast under the same title on *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (December 11, 1945).



Luis van Rooten

#38 "Death Is No End" by A. S. Ginnes, recorded November 5, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received November 13, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU5930. Extant audio: Yes. Plot: Longtime tellers at a bank, a husband and wife while on vacation

enjoying their employer's money soon begin to hear a strange beating sound. Cast: Elspeth Eric (Phyllis), Luis van Rooten (Mitchell), Cameron Prud'homme (Mike, Indian, Joe), Craig McDonnell (Mr. Whalen, motorcycle cop) and John Randolph (radio announcer, garage attendant).

#39 "The Dark Cellar" by Max Ehrlich, recorded November 7, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received November 13, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU5931.

Extant audio: No. Plot: A man's childhood



Stuart Brody

nightmare continues to plague him even during his life as a hardened criminal. Cast: Stuart Brody and Paul Nugent. The script was previously broadcast as "A Date With Death" on *The Shadow* (April 9, 1944) and repeated on that

program as "The Dark Cellar" (March 22, 1953).

#40 "Murder Is Not Enough" by Bafe Blau, recorded November 12, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received November 13, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU5932. Extant audio: No. Plot: A police detective forced to retire from the department exacts his revenge by committing the perfect crime. Cast: Ed Begley, Ed Jerome and Amzie Strickland.

#41 "The Face of the Dragon" by Jack Gordun, recorded November 14, 1946.

Script Copyright Claim received November 20, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU6055. Extant audio: No. Plot: A small object constantly taunts a man who has avoided punishment for murdering his wife. Cast: Karl Swenson (Ralph Storm) and Elsie Mae Gordon (Cora Storm).

#42 "The Man Who Died Again" by Robert Newman, recorded November 19, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received November 20, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU6054. Extant audio: No. Plot: Shot by the police while making a jailbreak and now on the operating table, a convict experiences a most baffling nightmare. Cast: Alan Baxter (Mitch Maynard). The script was previously broadcast under the same title on *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (April 26, 1942).

#43 "City Morgue" by Winifred Wolfe, recorded November 21, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received November 27, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU6252. Extant audio: No. Plot: A woman desperately attempting to telephone her boyfriend continues to reach the wrong number. Cast: Helen Shields (Laurie), Berry Kroeger (Chris) and Harry Clark. The script was subsequently broadcast as "Around the Corner from Nowhere" on *Theatre 5* (May 12, 1965).

#44 "Terror" by Joseph Ruscoll, recorded November 26, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received November 27, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU6253. Extant audio: No. Plot: A man is unable to convince anyone that he's going to be killed at the witching hour. Cast: John Harvey, Stephen Chase, Grace Keddy and George Tiplady. The script was subsequently broadcast as "A Study in Terror" on *The Mollé Mystery Theatre* (January 3, 1947).

#45 "The Corridor of Doom" by Robert Newman, recorded December 3, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received December 4, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU6704. Extant audio: No. Plot: Is a man only dreaming, or did he actually take repeated walks down a lonely hallway?



Ethel Everett

Cast: Eric Dressler (John Clay), Santos Ortega (Dr. Stone), Ethel Everett (nurse, Jane), Alen Drake (Martin) and William Keene (Alec, cop). The script was previously broadcast under the same title on *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (October 23, 1945).

#46 "Appointment" by Winifred Wolfe, recorded December 5, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received December 4, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU6705. Extant audio: No. Plot: On their first wedding anniversary, a couple's plans for a quiet time are shattered by the husband's former partner. Cast: Ann Shepherd (Ada), Frank Behrens (Gene), Will Hare, (airport PA announcer, boy), Norman Rose (Stormy, newscaster), Humphrey Davis (Weezel, man) and Charlotte Holland (Franzy, woman).

#47 "Glory Train" by Robert Newman, recorded December 10, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received December 11, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU6523. Extant audio: No. Plot: After robbing a

freight office, a gang of hoodlums continue to escape by switching trains until they enter one which has a only one stop. Cast: Frank Behrens (Ben), Frank Readick (Dink), William Quinn (Casey, man) and Ted Osborn (Wabash, chef). The script was previously broadcast as "The Train to Glory" on *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (January 1, 1944).

#48 "A Week Ago Wednesday" by Winifred Wolfe, recorded December 12, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received December 11, 1946. assigned Registration No. DU6524. Extant audio: No. Plot: Did a woman actually travel forward in time to commit a murder? Cast: unknown. The script was previously broadcast under the same title on *Suspense* (November 29, 1945) and repeated on that program January 5, 1958.

#49 "The Living Dead" by Robert Newman, recorded December 17, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received December 20, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU6603. Extant audio: No. Plot: Experiments with a new drug go awry forcing its creator to quickly develop an antidote. Cast: Eric Dressler, Bill Griffis, Eleanor Sherman, Merrill E. Joles and Marguerite Morrissey. The script was previously broadcast under the same title on *Inner Sanctum Mystery* (November 9, 1941).

#50 "The Face" by Paul Monash, recorded December 19, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received December 20, 1946, assigned Registration No. DU6604. Extant audio: No. Plot: How are two rivals able to stake a claim as "the most ugliest man in the world?" Cast: Hester Sondergaard, Lawson Zerbe and George Tiplady.

#51 "Dead Man's Turn" by Robert Newman, recorded December 23, 1946. Script Copyright Claim received January 2, 1947, assigned

Registration No. DU6773 Plot: How will a man who has been unmercifully followed day and night confront his adversary? Cast: Bill



Eleanor Phelps

Smith (Andy), Roland Winters (Judson, clerk), Eleanor Phelps (Anna, landlady), Ed Fuller (foreman, cop) and Martin Wolfson (morgue attendant, pawn broker). The script was previously broadcast under the same title on *Inner Sanctum*

*Mystery* (April 30, 1946).

#52 "Memory of the Dead" by A. S. Ginnes, recording date unknown. Script Copyright Claim received January 2, 1947, assigned Registration No. DU6774. Extant audio: No. Plot: What would cause a man to believe that people shouldn't possess legs? Cast: unknown.

The chronicling of transcribed, syndicated programs often presents problems for the radio historian. As such series may be offered to broadcasters over a period of years and thus aired by stations at various times and days, the use of a specific broadcast date for each episode should be discouraged.

For *Murder at Midnight*, Harry Wilson has instituted a log based on copyright dates, see link:

<https://archive.org/details/murderatmidnight-bycopyrightdate>

The current study takes this classification much farther as all available audio and each

script of the series has now been scrutinized. The recording of *Murder at Midnight* episodes commenced April 19, 1946 and concluded in December of the same year. The April date has been misinterpreted by many chroniclers as the initial broadcast of the series. Coupled with the program's history, specifically on station KFI (see Part 1), this error has now been corrected. Scripts were submitted for copyright claim either singly or in batches and note that a given episode may have been recorded before or after the copyright date.

Many scripts contained a title page which included cast and production crew. Additional cast members were identified via press releases and also by voice recognition conducted by this author. It is a tribute to the production staff that many radioites were utilized throughout the series including stalwarts Ann Shepherd and Eric Dressler who were joined by newcomers to the medium, Don Hirst and Gen Phillips. Anton M. Leader and Raymond Morgan were director and narrator respectively for all fifty-two episodes. Albert Buhrman was at the organ console subbing for Charles Paul in Episodes #16 through #19. Though animal imitators Brad Barker and Don Bain were included in cast sheets or press releases, the identity of the sound effects artists remain unknown. It is most probable that these individuals were employees of the World Broadcasting System in a similar capacity as the program's studio booth engineer Alvin Butow.

Though distinctly a "Blood and Thunder" series, *Murder at Midnight* did have its moments of inside humor. For example, in "Terror Out of Space" (Episode #10), two of the main character names were John Larkin and Roy Shields (a tribute to Chicagoans, radio actor Larkin and musical composer/conductor Shields). Many of the scripts were utilized not only for other radio programs, but also for television. This aspect

of the program warrants additional study along with the search for audio of the remaining "lost" installments. As noted by Bill Nadel in the program guide of the 2011 Radio Spirits release, *Murder at Midnight*, two episodes "The Dark Chamber" (#37) and "Death Is No End" (#38) were previously uncirculated. Moreover, the literary foundation of selected episodes needs to be explored (a Walt Whitman poem was the basis for "We Who Are About To Die" [Episode #27]). It is anticipated that the material presented in this two-part narrative will inspire additional studies of this series.

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You can contact Mr. Schadow at [bluecar91@hotmail.com](mailto:bluecar91@hotmail.com)

