

*Stories of Pacific Powerland*  
Ryan Ellett

While old-time radio fans are generally aware of post-Golden Age dramatic radio programming such as *Theatre 5* and *CBS Radio Mystery Theater*, a little-known series from this so-called New Time Radio era is *Stories of Pacific Powerland*. Sponsored by Pacific Power & Light, a utility formed in 1910, the series aired over more than 70 stations across the power company's service region that stretched from California to Washington and over to Wyoming.

Originally conceived in 1960 and premiering October 23, 1961, *Stories of Pacific Powerland* dramatized stories of the region's history in five-minute episodes. The debut story focused on Air Force general Nathan Twining who survived six days adrift on a life raft after his bomber crashed in the South Pacific during World War II. The series was considered an unusual sort of advertising for the utility, especially by the 1970s. In 1975 company statements indicated the show had a budget that year of approximately \$34,000.

The program was introduced and narrated by Nelson Olmsted, a veteran radio and television actor for much, if not all, of its run. Clint Gruber was responsible for announcing duties at the beginning and end of each episode. Scheduled to air three times a week, 1,273 original episodes of *Stories of Pacific Powerland* were broadcast (according to the American Heritage Center archives) during its run before it was cancelled in 1977. Beginning in 1970 Thomas K. Worcester, a freelance writer from Clackamas, OR, took over writing and producing chores from John Forbis, who had previously been responsible for each of the 78 original scripts created each year. Each story was aired twice in a year, leading to an estimated total of 3,000 broadcasts during its sixteen year run. *Stories of Pacific Powerland* and its unique stories of the northwestern United States quietly left the air in 1977.