

# *Sutter Creek Community Benefit Foundation*

September Newsletter, 2024

## **From the Airways of the Past Thrilling Tales of Yesteryear**

*Return with us now for a short stroll down memory lane to the  
Golden Age of Radio*

**When I was a kid in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, my Dad, a career Air Force officer, was transferred to Japan for a three-year tour.**



**By the time my Mom and the four of us kids arrived, Dad had found a house and furnished it sparingly, but with a TV! Being a child of the '50s, a television was the most important thing in the house to me. Imagine my shock and surprise to discover that Gunsmoke's Matt Dillon, Ozzie & Harriet's Ricky Nelson, I Love Lucy's Lucille Ball, and Rawhide's Rowdy Yates spoke not a**

**word of English, only Japanese!**



**In order to avoid a lifetime of psychiatric bills, my Dad bought me a small transistor radio – remember those? That radio picked up broadcasts from the Army and Air Force Entertainment Service who aired all forms of music and spoken shows originally from the mid '30s through the mid '50s. It became my after dinner world. Some names were familiar because of their transition to television. But names like Boston Blackie, Junior G Men, Lights Out, and Dimension X became new and beloved substitutes. Even though most shows were older than me by a generation or more, I became a lifelong fan of Old Time Radio Shows.**

**These broadcasts, which are still available for streaming on several internet websites, were truly snapshots of American life in the pre-1960 era.**

**One of the favorites out of the thousands of shows broadcast was “Gunsmoke”, starring William Conrad as Matt Dillon, character actor Parley Baer as Chester, and Howard McNear**

**(Floyd the barber on the Andy Griffith Show) as Doc. Georgia Ellis rounded out the regular cast as Miss Kitty.**



**Airing on CBS in 1952, it ran until 1961 when the radio show was ended in favor of TV. Chester's original radio name was Chester Wesley Proudfoot. When Dennis Weaver took the role on television in 1955, it was changed to Chester B. Goode.**

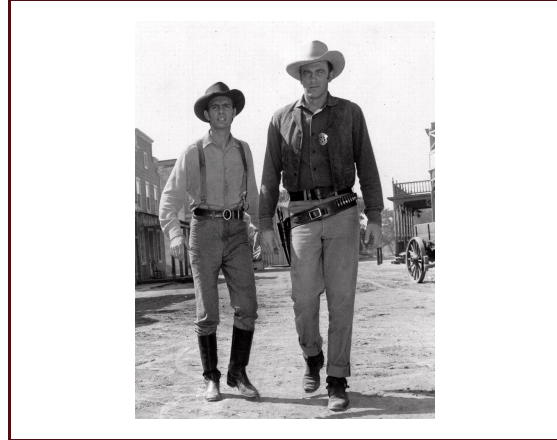


**Coincidentally, Chesterfield cigarettes sponsored Gunsmoke on both radio and television for years, following L & M cigarettes, the original sponsor. Also, the character of Doc Adams was named after the series of Addams Family cartoons. On radio's Gunsmoke, Doc's last name was not Adams. It was changed to Adams to hide from a false murder charge. Kitty Russell was not an original character when the show debuted in April of 1952. Kitty was added as a character in May 1952 with Georgia Ellis in the role where she remained until the radio show ended in 1961. She was never seen in the television show where Amanda Blake reigned as Miss Kitty.**

**William Conrad (Matt Dillon) began as a radio announcer in the**

**1930's. He participated in over 7,500 radio shows in one role or another. Prior to Gunsmoke, Conrad generally played a villain. Graduating to television, Conrad starred in Jake & the Fatman, Nero Wolfe and Cannon.**

**Roles had to be specially written to accommodate his girth. He typically weighed between 230 and 270 pounds and stood 5'9". James Arness, by contrast, stood between 6'5" and 6'2", depending on your source.**



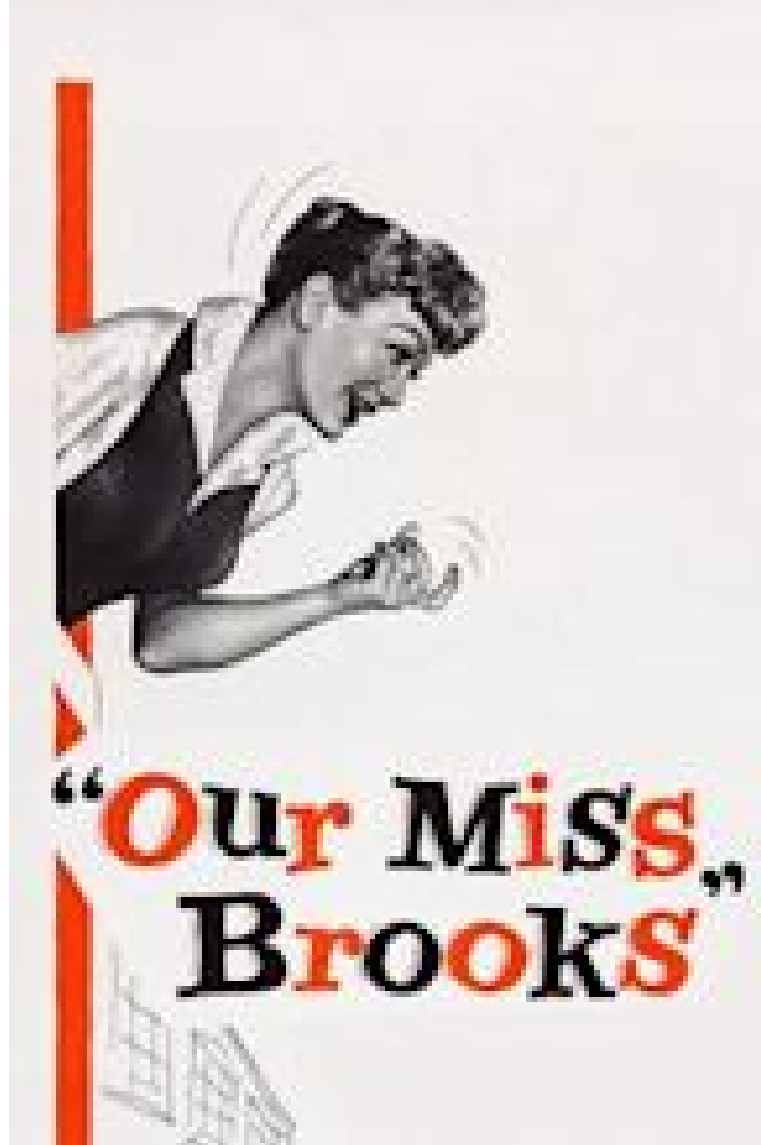
**Other western hayburners enjoyed on radio included Have Gun Will Travel, The Lone Ranger, The Cisco Kid, Hopalong Cassidy, and, of course, Roy Rogers accompanied by his lovely wife, Dale Evans.**



**And Gene Autry accompanied by his lovely horse, Champion.**



**Another hit for CBS was the popular comedy, *Our Miss Brooks*, starring Eve Arden as the fictional Madison High English teacher.**



Even though Eve Arden had appeared in several films, and had begun her career on Broadway, the role of Connie Brooks became her most popular and identifiable character. Our Miss Brooks was a groundbreaking show portraying Miss Brooks as neither a birdbrained goof, nor a homebound domestic, but instead a working woman who surpassed the perceived limits to working women's lives of the day. Brooks was a realistic character in a realistic profession. She showed women could competently and independently navigate through life.

The show also starred veteran character actor Gale Gordon as the school's explosive principal, Osgood Conklin; Richard Crenna, as Walter Denton, Miss Brooks' pal and helper; Robert Rockwell replaced Jeff Chandler as the clueless, bashful, biology teacher, Philip Boynton; Jane Mogan as Brooks' kindly, but somewhat absentminded landlady, Mrs. Davis, whose tendency to lose her train of thought in mid-sentence was loved by audiences; Gloria McMillan as Harriet Conklin, daughter of Osgood Conklin, and object of Walter Denton's affection; Leonard Smith as dim-witted Stretch Snodgrass, Walter's best friend and Madison High star athlete; and Mary Jane Croft as

scheming rival English teacher, Daisy Enright.



Minerva, Mrs. Davis' cat whose distinctive "meeow" made her a favorite.



The show ran on radio and television from 1948 to 1957 and was sponsored by Colgate-Palmolive, promoting Palmolive Beauty

**Soap, and Luster Crème shampoo “You owe your crowning glory to ...Luster Crème shampoo”.**

**Lighthearted comedy shows were always popular with audiences seeking to escape the daily grind. Some of the more popular ones were – Fibber McGee & Molly, The Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet, Burns & Allen, The Jack Benny Show, Duffy’s Tavern, The Great Gildersleeve, and I Love Lucy.**



**In the early 1950's, America became obsessed with science fiction. One popular avenue was that of peering into the future.**



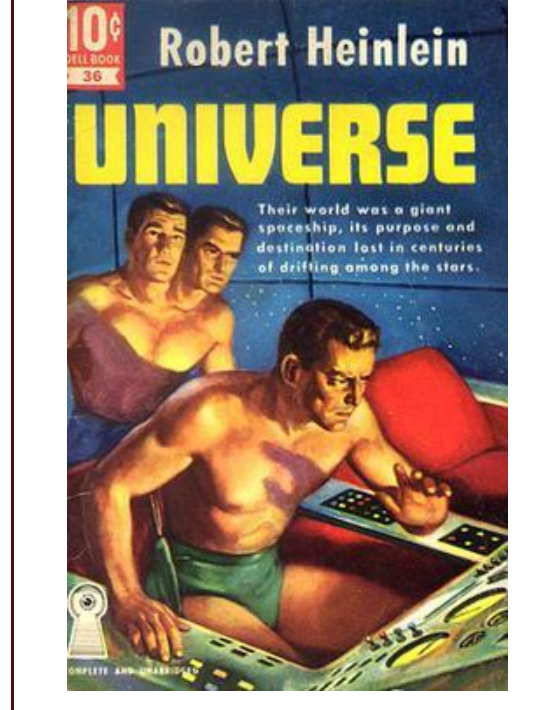
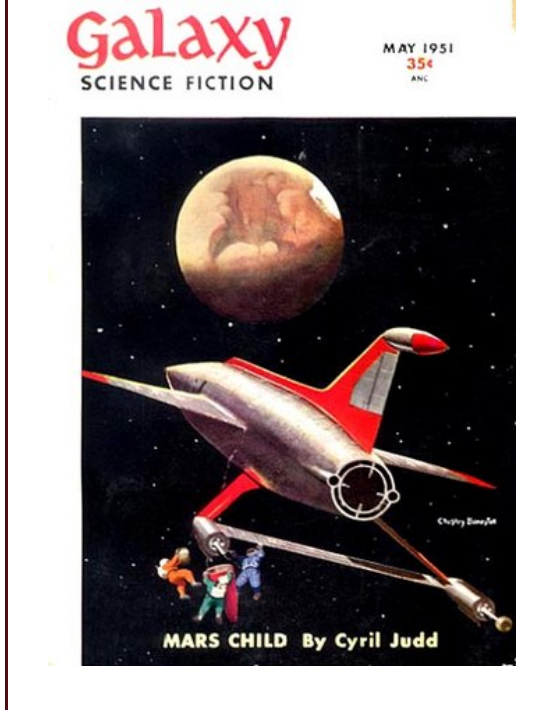
**NBC's popular fantasy/science fiction show, Dimension X, and Mutual Broadcasting's slightly less well known, 2000 Plus, provided predictions, and glimpses, into the future.**



**It's interesting today to listen to shows such as Lights Out, X Minus One, Beyond Tomorrow, Escape, Inner Sanctum, Suspense, Tales of Tomorrow, and Exploring Tomorrow and see how many futuristic predictions have become part of today's everyday life.**

**Developing scripts from some of the most influential science fiction writers of the day, these shows were immediately popular. Such luminaries as Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, and Ray Bradbury contributed to well thought out adult entertainment.**





The radio shows illustrated here are merely a small fraction of the thousands of broadcasts from the mid '30s through the mid '60s. Many, if not most of these are available on the internet at sites such as [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), [www.olderadio.com](http://www.olderadio.com), [www.otr.net](http://www.otr.net), [www.dumb.com](http://www.dumb.com), to name but a few.

So, there you are. Get in and explore this not-so-forgotten world from the past. A simpler time when families gathered around the radio after dinner to listen to their favorite shows. Give it a try, bring back an old tradition.



Who knows, maybe that big screen TV will find a place in your next garage sale.

Do you know someone who would like to receive our monthly newsletter? Send contact information to [info@sccbf.org](mailto:info@sccbf.org) to be added to our distribution list.

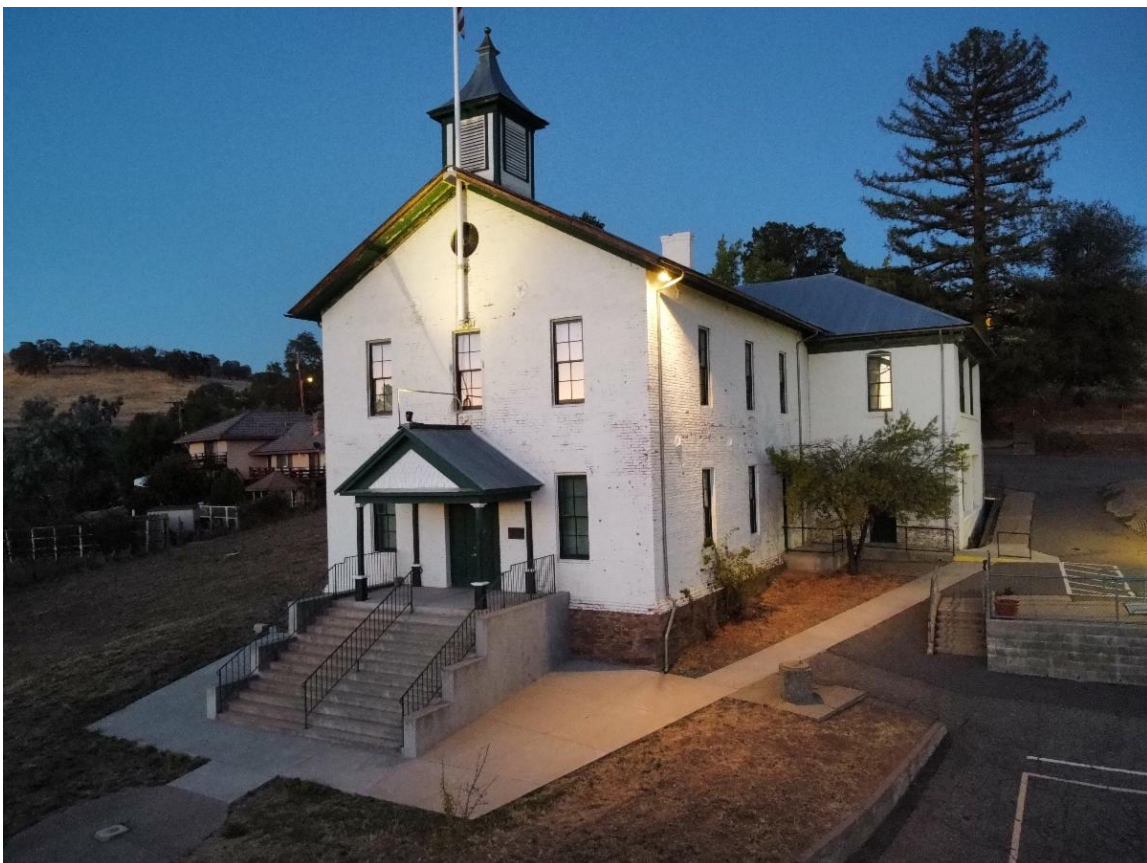
SCCBF is funded primarily by public contributions and memberships. If you have an interest in preservation, history, or are looking to be involved in the community, email [INFO@SCCBF.org](mailto:INFO@SCCBF.org).

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# DONATE

SCCBF's current renovation project is the Historic Sutter Creek Grammar School which is rich in Gold Rush history. This beautiful building is California's second oldest two-story brick schoolhouse. There are four rooms within the Historic Grammar School that can be rented. Contact the City of Sutter Creek for information on rates and availability - (209) 267-5647 ext. 230 or email [info@cityofsuttercreek.org](mailto:info@cityofsuttercreek.org) / website - [cityofsuttercreek.org](http://cityofsuttercreek.org)



The Sutter Creek Community Benefit Foundation (SCCBF) is dedicated to the restoration, preservation, and development of the community's historic assets both now and for future generations. (nonprofit 501(c)3 – Tax ID #87-1825043)

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