

"Broadcast doings of the day and night." - Whitman
THE EMPTY NEST NEWSLETTER

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"Those musicians that shall play to you / Hang in the air*
a thousand leagues from hence." -- Shakespeare Henry IV
(* most refer to birds, musicians hanging in the air! In New England, the host of Morning Pro Musica over public radio, starts each dawn broadcast with five minutes of recorded bird-awakening song!)

The voice that brings books to life

Karl Schmidt has been enriching lives with 'Chapter a Day' for years

The first time I heard Karl Schmidt, I was tuning in the rickety old radio that stood buried under a layer of dust and cobwebs in the corner of the barn. I was dialing for some uptown beat to get me through the layers of mud caked upon my horse, but instead came upon a rich, animated voice that laced the lazy fall morning with intrigue and suspense.

Schmidt was reading a mystery novel.

Not just reading, but casting a spell over his "Chapter a Day" listeners with an ensemble of characters that seemed as real

and alive as anything I'd heard on the morning news.

It didn't matter that a man was taking on the role of a frightened housewife ready to crack under police interrogation or that I knew not who the stiff was hiding under the coroner's sheet. By the time I reached the dark bay hide of my horse, I was hooked.

Wisconsin Public Radio listeners have been tuning in to Schmidt, 66, and "Chapter a Day" each weekday since 1981. It airs at noon on WERN/FM 88.7 and at 1 p.m. on WHA/AM 970 and is repeated on both stations at 10:30 p.m. The program itself can be traced back to 1928 and is considered by some to be the oldest continuous radio show in the country.

Schmidt, a childhood soap opera actor, originally appeared on the long-running show in the 1940s while he was a University of Wisconsin student studying labor economics. Childhood memories of

family members standing firm on both sides of a Massillon, Ohio, union picket line carved the path for his bachelor's degree, but it was the lure of working at the pioneering WHA/AM 970 that brought him to Madison.

College was interrupted by World War II, which Schmidt spent in the Dutch East Indies, New Guinea and the Philippines building radio stations and announcing for Armed Services Radio.

The '50s found the wiry Schmidt doing on-air stints with WIBA and then-WKOW radio, picking up a master's degree in speech and working his way through New York's radio smorgasbord.

There was a quick fling with television in the early '60s, directing such local TV kids shows as "Mr. Lister and his Friends" and Bob Homme's "The Friendly Giant." But, as Schmidt readily admits, "I was a radio person from the beginning. I came back to radio with great joy.

"Television requires so many people around you to produce something. There is so much that can go wrong. It was frightening. I like more control over my work so if something goes wrong I can blame myself, or if it goes well I know it was my doing."

It is this same independence that keeps "Chapter a Day" a state treasure rather than a national commodity.

"I don't bother to sell it nationally because a bit of the freedom I've got would be lost," he says. "It would be, 'Oh, California won't take this or so and so won't like that.' Why else be in this business if not for the freedom? It's certainly not the money."

Although Schmidt managed WHA and the Wisconsin Educational FM Network throughout much of the late 1960s, perhaps his greatest creative success

Madison, Wisconsin

Patrice
WENDLING

Capital Times Staff Writer



Madison, Wisconsin
McMedia

came with his role as creator of the nationally renowned "Earplay." Modeled after the serious, cultural radio dramas common to England, Germany and Canada, the radio drama project began in 1971 with a \$150,000 grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. In its 10-year existence, its budget tripled and plays originally commissioned for "Earplay" by such writers as Edward Albee and Archibald MacLeish were being snatched up for broadcast in Europe.

"Earplay" ran out of funding in 1981. Schmidt says it was the victim of a set of complicated circumstances, including a dramatic cut in national funding for public radio, a dearth of quality writers at the time and a focus that concentrated too heavily on bringing new works along at the expense of airing the classics and serials.

"It was not a crushing blow when it stopped," he says, "almost a relief. It was a project that had failed in its major goal to maintain radio drama, but it didn't fail

SCHMIDT TO READ ENNL EDITOR'S "ROUND BARN" ON CHAPTER-A-DAY!

Madison, WI Mark your calendars for Jan 12, Wisconsin area readers, that's the day you will hear, over Wis. Publ. Radio, selections from that wit-bit-even-be-finished-(and-published) saga, The Round Barn. In Jan, Karl is reading from Wis. writers, and figures that JJ is not only eligible as a Wis. writer, but that Round Barn is a strongly based Wis. book! He will read stories that focus particularly on W.J. 'Daddy' Dougan, the grand father & gr. grandfather of many ENNL readers, and friend of a number of others of you. Now that JJ has finally printed up the left documents, You Loving Father, she is going to go into as high a gear as job & commitments allow, to finish and market Round Barn. You may place an order soon.



Karl Schmidt, at work at Wisconsin Public Radio.

(text continued on p. 2)

CHAPTER-A-DAY, CONT:

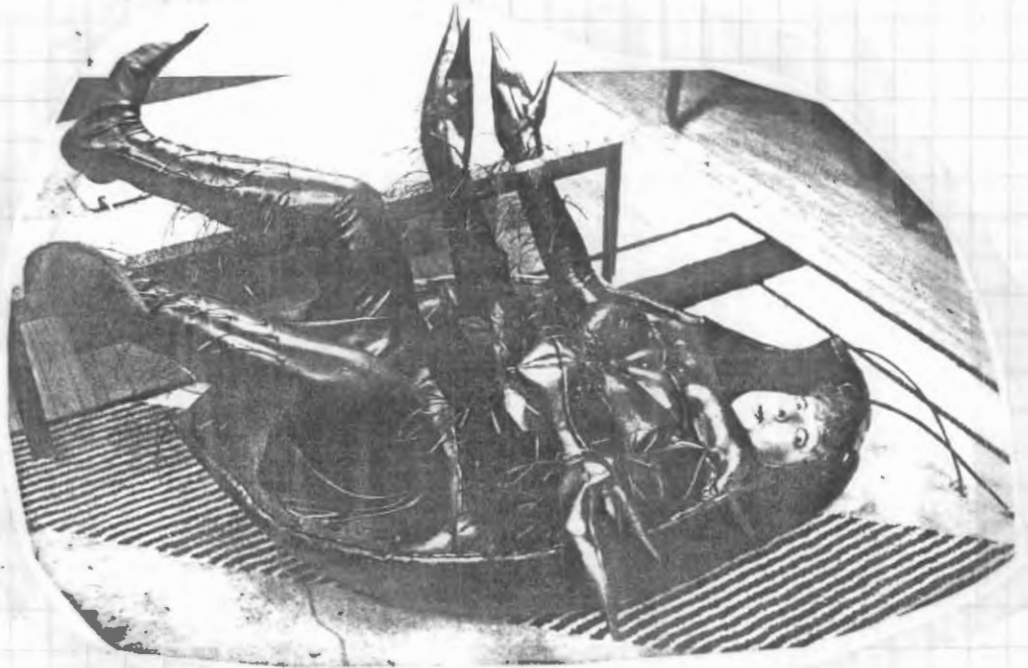
in the sense of providing a landmark that I hope may be used in the future. It was the first time in this country that an opportunity came to do continuing, quality drama on radio and in that respect it succeeded. We did do quality radio.

"The project came to an end because of the change in emphasis in NPR programming from a mix of cultural and news and public affairs programs to an emphasis of almost exclusively news and public affairs."

Others took note of the series and Schmidt's work and rewarded him with a Peabody Award, the National Public Radio Distinguished Service Award and the first Prix Italia to ever be given to an American radio broadcaster.

Although officially retired, the father of five spends countless hours each week preparing for "Chapter a Day." Stacks of potential books clutter the desk in his tiny Vilas Hall office — it's only a fraction of those he says he continually sorts through with the help of his wife, Jo. (go to rt. hand column)

"CLASSICAL GAMES AND COMPETITIONS ARE A HIGHLIGHT OF RON'S 1989 CELEBRATION"



First Prize went to Joan Schmidt for "Best Cockroach Imitation"

NEWS ON CHAD

S. Burlington, Vt. Eva reports that Chad is now living at The Arbor, a nearby home for Alzheimer patients. He was home from mid-August to mid-December, after his hospitalization this summer, but it was becoming increasingly dangerous for both him & Eva, getting up stairs; when he'd fall a neighbor would have to come to help; etc. The Arbor is a beautiful place, no restraints, no medication, very loving. The patient brings his own furniture. There are spacious halls for walking, while the condo was too small, & it's been icy outdoors. Chad visited the Arbor and participated in the decision to go. He has adjusted very well. He knows and converses with his friends. Our deep love goes out to you both, and how grateful we are there is The Arbor.

NEWS ON ALLEN

Chicago As some of you know, Allen Jackson vanished last early January into Chicago, and many of us feared him dead. But he surfaced recently, at the Cook Co. Hospital, (with a hernia operation.) He's been living, cashless, in various shelters, under pseudonyms. I told him I thought he'd been bashed on the head; he laughed & said he always gives soft answers & nobody harms him. He appreciated the poster I got out seeking him (the returns, serendipitously, came in to me the very day he revealed his identity at Cook Co.) but said it was a wonder anyone recognized him from the photo for he's lost 100 lbs, down to 115. (Street life isn't fattening!) I suggested he write down his adventures, he says he already is doing that.

With an honorable mention to Mikhail Baryshnikov.



Allen, we wish you well, & would like to help!

Originally, he selected only thin books that could be read in two weeks, but found listeners were identifying with the characters to the point they would stick with Schmidt through trilogies and hundreds of pages of dialogue. Roughly 12 to 15 books are read annually now with the help of WHA staffers Jim Fleming and Carol Cowan and range in length from one week to two months.

Schmidt does all his own editing, slicing down the dialogue with a stopwatch to avoid dramatic stops and to bring unity to the daily installments. But it's the ease with which he makes us believe these storybook characters are really playing out their lives that makes "Chapter a Day" a success. Without a doubt, Schmidt maintains a constant and credible connection over the airwaves.

"I really do love the work," he says. "I have better contact with the audience. It's strong. I'm doing something I hope gets them through the day."

"It wasn't there with 'Earplay' — that feeling of knowing where the audience is, what they are laughing at or reacting to. But with 'Chapter' all of that is there. I know what they like and I can be responsive to their needs and wishes. It's nice to walk into a store and ask for a quart of milk and have people, thinking they recognize your voice, ask, 'Do you do 'Chapter a Day?'"

Beloit Commented Ron Dougan, when grand daughter Elle Jackson moved all her furniture in, from her Chicago apartment: "I'm like Queen Victoria. I can sit down anywhere without looking behind me."

A lot of this issue has a Karl Schmidt focus: Here's a letter from Florida I'm sure you'll enjoy: (Karl is wishing his father-in-law)

Dear Ron, 2/26/89

It's about time to come home. We'll leave here Wednesday, spend a few days at Peter's and then head for Madison arriving there March 11 or 12.

This place in Marathon is very small. Consequently I do and I spend more time in close contact with each other see more of each other, than we do in Madison. And that brings me to make some observations about the ways she more and more resembles you. When she and I got married some 41 years ago I didn't realize what was meant by the old saying: one doesn't marry just the woman; one marries the family. I thought that was a way of saying one becomes a member of her family, the life of which



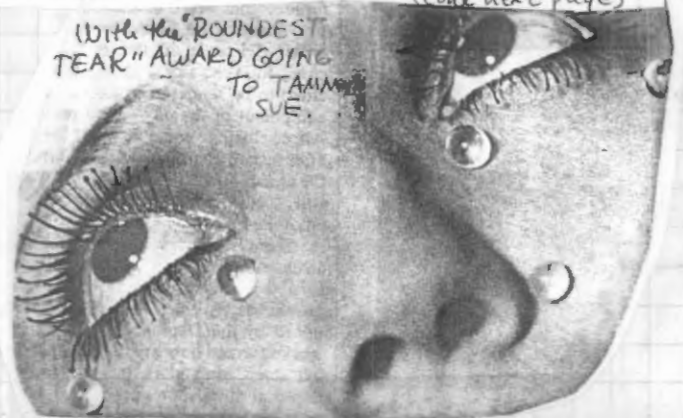
THE BENDING OVER COMPETITION for those 65 and older was won by Annie Collins until it was revealed that she lied about her age. becomes one's own. Well sure, I thought. Of course.

The first indication I had that much more was meant by the old saying was when Jo's knees began to get lumps on them. Were these the knees of the woman I married? No. They were suspiciously the knees of her father. That came as a shock. Surreptitiously, I began to examine the father more closely. Just what the hell was in store for me? Time has answered that question pretty well (although I'm sure it hasn't finished answering yet). Surreptitious observations here in these tight quarters in Marathon disclosed a certain thinning of the calves. Where has that substance gone? Astonishingly, it seems to have migrated upwards. Not to be out done (cont next page)

THE BEST "BLANKET POSE" WAS WON BY KATE DICK YDE.



Wally's red pool decorations



With the "ROUNDEST TEAR" AWARD GOING TO TAMMIE SUE.

Dawaris Jackson won a first place for her "QUILT ON WALL OVER CHAIR"

by the calves³ of the legs, the cheeks of the face have been on the move as well. They have moved down to join the jaw, and while still topside, let me say that woman's crowning glory, in this case Jo's coal black, lustrous, curly hair has become grey, wiry, unruly and unruly. which leaves the most prominent (no intended pun?) and the latest fatherly characteristic to show up in Jo. It's a delicate matter to talk about. I must be extremely discreet... Upward and downward migrations - those spoken of and those not spoken of - seem to have a common destination. They are going toward an area the center of which - I must speak plainly - is the belly button. After all these years of vestigial slumber, ^{the belly button} seems on the verge of getting a new job: guardian of a



formidable protuberance!

I say no more. after all, as I've said, these are tight quarters down here leaving little room to duck and dodge the very real slings and arrows which could come my way.

Mind you I'm not complaining.

I once knew a New Guinea husband who gave 10 pigs and 2 pipes for a wife. After certain disappointments he returned the goods. I realize that in this country there is a statute of limitations. Besides if legal action was to be taken I suppose it should be a class action suit against the Creator and like the state He can't be sued.

I confess too that I begin to notice changes in myself. Certain echoes of parental physiology. But I can't wait to get home and check you out further. K

Now is it time to go home?

While an honorable mention went to Manuel Noriega for his clever "RON COSTUME"

There is not space to show the competition for the "flattest feet," the "sweetest armpit," or the no-winner "Elephant hoist," (Sponsored by Rosman, Uehling & Kinzer: to non-Beloiters, a local funeral establishment.) Perhaps in a future ENNL we can show more of this most spectacular & original of birthday extravaganzas.

Rou's major present was a trip around the world, so we can

all look forward to the next birthday party, global in scope! Thanks, Pat's Steffie.

