



Old Time Radio performers, from left, Dixie Feeney, Bob Armstrong, Kent Prickett and Pam Ward rehearse behind the mics at the Community Center.

TIMOTHY BULLARD/Daily Courier



# Tuning in to a grand old time

*I am the Whistler, and I know many things, for I walk by night. I know many strange tales, hidden in the hearts of men and women who have stepped into the shadows. Yes, I know the nameless terrors of which they dare not speak.*

— “The Whistler” radio series, 1948

By Howard Huntington  
of the Daily Courier

Did he say *nameless terrors*?

One weekend every other month, the Old Time Radio Players deliver a classic at the Grants Pass Community Center — “The Whistler,” “The Lone Ranger,” “Inner Sanctum Mysteries.” But they’re not on the air. The fun is in being there to listen and *watch* the Players live.

When they started seven years ago at Rogue Community College, they had little publicity and audiences you could literally count on one hand. Today, they play to crowds of more than 100 at the Grants Pass Community Center, 234 S.W. L St.

“We’ve got people that have missed one show in seven years,” Player Bob Armstrong says. “As soon as they’re walking out the door, they’re saying, ‘I want to make reservations for the next show.’”

“The actors have to portray everything with their voice. We seek people who can use their voices in many different ways, do different accents, because the audience has to be able to literally close their eyes and picture what’s going on.”

The programs typically run about two hours and feature the Timeless singers — as well as dessert, served by the Players. “We end up in a music finale, and we get all the cast up on the stage. Everybody just kind of clowns around and dances to the music,” Armstrong says.

Crowd reactions continue to amaze him.

“We totally re-enact the original show — music, everything,” says Sal Blydenburgh, master of audio effects for the Players. What he can’t download on a computer, he invents.

“I was fortunate enough to work for Warner Bros.,” he says. “I mean, like a squeaky gate. Sometimes I’ll just take a balloon and rub it. Doorbells ringing, we can do live. Gunshots, we do live. We use a starter pistol.” Coconut half-shells clapped on gravel made perfect hoofbeats for “The Lone Ranger.”



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**Shari Heglin uses a boot and other common objects to make sound effects that are so believable.**

“We couldn’t do it without Sal,” Armstrong testifies. “He has thousands of different effects.”

For Player Dixie Feeney, comedy is the big thing. “It always has been,” she says. “I love doing the Bickersons. I’ve been told that I sort of look like Betty White. I’ve done mystery, too. That was spooky, eerie.

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## How much do you know about old-time radio? A little quiz:

1. The Golden Age of Radio extended from about:

- a) 1900 to 1920
- b) 1920 to 1950
- c) 1910 to 1930

2. Who starred in “The Life of Riley”?

- a) William Bendix
- b) Robert Proxmire
- c) Ray Wynn

3. Which radio Western became one of history’s longest-running TV shows?

- a) “The Lone Ranger”
- b) “Hopalong Cassidy”
- c) “Gunsmoke”

4. Who was the hero of “The Shadow”?

- a) Cranston Lamont
- b) Lamont Cranston
- c) Adam Fog

5. What was Eve Arden best known for?

- a) Drama
- b) Comedy
- c) Bird calls

6. Who narrated “War of the Worlds” in 1938?

- a) Walter Cronkite
- b) Claude Rains
- c) Orson Welles

7. Who was an archenemy of the Green Hornet?

- a) Red Legs
- b) Oliver “the Great Detective” Perry
- c) Black Flag

8. Who played Tonto on “The Lone Ranger”?

- a) Max Kline
- b) Cyril Reed
- c) John Todd

9. What Lucille Ball radio show helped launch TV’s “I Love Lucy”?

- a) “My Favorite Husband”
- b) “The Lucy Hour”
- c) “I Married Lucy”

10. Who became a broadcast-news legend during World War II?

- a) Luther Pointer
- b) Murray Savage
- c) Edward R. Murrow

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