

# Our Secret Weapon

*For the DuMont TV series (1950–51) based on this radio series, see Our Secret Weapon: The Truth.*

***Our Secret Weapon*** (1942–1943) is a CBS radio series created to counter Axis shortwave radio propaganda broadcasts during World War II. Writer Rex Stout, chairman of the Writers' War Board and representative of Freedom House, would rebut the most entertaining lies of the week. Sponsored by Freedom House and Philco, the 15-minute weekly series was broadcast Sundays at 7 p.m. ET through October 18, 1942, then Fridays at 7:15 p.m. ET through its final broadcast October 8, 1943.<sup>[1]:529</sup>

"*Secret Weapon* was designed to whip up and excite the nation to a greater war effort — in industry in buying war bonds, in every avenue toward victory," said series creator Sue Taylor White of Freedom House.<sup>[2]</sup>

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## Production

On August 9, 1942, Rex Stout moderated the first of 62 wartime radio broadcasts of *Our Secret Weapon*, produced by Freedom House and airing on CBS. The first ten programs were sponsored solely by Freedom House, and in the eleventh week Philco became a co-sponsor.<sup>[3]:121–122</sup>

"Every Friday Mr. Stout, author of mystery stories, directs *Our Secret Weapon* over the nationwide network of the Columbia Broadcasting System," reported *The Christian Science Monitor* in February 1943. "There is no mystery, however, over the secret weapon Mr. Stout talks about — it is the simple thing known as 'plain fact.'"<sup>[4]</sup>

### Our Secret Weapon



Rex Stout of *Our Secret Weapon* (December 1942)

<b>Genre</b>	Counterpropaganda talk
<b>Running time</b>	15 minutes
<b>Country of origin</b>	United States
<b>Language(s)</b>	English
<b>Home station</b>	CBS
<b>Hosted by</b>	Rex Stout
<b>Starring</b>	Rex Stout Paul Luther Guy Repp Ted Osborne
<b>Created by</b>	Sue Taylor White
<b>Written by</b>	Rex Stout
<b>Directed by</b>	Paul White
<b>Produced by</b>	Freedom House
<b>Original release</b>	August 9, 1942 – October 8, 1943
<b>No. of episodes</b>	62

# PHILCO CORPORATION

INVITES YOU TO  
LISTEN TO



***OUR SECRET  
WEAPON***

**TRUTH**

Hear Rex Stout  
Expose **AXIS LIES!**

**WJAS**

**TONIGHT  
6:30 P. M.**



# RECENT ARRIVALS

## Re: Axis Propaganda, Variety Shows and Music That Soothes the Anxious Heart

By JOHN K. HUTCHENS

NOTHING too solemn today. Listening to the new programs that have been coming along recently—with the exception of “An American in England” and “Britain to America,” noted here last Sunday—you get the notion that the creative minds along Radio Row are marking time, waiting for the Autumn or perhaps only for a good idea. Herewith, then, the adventures of a soul among a few lesser masterpieces.

And “lesser” would seem to be the word, because even the best of them is not ambitious but, rather, effective in a quiet kind of way; the best of them, in the opinion of this listening post, being the quarter-hour item which occurs on Sundays at 7 P. M. over WABC-Columbia under the title of “Our Secret Weapon.” It is a pardonably melodramatic title, for the weapon is no secret to any one who is apt to tune in within the boundaries of the continental United States. The weapon is merely the truth, as opposed to Axis propaganda, and your impression as you hear it is akin to the clinical detachment attending any operation.

The surgeon, or lie-detector, is Rex Stout, the author turned radio performer, and the procedure could scarcely be simpler. In Germanic or Japanese accents a voice repeats, word for word, some preposterous fabrication that has emanated from Berlin or Tokyo, whereupon Mr. Stout picks it to pieces and steps on it. It is almost too easy—like shooting stationary clay pigeons—but it is not less amusing and informative because of that; for Mr. Stout presides excellently over the business at hand, with irony, aplomb and occasionally a touch of raucous humor, as when he interrupts a Goebbels pronouncement, say, to point out the arrant nonsense in it. The material supplied by the Axis is plentiful and the morale value of its exposure is high, not only as entertainment but in terms of enlightenment. Renowned for its cleverness, Berlin's propaganda is not so clever, after all. More often, as Mr. Stout makes clear, it is exceedingly clumsy.

### Radio Canteen

Of variety shows there is no end, for the plausible reason that the public likes them very much, and even if this were not true WABC's “Stage Door Canteen” would have found a friendly audience waiting for it on Thursday nights; for it celebrates one of the most original and engaging of home front activities, that haven in West Forty-fourth Street where the stage's great have entertained—and fed—some thousands of service men. The radio program whose name it bears is considerably less original and, naturally, has no way of feeding the listeners, who have probably had dinner by 9:30 anyway. You are not apt to quarrel violently with a show whose weekly change of bill has found such talent as Barry Wood, Bert Lytell, Helen Hayes, Helen Menken, Burns and Allen, Maurice Evans, Walter O'Keefe, Phil Baker and Ed Wynn taking part; and the beneficiary (the American Theatre Wing) represents a noble cause. What you can regret, in a negative way, is the opportunity it misses to achieve

some imaginative form, some idea, as striking in its own terms as the original on which it is based. As it stands, it is a fair vaudeville bill, not bad but certainly not very good. It leaves you, with the uneasy feeling that it has failed to capitalize on the head-start with which its name provided it.

On the other hand, expecting nothing much of the Garry Moore “Show Without a Name,” because very little had been said about it in advance, you may have been surprised by that six-a-week show when it arrived on WEA-F at 9 A. M. last Monday. To a concern previously expressed in this sector—i. e., how anybody can try to be funny before noon, on or off the air—Mr. Moore and company respond with a reasonably sprightly thirty minutes of songs, dubious puns and kindred foolishness, more or less reminiscent of “Studio X” and the Blue network's “Breakfast Club.” In fact, Mr. Moore used to preside over the latter in Chicago, and so is accustomed to getting up in the morning. Six mornings a week is an arduous schedule, though, even when you are used to it, and accordingly decision is reserved on this one.

### A Little Soft Music, Professor

Obviously, that comes under the heading of escapism, and so do a couple of other recent items which go further with it. To those who find the world too much with them, they proclaim relief by way of hymns and soft music, a formula which automatically precludes a large jive-hound public but has its points for others. Over WJZ-Blue, at 4:30 on Sunday afternoons, Edward MacHugh offers spiritual repose in the form of music like “Sweet and Low” and “Work for the Night Is Coming,” assisted by a quartet and (perhaps to their slight surprise) Paul Lavalle's orchestra, better known for their presence in such secular matters as “Lower Basin Street.” Spiritual repose? Mr. MacHugh's ministerial tones are practically hypnotic. Almost certainly his listeners continue in a state of sweet somnolence throughout the rest of the day. But, then, it is Sunday, and probably they have not a great deal else to do anyhow.

As for WABC's “Mother and Dad,” this department has heard only two sessions, but enough to acquire the general idea. The Columbia Broadcasting System invites you to believe that one of its studios is the parlor of a small town home inhabited by an elderly and amiable couple upon whom the neighbors call five times a week at precisely 5:15 P. M. for songs and sage maxims. “We stop a few minutes in the middle o' the afternoon and take stock o' things,” says Parker Fennelly (“Dad”) in a rustic accent not equaled since “The Old Homestead” and “Way Down East,” after which mother and dad and the neighbors proceed to “The Bell in the Lighthouse,” etc. The maxims, of which there are half a dozen on each program, are likewise substantial, such as: “Business and life are too much fun to have anything dishonest connected with them.” How are you going to get into an argument about that?



“Big Sister's” title role player (WABC-Columbia, 12:15 P. M., five-a-week) is Nancy Marshall.



This portrait appears to be rushing the season a little, but it is only by way of saying that Jack Benny and Dennis Day will be guests today on WEA-F-Red's “Victory Parade,” at 6:30 P. M.



Dean of WOR's producers, Roger Bower adds another to his list of shows on that station when his latest, “Vaudeville,” opens next Saturday at 8:30 P. M. The title means just what it says.



Without the blackface, here are Amos 'n' Andy (Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll), who headline WABC's “Victory Theatre” at 9 P. M. tomorrow. They don't often stray from their own program.



Monday through Friday (5:45 P. M., WEA-F), Jane Webb is one of “The Bartons.”



Assisted by the “Jesters,” Diane Courtney sings Mondays and Thursdays (7:45 P. M., WJZ-Blue).



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...the world well known was directed to whip up and use the Japanese to fight the frontier war effort in industry in building their bonds. In 1941, the United States moved toward victory.



# ALONG RADIO ROW

## More Football—Rex Stout Show Retires —And Other Kilocycle Matters

By JACK GOULD

**P**HIL CARLIN, vice president of the Blue network, came up last week with an idea designed to avoid duplicate broadcasts of the same football game. The shortage of major games in wartime has led most of the networks to concentrate on the obviously outstanding event of Saturday. It is Mr. Carlin's thought that the networks should draw straws on three or four games each week, a procedure which would give the listener more diversified gridiron fare.

The Rex Stout program, "Our Secret Weapon," has run its course and will be replaced at 7:15 P. M., Friday, by "Eye Witness." The new program will be a dramatization of

on "Salute to Youth," beginning Oct. 19, over NBC.

With the departure of John J. Anthony and his advice, the Sunday night period from 10 to 10:30 over the Blue will be occupied by Gertrude Lawrence's flossy attack on the kilocycles, beginning Oct. 17. On the basis of his initial appearance with Miss L., it is reported that Robert Benchley will now be a permanent fixture.

Something of a record in the way of a drama review was chalked up recently by Ethel Colby, who with her husband, Julius, reports on the sad fate of the drama for WMCA. Mrs. Colby's review: "An alleged musical comedy, 'Hairpin Harmony,' opened tonight at the National Theatre. My husband and I went, but you folks were lucky enough to have remained at home."

It is Frank Sinatra that CBS has finally picked to do battle with Charlie McCarthy on Sunday evenings. Beginning tonight, the singer will be heard in "Broadway Bandbox" from 8 to 8:30 P. M., a period which most program specialists have carefully skirted because of the popularity of Edgar Bergen's protégé over NBC. . . . Bert Wheeler is to be a new permanent member of the "Broadway Bandbox" cast.

Speaking before the Radio Executives Club luncheon last Thursday on free speech and the broadcasters' duty to preserve it, James F. Fly, chairman of the FCC, acted as his own censor. Herewith an excerpt from his talk, the words in brackets being those deleted by Mr. Fly from an advance copy:

"Licensees must become aware that [starting right now] management should take stock of itself. Any dodges similar to those intricate clauses employed in a corporate indenture to enable a trustee to duck his responsibility must be weeded out [fast]."

Take your time, boys.

A nominee for whatever announcer awards may be made in the future should be Kenneth Brown, who presides at the microphone of the two stations (ZNS and ZNS2) in Nassau in the Bahamas. The other night he was introducing the complicated and somewhat foolish title of an American swing number and then added this afterthought: "Oh, well, it may not be too bad."

One of the most prolonged "blackouts" of shortwave reception ended last Monday, at least temporarily. For nearly ten days the European stations were heard only briefly during the daylight hours and after dark even the powerful BBC transmitters were "wiped out."

Department of postponement and change:

"Thanks to the Yanks," with Bob Hawk, is now being heard at 7:30 P. M. Saturdays over CBS (WABC).

The return of Gracie Fields has been deferred to Oct. 18 over Mutual (WOR).

Theodore Granik's "American Forum of the Air" shifts this week to a new period: 9:30-10:15 P. M., Tuesdays.

Griff Williams and his orchestra and a chorus next week begin a new program from 5 to 5:30 P. M. Sundays over Mutual.

the best war correspondent's dispatch of the week. Bob Trout will be narrator.

Guy Lombardo has once again embarked on a search for a feminine vocalist for his band. Jane Ellen, billed as "the Washington society songstress," receives a trial tomorrow night over CBS.

Quentin Reynolds, author and correspondent, is the latest addition to the ranks of radio's narrators. He will assume his new role