

# GANG BUSTERS

The Crime Fighters of American Broadcasting

BY MARTIN GRAMS, JR.

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Although Phillips H. Lord and his staff fictionalized the names of true-life criminals for many of his *Gang Busters* broadcasts, this book reveals more of the factual crimes than fictional. Information documented within the pages of this book is not meant to infringe on the privacy of anyone. All of the information contained within this book is (and has been) public knowledge for decades. Sources include special collections and archives available to the public at various libraries across the country including The Library of Congress, The Library of American Broadcasting of the University of Maryland, and periodicals including *The New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, *Newsweek*, etc.

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## INTRODUCTION

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When Phillips H. Lord created *Gang Busters* in January of 1936, crime was so rampant that it was almost tolerated. Obedience to the laws and respect for law-enforcement agencies was at a low ebb. Criminals and their methods were highly publicized in glamorous episodes.

Lord, as an amateur criminologist of note and a man who had delved into criminal behavior by inclination, was appalled. He had just finished his *G-Men* series which dramatized FBI cases and he knew how the criminals lived, what they were like and how they operated. Civic-minded citizens, law enforcement officers and police organizations were approached. They were enthusiastic in their approval and unstinted in their cooperation. They turned over their files and Lord made radio history with his exposes.

At first Lord appeared on the program and interviewed the guest police officials. Later, as his other radio programs demanded more attention, he turned the hosting chores over to West Point graduate Colonel H. Norman Schwarzkopf, who for twenty years was nationally prominent in police circles. When the Colonel was recalled to active duty, Lewis J. Valentine, former Commissioner of Police of the City of New York, took over.

Before any case was presented to the radio audience, it was triple-checked. A *Gang Busters* representative gathered the material from law enforcement bureaus scattered all over the country. The Chief from each bureau had to approve every fact in the report before it was used. Then the script department started to work, with instructions to “make it dramatic, but be sure it’s accurate.”

Every *Gang Busters* broadcast featured nationwide clues, which consisted of last-minute reports of wanted persons, received from the police and FBI. One hundred requests weekly was the average number of police bulletins received by *Gang Busters*. They were boiled down to one or two clues, selected for importance, color and ease in remembering the descriptions. *Gang Busters* files show that among those criminals apprehended by such nationwide clues were Lawrence Devol, Hoffman and Penning, Edward (Wilhelm) Bentz, Howard Hayes and Charles Jones, Claude Beaver, and Percy Geary. In addition to those named, by May of 1942, more than 277 other criminals had been apprehended by *Gang Busters* clues.

Known as the “Number One Idea Man” in radio, Phillips H. Lord – who was once presented on the floor of Congress as the “source of more enjoyment than any person living today in the United States” – conceived the program at

## BIOGRAPHY OF PHILLIPS H. LORD

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Phillips H. Lord was born in Hartford, Vermont, on July 13, 1902, the son of Reverend Albert J. and Mrs. Maude Phillips Lord. About a year later, the Lord family moved to Meriden, Connecticut, where the Reverend Lord accepted the pastorate of the First Congregational Church where he served for over thirty-five years.

Lord spent his boyhood winters in Meriden and his summers in Maine. After finishing high school in Meriden, he attended Phillips Andover Academy where he was the captain of the tennis team. Then he transferred to Bowdoin College. Forced to earn part of his tuition and living expenses, and rather than take the usual kind of part-time job, he decided to analyze the situation and find some service or merchandise for which there was a need at the college. In 1923, the Faculty of Bowdoin College at Brunswick, Maine, had a meeting. It turned out to be one of the most unusual meetings and it evidently proceeded along the following general lines.

**PRESIDENT:** “Gentlemen, the college bookstore downtown reports that they’re not selling any books this year. What’s happened?”

**PROFESSOR:** “It’s Lord.”

**PRESIDENT:** “Lord who?”

**PROFESSOR:** “Phillips Lord.”

**PRESIDENT:** “Who is Phillips Lord?”

**PROFESSOR:** “He’s the son of a Minister. He’s got the book market cornered.”

**PRESIDENT:** “The bookstore has been in business twenty years. How could this Lord have the book market cornered?”

**PROFESSOR:** “Well, he found out what books would be used this year – he set up a little store here on the campus – undersells the Brunswick bookstore by five percent and has gotten all of their business.”

**PRESIDENT:** “Um – let’s see – ordinarily, in a new year a three-thousand dollars worth of books would be sold.”

**PROFESSOR:** “He makes twenty-five percent on all he sells.”

**PRESIDENT:** (Whistles – if college presidents do) “Seven hundred and fifty dollars profit. Not bad – but what about this new taxi company I’ve been hearing rumors about?”

**PROFESSOR:** “That’s Lord, too.”

**PRESIDENT:** “He’s the whole company?”

**PROFESSOR:** “The whole of it. He has five automobiles he rents. I hear he gave sixty dollars for each one.”

**PRESIDENT:** “How much does he rent them for?”

**PROFESSOR:** “Twenty-five dollars a car for the weekend. They’re always rented, too.”

**PRESIDENT:** “I see – they pay for themselves in two weeks and a half – and then – well. He’s making more money than I am.”

**PROFESSOR:** “He has a shoe business, too, you know.”

**PRESIDENT:** “This same Lord?”

**PROFESSOR:** “The same Lord.”

**PRESIDENT:** “Well – see he doesn’t lock up the advertising for the athletic events – football score cards – baseball, etc.”

**PROFESSOR:** “I’m sorry, sir – he had those all locked up two years ago.”

**PRESIDENT:** “Now – just a minute. Who is running this college? Lord or me?”

**PROFESSOR:** “I think he’s willing to let you think you are, sir.”

**PRESIDENT:** “Is – is – is this human dynamo in any more business deals?”

**PROFESSOR:** “Oh, yes sir. He has a monopoly on all banners to be sold to freshman.”

**PRESIDENT:** “I’d like to meet this Lord – would you ask his Lordship to come over and see me?”

**PROFESSOR:** “I don’t think we can find him for a few days, sir.”

**PRESIDENT:** “Why not?”

**PROFESSOR:** “Well he bought a shipment of fur coats from Russia.”

**PRESIDENT:** “What!?!?!?”

**PROFESSOR:** “Yes sir. You know raccoon coats sell for about two hundred and fifty dollars – but Lord got those so he could double his money and sell them for forty dollars each.”

**PRESIDENT:** “Remarkable – remarkable. But what has that got to do with not being able to find him?”

**PROFESSOR:** “Well the coats were fine – in the very cold weather but that rain storm we had day before yesterday . . . well, sir, the coats all shed their hair until they don’t have one spear left on them. And do they smell. I would say sir, that they stink.”

**PRESIDENT:** “You positive?”

**PROFESSOR:** “Yes sir. I bought one.”\*

And so Lord graduated from Bowdoin College. But right up to this big event he had no idea what he was going to do after graduation. Having graduated with honors, he was appointed at the age of 22, principal of the Plainville, Connecticut High School. Apparently Lord called long distance by telephone, caught the school board in session and whether they meant yes – or meant no and said yes – nobody is quite clear to this day. But the result was Lord became the youngest high school principal in the country.

Lord tackled his teaching job with the same ingenuity he had already displayed. The following year his salary was increased to \$3,000 and he was made principal of the high school *and* the grammar school. A new high school was built. Football teams and dance clubs were organized – but he still felt that teaching did not offer the kind of opportunity he sought.

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\* The script dialogue originates from Lord’s personal papers. It is presumed that he typed this himself. The events were true: Lord sold silk stockings having struck a deal with a hosiery mill, and raccoon coats to any student who could afford them.

Next, he started up a mail order business selling silk hosiery and later, pearls from the Orient. Not satisfied with his new-found fortune, Lord started selling vacuum cleaners by mail. By the end of the second year, all his endeavors were going strong but he couldn't help feeling that the place for financial success was New York. He wrote a number of inquiring letters and at the end of the second year turned down a most substantial job offer as principal in a larger city, turned his mail order business over to others, and traveled to New York. There he took a job at twenty-five dollars a week in a candy factory.

The candy company was no cup of tea. Having received a cold reception from the employees on the first day, Lord quickly resigned after two weeks employment. Three days later he walked into one of New York's largest publishing houses and without knowing a soul – walked into the President's office. Two hours later, he was the Sales and Advertising Manager. Quickly Lord scrutinized this opportunity. It certainly was a great company, with nice folks, but he couldn't see his future there. He resigned, walked up Fifth Avenue, saw the office of the *Spur* magazine and walked in. He asked to see the President and an hour later was circulation manager of that prominent magazine. (Lord's vigorous ideas proved too much for that publication and he was summarily fired.)

Shortly after the magazine disaster, Lord's radio career began. He started writing radio scripts in the evening. With radio a growing and expanding medium, the broadcasting studios had not yet created a format for which a radio script was to be written. Radio scripts for early-1930s radio programs featuring very few cast members looked more like single-page text which other script writers – whose talent for writing came from the stage – wrote their radio scripts in the format of stage plays. Lord admitted that he knew nothing about writing a radio script, but with his talent for walking into an office and convincing a member of management to hire him on the spot, he felt he was the professional for the job.

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## SETH PARKER IS ON THE AIR

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Being the son of a Reverend with a congregation taught Lord many lessons of Christian values. Upon learning that a large percentage of radio listeners were Christians who enjoyed programs of spiritual commitment, Lord came up with an idea. Renting a small room about the size of a small bathroom, at the Salmon Tower Building in New York, Lord commissioned his new residence as both home and office. He purchased a chair for one dollar, a desk for three dollars and an old battered typewriter. He even bought an Army cot so he could sleep in his office and save time. He bought some cans of Sterno® with which to cook, and a case of canned soup.

Using his own grandfather as the role model for a character named “Seth Parker,” Lord created a series of scripts based on Sunday evening dinner table conversations, incorporating old-fashioned hymns in between the conversations. This group of rustic New Englanders featured restrained mannerisms doing their best “to conjure up days of long ago, when applejack and bundling were in vogue.” After a number of trials and errors, Lord finally hit on the idea of sending them out to the stations throughout the country – not just the major New York studios. The scripts were called *Seth Parker’s Singing School* and finally after patiently trying to sell them for one year, WLW in Cincinnati wrote and offered to buy the scripts for twenty-five dollars each. Now, that was really something. It felt good. It sounded good. One month later, WTIC in Hartford bought the very same scripts for twenty-five dollars each – then Detroit – then San Francisco, and in six months there were twenty stations all paying Lord for the same script – or \$500.00 a week.\*

Following the *Seth Parker* program were numerous short-run radio programs created, produced, directed (and occasionally written) by Phillips H. Lord. From June 23, 1930 to May 9, 1931, the Goodrich Tire and Rubber Company sponsored *Uncle Abe and David*, a radio serial broadcast four times a week featuring the continuing home-spun adventures of Abe Stetson (played by Phillips H. Lord) and David Simpson, two old “down east” codgers who operated their own general store in Skowhegan, Maine. The supporting cast included Parker Fennelly as Uncle Abe (Lord left the acting task to Fennelly after the first few weeks), Arthur Allen as David and Effie Palmer in the female roles.

Weeks after *Uncle Abe and David* went off the air, Lord immediately started a new radio serial. *The Stebbins Boys* (broadcast June 22, 1931 to October 21,

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\* WTIC’s premiere broadcast of *Sunday Evening at Seth Parker’s* was on March 3, 1929.



at six each morning – and wrote on his script while he ate. He had seven shows a week to write – rehearse, direct and act in. He had another six repeat performances lasting until one o'clock in the morning. For five years he wouldn't leave his room to go to a movie or have dinner with a friend. Nor would he allow anyone to call on him. It was a strange super-human effort. But when they took a nationwide poll of all radio programs on the air in 1928, Lord held two of the first three places.

## CRIME HITS THE STREETS

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America was obsessed with sensational crime during the early 1930s. The flamboyant bootlegging empire of Al Capone was larger than life. The media turned criminals like “Baby-Face” Nelson and “Machine Gun” Kelly into romantic figures and popular Robin Hood characters. When some of these criminals robbed banks, they also destroyed the mortgage and loan records, thereby rationalizing their crimes by helping out the “little guys” who faced the loss of everything they had during the Depression. J. Edgar Hoover was not amused by the glorification of these murderers and thieves. He saw it as a “challenge to law and order and civilization itself.”

Born a white Protestant of a middle-class neighborhood, Hoover was a member of the latest generation of civil servants in his family. He was closest to his mother, Annie, who was the disciplinarian and moral guide of the family until her death in 1938. In the midst of general hysteria concerning Communist infiltration of America after the First World War, anarchists bombed the home of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer in 1919. The Attorney General used the attack to initiate a widespread clamp down on radicalism. Hoover, with his straight-laced morality, was the natural choice to head the campaign.

Later known as the “Palmer raids,” the widespread attack on radicals was largely Hoover’s operation. On January 2, 1920, he organized raids to be carried out in three different cities. With no search or arrest warrants in possession, the enforcers paid no regard to who were and were not guilty of insurrectionary activity. In the end, mass arrests were made and 556 people were deported from the United States. While the methods of the Palmer raids were to eventually come into question (causing Palmer to resign in disgrace), Hoover’s reputation remained clean. This was the first of what would become many public events to hail Hoover a hero to law-abiding Americans.

In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge appointed Hoover head of the Bureau of Investigation, a position Hoover long coveted. It was in this position that he finally received the power he craved. Upon acceptance, Hoover demanded it be completely divorced from politics and responsible only to the Attorney General. Hoover’s conditions were met and he set out on a rejuvenation campaign, which would build the Bureau into one of the most powerful government agencies in Twentieth-Century America.

Hoover assembled an elite group of men, white and college-educated, who would represent the Bureau as professional and trained agents. He demanded

demanded the receipts. Thorpe put up a fight and in the fierce struggle, Sydow was shot in the foot. However, he at last managed to shoot Thorpe. Sydow drove his car to a spot near Deerwood, where weak from loss of blood, he skidded into a ditch. Five youths on their way to or from college, saw the wreck and packed the seemingly unconscious Sydow into their car. There he held them up and forced them from the car. When a flat tire stopped him, he held up another motorist and took his car. He dropped out of sight in Minneapolis, after treating his wounded foot with supplies and dope he had purchased in a drug store. (He had been a hospital orderly in prison and learned how to treat gun wounds.)

Although there was no real evidence against Sydow, he was suspected after police checked with the college youths and the motorist whose car he had stolen. The information came to *Gang Busters* and was broadcast over the air. All citizens were warned to watch for a stolen deluxe Ford coupe. A Detroit citizen remembered seeing such a car in a nearby garage and jotted down the license number. Then he ran to the garage and verified it. He notified police who planted men to watch the garage. No one ever came for the car, but the police did manage to get a fingerprint from the rear view mirror which Sydow had repositioned once after removing his gloves. He was positively identified and a nation-wide alarm went out for him.

For eight months Sydow eluded the dragnet and committed numerous thefts. A Minneapolis labor leader, Patrick J. Corcoran of the A.F. of L. was murdered and Sydow was suspected of the crime. On February 16, 1938, George Dow of 100 West 52nd Street, St. Paul, Minn., was held up at gunpoint by a man who burglarized his home. Patrolmen Henry Nordby and Earl Brunskill went to Dow's house and were able to trace the criminal's footprints through the snow for two miles. At the end of the trail they caught him and found a gun and the loot he had taken from Dow. When he was fingerprinted it was learned that he was Bruno Sydow.

When the backtracking of the various links of evidence was completed, it showed that the *Gang Busters* clue was responsible for capturing the murderer. Sydow's fingerprints on the car discovered in the Detroit garage, which had definitely been stolen by the murderer, proved that he was the one the police sought for killing Thorpe. Sydow cracked under the overwhelming evidence and confessed, in the presence of Thorpe's son. No record could be found of his conviction or sentence.

On March 23, 1938, *Gang Busters* presented "The Case of Golden Barrett and George Squires." The story dramatized the crimes of Golden Barrett, alias Neil Golden Thompson, who on the evening of December 28, 1929, noticed a grocery store ready to close for the night. Parking his car, he wrapped his scarf about his face and held up the proprietor, Wayne Wrightsman, his son Wayne, Jr., 13-years-old, the butcher and a customer. While Barrett was searching Wrightsman's pockets, Wrightsman struggled with him and Barrett shot the

grocer in the groin. Wrightsman did get the gun away from him though and as Barrett ran out the door he fired at him. The hammer fell on a dud. Then young Wayne picked up a single-shot .22 rifle and shot Barrett in the right shoulder. He managed to escape in spite of the wound and got to his grandmother's rooming house, where he was temporarily living, in Kansas City, Missouri. He told his aunt he had been injured while hunting, and she sent for a doctor. The doctor dressed the wound and said it was not serious. On her way home, his aunt passed the grocery store and put two and two together. Early the next morning she called Captain Beatty at Police Headquarters and told him the story.

Barrett was picked up, identified by the witnesses in the store and sentenced to concurrent terms of from 10-21 years. While awaiting trial in the Olathe County jail, he escaped with three other men by beating the jailer over the head with a food tray and fleeing. He was captured the next day. Meanwhile, Wrightsman had lost a leg at the thigh. He opposed Barrett's two applications for parole in 1936, with the support of Barrett's aunt who was now afraid of him. Barrett made friends in jail with a con named George Squires. In 1937 they both made successful applications for parole. They planned a series of holdups and moved back to Kansas City, Missouri. In July they held a series of holdups of pedestrians, stores and stole cars. Then on July 24th, Barrett and Squires went to the Armourdale District in Kansas City to dispose of some dope taken in a drug store raid and then decided to steal a car and get out of town because it was getting hot.

At 8:56 p.m. that same evening, Officers John Coyle and Norbie Jones had gone to a private residence to settle a domestic quarrel. After they had quieted down the fighting couple, they returned to their squad car. While the officers were inside, Barrett and Squires had attempted to steal the car but could not start it. In their frantic attempts they tripped the transmitter of the two-way radio so that the entire dialogue which followed could be heard at police headquarters. Squires said to Jones who was ahead of Coyle, "Get in the car, copper. We're takin' you for a ride!" Jones retorted, "Oh yeah, that's what you think!" For the next twenty seconds the dispatcher at headquarters heard ten or twelve shots. He recognized Jones' voice and sent three squad cars to the address on Osage where the two cops had gone originally. Squires and Jones fired simultaneously, then Barrett fired at Jones. Squires got out and grappled with Jones who was seriously wounded. Just then Coyle came up and shot Squires through the head as he was about to shoot Jones again. In the meantime, Barrett emptied his gun into Coyle and fled, severely wounded by a bullet from Jones' gun.

When Captain Beatty reached the scene he was approached by a citizen who told him that a man was lying in an alley about a block away. The captain immediately recognized Barrett. He died the following morning. Squires had been killed instantly. Officer Jones recovered.

On April 27, 1938, *Variety* magazine printed a review about *Gang Busters*, most favorably. The paper reported:

*“Crime program has been aired unbrokenly for over a year but for the past few months has had Colonel Norman Schwartzkopf of the New Jersey State Police as commentator in place of Phillips Lord. Broadcast, which exploits activities of police in solving outstanding crimes in the annals of various law enforcement systems, has plenty to attract amateur sleuth and other listeners usually magnetized by criminal events, but still is open to improvement.*

*“Selections for airing are all on the cops’ side of the fence, as they have been since the program debuted. They’re okay, but instead of confining itself to explaining steps taken by police to apprehend culprits, it might occasionally be a good idea to shorten this or lengthen time to include reasons why criminals involved got that way. In itself the program was a nice job of radio writing, every step taken in case aired being clearly outlined. It was open to criticism on one or two technicalities but they were minor. Story opened with two young men facing each other in a baseball game, one pitching and the other winning the tight game for his side with a homer – and winds up under the circumstances – with the batter, as a cop, being responsible for the erstwhile pitcher’s arrest for murder. It was taken from the records of the Cleveland Police with Chief Madowitz of that force aiding in the retelling.”*

On June 8 and June 15, 1938, “The Case of Killer McGoig” was dramatized on *Gang Busters*. This two-part thriller dramatized the exploits of Gus McGoig, who in early 1934, after a petty crime career, ended up in the county jail at Newport, Tennessee where he met Clarence Bunch, a bank robber. On May 15, 1934, McGoig and Bunch escaped with a .38 which had been smuggled to Bunch. He shot the jailer in the arm and locked him in their cell. The fugitives lay hidden in the mountains for days while a posse scoured the countryside. Then, around July 1st, they embarked upon a series of petty holdups and hijackings, gradually adding more men to the gang, of which Bunch was the head man. They continued on their wild rampage of crime around White Plains, and in Clairborne, Jefferson, Grainger and Hemblen Counties, and even going over into North Carolina. They had numerous brushes with the law, but McGoig was finally trailed to a cabin hideout in mountainous Caney Valley and captured by a posse.

On August 25, 1934, McGoig was sentenced at Tazewell to five years in the state penitentiary at Nashville. There, McGoig whittled a wooden pistol, and used Deputy Warden Ed Conners as a human shield to get out the gate in Conners’ car. On December 6, 1935, McGoig and cellmate Pete Dean, forced old acquaintance Frank Hopson, 22, to accompany them against his will. They drove to New Tazewell, Tennessee and held up the bank. Citizens fired at them but they roared safely out of town. They passed a bus, and then noticed that a car driven by pursuing Sheriff L.B. Hutchinson and Deputy Austin “Red” Matthews also passed the bus. They screeched to a stop at the end of Clinch

## **FOLLOW-UP**

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*Gang Busters* had established good will by liberal thank you notes, requests for reactions, offers to broadcast clues to persons wanted, etc. Such letters went out promptly to every officer or real name used in a particular script. If a listener reported interest in a clue, *Gang Busters* acted more promptly on this than any other phase of activity, feeling an hour may make the difference in a capture. If a listener anywhere had information on a FBI wanted person, Lord's office called the New York office. If the information concerned a local or state clue, they wired the police officer concerned.

## REHEARSAL ROUTINE

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The average collect rehearsal time for *Gang Busters* was from six to seven hours for each program – depending on the intricacies of the script. The casting director had a file of 1,500 actors, and used 600 character voices in a series. Unless a script ran for two weeks, no actor appeared on consecutive shows. The leading “mug” as well as principal “cop” were given as much data about the parts they were to play as possible. A fundamental rule was that the audience must hate the “mug” and love the cop.

As an example of the weekly routine that went into the rehearsals of each *Gang Busters* broadcast, let's take a peek at the April 14, 1951 broadcast. The supervisor of the show arrived at Studio One, CBS by 4:15 at the latest on Saturday afternoon, as this was the time the agency took over the studio for rehearsal of commercials. As soon as these are rehearsed, a complete dress rehearsal is put on until 5:00. Cuts are made and improvements suggested in the script or direction until finished. Then those in the studio listened to a play-back of the advance show – the show for the following week. After this play-back which is attended by agency, *Gang Busters* director, *Gang Busters* writer and CBS Engineer together with supervisor, suggestions for improvement of the script and board suggestions regarding direction are made. Conference is then adjourned until 8:15 when final touches are made for the air show at 9:00. Once the supervisor had confidence in those conducting the air show, it was probably unnecessary that he be present at air-time unless he knew in advance that an account executive might have been there with a client. Usually the Young & Rubicam contract man knew of the visit of anyone of a particular nature and he would notify Lord and his crew in advance during the week.

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## THE CASE OF THE COLGATE TAKEOVER

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Relations with the sponsor, the Colgate-Palmolive-Peet Company was about to take a downward turn for the worse. “In May of 1938, I was approached by the Stack-Gobel Advertising Agency who asked me when my contract for the series with Colgate expired,” explained Phillips Lord. “I told them that I just had a one-year contract which expired the end of 1939. Stack-Gobel told me that they had a client, an aspirin account which was crazy over *Gang Busters* and who would give me \$6,200 a week for at least a 39-week contract and they believed they could get them to sign for a firm year. This (compared to what Colgate was paying) was a terrific offer. I told them that legally I had the right to make a commitment right then and there, but I would not do it until I took the whole situation up with Colgate and talked it all through. Therefore, I signed nothing, nor committed myself to them in any way.”

“During the next 24 hours, I called up Benton & Bowles for a conference luncheon,” Lord continued. “It was set for several days later. Meanwhile a squib appeared in *Radio Daily* that such and such a company was getting *Gang Busters*. I was called up by someone at Benton & Bowles who was very upset. I explained that I had been interviewed by an agency concerning it, but had not committed myself in any way and that was why I had already asked for a luncheon. At the luncheon there was Mr. Bates (of Benton & Bowles) and my partner, John Ives, and I believe Mr. Revere, but I am not sure. I explained the whole story. I told which agency it was who had called, just what they had said and what account they had it in mind for. I reviewed the past experiences we had together concerning the program. I told Mr. Bates the sum I had been offered. I told him that although this proposition was being made as a firm offer, I was holding it up and was giving Colgate first refusal.”

“I explained that I wasn’t even going to ask Colgate to meet that proposal, or come anywhere near it, but did want Colgate, if it intended to continue, to show its appreciation in some substantial increase, and when the time came to receive it, then have them decide to make counter offers,” Lord continued. “Mr. Bates told me that he had known for some time I should have received more money – and he had meant to bring it up to Colgate – but he had been so busy it was just one of those things he hadn’t gotten around to. The luncheon broke up very friendly – and I expected a call back with some sort of an offer. If Colgate had offered \$4,300, I would have remained with Colgate and sacrificed the difference between that and the aspirin offer. In fact, I made this offer of \$4,300 in a letter to Benton & Bowles on May 23, 1938.”



“Instead I was called over and told very bitterly and arbitrarily that I had no rights, whatsoever, that the show didn’t belong to me, that they could go right along without me, that Benton & Bowles had thought up the whole idea, it wasn’t mine at all, the title belonged to them, they had thought of the clues and everything about the program. I didn’t reply, I walked out before I said anything I would regret.”

Lord was served with legal papers which claimed Colgate owned everything about the show. Colgate created it, developed it, and Lord was simply hired to put their show on for them. Colgate even went so far as to register a United States Patent Office registration (number 369228) for a periodical titled “*Gang Busters*,” just so they could claim the trademark “*Gang Busters*.”

“Before *Gang Busters* went on the air, and every week it was on the air, the Publicity Department of Benton & Bowles, working right with the Radio Department, released notices to the papers about my being the creator and originator of *Gang Busters*,” Lord protested. “We were not allowed to release anything about *Gang Busters* during that period, and in fact it was written right into the contract. These releases were made by Benton & Bowles’ radio department. We have over three thousand clippings on file of releases made by Benton & Bowles calling *Gang Busters* my show, and many of these state I was the originator – or creator. This certainly would not have been done for a period of three years if it were not so. There was never a word said about its not being my series until it was used as a defense when the agency thought it was losing a low-priced series.”

When Phillips H. Lord appeared at Benton & Bowles request on other radio programs, Lord was introduced as the creator of the *Gang Busters* series. Lord was a guest on Hank Simmon’s *Showboat* to introduce the *Gang Busters* series coming on the air, and Lord explained over the air how he happened to create the program. Lord was also introduced on Lowell Thomas’ radio program in 1936 answering questions concerning how he created *Gang Busters* and Benton & Bowles made the arrangement for him to appear on the program. On the opening program of *We, the People* (October 4, 1936), Lord was introduced as the creator of *Seth Parker*, *G-Men*, and *Gang Busters*.

In the *Who’s Who* publication, Lord was listed as the creator of *Seth Parker*, *Uncle Abe and David*, *The Stebbins Boys*, *Cruise of the Seth Parker*, *G-Men*, *Gang Busters* and *We, the People*.

“I considered the accusation contained in the legal papers served upon me the most unjust, unfounded attempt I had ever encountered in the radio business,” Lord defended. Both sides started to go to court immediately. Legal representatives for Colgate claimed the statements about Lord creating *Gang Busters* was pure “publicity hype.” Lord backed his claim by offering to call key witnesses including representatives from NBC during the time he was tossing the idea around to create an outgrowth of *G-Men* for the radio under a different format. Both corporations, not wanting a big mess splashed all over

## “THE CASE OF LOUIS LEPKE BUCHALTER” (PART TWO)

**STORY:** Buchalter didn't look the part with his suits and the general appearance of a mildly affluent businessman. But his fine wool suits couldn't warm his eyes, said to be like blocks of ice. In August of 1939, he was arrested and sentenced to 14 years in prison for narcotics offences. When hit man Abe Reles agreed to provide evidence against Buchalter, he was tried for the murder of Joseph Rosen, a candy store clerk. Found guilty of the slaying, Buchalter was executed four years later at Sing Sing Prison on March 4, 1944.

**EPISODE #198** (Broadcast April 20, 1940)

## “THE CASE OF THE BOYS' HAVEN”

**STORY:** Remains unknown.

**EPISODE #199** (Broadcast April 27, 1940)

## “THE CASE OF THE EASTON BROTHERS”

**STORY:** For three wild and tragic weeks, brothers Clarence and Orelle Easton pursued a life of crime involving kidnapping and robbery. They kidnapped Mr. H.R. Hine, manager of a Cumberland, Wisconsin department store and his girl. They held them prisoners for four hours before forcing them out of the car. Police caught the Easton brothers off guard and exchanged gunfire. The boys escaped. Sheriff Mark Campbell found a shotgun butt near the shooting. At first, he didn't realize that it was evidence that would eventually connect them to a reign of terror that spread over the Wisconsin countryside during their spree. Meanwhile, the Eastons kidnapped two deputies and drove off in their own car because it was less conspicuous than a squad car. Relentlessly, the police dragnet involving Illinois State patrolmen closed in on the pair. They were eventually overpowered.

**EPISODE #200** (Broadcast May 4, 1940)

## “THE CASE OF JACK HOWARD”

**STORY:** Jack Howard shot 11 people and killed seven in the process of committing 94 known hold-ups, two incidents of assault and battery, and miscellaneous purse snatchings. On December 4, 1934, Howard

got food and blankets. When an attendant of the Lake Spaulding reservoir spotted the men, the police took pursuit, apprehending the bandits.

**EPISODE #291** (Broadcast December 11, 1942)

**“THE CASE OF RATLIFF & HELMS”**

**STORY:** On December 24, 1927, Marshall Ratliff was fitted with a Santa Claus suit. In Cisco, Texas, Santa walked into a bank, eyed a cashier and quietly announced a hold up. His cohorts, Hill, Davis, and Helms, quickly spread across the room with guns showing. Customers froze in their tracks, but a mother and a young daughter slipped out the front door and ran to the office of Police Chief Bedford. When Bedford entered the bank, he found the robbers on their way out using customers and bank officers as human shields. The next day, a posse armed with guns and bloodhounds took chase. Ratliff was wounded and Helms and Hill managed to get away. At the county jail, a crowd gathered and overpowered the law officers, hanging Ratliff in the streets.

**EPISODE #292** (Broadcast December 18, 1942)

**“THE CASE OF ERWIN & BROWN”**

**STORY:** Earl Erwin and Mervin Brown met in the Missouri State Penitentiary. As two models of good behavior, they were made trustees to perform services outside prison walls. One evening they failed to return, financing their trip by a series of hold ups until they reached Omaha. There, while robbing a drug store, they perfected a successful technique. Erwin went in and held the place up while Brown stayed outside as lookout. When police arrived, Brown posing as a casual loungeur, would shout out to police which way the robber went, misdirecting police to the wrong direction. A short time after, he would saunter off and meet Erwin at a prearranged place.

**EPISODE #293** (Broadcast December 25, 1942)

**“CRIMINAL IDENTIFICATION”**

**STORY:** The identification of people – especially criminals – has always been a problem with the police. Identification of a person means knowing positively who a given person is. In medico-legal practice it may be