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From Page to Stage: Old Time Radio at IWU

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From Page to Stage: Old Time Radio at IWU

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. --As the first in their three-part series titled "From Page to Stage," Alpha Eta Pi, Illinois Wesleyan University's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English honor society, will bring Jim Hazard, professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and the sounds of old-time radio to Illinois Wesleyan University on Feb. 26.

Hazard's presentation, which begins at 7 p.m., in Evelyn Chapel, will center on Paul Rhymer, a radio script writer in the 1930s, who wrote the witty radio comedy "Vic and Sade." Hazard's remarks will be followed by two script performances featuring Jared Brown, IWU professor of theatre arts; Bob Bray, IWU R. Forrest Colwell Professor of English; Alyssa DeCesari, a senior theatre arts major from Lisle, Ill. and David Getzin, a senior theatre arts major from Wausau, Wis.

Growing up in Whiting, Ind., Hazard credits his grandmother with instilling in him the intricacies and humor of Paul Rhymer's radio program "Vic and Sade."

"I first heard 'Vic and Sade' in my grandmother's kitchen. She would pause in her war on dust and fingerprints for fifteen minutes to sit with a cup of tea and listen to the folks who live in the house halfway up the next block," said Hazard. "I remember her wiping away tears of laughter with her flowered apron. I got a cookie and tea and we talked about the Gook family as if they were our family. It was a high point of the day. Years later I discovered how good her taste was."

"Vic and Sade" tells the story of the Gooks, a small family composed of Vic, Sade and their son Rush, with an occasional visit by Uncle Fletcher.

"There was no fake melodrama or mystery in his shows--it was humor of the highest and finest sort," Hazard said. "There were no sound effects, no other characters, no traveling away from home. A very pure appreciation of the human voice in conversation with other, familiar voices."

Rhymer grew up in Bloomington, Ill., and attended Illinois Wesleyan University. Later, he moved to Chicago, where radio dramas excelled in the 1930s, and worked as a freelance writer.

A regular writer for Milwaukee Magazine, Hazard writes on local lore and human interest stories. He has also taught several radio history courses in Elderhostels, giving him some focus and someone to talk to about his enthusiasm over Paul Rhymer and his scripts.

"I am mainly interested in the popular arts--especially those instances when we achieve the highest common denominator, rather than the lowest," Hazard said. "I see Rhymer's work as a kind of string quartet for voices, in various keys and moods, always marked by humor and delicacy. He was not a satirist: he loved his characters, even their foolishness."

