

“And Now, A Word From Our Sponsor...”

By Christopher Klose, volunteer, on HRH Programs and Collections Committees, May 4, 2023

As we prepare to launch a new phase of our oral history program, Chris Klose remembers back to the fanciful stories shared during his parents’ radio show.

Before the widespread adoption of television in the early 1950s, radio was still king. Faithfully each week, millions upon millions of Americans tuned in “same time, same station,” to *Guiding Light* or other favorite “soap operas,” so-called because they were “brought to you” by Ivory soap (“99 and 44/100 percent pure”) or other popular brands. Everyday stories kept listeners entertained.

Although local newspapers are few and far between these days and social media have seemingly relegated radio and television to the dustbin of history, stories about everyday people still topped the charts. Recognizing that what goes around does come around, Historic Red Hook is inaugurating an oral history program to capture the daily life of Red Hook as experienced by its residents.

On June 3, in conjunction with its Then & Now Festival and the re-opening of the StoryStudio, Historic Red Hook will begin to record, preserve, and, with permission, share stories that deepen our understanding of Red Hook’s identity, character, and history. First, we will record the voices of Red Hook residents as they describe their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, the focus will turn to what has attracted people to Red Hook over the years. We will partner with Red Hook Responds and Culture Connect to interview a wide cross-section of the community, including our Spanish-speaking families.

Historic Red Hook’s focus on recording the voices of our community is not new, only the digital format. Tales of everyday Red Hook first won a nationwide radio listening audience thanks to my parents, Woody and Virginia Klose’s “Red Hook 31,” their 15-minute a day, five-day a week interview show emanating from the kitchen of our Echo Valley farmhouse and broadcast from 1947 to 1948 over the Mutual Broadcasting System.

Whether talking with the Red Hook Village mayor or listening to “Bronco” Charlie Miller, self-promoted as the last of the Pony Express riders and living out his days at Ward Manor, which was then a retirement community, Mother and Dad’s goal was to be entertaining. As my father used to recall, sometimes



Virginia and Woody Klose interview “Bronco” Charlie Miller (center) on their radio show.

they “went along with the gag,” however fanciful.

In Charlie’s case, the gag was beyond fanciful. In the span of his 15-minute on-air chat with my parents, (listen at youtu.be/SVIM4bqP9WE), Charlie allowed as how he had shaken Abe Lincoln’s hand, knew Buffalo Bill Cody (even riding in his Wild West show for three seasons), and met Sam Houston and Davy Crockett (who had died at the Alamo in 1836, some 14 years before Bronco Charlie was born)! Oh, he also witnessed the driving of the Golden Spike linking the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads at Promontory, Utah, in 1869. Not too shabby for eastern-born Julius Mortimer Miller, whose long life

(he died January 15, 1955 at 105 years of age) bore testimony to his genius as a “remarkable tale teller, able to hold an audience rapt with a strong, clear voice and a master actor’s sense of drama and pacing,” as characterized by Jim DeFelice in his definitive history of the Pony Express, *West like Lightning*.

We don’t expect story tellers as fantastical as Bronco Charlie in our upcoming interviews. But, oral interviews often include untold or overlooked personal accounts that provide valuable perspectives not otherwise captured in letters, photographs, diaries, and other historical materials.

As Red Hook 31’s announcer would urge at the end of each show, “Tune in tomorrow, friends, same time, same station.” Same goes for Historic Red Hook. Keep tuning and checking in. We are ready to listen to you!

Red Hook Advertiser

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Klose Family Commence New Broadcast On Air Daily - Title “Red Hook 31”

The trials and tribulations of a city business man and his family who purchase an old farm-house and attempt to convert it into a combination home-and-farm enterprise backgrounds a new series that debuted Monday, August 4, in the 1:15 to 1:30 p. m., EDT, time period over WKNY Kingston and will also be heard over WOR 9:00 to 9:15 a. m. on Sundays.

Unique in network programming ideas, the show, which is titled “Red Hook 31”, is a Monday through Friday strip featuring the every-day lives of Willard “Woody” Klose, a radio producer, his wife Virginia (“Ginny”), and his four sons, Taylor, aged 10; Nicky, 9 years old; Kevin, 6, and two-year-old Christopher. Each of the week-day broadcasts will originate from the Klose farm home east of this village, an 80-year-old Colonial type structure that commands a 100-acre farm in the heart of the fertile Hudson Valley.

Faced with the problem of raising four husky, growing youngsters in the confining maze that is New York City, Woody and Ginny Klose bought this historic Colonial farmstead with the idea in mind of not only beating the urban housing shortages, but also providing a stimulating rural atmosphere in which their children might grow.

The show will be most informal with the Klose family and local neighbors taking to the air with real-life, lunch-time discussions and anecdotes about their own problems and those of their farmer neighbors. Many of



Photo by C. Eggert

MR. AND MRS. WILLARD KLOSE
City-bred Klose family finds that farming “ain’t as easy as the books show it to be” in New Week-Day Strip on their farm life.

Red Hook Advertiser article featuring the Klose’s radio show, Aug. 7, 1947.