



Old Time Radio Moments of the Century (Part 10)

Over the last nine months Ms. McLeod has listed 90 of her "top 100" 20th Century Radio Moments. This month we are featuring her final "top ten" selections. Your editor is of the opinion that most of these would be on everyone's list.

(The following article by broadcast historian Elizabeth McLeod is reproduced here with her permission.)

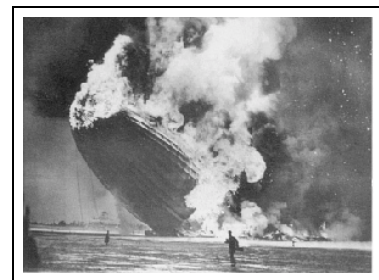
10. War Of The Worlds 10/30/38

Like a lot of legends, the story of Orson Welles and his Martian Invasion has grown with the telling. It's probable that no more than six million people heard the broadcast, and Professor Hadley Cantril in his landmark study of the "invasion" estimated that at most only about a million people were actually fooled -- out of a total population of around 150 million, and compared to the 35 million Americans who went on blithely listening to Charlie McCarthy, unaware that anything was out of the ordinary. But the numbers, in the end, don't really matter. What matters is that Welles and company provide a graphic demonstration of just how powerful the audio medium can be -- and even more significant, the post-mortem public response to the broadcast reveals just how unprepared Americans really are for the brave new Media Age ahead.

9. FDR's First Inaugural 3/4/33

The winter of 1932-33 may have been the most grim in our nation's history. The economy was in ruins, the banking system was collapsing, tens of millions were hungry, with no money, no jobs, and no hope. But on a chilly March afternoon, a newly inaugurated President reaches out with his voice to calm the panic, to convince a terrified America that, indeed, the only thing it has to fear is fear itself.

8. The Hindenburg Description 5/8/37



Is there a living American who *hasn't* heard WLS staff announcer Herbert Morrison's sobbing account of the explosion of the legendary German dirigible? Without doubt the most famous actuality recording of all time, Morrison's description of the disaster is so vivid that it becomes the first notable exception to NBC's prohibition on the airing of recordings. It only aired twice over the network -- and never in its entirety -- but Morrison's recording has nonetheless transcended the original event to become one of the most familiar audio documents of the twentieth century.

7. FDR's first Fireside Chat 3/12/33



"My friends. I want to tell you what has been done in the last few days, why it has been done, and what the next steps are going to be." In a calm, reasoned, thirteen-minute talk, the new President outlines the steps taken to prevent a full-scale collapse of the nation's banking system -- explaining the complexities of industrial economics in terms that any citizen can understand. This gentle, informal approach projects the atmosphere of a man talking to his neighbors by the fireside -- and CBS-Washington manager

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