

Introduction

“California Campfire Tales, written by Joe McHugh,” combines two tales from the early days of California as told by medicine showman and raconteur, Phibius T. Quakenbush. In the story of “The Golden Frog” an Indian’s faith overcomes a gambler’s greed while in “A Pony Express Love Story,” a young Irish woman saves the life of her sweetheart and invents a new pastry!

For step-by-step instructions on how to perform a radio play with students, refer to the “Radio Theater Cookbook, Recipes for the Imagination,” available from the Raven Radio Theater of the Air! This script is published with the following materials and information to help you prepare your students for their own radio theater presentation.

Master CD - an CD that contains the pre-recorded music and sound effects segments you will need to perform this play.

Master CD Index - lists the music and sound effect segments on the Master CD, their duration, and instructions.

Character List - tells you which characters are in the play, how many lines each one has, and which pages of the script to duplicate for each character.

Sound Effects Suggestions - ideas for finding or building the mechanical sound effects you will need to perform the play.

“Get-Ready” Cards - a master set of cue cards that you can copy onto card stock and use during the performance to cue sound effects crew.

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“California Campfire” Character List

Announcer	10 lines	Introduces the radio play to the audience
Professor	207 lines	Phibius T. Quakenbush, medicine show entertainer
Hardesy	37 lines	Journalist traveling through the gold country
Billy	14 lines	Miwok Indian
Toliver	2 lines	Billy’s friend
Mrs. Benton	17 lines	Wife of Uriah Benton
George	8 lines	Customer in the General Store
Ed	8 lines	Customer in the General Store
Mack	9 lines	Customer in the General Store
Doc	29 lines	Gambler
Uriah Benton	5 lines	Owner of the General Store
Pa	16 lines	Owner of the Lost Goose Cafe
Ma	4 lines	Wife of owner of the Lost Goose Cafe
Mary	21 lines	Girl who saves Pony Express rider
Alice	13 lines	Mary’s sister
Jenkins	3 lines	Muleskinner
Quentin	6 lines	Pony express rider
Samuels	6 lines	Gold miner
Tim	2 lines	Gold miner

Casting Notes: There are 20 speaking parts in “California Campfire Tales.” Having an adult read the part of the Professor can be very helpful as it helps establish the timing and expression of the young readers. Remember you are casting by voice alone, not by appearance. Become familiar with the script and try and match the reader to the voice of the character. The idea is to inspire the readers to bring as much life to their characters and the action of the story as possible. You will need 8 to 12 students for the sound effects crew.

Duplicating List

Announcer	p. 1	Narrator	p. 1
Professor	full script	Hardesy	pp. 1-3, 9-12, 19-20
Billy	pp. 4-10	Toliver	p. 4
Mrs. Benton	pp. 5-10	George	pp. 5-8, 10-11
Ed	pp. 5-11	Mack	pp. 6, 9-10
Doc	pp. 7-11	Uriah Benton	pp. 9-10
Pa	pp. 13, 16-18	Ma	pp. 13, 16-17
Mary	pp. 13-19	Alice	pp. 13-16
Jenkins	p. 15	Quentin	pp. 15, 18
Samuels	pp. 18-19	Tim	p. 19

Master CD Index

With the music/sound effects master CD for California Campfire, you will be able to add audio texture and excitement to your radio theater production. The master CD includes **in sequence** the music and sound effects selections listed below

1. Old-time radio segments and fanfare
2. Theme music
3. Crickets with short banjo segment
4. Birds and nearby stream
5. Crickets
6. Crickets
7. Fiddle music
8. Crickets
9. Rain
10. Crickets
11. Theme music

CLIPPITY-CLOP! SPLASH! PLOP! CRASH! BANG! WHOOSH!

Sound Effects

Chime - A single tone (or several tones such as NBC's "Do - So- Me") alerts the listener to the upcoming radio drama. A glockenspiel makes fine tones but a variety of other items can work as well even a discarded bearing-ring hanging from a cord which is struck with a small wooden mallet.

Hoof Beats and Bridle - Take two halves of an empty coconut shell and drum them rhythmically in a tray of gravel. You can also cover the coconuts with cloth to imitate hoof beats on a soft surface. The easiest way to imitate a bridle sound is with a whole bridle or just the bit or piece of light chain. Shake it lightly along with the hoof beats to create a convincing illusion of a horse and rider.

Banjo - Borrow a banjo from a neighbor or a music store. Strum it a few time or pick out a simple melody like the "Old Suzanna."

Saddle - To make the squeaking sound of a saddle as someone dismounts from a horse take an old leather wallet and bend it back and forth close to the mic.

Footsteps - Walk in place or hold a pair of shoes with the hands and "walk" on a table. It is important to get a realistic rhythm to the footsteps. If walking in place, a "heel to toe" step is best but takes practice to master.

On Gravel - Use a tray with medium to small gravel on it.

Sloshing - In a large wash pan place several crumpled and shredded newspapers. (Brown paper restroom towels are better because they don't have any ink to stain the hands) Add water until you get a good "squishy" or "sloshy" sound. Simulate walking by using the palm of the hand for footsteps.

Campfire - An old standby of radio theater, this effect is created by gently crumpling a piece of cellophane. Different pieces of cellophane create different sounds so experiment to get just the right "crackle" for the campfire. You can add to this effect if you want by taking a small whisk broom and running your fingers along the top of the bristles while someone else snaps a thin piece of wood from time to time.

Ladling Out Stew - Place some canned beans or wet, crumpled up newspaper in a pot. Use a metal spoon to ladle it out onto a “camp-style” metal plate. Make sure to scrap the pot and strike the plate with the spoon as you do so. Follow this up with silverware occasionally scraping the metal plate as Hardeesy eats and talks.

Splitting Wood With a Hatchet - This engaging effect is done with a 16” piece of “two by four” and a hatchet. Split the wood on the floor holding a mic nearby in order not to rattle the other items on the sound effects’ table. Use a straight-grained piece of wood without knots for easy splitting. Be careful.

Tying Up a Bundle of Wood - Take several pieces of short thick tree branches or wooden lathe and handle them roughly near the mic.

Splashing Water - Splash water in a plastic wash pan with your hand near the mic but making sure not to get it wet.

Door - There was always a framed, half-size door in all the old radio drama studios. It either sat on a table top or, if larger, had castors so it could be easily moved around. The bigger the door and heavier the frame, such as one made of hardwood, the more realistic the sound it made. The handle was just a shade loose, so that it could be rattled a little as the door was opened. A variety of other door fittings were often installed on the door and frame including a lifting-type latch, a bolt, a knocker, etc. Sometimes the door doubled for window sounds with a sash window set in the back of the boxed frame.

If you build your own sound-door, or have a parent or local business donate one, it can be used over and over again in future radio drama productions.

Another solution is simply to use a real door close enough to be picked up by a microphone.

For the door to the general store, have someone ring a little hand bell as the door is opened or closed.

Sound of Coins - Simulate the sound of coins by using different sizes of metal washers from the hardware store. Drop them from above into a hand held against the stomach.

Dropping Bundles - Make up several bundles of short tree branches tied together and drop them on the floor near a mic.

Coffeepot and Pouring - A great sound effect when done in tandem. Take coffeepot full of water (a porcelain “camp-style” coffeepot is the best) and rattle the lid a few times before pouring the water into a tin cup.

Scales Placed On Counter - Simply find something heavy and place it on a table with a “thunk.” Rehearse this effect beforehand to make sure none of the other items on the table make noise when you do it.

Gold Frog Placed on Scales - Use something heavy like a rock and place it in a metal tray in such a way that it makes a slight “ringing” sound. Somehow suspending the tray on strings will help you achieve this effect.

Weights Placed on Scale - Use two lead fishing sinkers and lightly drop them, one after another, onto a metal tray making a slight “ringing” sound each time.

Bucket - Take a galvanized bucket, the older the better, and shake it a little by the handle next to the mic.

Digging Dirt - This effect is done by using a small garden hand trowel and a shoebox-size container of dirt. Put some pebbles in with the dirt to make more sound. With a mic nearby, repeatedly push the trowel slowly into the dirt, lifting some up and pouring it back, to simulate the sound of a large shovel digging in hard ground. Be careful not to hit the sides of the box while you do this.

Rocker - Make the sound of the “rocker” by rubbing two pieces of “two by fours” together in a back and forth motion near the mic while someone repeatedly pitches dirt from a trowel into a flat empty box which someone else is shaking from side to side. Put a piece of metal screen in the bottom of the box for added realism.

Panning for Gold - Swish some water around in a flat metal pan with some dirt in it. Do this close to the mic.

Washing Dishes - Put some plates and a handful of silverware in a wash tub filled with water and actively “clink” them together with your hands while splashing the water. A metal wash tub is best if you have one.

Moving Pots on Woodstove - Scrap a pot or two around on the back of a large, upside-down iron skillet.

Wind - A wind machine is made by hanging a piece of heavy canvas with lead fishing sinkers sewn in a seam along one end over a large, cylinder made of wooden slats and turned on a frame with a hand crank. The rubbing of the canvas against the slats makes the sound of wind. Another way to simulate wind is to pull a length of silk-like material across two or three upright wooden boards. The strength of the wind can be increased or decreased by varying the amount of drag. For wind in the trees agitate a handful of old recording tape in front of the microphone.

Thunder - Go to a sheet metal shop and try different pieces of scrap metal until you get one that makes exactly the sound you want (18 gauge works well). Bolt a piece of wood along the top and a piece of leather for a handle to the bottom. You can hang the thunder-sheet or have it held up by two people while a third shakes it. (Be careful when laying it down afterwards you don't make any unwanted noise.) Students who handle the thunder-sheet should wear leather work gloves as sheet metal often has sharp edges.

Another way to make thunder is to buy some lead shot from a sporting/hunting goods store (“OO-buck” is best). Put a handful into a heavy balloon and blow it up. Shake the balloon next to the mic to simulate thunder. A little practice will get it right. If you shake it too hard the balloon may break. Lead in any form is poisonous so use extreme caution around children.

Whip - The whip sound can be made by taking two wide leather belts and taping them together at both ends. Holding the ends in each hand, push them together and then pull them apart making a snapping sound. It takes a little practice to make it work each time or make a “slap-stick” by taking two boards (roughly 18” long, 4” wide, 3/4” thick) and connecting them one end with a spring hinge like the ones used on the older screen doors. One piece of wo

can be longer than the other and fashioned into a handle. Either simply lift one piece and let it go to “slap” the other or, if made with a handle, flick it overhead to make a realistic “crack” of a whip.

Wagon - The easiest way to make wagon sounds is to combine hoof beats on gravel with a shaking bridle and an occasional banging of tin cups or metal pots. However, if you want to create the sound of rolling wheels you can experiment with any number of techniques. A large round wheel held in a wooden frame with a handle connected to the axle for turning was used in the early radio studios. As the wheel turned, it rubbed against two rollers on the bottom of the frame which were covered with sandpaper to simulate a rough dirt road. We can use across an old ice-cream maker that sounds very much like a rolling wagon, the metal container inside adding just the right amount of metallic resonance. Be creative.

Gunshot - Use a starter’s pistol with blanks or a cap gun. You can also make this effect by striking the edge of a snare drum with a drumstick. Strike a pile of alternate layers of heavy duct canvas and heavy wrapping paper with a thin flat wooden stick. The stick should be about two inches wide and not over a 1/4” thick. Strike a leather cushion with a thin flat stick. Prick an inflated balloon with a pin.

Horse Whinny - Do this with your mouth.

Lantern - Use an old kerosene “hurricane” lantern. Push the lever that opens the glass globe next to a mic.

Striking Match - There are two distinctive sounds of lighting a match, the scratch and the flare of the flame. Use a large wooden kitchen match and draw it slowly across the striker about 6 inches from the mic.

Rain Slicker - Use a real rain slicker or plastic tarp and handle next to mic.

Ripping Cloth - Rip a piece of window shade or unbleached muslin several times.

Pick on Stone - At a distance from the mic, repeatedly strike a rock with a hammer. Try different rocks to get the best sound. Using a free hanging piece of steel to hit the rock can give you a pick’s peculiar “ring.”

HOOFBEATS BRIDLE

Wait for cue!

CREAK OF SADDLE

HOOFBEATS BRIDLE

Wait for cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Gravel)

Wait for cue!

CAMPFIRE

TIN PLATES LADLING STEW

Wait for cue!

LADLING STEW SNAP OF WOOD

HATCHET

Wait for cue!

TYING UP WOOD FOOTSTEPS (Leaves)

Wait for cue!

WATER SPLASHING

DOOR (Open & Close w/ Bell)⁵ FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface)

Wait for cue!

COINS

Wait for cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface) DROPPING BUNDLES

FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface)⁶ COFFEE (Poured)

Wait for cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Two Cues)

Wait for cue!

SCALES PLACED

NUGGET (Placed on Scale)

Wait for cue!

LEAD WEIGHT (Placed on Scale)

Wait for cue!

(REPEAT)

DOOR (Open & Close w/ Bell)

FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface)

Wait for cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface)

NUGGET (Placed on Scale)

BOX OF WEIGHTS

LEAD WEIGHT (Placed on Scale)

Wait for cue!

(REPEAT)

COFFEE (Poured)

Wait for cue!

**DISHES WASHED
POTS & PANS**

Wait for cue!

**HOOFBEATS
BRIDLE** (Fade-in - pass-by -
fade away)

FOOTSTEPS

Wait for cue!

**WIND
THUNDER**

Wait for cue!

**WHIP
WAGON**

**HOOFBEATS
BRIDLE**

Wait for cue!

GUNSHOT

Wait for cue!

**HORSE WHINNIE
HOOFBEATS**

WAGON

WHIP

Wait for cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface)

FOOTSTEPS (Running)

Wait for cue!

HOOFBEATS (Passing By)

FOOTSTEPS (Hard Surface)¹⁴

Wait for cue!

LANTERN (Open)

MATCH

LANTERN (Close)

Wait for cue!

SLICKER

FOOTSTEPS (Two Sets)

Wait for cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Runningsloshing)

FOOTSTEPS (Runningsloshing)

Wait for cue!

SLICKER

Wait for cue!

FOOTSTEPS (sloshing)

CLOTH RIPPED

Wait for cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Runningsloshing)

Wait for cue!

PICK (In Distance)

Wait for cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Gravel)

FOOTSTEPS (Gravel Two Sets)

Wait for cue!

FOOTSTEPS (Gravel)

California Campfire Cue Cards

"California Campfire Tales"

A radio drama of Old California by Joe McHugh

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1

FADE-IN OLD TIME RADIO SEGMENTS & FANFARE

Announcer: Welcome ladies and gentlemen to the Raven Radio Theater of the Air and our exciting historical drama, "California Campfire Tales." Today's radio play was written by Joe McHugh is brought to you by (name of school/sponsor).

So now it's time to sit back, listen carefully, and let the wings of your imagination take you back to those early days of California as we present, "California Campfire Tales!"

2

FADE-IN THEME MUSIC

Hardesy: I came West in the year 1892. I was a young man, full of curiosity and an unquenchable thirst for adventure. My plan was to ride the great Transcontinental railroad from Chicago to Reno, Nevada, where I would then purchase a horse and supplies to cross the Sierra Mountains on horseback into California. Oh, how I remember that journey! The steep, rugged crags, the towering pines, the abandoned mining camps, it was a world both new and strange to me.

One evening, just after dusk, as I was some miles east of the twin mining towns of Nevada City and Grass Valley, I was surprised to hear music drifting to me on the still mountain air. I followed this unexpected sound and soon came upon a lone campsite tucked in amongst some tall pines. Pulled up to one side of a crackling campfire was a painted wagon with a gray nag hobbled nearby. Facing the fire, perched on a fallen log, like some ancient forest gnome, was an old man dressed in a long frock coat and travel-worn beaver top hat. His weathered face sported a large moustache and he was strumming a home-made banjo while the light from the fire danced in his merry eyes. . .

3

FADE-OUT THEME MUSIC

FADE-IN CRICKETS WITH SHORT BANJO SEGMENT AT START

fade-in hoofbeats and bridle

Professor: (CUE AFTER BANJO ENDS) Well, I always said there was nothing like music to draw a crowd. Climb down from your mount, stranger, and rest yourself by the fire.

Hardesy: Don't mind if I do. I've had a long day in the saddle. (grunts as he dismounts)

creak of saddle

Professor: You can tie up over yonder to the wagon.

**several hoof beats, bridle, and steps on gravel move away and then stop
steps on gravel approach and stop
fade-in campfire**

Professor: Reckon you're hungry. I've got a stew made from some bear meat jerky an old Injun give me. It's tougher than a mule skinner's tongue but it's got flavor.

clank of tin plate and ladling of stew

Hardesy: (grunts as he sits down) Thank you kindly. Smells wonderful.

Professor: What's your handle, son?

Hardesy: (while eating, confused) Handle? I . . . I don't get your meaning?

Professor: (slightly frustrated) Your handle? What do folks call you?

Hardesy: Oh, it's Hardesy. Thomas Jefferson Hardesy from Jasper County, Indiana.

Professor: Well, Mr. Hardesy, what brings you to these parts? The fun's all over with the gold rush you know.

Hardesy: I'm on my way to Sacramento. I'm a journalist. I'll be writing for the Union Newspaper. Maybe you've heard of it?

Professor: Heard of it? Course I have. It's the rag that Mark Twain fellow scribbled for. So you're a writer? Now ain't that grand. I'm honored to be in your company. The name is Professor Phibius T. Quakenbush, physician, entertainer, and philosopher, at your service. I run the best cure-all, patent medicine show this side of the Mississippi. I'm the last of a dying breed, you might say, and proud to have survived this long.

Hardesy: You work alone then, Professor?

Professor: Yep. It can be a lonely enterprise at times but you get used to it. I had me a Blackfoot Indian once. Traveled with him for about six years. "Chief Running Bear," I called him. Of course, that was just his stage name. I don't know what it is with white folks, Mr. Hardesy. Most times they'll up a kill an Indian if they get half a chance, or at least try and steal everything he's got. But when it comes to hawking medicine, you put an Injun standing quiet as a post in front of your wagon and you'll sell a heap more product every time. If I've seen it once I've seen it a thousand times. People are strange that way, I reckon.

Hardesy: Maybe you could tell me some things about California, Professor, seeing as I'm new to this country.

Professor: (laughs) Well, maybe I could at that. Here, ladle yourself out a tad more stew and I'll throw a couple more sticks on the fire.

<p>more stew being ladled out snap of wood</p>
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Professor: Now, young fella, the first thing to understand is there are really two Californias, the one you can see with your eyes, smell with your nose, and hear with your ears and the other one you've got to explore with your imagination. It's a rough and mysterious country full of stories about the early days when gold was first discovered in these hills and folks flocked in from all over to take a shot at getting rich. The world ain't never seen nothing like it, Mr. Hardesy, such a motley collection of dreamers, heroes, scalawags, and riff-raff all gathered up in one place and many of 'em speaking a different lingo and armed to the teeth. Yes sir, those were the rowdy days and I should know. I was right there in the thick of it!

Hardesy: Then this is my lucky day, Professor. There's nothing I like better than a good story.

Professor: Well, let me start by telling you about a Miwok Indian I once knew back in '53 when I was a-livin' in Columbia up in the "Motherlode" country. His name was Eneto but we all called him "Pitch-Pine Billy" because he sold pitch-pine to the miners and townsfolk for kindling. He was a strange looking creature, dressed all in skins with ashes from the campfire stuck to the pitch in his long hair. He was gaunt as an ol' grizzly after a long winter's nap and, like a bear, he went without shoes all the year round, his toes lifting up when he raised his foot and curling under when he set it down. Now Indians looks at things different than you or me, Mr. Hardesy. To them, everything's alive, not just animals and people and plants, but things like the wind and water, rocks and fire. They give 'em names and talk to 'em like you would a friend.

Well, anyway, one day Billy and a man he worked with name of Toliver was a-gatherin' pitch-pine up Grapevine Gulch, in Calaveras County. Billy was using a hatchet to split the wood. Nearby was a stream swollen with water from the winter runoff.

4

FADE-OUT CRICKETS

FADE-IN BIRDS AND NEARBY STREAM

fade-in sound of hatchet splitting wood

Billy: Enough wood for now. We stop.

Toliver: I can't come with you to town today to sell wood, Billy. I told the "Sidney Duck" I'd help him build a new shanty. *(Note: Sidney Duck was a nickname for an Australian)*

Billy: OK, I go alone. You tie wood together so I can carry. I get drink of water.

**sound of tying up wood and stop
steps on leaves fade-away**

Professor: Well, ol' Billy went along down the stream a piece and knelt down on the bank to get him a drink of water. He reached his cupped hands into the cold water and brought it up to his lips.

water splashing as Billy drinks

Professor: Suddenly something big and shinny caught his eye. It was a gold nugget the size of a railroad watch! But it weren't the gold color that drew Billy. No sir, it was the nugget's shape. . . just exactly like a half-grown bullfrog, sitting on it's haunches, and ready to spring!

5

FADE-OUT BIRDS AND NEARBY STREAM
FADE-IN CRICKETS

Hardesy: Why, I bet a gold nugget like that was worth some money.

Professor: I'll tell a man, it was.

Hardesy: So, did he sell it?

Professor: Now, hold your horses, I'm getting to it. You see, Billy just sat there, next to the stream, for a long, long time a-holdin' that nugget in one hand and stroking it with his other, like it was something alive. Then, early the next morning he went to town with a big bundle of wood to sell. His first stop was Uriah Benton's store, one of his regular customers. It was cold out and a bunch of the boys were keeping warm around the wood stove. Emma Benton, one of only a handful of white women in California in them days, was minding the store for her husband who'd gone off to Stockton to get supplies.

FADE-OUT CRICKETS

door opens and closes with bell

heavy footsteps on wooden floor approach and stop

Mrs. Benton: Good morning, Billy.

Billy: Got wood for you. Much pitch, burn good.

Mrs. Benton: And just in time too, Billy. These no-account miners have about used up every stick I've got and haven't purchased a blessed thing for the aggravation.

George: (speaking up from a short distance away) Seeing as we're the only customers you got, Mrs. Benton, you best be treating us kindly or we'll take our trade some place else.

Mrs. Benton: Go then and good riddance! At least then I won't have to listen to any more of your tall tales.