

Perry Mason Notes

Perry Mason aired from September 21, 1957 to May 22, 1966 with 271 episodes in the series.

Episode For Class:

The Case Of The Moth Eaten Mink - aired December 14, 1957

This episode of *Perry Mason* was filmed during October 3 through 9, 1956, about a year before the series aired. This drama is considered to be the "pilot" and was aired as the 13th episode of the year.

The Perry Mason character was inspired by a Los Angeles trial attorney, Earl Rogers (1869 - 1922), who handled 77 murder trials, but lost only three. His most notable cases occurred between 1899 and 1916. He was recognized for the extensive use of visuals, charts and diagrams, during trial before it became common practice. Rogers is famous for his defense of an attorney-client disagreement with Clarence Darrow, a fellow attorney who was charged with attempted jury bribery in 1912.

Ten years after Earl Rogers' death in 1922, impressed with numerous accounts of Rogers' cases, attorney and author Erle Stanley Gardner (1889 - 1970) reincarnated Rogers as the character Perry Mason. The life of Earl Rogers is recounted by his daughter Adela Rogers St. Johns (1894 - 1988) in her book *Final Verdict* (Doubleday, 1962), which was the basis of the television film *Final Verdict*, that was produced by Warner Bros.

As a child, Gardner read the magazine *Youth's Companion* (founded in 1827) published by the Perry Mason Company - a name Gardner later borrowed for his fictional attorney.

In 1933, *The Case Of The Velvet Claws* was the first of 82 Perry Mason novels published along with four short stories. The Perry Mason series ranks third in the top ten best selling book series. In 2015, the American Bar Association's publishing imprint, Ankerwycke, began reissuing Gardner's Perry Mason books, which had been out of print in the United States.

The character of Perry Mason was adapted for six motion pictures from 1934 to 1937 with Warren William as Perry Mason in four of the six films. In *The Case Of The Velvet Claws*, Perry and Della Street get married. There was also a long-running radio series from 1943 to 1955 with John Larkin as Perry Mason and Joan Alexander as Della Street. This series was followed by the best known adaptation, the CBS television series *Perry Mason* (1957–1966) starring Raymond Burr. None of the performers in the radio series moved on to the television version. A second television series *The New Perry Mason* starring Monte Markham ran from 1973 to 1974. Finally, 30 *Perry Mason* television films ran from 1985 to 1995 with Burr reprising the role of Mason in 26 of them up to his death in 1993. A third television series, HBO's *Perry Mason* starring Matthew Rhys, started airing in 2020.

Hamilton Burger first appears in chapter 10 of Gardner's 1935 novel, *The Case Of The Counterfeit Eye*, in which he is described as "a broad-shouldered, thick-necked individual with a close-cropped moustache". Gardner describes Burger in the cast of characters of that novel as an "honest but stubborn" D.A. In chapter 15 of *The Case Of The Caretaker's Cat* (1935), Burger's residential address is given as 3297 West Lakeside and his phone number is EXposition 9–6949.

Hamilton Burger appeared in the fifth installment of the Warner Bros. Perry Mason movie series of the 1930's, *The Case Of The Black Cat*. He was portrayed by Guy Usher. The character, now portrayed by Charles C. Wilson, played a larger role in the sixth and final film in the series, *The Case Of The Stuttering Bishop*. In this film his name was pronounced Ber-Jer.

Burger was portrayed by William Talman in the television series *Perry Mason*. Asked how he felt about Burger losing to Mason week after week, Talman said, "Burger doesn't lose. How can a district attorney lose when he fails to convict an innocent person? Unlike a fist or gun fight, in court you can have a winner without having a loser. As a matter of fact, Burger in a good many instances joined Mason in action against unethical attorneys, lying witnesses or any one else obstructing justice. Like any real-life district attorney, justice is Burger's "main interest."

Burger did defeat Mason twice on the television series: in "The Case Of The Terrified Typist" (Season 1- episode 38) and in "The Case Of The Deadly Verdict" (Season 7 - episode 4), a much-publicized episode that begins with Mason's client being sentenced to death.

Della Street was played by five different actresses in the six feature Perry Mason films. Claire Dodd played the role in two of the films (*The case Of The Curious Bride* and *The case Of The velvet claws*). Erle Stanley Gardner was joking when he picked the names of the Perry Mason characters: thus, "Della Street" is a spin on "de la street", which is shorthand for a streetwalker.

Lt. Arthur Tragg: Police homicide investigator was introduced in the 1940 novel, *The Case Of The Silent Partner*.

Paul Drake is a fictional private detective in the Perry Mason series of murder mystery novels by Erle Stanley Gardner. Drake is described as tall and slouching, nondescript (as suits his profession) and frequently wearing an expression of droll humor. He often smoked cigarettes especially when he had a subject of interest under surveillance. He is friend and right-hand man to Mason, a highly successful criminal defense lawyer in Los Angeles.

Allen Jenkins played a variation on the Paul Drake character, referred to as **Spudsy Drake**, in two 1935 films based on Gardner novels, *The Case Of The Curious Bride* and *The Case Of The Lucky Legs*.

Eddie Acuff took over the Spudsy role in the 1936 film *The Case Of The Velvet Claws*. Garry Owen played the investigator, now known simply as Paul Drake, in 1936's *The Case Of The Black Cat* and Joseph Crehan took over in 1937's *The Case Of The Stuttering Bishop*.

In 1957, William Hopper auditioned for both the Mason and Drake roles. "He was perfect as Drake and we got him," recalled executive producer Gail Patrick Jackson.

In the short-lived 1973–1974 revival, *The New Perry Mason*, Paul Drake was played by Albert Stratton.

In the successful series of Perry Mason television films that began in 1985, the Paul Drake character was part of the back story: his son Paul Jr. served as Mason's private investigator in the first nine films. Drake's son was played by William Katt, real-life son of Barbara Hale, who played Della Street both in the television series and the television movies.

Radio Series: The 15-minute continuing series *Perry Mason* aired weekdays October 18, 1943 – December 30, 1955, on CBS Radio. Geared more towards action than courtroom drama, it mixed mystery and soap opera, with attorney Perry Mason sometimes even exchanging gunfire with criminals.

The actors portraying Mason switched frequently over the first three years of the show's run, starting with Bartlett Robinson, then followed by Santos Ortega and Donald Briggs. John Larkin took over the starring role March 31, 1947 and portrayed Perry Mason until the end of the series. Joan Alexander was one of the actresses who played Della Street on radio.

Radio's Perry Mason has more in common, in all but name, with the daytime serial *The Edge Of Night* than the subsequent prime-time *Perry Mason* television show. As many radio serials moved to television, so was to be the destiny of *Perry Mason*. However, Gardner disagreed with the direction of the new show and pulled his support. CBS insisted that Mason be given a love interest to placate daytime soap opera audiences, but Gardner flatly refused to take Mason in that direction. The sponsor, Procter & Gamble hired the writers and staff of the *Perry Mason* radio series, the show was retooled and it became *The Edge Of Night*.

For *The Edge Of Night*, the characters and setting were renamed. It debuted on CBS on April 2, 1956 and ran as a live broadcast on that network for most of its run until November 28, 1975. The series then moved to ABC, where it aired from December 1, 1975 until December 28, 1984. 7,420 episodes were produced, of which some 1,800 are available for syndication.

According to **The Perry Mason TV Show Book**, the unbeatable defense attorney actually did lose three cases (that we know about) during his career. In "The Case Of The Witless Witness," Mason loses a non-murder case, a "matter of civil law," the site notes. In "The Case Of The Terrified Typist," Mason's client is found guilty of murder, but he eventually manages to clear her name anyway. Last but not least in "The Case Of The Deadly Verdict," Perry's client is found guilty of murder and is sentenced to death in the gas chamber. (But once again, Perry saves the day before that can go down.)

Paisano Productions, one of the production companies involved with this show, was formed by Gail Patrick Jackson (the executive producer of the show), her husband (Thomas Cornwell Jackson) and the creator of *Perry Mason* - Erle Stanley Gardner.

Among the actors considered for the role of Perry Mason were William Holden, Richard Carlson, Mike Connors, Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. and Fred MacMurray.

This show utilized three studios during its decade-long production schedule. The early seasons were shot at the old William Fox Studios, which 20th Century-Fox used as its television production branch. The Fox Studio closed in the early 1960s and the series moved to General Service Studios for a while before moving to the old Charlie Chaplin Studios for the remainder of the series. The studio grounds can be spotted throughout the series.

By 1955, the television industry was firmly established and Gardner began getting some very tempting offers to turn his favorite lawyer loose on the small screen. Supposedly he nixed a million-dollar offer from one production house for the entire TV rights. No doubt the bad memory of the Perry Mason films was still indelibly etched in his mind, along with the less than satisfying radio experience. Gardner wanted total control of his character again. So he set up his own television production company and named it Paisano Productions after his south-of-L.A. spread, Rancho del Paisano.

Erle Stanley Gardner, the creator of Perry Mason in a series of novels, was a very prolific author, who simultaneously employed three secretaries (all sisters) to keep up with his output. One of them he eventually married, after his first wife, from whom he was separated for 30 years, died. This was Jean Gardner, born Agnes Helene Walter. People who knew her believed she was the inspiration for Della Street, though neither she nor Gardner himself admitted it. Mrs. Gardner said she thought he put several women together to create the character.

The Temecula Museum honors Erle Stanley Gardner who lived on the 3,000-acre Rancho del Paisano in the Temecula Valley from 1937 until his death in 1970. The ranch was renamed Great Oak Ranch and is

part of the Pechanga Reservation. Gardner appeared in the final episode of the original *Perry Mason* series as a judge.

Raymond Burr - was born Raymond William Stacey Burr in New Westminster, British Columbia, Canada. Burr moved to New York in 1940 and made his first Broadway appearance in *Crazy With The Heat*, a two-act musical revue. His first starring role on the stage came in November 1942 in a Pasadena Playhouse production of *Quiet Wedding*. He became a member of the Pasadena Playhouse drama faculty for 18 months, performing in 30 plays over the years.

Burr appeared in more than 50 feature films between 1946 and 1957. His most memorable appearance was in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* in 1954.

After *Perry Mason*, Raymond Burr starred in *Ironside* for eight seasons. This series was the first crime drama show to star a policeman with a disability. The show earned Burr six Emmy nominations.

Three more attempts for a weekly television series were unsuccessful: *Mallory: Circumstantial Evidence*; *Kingston: Confidential* and *The Jordan Chance*. In 1985, Burr was asked to appear in a low-budget film that would be titled *Godzilla 1985*. He would reprise the role he played in *Godzilla, King Of The Monsters!* from 1956.

In addition to reprising Perry Mason in a series of 26 TV movies from 1985 to 1993, Burr also starred in *The Return Of Ironside* in 1993 with the original cast from that series.

Raymond Burr has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6656 Hollywood Blvd.

Barbara Hale - was born Barbara Bernice Hale in DeKalb, Illinois. She began her professional career as a model for a comic strip called "Ramblin' Bill." Hale was also one of the original "Dr Pepper" girls featured in the soda company's calendars in the 1940's and 1950's.

She moved to Hollywood in 1943. While under contract to RKO Radio Pictures, Hale made her first uncredited screen appearance in *Gildersleeve's Bad Day*.

Hale left RKO in 1949 to sign with Columbia Pictures. She co-starred opposite Larry Parks in the musical biography *Jolson Sings Again* in 1949. During the 1950's, she appeared in *Lorna Doone*, *The Jackpot* with James Stewart, *A Lion Is In The Streets* with James Cagney, *Seminole* and *The Oklahoman*, co-starring Joel McCrea.

She was considering retirement from acting when she accepted her role as Della Street in *Perry Mason*. During the series, Hale missed four episodes due to unexpected surgery. In 1985, Hale and Burr reprised their roles for the TV movie *Perry Mason Returns* and 29 more *Perry Mason* movies until 1995.

Hale was awarded a star of television with a marker at 1628 Vine Street on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on February 8, 1960. She won the Emmy Award for Best Supporting Actress in a Dramatic Series in 1959 and was nominated for the Emmy for Outstanding Performance in a Supporting Role by an Actor or Actress in a Series in 1961.

William Hopper - was born William DeWolf Hopper Jr. in New York City. His mother divorced his father in 1922 and took William to live in Hollywood. Hedda Hopper became a gossip columnist with nearly 30 million readers in newspapers in the United States.

William made his first stage appearance at the Pasadena Community Playhouse in *She Loves Me Not*. In 1936, Hopper had a contract at Paramount Pictures where he was credited in movies as Wolfe Hopper and DeWolf Hopper.

Some of Hopper's film roles included *Stagecoach*, *The Return Of Dr. X*, *Knute Rockne*, *All American*, *The Maltese Falcon* and *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.

By the 1950's, Hopper played the distant father of Natalie Wood in *Rebel Without A Cause* in 1955 and the father in *The Bad Seed* in 1956.

After *Perry Mason* ended in 1966, he declined other television offers. He did make one final film appearance in *Myra Breckinridge* in 1970 which premiered in New York three months after his death on March 6, 1970.

William Talman - was born William Whitney Talman Jr. in Detroit, Michigan. He established himself as a villain in motion pictures with his breakthrough role in the 1950 film noir thriller *Armored Car Robbery*, inspired by the *Great Brink's Robbery*. In 1953, Talman played a psychopathic killer in a movie directed by Ida Lupino, *The Hitch-Hiker*. His performance was noted by Gail Patrick Jackson, executive producer of *Perry Mason*. According to Jackson, "I'd seen a brilliant little movie, *The Hitch-Hiker*, and had to have Bill Talman as Burger – and he never disappointed us".

Talman also guest-starred in various television series, including *wagon Train*, *Have Gun – Will Travel*, *Cimarron City*, *The Wild, Wild West*, *The Invaders* and *Gunsmoke*.

In 1960, Talman was fired from *Perry Mason* for a short period after Sheriff's deputies raided a party on March 13, 1960 in the West Hollywood apartment of Richard Reibold, an advertising agency

executive. The deputies reported finding Talman and seven other defendants naked and suspicious of marijuana use. Among the guests was Mrs. Peggy Louise Flannigan, who would later become William Talman's next wife, after his divorce from Barbara Read. On June 17, 1960, the charges of lewd vagrancy against Talman and the others were dismissed for lack of proof. Talman was later rehired after the series's executive producer, Gail Patrick Jackson and Talman's friend Raymond Burr, made a request to CBS, Erle Stanley Gardner, the creator of *Perry Mason*, spoke out in favor of Talman's return and a massive campaign of letters from viewers to CBS.

Ray Collins - was born Raymond Bidwell Collins in Sacramento, California. Collins was inspired as a young boy to become an actor after seeing a stage performance by his uncle, Ulric Collins, in the Broadway production of *Way Down East*. He made his professional stage debut at age 13, at the Liberty Playhouse in Oakland.

In 1926, he married Joan Uron. At the start of the Great Depression, Collins began working in radio, doing 18 broadcasts a week, working as many as 16 hours a day. Beginning in 1930, he also played parts in short films for the Vitaphone Varieties.

In 1934, Collins began a long association with Orson Welles and became a member of the repertory company of Welles's CBS Radio series *The Mercury Theatre On The Air*. Along with many other Mercury Theatre players, Collins made his feature-film debut in *Citizen Kane* in 1941. Over the following years, Collins would appear in over 75 motion pictures.

After several television appearances, he joined the cast of *Perry Mason* in 1957 as Los Angeles police homicide detective Lieutenant Arthur Tragg. By 1960, his physical health and memory were both in decline.

In October 1963, Collins filmed his last *Perry Mason* episode, *The Case Of The Capering Camera* which aired on January 16, 1964. Although Collins would not return to work on the series, his name appeared in

the opening title sequence through the eighth season, which ended in May 1965. Executive producer Gail Patrick Jackson was aware that Collins watched the show every week and did not to discourage him. Ray Collins died on July 11, 1965 and is interred right next to legendary comedian Stan Laurel at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Hollywood Hills.

Kay Faylen (Dixie Dayton) - was born Catherine Frances Ruf. She made only six appearances in various television series. She is the daughter of actor Frank Faylen, who is best remembered as Herbert T. Gillis, the father of Dobie Gillis. Faylen was also the first wife of television personality and host Regis Philbin from 1956 to 1968.

Roxanne Arlen (Mae Nolan) - was born Roxanne Giles in Detroit, Michigan. On Broadway, Arlen portrayed Gloria Coogler in *Who Was That Lady I Saw You With?* in 1958. She was given the nickname "The Wiggle" for a trademark walk she claimed to have developed at grade school. For the remainder of her screen career, she remained firmly typecast as dumb blondes with names like Flo, Dixie or Bootsie.

In 1956, she screen tested for the role of Della Street in *Perry Mason*. Her other television credits include, *The Bob Cummings Show*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *77 Sunset Strip* and *Hawaiian Eye*. Arlen left show business in 1967 when she found herself being groomed for a sex-goddess role like that of Marilyn Monroe. In 1969, she and her fourth husband, William Shafer moved to London where she became a playwright under the name Roxanne Shafer.

Douglas Kennedy (Sgt. Jaffery) - appeared in over 200 roles for television and motion pictures from 1940 to 1973. He played a large number of supporting roles and was able to receive contract-player status at Paramount Pictures and Warner Brothers. He is best remembered for his western television series *Steve Donovan*, *Western Marshal* in 1955 and as one of the policemen taken over by the Martians in *Invaders From Mars* from 1953. In addition to *The Case Of*

The Moth Eaten Mink, Douglas Kennedy appeared in three other episodes of *Perry Mason* during the run of this series.

Robert Osterloh (Morey Allen) - His television and motion picture career spanned from 1948 to 1972 with over 130 roles in these venues. Osterloh was a member of the Federal squad led by Eliot Ness played by Robert Stack in *The Scarface Mob* which was the pilot for *The Untouchables*.

Osterloh is remembered for playing tough guys in crime films such as James Cagney's prison sidekick in *White Heat*. Before his retirement in 1972, he played one of the businesslike Satan-worshipers as Mr. Fountain in *Rosemary's Baby*.

Marc Krah (George Fayette) - Appeared in other television programs such as *The Untouchables*, *Captain Midnight*, *Biff Baker, U.S.A.* and *Dick Tracy* during his 13 year career.

REFERENCES

Internet Movie Data Base

Wikipedia

Perry Mason Production Sheets