

The Truth that Was Out There: Long John Nebel's Fight against the Censorship of Flying Saucer Reports, Part I

By Raymond Keller, a.k.a. "Cosmic Ray," the author of the international awards-winning *Venus Rising* trilogy of books



Silence is the voice of complicity...

See <https://occupyoakland.org/2014/03/battle-democratic-pacifica-kpfa/>.

“Information is the currency of democracy.” –Thomas Jefferson

Throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s, the American people came to know the truth that was out there, the truth about the extraterrestrial origin of the flying saucers that traversed our skies on a continual basis. They learned about this great truth from the “contactees,” those select individuals privileged enough to encounter and converse with the flying saucer occupants. The platform the contactees enjoyed in broadcasting their message from the extraterrestrials was Long John Nebel’s late night radio talk program, *Party Line*, initially transmitted to a geographic listening area covering 25 contiguous states over station WOR in New York City, beginning in 1954.

Born John Zimmerman in 1911, the controversial late night talk show host did not start his career in radio until he was 43 years old. Up until 1954, he held various jobs in sales; and through his running of a successful auction house in New Jersey came into frequent contact with various East Coast radio station advertising sales representatives from whom he purchased air

time for advertisements. 1954 was a crucial year for radio. It was receiving a lot of competition from the new and burgeoning television industry. Hence, network radio executives were looking for a new format that would help distinguish their media from television broadcasting. As Nebel proposed a talk show format where listeners could actually call in to the program, and live at that, the radio moguls decided to let Nebel take a hand at implementing his own idea. Nebel's proposal had potential, they reasoned. They had nothing to lose by trying it out, and the world to gain.

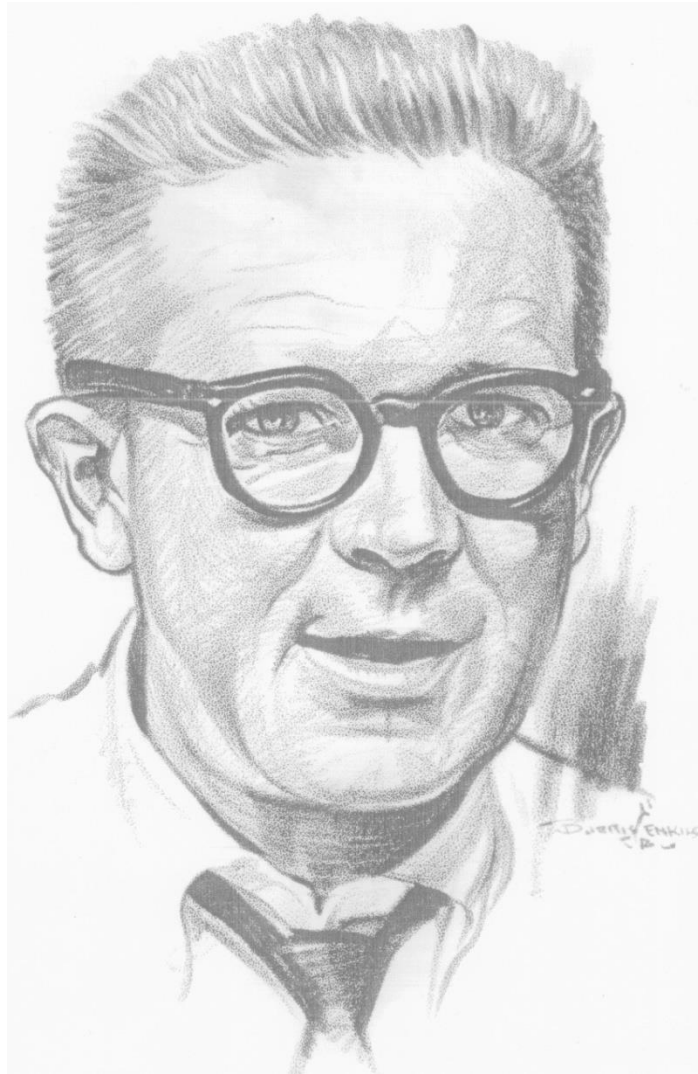
Success of the *Party Line*

The program was a great success. It was heartily received by a vast listening audience. After three years on the air, the ufology community could not do without it. Mrs. Walton Colcord John of 4811 Illinois Avenue, N.W., in Washington DC, was the editor and publisher of the famous *Little Listening Post* newsletter, a very important but irregularly published periodical coming out, on average, about every two to three weeks. Mrs. John, however and for the most part, kept her name off of the newsletter. She probably feared government reprisals for her efforts at uncovering the truth about the elusive flying saucers. But she constantly kept her ears open for any breaking news about investigations of saucer reports or related areas of research; and most of all, she was an avid listener of Long John Nebel's *Party Line* broadcasts. In a special bulletin issued by the *Little Listening Post* on 8 February 1957, Mrs. John opined of Long John Nebel that he was "the UFO's best friend in the United States today."

"Long John," she further added, "conducts a unique radio forum from 1:00 a.m. to 5:30 a.m., seven days a week, on Mutual's station WOR in New York. In a few months time a miracle has happened for UFO. Long John's program has metamorphosed from a disc-jockey program into the world's most broad-minded public forum on what Long John calls 'off-beat' subjects: flying saucers, UFO, reincarnation, occultism, extra-sensory perception, psychokinesis--- in short: the 'borderland sciences.'"

Mrs. John provides an excellent summary of what the *Party Line* program was for the readers of her *Little Listening Post* newsletter: "Long John calls his program the 'Party Line;' and it is in reality almost that very thing. Guests of the *Party Line* sit in informal groups, munch crackers and drink coffee, around a big table loaded with microphones, in a building full of glowing transmitter tubes, flickering lights, fluctuating meters and big copper coils. They hold completely uninhibited bull-sessions on topics not usually given time on air. Red neon lights flutter and blink on the phones. Long John answers and Party Liners as far away as Canada, Florida and Illinois join in the lively discussions. Within the bounds of propriety, no holds or topics are barred. There are now an estimated 1,500,000 UFO Party Liners, and fan mail often runs to several hundred letters a day. Pillow coddlers are staying awake until dawn, maintaining the 'High Watch' and hearing their pet subjects propounded.... and ufology has come into its own."

While local reports of flying saucers and the opinions of regional flying saucer investigators were plentiful in the great variety of independent newspapers being published throughout the United States and the world at the outset of 1957, radio network administrators were hesitant to go out on a limb in broadcasting such information to the public at large. The charismatic “Long John,” so called because of his lanky, thin 6’4” frame, had other opinions on the matter. While he did not necessarily “buy into” every reported UFO or alleged encounter with flying saucer occupants that would pass over his desk, he was more than willing to concede that some of the sightings and incidents may very well be real. Our ignoring of such would accomplish little; and it might even be something that we were thoughtlessly doing at our own peril.



Courtesy of the Gray Barker Collection, Clarksburg, West Virginia: Paranormal and pioneer radio broadcaster Long John Nebel (1911-1978). Nebel interviewed most of the so-called “contactees” of the 1950s and early 1960s on his WOR Radio *Party Line* call-in talk program. His favorite interview subjects were the ever-beautiful Venusian maidens.

Good Time Slot: Every Ufologist's Dream

Up until the mid-1950s, most radio stations, if they weren't signing off at midnight or an hour or two thereafter, were playing classical music into the wee hours of the morning. With the arrival of the smaller hours of the a.m., most of the turmoil of the city had subsided. The cosmos was lending itself to contemplation by introspective minds. The executives at WOR Radio wisely surmise that such pensive individuals might well be attracted to the kind of thinking person's programming then being proposed by Nebel.

In lieu of this, Mrs. John at the *Little Listening Post* noted that the hours of 1:00 to 5:30 a.m. "are ideally suited to study and investigation and discussion of UFO and all the cosmic subjects which have been crowded off the air by commercials. So---" she added by way of explanation, "Long John converted the psychic hours into a great gift to ufology, contributing much to the great resurgence of UFO interest in the winter of 1956-57. Here, at last, is what every ufologist has dreamed about: frank, public and informative discussion.... for the millions."

With Missionary Zeal

Word of Long John Nebel's intriguing UFO programs had reached the West Coast and wonderful guests like George Adamski of Palomar Gardens and George Van Tassel of the Giant Rock Airport, both situated in California, would make regular stops to the WOR studios when they were on tour in the Eastern states. Visitors from California and other Western states to locations back East situated in the reception area of the *Party Line* broadcast, after hearing a broadcast or two, started to ponder what could be done to provide national coverage for the program. Since the *Little Listening Post* was the most widely distributed newsletter in the American ufology community, editor and publisher Mrs. John made the unilateral decision that everyone on her subscription list, or even anyone with an interest in paranormal phenomena or UFOs should write to the Mutual Broadcasting Company at 1440 Broadway, New York City 18, New York, and "insist that the *Party Line* be put on the Mutual Network, so that all of us can hear it." This was carried out with as true missionary zeal.

Fans of the flying saucers at the time were quick to point out that Mutual Broadcasting Company's radio correspondent Frank Edwards (1908-1967) had been discussing UFOs and interviewing various investigators of the phenomenon since the first appearance of the objects over Mt. Rainier in Washington state on 24 June 1947, as reported by the civilian pilot Kenneth Arnold who was flying his Call-Air plane in the vicinity of the Cascade Range on the afternoon of that fateful day. While Edwards was not on the air for four and a half hours every night and aired in the daytime, the subject of flying saucers proved to be both a profitable one for the

Mutual Network and a captivating as well as a serious topic for an estimated 10,000,000 listeners. Edwards' program was sponsored by the prestigious American Federation of Labor and had a strong base in the working class.

Mrs. John's advice was followed by the ufology community. They even exceeded the suggestions of the *Little Listening Post's* editor and publisher. Each reader contacted at least three friends in the United States, and even in Canada and Mexico, if they had any dear ones resident in those countries. "OK," said Mrs. John, "continue to urge foreign correspondents to start a *Party Line* in their own countries. It will require thousands of letters to do this. But this is the opportunity that all saucer fans have been awaiting." In ever increasing numbers, people began to listen to Long John Nebel's program to learn about every phase of ufology, in addition to other interesting, but "off-beat" topics. As more were tuning in, they, in turn, would phone their friends and ask them to tune in on the *Party Line*, WOR at 710 on the AM dial, every night from 1:00 to 5:30 a.m., without fail.

"And jam those phone lines," exhorted Mrs. John. "Please phone WOR and participate in Long John's *Party Line*."

"But most important of all," she emphasized, "write to Long John, care of Radio WOR; and tell him you are grateful for the helpful program. Make suggestions and ask questions."

The result was that Long John Nebel's *Party Line* became the first truly North American network program.



Mutual Broadcasting Company's correspondent Frank Edwards frequently covered UFO reports on his daytime radio program. Because of the success of Edwards' program, the flying saucer-crazed public demanded, and received, WOR's incorporation of Long John Nebel's program in its late night coverage over the entire North American continent.

Venus Is a Hot Topic

No matter your age, you'll want to find out what the UFO community was up to back in the early and formative years of the contactees and the Venusians they communed and consorted with. In the next installment the magic realist, mythologist and ufologist, Dr. Raymond Keller, looks at the ascension of Venus as a "hot topic" in the annals of Long John Nebel's programming history. Specifically, the doctor examines the controversial claims of the enigmatic New Jersey sign painter Howard Menger, whose appearances on Nebel's *Party Line* pushed up the show's ratings to all-time highs, but at the same time sparked a furor and moral indignation that almost forced the program off the air. Pressured by religious fanatics and censors, the Mutual Broadcasting Company's executives found themselves in a monumental quandary. You won't want to miss out on any of this classic three part series. –Cosmic Ray

The Truth that Was Out There: Long John Nebel's Fight against the Censorship of Flying Saucer Reports, Part II

By Raymond Keller, a.k.a. "Cosmic Ray," the author of the international awards-winning *Venus Rising* trilogy of books



Highbridge, New Jersey, contactee Howard Menger (1922-2009), a frequent and most popular guest on Long John Nebel's *Party Line* radio broadcast, generated a storm of controversy over his claims of meeting Venusians that landed their flying saucer in his backyard apple orchard. Photo is from Keller Venus files.

The sign painter and the Venusians

The subject of flying saucers is what kept listeners' ears glued to Long John Nebel's *Party Line* program, broadcast over WOR-Radio out of New York, seven times a week, from 1 to 5:30 a.m. And of all the experts on this extraordinary subject that ever took a turn in addressing Nebel's ever-growing audience, it was the New Jersey sign painter Howard Menger who proved the most attractive, yet controversial. Ben Gross, a radio and television reviewer for the New York *Daily News*, took note in the 10 February 1957 edition of that newspaper, that the

Party Line was the perfect venue for the increasing number of “off-beat connoisseurs” in the radio market.

In an article entitled, “Venus Flying Saucer Gave Him a Lift,” media correspondent Gross wrote that, “There’s a fellow out in Highbridge, New Jersey, who says he has regular contacts with men from Venus. They land in his apple orchard via flying saucers. But that’s not all. By means of some mystic mumbo-jumbo, known as teleportation, he vows he can transport his body or any object from one place to another. Air lines, railroads and bus companies, please take notice!”

Gross insisted that he wasn’t making this story up and neither had he been imbibing of any alcoholic substances. “No such thing,” he insisted; and he added that, “I could pass the drunk test in traffic court anytime.

“The truth is I’ve been listening these many nights to the *Party Line* conducted by Long John over WOR-Radio; and I’ve tuned in so assiduously that no matter how fantastic a story you might tell me, I’m eager to listen.”

Of course, while the renowned journalist Frank Edwards covered the “nuts and bolts” technical aspects of the UFO phenomenon over Mutual Broadcasting’s day-time programming, it was up to Long John Nebel to provide the night owls with all of the esoteric information coming from the contactees, psychics and others tuned into the more metaphysical planes of existence. In this regard, the *Daily News* reporter dubbed Long John Nebel, the “Chef of the Imaginative Bouillabaisse.”

Nebel Intrigued

Nebel was particularly intrigued by the contactees and their alleged adventures with extraterrestrials. However, Nebel would be the first to emphatically tell you that he does not necessarily “buy into” all of these contact tales. The pioneer radio talk show personality was definitely a hospitable fellow; and he did manage to keep an open mind about all the paranormal subjects that would come forth on his program, which first aired on 17 August 1956. The guests have proven quite eclectic. Besides the contactees, there have also appeared on the program spiritualists, believers in reincarnation, mental telepaths, practicing astrologers, individuals who can teleport themselves, authorities on cancer and fluoridation, hypnotists, mind readers, escape artists, science fiction writers, magicians, debunkers of bunko schemes, and many more. Often Nebel would bring cynics and doubters on the *Party Line* to hotly engage in arguments with his more flavorful guests as described above.

Over a Steak Dinner at the Pen and Pencil Restaurant

Both being journalists in the Greater New York area, Gross and Nebel agreed to meet over a steak dinner at the famous Pen and Pencil Restaurant, a well-noted hangout for people in

the media. Of their meeting, Gross wrote in the *Daily News* that, “John is a 6’4”, 170-pounder, with smiling blue eyes and crew-cut brown hair. A former ‘mind reader,’ carnival and street corner pitchman, band leader, ‘super-salesman,’ and manager of the world’s largest photographic supply store, he glows with boyish enthusiasm.”

Gross went on to further describe Nebel. “His youthful zest causes one to doubt the accuracy of his birth certificate, as this formal document says he was born in Chicago, 11 June 1911.”

At the restaurant interview, Gross asked Nebel, “Which topic discussed on your show has drawn the most mail?”

“Flying saucers,” said Long John Nebel, adding that, “The majority of the 50,000 letters we’ve received are concerned with these UFOs. Other big mail drawers are teleportation, cancer and fluoridation.” Teleportation would be considered the transportation of a material object via mental or spiritual means, through time and space.



Long John Nebel pontificates on flying saucer contactees. Photo is from Keller Venus files by August C. Roberts to Otto Binder for unpublished book.

The Flying Saucer from Venus

The interview continued.

Gross: “What is the story told on your program which you regard as the most interesting?”

Nebel: “That of Howard Menger, a sign painter, of Highbridge, New Jersey.”

Gross: “Tell me about it.”

Nebel: “Well, Howard is a nice, gentle and average appearing a person as you’d want to meet. He seems to be utterly honest and sincere. He lives in his small home and, according to him, within recent months flying saucers from the planet Venus have landed in his apple orchard three times.

“As he tells the story, which his wife, Rose, says is absolutely true, he has not only talked to outer space visitors who have arrived in a saucer, but actually taken a 17-minute trip with them in their wondrous craft. Furthermore, says Howard, he has 25 witnesses to these incidents. And, of course, he claims he is also regularly in contact with these spacemen via mental telepathy.

“But this isn’t the most remarkable part of Menger’s many unusual experiences. He says that one night, just a few weeks ago, in response a telepathic message from spacemen, he drove in his station wagon toward Pennsylvania. While driving, he suddenly received another message to turn off a dirt road into a wooded area. He was sitting alone there, but nothing happened.

“Then, apparently with the power he has acquired, Howard teleported himself to his home in Highbridge, some 70 miles away. Or so he claims.”

Howard Explained Teleportation

Gross: “How did he do this?”

Nebel: “Howard says he concentrated on appearing at his house. He visualized himself standing before his front door. He saw his sister-in-law answering his knock and Howard took a pipe from his pocket and handed it to her. Then at 8:40, back in the station wagon again, Howard drove to a nearby diner and called his sister-in-law at Highbridge. She told him that she had just seen him standing in front of the door.... That he had handed her his pipe.... and then had vanished into air.

“And later that night, after Howard had returned home, there it was. His pipe was on a table.... The one he had delivered by teleportation!”

Gross: “What do you think of this story?”

Nebel: “A psychiatrist, Dr. Nodor Fodor, says it’s possible, because it’s a matter of split personality and involves such things as time, space and another dimension.”

Gross: “But, do you believe this?”

Nebel: “Well, you have to admit that it’s interesting.”

The ‘Cosmic Ray’ Opines

There is little doubt in my mind that Howard Menger was telling the truth; for I have teleported myself on several occasions. In the introduction to my second book in the Venus trilogy, ***Final Countdown: Rockets to Venus***, an account is provided by a witnessing paranormal investigator where I teleported from a youth center in Parkersburg, West Virginia, back to a campsite some ten miles away, in the presence of four witnesses. Attached to this article is a video from my office where I demonstrate how teleportation is accomplished with the aid of a ***nimbus***, a Venusian device which augments quantum gravitational compression fields with the aid of an embedded Cyterium/Californium crystal.

Watch Raymond’s Video!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QiEociRIBQ>

“Faith is believing in things when common sense tells you not to.”
–Fred Bailey in *Miracle on 34th Street* (20th Century Fox, 1947)

The program on the night following Menger’s appearance included the channeling of a 50,000 year old spirit from the lost continent of Atlantis. Remember, this was a time when the Congress was considering, at the behest of wayward psychologists, a ban on comic book heroes like Batman, Superman, and Captain Marvel and libraries were routinely being forced to ban books like L. Frank Baum’s *The Wizard of Oz* or (1900) or the more contemporary J. D. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* (1951). Not surprisingly, a noted Indiana psychologist would launch a campaign to take Long John Nebel’s Party Line off the air for good, citing it as “rubbish” and declaring that it only served to “cater to those who want to believe in the impossible and the abnormal.”

To find out the details of this absurd campaign and the efforts of the government minions complying with the wishes of a dastardly Silence Group to black out Nebel from his expanding radio audience, don't miss the next amazing article in this series, "The Truth that Was Out There," right here on this website.