

# Double Take

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*The Chicago Time Capsule was indeed an elaborate production. The greatest of American acting, writing and electronics went into its story of Man, 1960, for future historians. And, centuries later, it was dutifully recovered. Only...*

WHEN the Travelers from Outer Space dug into the pile of moldering rock, they found the metal capsule their senses had told them was there. Battered and corroded though it was, the shadow vibrations showed that it had once been smooth and shiny. As smooth, shiny and impervious to wear as Twentieth Century Earth technology could make it.

At the time the Mayor of Chicago had ceremoniously tossed a handful of lake sand into the hole, had his picture taken smiling against the skyline, and had moved away to let the workmen fill the hole with cement and place the marker, the

Time Capsule had been bright with the hopes of civilization sending its proud present into the uncertain future.

Time passed...

The tiny radio transmitter in the capsule began throwing out its wide signal at the exact instant planned for it many centuries before. No one heard. Eventually, the tiny powerful batteries gave out. The signal died.

Time passed...

When the Travelers from Outer Space took the capsule back to their ship and opened it, they found the contents in perfect order. Even the reel of magnetic tape had not succumbed to the centuries.

In due course, the Travelers examined the tape, divined its purpose, and constructed a machine that would play back the recording.

OUT of a million evolutionary possibilities in a Universe of planets, the chances of two intelligent races being even roughly similar are astronomically remote.

A being develops sense organs for no other reason than to make it aware of its environment. The simplest primitive being's awareness of its environment centers around food, its means of survival. It develops organs and appendages that will enable it to ferret out, obtain and ingest its food. As the food differs, so, then, does the eater.

The Travelers had no ears or eyes, as such. They had other organs for other purposes, but the net result was that they "saw" and "heard" quite as well—even better—than Earthmen.

Perhaps that explains why the Travelers gleaned so much more from the tape recording in the Twentieth Century capsule than its originators had planned or intended.

NOT just any radio show could be placed in the Time Capsule. What picture of contemporary 1960 mankind would the men of the future derive from a soap opera? A news analysis? Or top comedy show? Certainly not a flattering one, and so, reasoned the brass in charge of the project, not a true one.

No, the only answer was to produce a special documentary program, painting on a broad canvas the glories that were the common man's birthright in an enlightened democracy. As July 4<sup>th</sup> was only a month away, the idea was a natural. The program would be carried simultaneously on four networks, then placed in the Time Capsule so that historians of the future would have something solid on which to base their conclusions.

A famous poet-radio writer was hired to write the script. Hollywood's greatest young male star donated his services (with much attendant publicity) as narrator. A self-acknowledged genius who directed radio shows for a living condescended to lend his talents to the production. Numerous other actors, musicians, technicians and assistants were hired... none well-known, but all quite competent.

July 4<sup>th</sup>, the big day, arrived. The cast went into rehearsal early in the morning. By the second complete run-through, just before the break for lunch, the show was hanging together nicely. After four hours of polishing in the afternoon, it was ready to go on the air. Everyone's nerves were raw, but the show sounded great.

Naturally, when a room full of creative people have been rubbing against one another for a full day, a lot of emotions are generated. The listening audience never knew about it, but it took the actors, directors, musicians and technicians several days to get the session out of their systems. During rehearsals, the young Hollywood star developed a consuming lust for one of the minor actresses. One of the minor actors developed a consuming lust for the young Hollywood star. Everyone immediately hated the director, and he, lofty and all-wise, contemptuously hated them in return. By eight o'clock that night, show time, the splendid documentary on the splendid American people was not the only thing that was at peak pitch.

It was the only thing, however, that the radio audience heard. It was magnificent. Future students hearing the tape could not but conclude that here was the Golden Age. Man, at least American man, circa 1960, noble, humble and sincere, was carrying in his bosom the seeds of greatness. Difficulties still existed, of course, but they were not insurmountable. A few deluded people seemed to be working against the common good, but the program left no doubt that this would be cleaned up in short order. The millenium was at hand!

WHEN the Travelers from Outer Space, who were a team of historians doing research on the history of life throughout the Universe, listened to the tape recording, their "ears" heard none of the program as it had been originally broadcast. They were no less fascinated, however, for what they heard was the thought patterns of the people who had been connected with the program. These thoughts, in the form of electrical impulses, were also recorded on the magnetic surface of the tape, and were the only sounds audible to the Travelers.

What a pity these future historians didn't get mankind's version of the life of mankind in 1960, after the producers had gone to so much trouble to tie it up in a package for them. Their conception of Earth culture was based on the thought impulses they "heard", and their History of Earth was written accordingly. The last paragraph is worth noting:

"In the main, it is quite fortunate for life in the Universe that these primitive people destroyed themselves before they learned how to leave their planet. Lustful, murderous and guilt-ridden, they are perhaps the worst examples of intelligent life that we have ever discovered. And yet, paradox supreme, they had one quality that we ourselves would do well to emulate. That quality we can only surmise, for nothing on the recording spoke of it, yet it is obvious, for if they hadn't had this quality, there would have been no recording left for us at all.

*"How strange that these tortured people should practise an unparalleled example of Life's highest achievement... complete honesty with themselves and others."*

