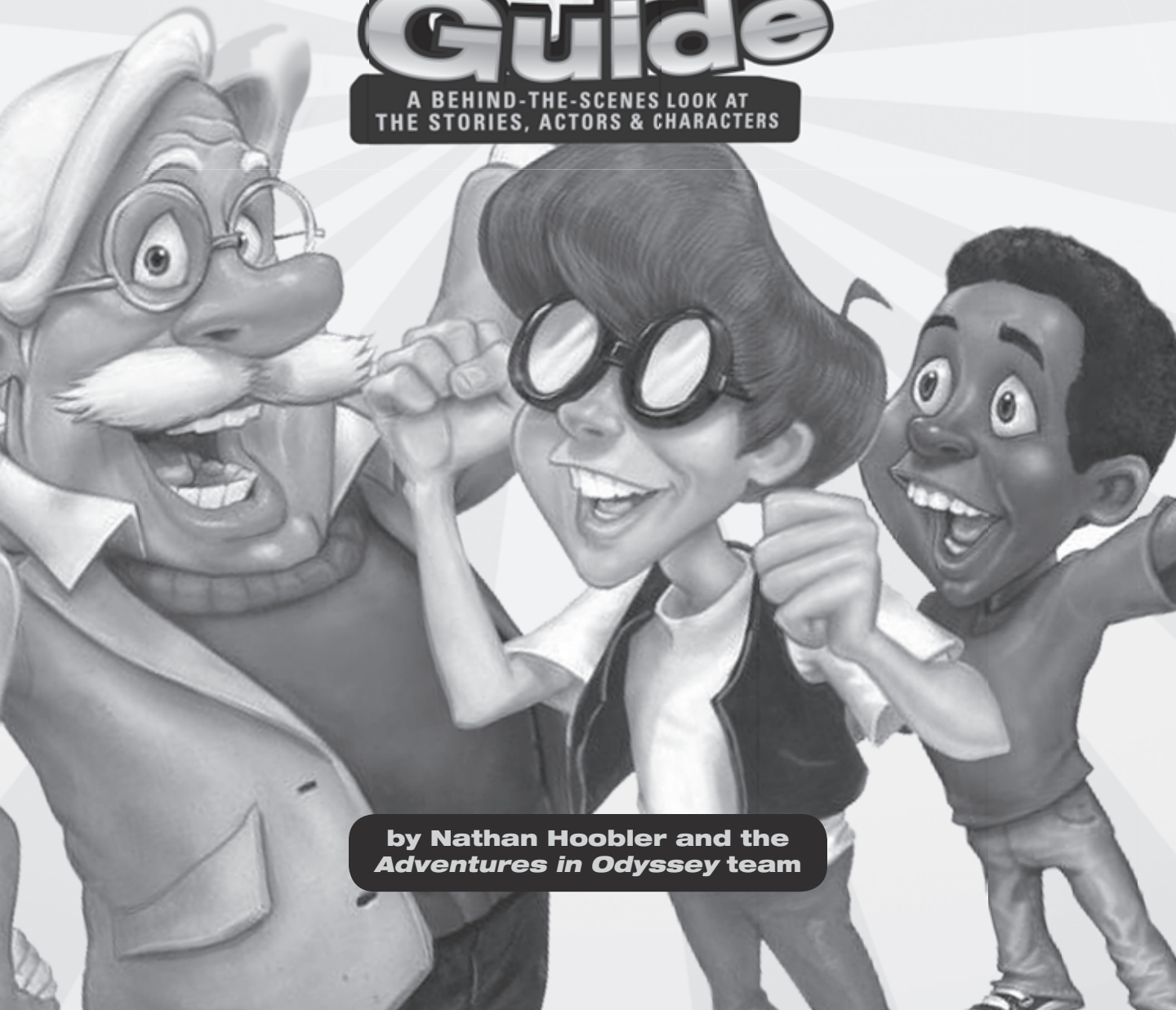


FOCUS ON THE FAMILY® PRESENTS

*Adventures*  
*in*  
**ODYSSEY**  
**THE**  
**Official**  
**Guide**

A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT  
THE STORIES, ACTORS & CHARACTERS



by **Nathan Hoobler** and the  
**Adventures in Odyssey** team

## ***Adventures in Odyssey: The Official Guide***

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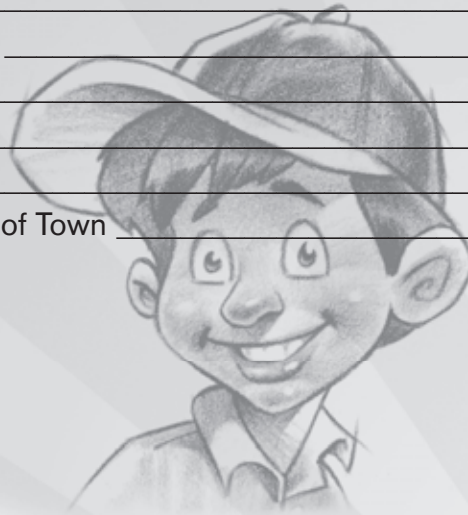
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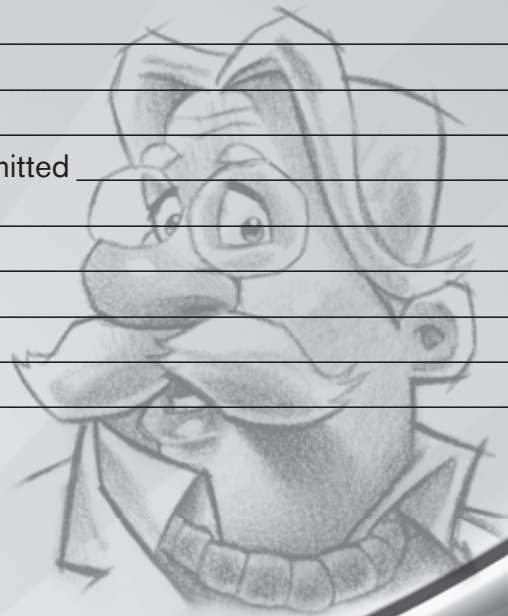
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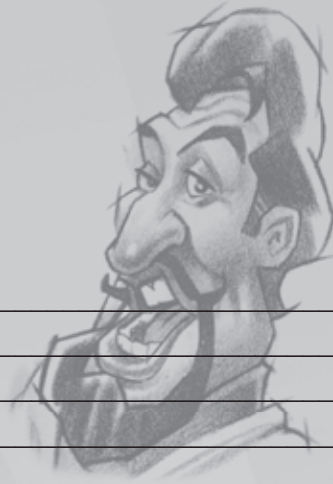


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To, you, the reader

*For opening this book. If you read every word of it, it will only take a few months.*





Whit unveiling a new invention

# *Introduction*

“Why don’t you get the whole family together and join us for another adventure in *Odyssey*?”

I first heard those words when I was eight years old, and, like listeners around the world, my family joined *Adventures in Odyssey* for hundreds of adventures. We couldn’t get enough. We listened to *Odyssey* on the radio, we watched the *Odyssey* animated videos, and we read the *Odyssey* novels.

As I got older, I wanted to find out everything about *Odyssey*. But I couldn’t keep all the details straight because the series had so many wonderful stories. *What was the first episode in the Blackgaard saga? What was the show where Richard Maxwell talked about having a sister? Which episodes had themes of “obeying your mom and dad”?* (Sometimes I really needed to listen to those episodes a few times in a row.) The real question was this: *How do I organize all this information?* In college, I created one way—a fan Web site!



After I posted the site, an unexpected thing happened. I started getting E-mail from the writers, producers, and sound designers of the show. It was like a *Star Wars* fan getting a personal letter from the creator, George Lucas. I was thrilled! Before long, I started chatting online with Mark Drury, one of the sound designers of the show. He suggested that I come out for a summer internship at Focus on the Family and work with the *Adventures in Odyssey* team. After I recovered from a near-dead faint, I thought that was a great idea. I came out during the summer of 2000 and wrote my first script under the caring eyes of Paul McCusker. What a dream come true!

Being involved with the *Odyssey* team made me realize that the great episodes that go out on the radio, on video, and in novels are only *half* the story. What happens behind the scenes during the creation of the show is filled with just as much excitement and conflict, just as many twists and turns, and just as much drama and intrigue as your favorite *Adventures in Odyssey* tale.

But what fun are all those great behind-the-scene stories if no one knows about them? It would be like Whit creating an incredible new invention, but never unveiling it. Why not create a book that allows readers to follow the story of *Adventures in Odyssey* both through the stories in the fictional town and through the stories

of the team that creates that town every day? That's what the *Odyssey* team thought, and our 20th anniversary provided the perfect opportunity.

So now you hold in your hands an adventure that is 20 years in the making. It's *Adventures in Odyssey: The Official Guide*!



Even when I was eight years old, *Odyssey* tapes were in my cassette-tape player.

But before we begin, a few quick notes.

With a book longer than the M volume of the encyclopedia, we wanted to save space where we could. So “BTS” doesn’t mean



Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Bug Tracking System, or even Bangor Theological Seminary. BTS is short for “Behind the Scenes,” and it’s here that you’ll find those stories of the creation of each show, from the creators, writers, producers, actors, and sound designers. You’ll also see the word “Foley” in many of the BTS and Sound Bites. Foley, named after sound-effects pioneer Jack Foley, describes the live sound effects that the sound designers create. When you hear Bernard pulling that squeaky squeegee across a pane of glass, that’s the work of a sound designer doing Foley.

We reference many movies, books, and TV shows that have inspired *Odyssey* stories. Just because we mention some of these media doesn’t mean that we recommend them for our readers. Of course, we hope that God is truly the inspiration for our work. We give Him the glory for all the success the show has had . . . though we don’t want to blame Him if we make an error.

Also, be careful when reading about albums and episodes you haven’t heard. We tried not to include spoilers, but in some cases, we couldn’t talk about the episodes without giving away endings.

And finally, did you notice that I used the word “we” in the previous paragraph? We told the behind-the-scenes story of *Odyssey* from a team perspective, so the “we” means everyone who was involved in its creation or who worked on a particular episode. So if you read a story from album number 1 that uses the word “we,” don’t think I was somehow around for those decisions. Remember, I was eight when *Odyssey* began! So “we” means “we” in the *Odyssey* team sense of the word.

And . . . well, the rest you’ll just have to figure out as we begin this adventure.

—Nathan Hoobler

“Would you like to join us? Then get ready! Because you never know what could happen when you have an adventure in *Odyssey*!”





# *How Adventures in Odyssey Began*

*Adventures in Odyssey has aired for over 20 years with more than 640 episodes, making it one of the longest-running radio dramas in history. The radio show has also led to the creation of 17 videos, nearly two dozen novels, plus video games, music albums, and more. Hundreds, maybe even thousands, of stories have been told in the world of Odyssey. So where did all these stories get their start? To get the answer we talked with a man who was there from the beginning—Steve Harris.*

*Steve worked at Focus on the Family in the 1980s as head of the Special Projects department. Special Projects was a research and development team that worked on the early versions of many Focus on the Family radio programs, including Adventures in Odyssey.*

**Q:** Back in the 1980s, Focus on the Family Special Projects team wasn't doing radio drama. What made the team decide to produce one?

**SH:** Around Thanksgiving 1983, the leaders of the broadcast team needed to decide what to do for the *Focus on the Family* Christmas broadcast. For years, we'd been repeating the show of Dr. Dobson reading "Helen's Buggy," his favorite Christmas story. It was a fine show, but we were all getting a little tired of doing the same thing.

I said to my teammates, "Hey, how about we produce a radio drama?"

There was a long pause. Then the other two said, "Uh . . . what other ideas do we have?" The more we talked about it, however, the more everyone liked the idea, so we decided to give it a shot.

**Q:** How did you put that first drama together?

**SH:** I had some contacts with the Jeremiah People, which is a Christian performing-arts group. Dennis Shippy worked with them. Dennis was asked to write the original draft of the Christmas script. He developed a basic story that dealt with a husband and wife who got caught up in the holiday rush. I rewrote and adapted the script, which came to be called “Spare Tire.” Chuck Bolte, then director of Jeremiah People, played the husband. Chuck suggested we hire D. J. Harner to play the wife.

We produced that show with a magnificent, state-of-the-art, four-track reel-to-reel tape recorder, which I think should now be in a Smithsonian museum. “Spare Tire” aired on December 17, 1983.

**Q:** What was the reaction to “Spare Tire”?

**SH:** It was enough of a success that Dr. Dobson said, “This is great! Can we do four of these a year?” It would have been great if we hadn’t had so many other projects to do. We didn’t actually have time to do another drama until almost two years later.

**Q:** Is that when you produced “House Guest”?

**SH:** Right. That one was about a father who lived at his grown daughter’s house for a while. I based the script on my own experience when my dad stayed at my house after his heart-bypass surgery. We needed someone to play the father, and Chuck gave me the name of Hal Smith. Chuck had worked with Hal on a Christmas program years before and wanted to work with him again. Of course, I remembered Hal from *The Andy Griffith Show* [1960–1968]. I called the number

## Timeline: The Abbreviated History of *Adventures in Odyssey*



**November 23, 1985**

“House Guest” airs. (First *Focus* radio drama featuring Hal Smith.)

**January 5, 1987**

First *Family Portraits* drama (“Whit’s Visitor”) airs on the *Focus on the Family* daily broadcast.

**November 21, 1987**

First *Odyssey USA* episode (“Whit’s Flop”) airs on 200 radio stations.

**December 17, 1983**

“Spare Tire” airs. It is the first *Focus on the Family* radio drama.

**July 23, 1986**

“Gone Fishing” airs. (Another foundational drama.)

**August 10, 1987**

Radio drama “Tilly” airs; it was based on the book by the then unknown author Frank Peretti.

**April 23, 1988**

Name changes to *Adventures in Odyssey*. First episode to air: “The Quality of Mercy.”

thinking I'd get his agent, but Hal himself picked up. I guess he'd given Chuck his home number.

We had a wonderful conversation, and Hal wanted to work on the program. While we were recording "House Guest," I learned my lesson about working with Hal. When you book Hal Smith for a recording session, if you need one hour of voice tracks, you book a two-hour session; one hour to get the voice tracks done—because he knocks those out no problem—and an hour for him to tell stories about his experiences and his career.

**Q:** You worked with Hal again on the next drama, didn't you?

**SH:** That's right. It was "Gone Fishing," a story about a guy who pretended to be sick so he could skip work and escape his life by going fishing for a day. While he was fishing, he met a wise man who set him straight about a few things. It was just Chuck and Hal for most of the show, which was great.

**Q:** Most of these shows had only two or three people in them, so they were fairly simple, right?

**SH:** At first, yes. We had a limited pool of talent to draw from in those early days and an even more limited budget. Then in 1986, I received several copies of a homespun radio program by a little-known author by the name of Frank Peretti. I was very touched when I took the time to listen. It was a sweet story



Actors Hal Smith and Chuck Bolte recording "Gone Fishing"

**May 1988**

First retail package (*Odyssey USA*) released.

**December 10, 1988**

In "Connie," Connie becomes a Christian.

**Summer 1989**

Chick-fil-A puts *Adventures in Odyssey* booklets in its kids' meals.

**March 3, 1990**

In "By Any Other Name," Bernard first appears in *Odyssey*.

**June 18, 1988**

The Barclays first appear on *Odyssey* in "Family Vacation."

**March 18, 1989**

Whit unveils his greatest invention in "The Imagination Station."

**July 8, 1989**

Dr. Regis Blackgaard arrives in *Odyssey*. ("The Nemesis")

**August 5, 1991**

*Adventures in Odyssey* starts airing daily on stations around the country.

called “Tilly.” I called Frank and asked him if I could adapt his script and produce it for the Focus on the Family broadcast. He said, “Sure.” This gave me a chance to raise the bar dramatically. I expanded the quantity and quality of sound effects, many of which were original, rather than from records or CDs. The show benefited from the best musical score we had received to date from my composer friend John Campbell.

The show went on to become (and remains today) one of the most popular *Focus on the Family* broadcasts ever. So it was obvious that radio drama was around to stay. Later, Frank Peretti turned the script into a novel, and a made-for-television production was done in 2003 by Love Life America.

**Q:** What made Focus decide to go from producing individual dramas every once in a while to doing an ongoing series?

**SH:** During an interview on the Focus on the Family broadcast, author Bruce Wilkinson commented to Dr. Dobson that it wasn’t enough for Christians to complain

about the poor programming on radio and TV. He presented the challenge to do something about it.

Not long after, Dr. Dobson and the vice presidents came back from a leadership retreat with a new mandate: Create a children’s radio drama series. It was up to us to take it from there. The best part of my job back then was that we got to do things we had never done before. We made up the rules as we went along.

So, we needed to flesh out the details of whatever this new series would be. I started by searching for staff members who could help me work on the day-to-day production. We placed ads in several newspapers like the *Los Angeles Times*, and in response we received a stack of demo scripts that was literally several feet high. I read each one of the scripts and found very few that demonstrated the sense of imagination I was looking for. However, about three-quarters of the way down the stack, I found a script that someone had sent us that was an unproduced episode of *The Twilight Zone* television series [1985–1989]. Finally, a premise with promise! The story demonstrated

**September 1991**

First Adventures in Odyssey video released: *The Knight Travelers*.

**Summer 1992**

First novel released *Strange Journey Back*.

**January 8, 1994**

Eugene meets his future wife, Katrina. In “Truth, Trivia, and Trina.”

**September 3, 1994**

“Gone . . .” airs. Whit leaves. Jack Allen comes to town.

**October 1991**

Focus on the Family moves from Pomona, California, to Colorado Springs, Colorado.

**June 27, 1992**

Harlow Doyle first appears in *Odyssey* in “Harlow Doyle, Private Eye.”

**January 27, 1994**

Hal Smith passes away.

**November 5, 1994**

Tom Riley elected mayor of Odyssey in “Tom for Mayor.”



a flair for the unusual, interesting characters, and, most important, a sense of values. This guy named Phil Lollar wrote it.

I called Phil in for an interview and saw right away that we didn't see eye to eye on everything, but praise God for that! You'll see elements of both of our points of view

*Focus on the Family*  
magazine, January 1987.  
An article about *Family*  
*Portraits* airing on the  
daily broadcast



in the blueprints of Odyssey. So we brought Phil on and also hired another writer, Susan McBride.

Once we had that team in place, we started brainstorming what became known as the

*Family Portraits* series. It was a test-run series of 13 episodes that would air Mondays on the *Focus on the Family* broadcast. If we survived that test, the idea was that we would go into full-scale production and spin the series off as an entirely new program.

**Q:** Did anyone think you were crazy to try a radio drama in the era of television?

**SH:** There were a number of reasons to suspect our sanity. Many people were skeptical that we could get children in the 8- to 12-age group to listen to the radio. There weren't very many existing programs in the genre, and the ones that did exist were very different from the style and tone we wanted. Also, we discussed how the program would be funded in the long term since the typical support model on Christian radio involved asking listeners for donations.

I had a lot of confidence in radio and, fortunately, Dr. Dobson shared that belief. As long as he didn't think we were crazy, we were okay.

**December 3, 1994**

Jason Whittaker moves to Odyssey.  
("A Name, Not a Number")

**September 2, 1995**

In "The Time Has Come," Eugene  
becomes a Christian.

**January 13, 1996**

"Pokenberry Falls, RFD" features the  
Barclays leaving for Pokenberry Falls.

**Summer 1996**

First *Focus on the Family Radio Theatre*  
production released. (Charles  
Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*)

**December 24, 1994**

"Unto Us a Child Is Born" airs.  
Stewart Reed Barclay is born.

**October 7, 1995**

"The Final Conflict" airs. The album  
*Darkness Before Dawn* is finished.  
Dr. Blackgaard dies.

**May 18, 1996**

Paul Herlinger steps in as the voice  
of Whit in "The Search for Whit"

**November 2, 1996**

"Home, Sweet Home" airs. Whit  
returns to *Odyssey*.

**Q:** How did you brainstorm the ideas for this new series?

**SH:** The emphasis (especially at the beginning) was on the “storm” and not so much on the “brain.” Susan was generally agreeable,

but Phil and I had some of the most wonderful creative arguments you could ever imagine. We debated every conceivable angle about the format, audience, and characters. We felt that if this series

could stand up to the pounding we were giving it, the series would stand up to years of use.

Of course, at the time we had no clue that

the show would last as long as it has. We were thinking maybe a couple of years. But even a couple of years is a hundred episodes if you do one every week, and we knew we needed a solid foundation for the show.

All of us were passionate about the program and wanted it to be successful. The creative process through which we gave birth to the program wasn’t always easy or quiet. But, then again, neither is the human birth process. As a mother could tell you, the baby was worth it.

**Q:** You could have created any kind of drama. Why did you decide to set it in a small town?

**SH:** I was excited about doing a show with a special environment or setting, where there’s a large ensemble cast. Several great TV shows did this, like *M\*A\*S\*H* [1972–1983] and *The Andy Griffith Show*. We needed an environment that was narrow enough to be familiar to people and feel like home. Yet I also wanted the setting to be big enough that there



November 1987—*Focus on the Family* magazine—  
“Coming Broadcast” November 2 is “Whit’s Flop”

### January 1997

*Adventures in Odyssey* goes on vacation and takes a break from production. Re-air the best of *Adventures in Odyssey*.

### November 1997

*The Complete Guide to Adventures in Odyssey* released.

### November 29, 1997

“New Year’s Eve, Live!” is recorded in Colorado Springs, Colorado, to celebrate *Adventures in Odyssey*’s 10th anniversary.

### March 6, 1999

Tom Riley opens the Timothy Center. (“Opening Day”)

### September 6, 1997

Production resumes with “For Whom the Wedding Bells Toll.” Jack Allen and Joanne Woodston marry. Eugene and Katrina Shanks get engaged.

### November 8, 1997

Margaret Faye elected mayor of Odyssey. (“The One About Trust”)

### May 23, 1998

In “The Graduate,” Connie finally graduates from high school.

### October 1999

First Passages book—*Darien’s Rise*—is released.

wasn't a story idea that would come down the road that we'd have to say, "Sorry. Doesn't fit the format."

So I came up with the idea of creating this mythical place that was somewhere in the United States. East, west, north, south—it didn't matter. Just somewhere that all these adventures could happen.

**Q:** *Odyssey* was different in tone and style than many Christian programs. How did that feel come about?

**SH:** Our first rule right up front was that you don't talk down to kids. That's something we had seen again and again, and it frustrated us. Programs like that bothered me even when I was child. It seemed like "talking down to kids" was even more prevalent in Christian writing.

I knew enough children to know that they're asking tough questions. They're going to school in a social environment where they're bombarded all the time. They see unhealthy adult relationships portrayed on

TV. They have problems at home. They're wrestling with real stuff. So we wanted our show to have an element of reality. We wanted kids to listen to it and feel respected.

**Q:** But you weren't writing just for kids.

**SH:** No. We wanted this program to appeal broadly. Children don't listen alone. We knew of other children's programs—both radio and television—that parents would listen to or watch with their kids and feel like screaming because the shows were so corny.

So we made a point of packing in little tidbits of humor that maybe 5 percent of the audience would get—primarily adults. A great example of that type of humor is the Warner Bros. cartoon series from the 1940s and 1950s. The cartoons were shown in theaters, and they had all kinds of political, social, and pop-culture references that flew right over the kids' heads, but the adults loved them.

**December 18, 1999**

A Look Back celebrates a millennium of *Adventures in Odyssey* episodes. (See sidebar in *The Lost Episodes*)

**April 1, 2000**

Official Web site launched at [WhitsEnd.org](http://WhitsEnd.org).

**May 26, 2001**

Wooton Bassett's first appearance at Whit's End.

**January 26, 2002**

Eugene and Katrina finally tie the knot and promptly leave the show for several years. ("Plan B: Missing in Action")

**February 7, 2000**

"Mandy's Debut" recorded live at National Religious Broadcasters' convention in Anaheim, California.

**December 2, 2000**

"Opportunity Knocks" airs. The Novacom saga series of action-adventure shows begins.

**January 5, 2002**

Whit's End Connellsville opens in "Grand Opening."

**July 7, 2002**

"Exit" airs. The Novacom saga ends.

**Q:** Many radio dramas—even those produced now—are very simple productions. There might be a generic audio background and a few footsteps here and there for sound effects, but that's it. Why did you decide to be so elaborate with *Odyssey*?

**SH:** Because we knew that radio is far more visual than television could ever hope to be. If you want to see something in a movie, it has to be visually represented in some way. Television can't hold a candle to the power of the imagination. We wanted to set kids' imaginations free, and so we knew we had to make our productions awesome.

**Q:** How did you create that level of quality on a four-track tape recorder?

**SH:** It was difficult at first. We were bouncing intermediate mixes back and forth between different machines. We had to get very creative. It got to the point where we adopted the famous motto: "We the willing . . . have done so much, with so little, for so long, that we are now qualified to make anything out of nothing."

**Q:** So, *Family Portraits* aired for 13 weeks on the *Focus on the Family* broadcast. How successful do you feel your audio drama test was?

**SH:** It was a mixed bag. Outside producers and directors were brought in to do most of the work after the writing was done, and, frankly, some of our best stuff got lost in translation. On the plus side, the test gave us the chance to develop the basic blueprints for both the town of Odyssey and the show. It was also a good, creative "shakedown cruise," which gave us an opportunity to test ideas and see what worked and what didn't.

**Q:** You said that the goal was to spin off *Adventures in Odyssey* as a separate program in its own timeslot. How did that decision get made?

**SH:** I think Dr. Dobson and the leadership at Focus on the Family responded to the listener reactions and decided to launch the program. We received 4,965 letters about *Family*

**July 13, 2002**

"500" airs, a show celebrating 500 *Odyssey* episodes.

**January 25, 2003**

The Washington family first appears in "The Toy Man."

**December 2003**

*Gold Audio Series* begins.

**April 2, 2005**

"A Most Intriguing Question" airs. Eugene returns to *Odyssey* with much fanfare.

**July 25-27, 2002**

"Live at the 25" recorded at 25th anniversary of Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

**November 22, 2003**

Connie almost gets married. ("Something Blue")

**Fall 2004**

*Adventures in Odyssey* video games released. ("The Treasure of the Incas" and "The Sword of the Spirit")

**October 15, 2005**

Eugene learns that his long-lost father, Leonard, is alive. ("Prisoners of Fear")



*Portraits*, and 4,771 of them were positive. But even after that response, it took awhile for the *Odyssey* program to be approved.

**Q:** When did you start working on the series itself?

**SH:** Focus gave approval for *Odyssey* to go into production just three weeks before the first episode was supposed to air on the radio. We were doomed from day one. For the first month, Phil Lollar and I were putting in 80-hour work weeks. It was ridiculous.

**Q:** How did you get back on track?

**SH:** We hired a few people. Writer Paul McCusker had submitted a few episodes freelance for us, and we brought him on full time. About that time, Susan McBride left the staff. And then Chuck Bolte left the Jeremiah People and came on as executive producer over the entire show. Phil and I had been writing many of our scripts together. One of the first things Chuck did was to make us write shows separately so we could work faster.

**Q:** You worked with *Odyssey* for the first two years. How did your time there come to an end?

**SH:** After Chuck came on board, my job at Focus on the Family grew more and more administrative and less creative. It was time for me to take what I had learned at Focus on the Family and apply it in other contexts.

Not long after leaving the staff, I ran into Dr. Dobson at a local restaurant. I took that opportunity to tell him personally how grateful I was that he gave me the chance to do things I never would have been able to do anywhere else. Many of the things I can do well are the result of his investment in my personal and professional life. (On the other hand, the stuff I mess up isn't his fault!) Seriously, I owe him and other leaders at Focus on the Family a debt of gratitude that I can never repay.



**December 3, 2005**

Connie starts writing a book. ("Tales of a Small-Town Thug")

**March 10, 2007**

Eugene Meltsner discovers that he has a brother, Everett. ("The Top Floor")

**March 1, 2008**

*Odyssey* considered for Best Small Town in America. ("Suspicious Finds")

**Summer 2008**

*Adventures in Odyssey: The Official Guide* released.

**December 16, 2006**

The Washington family become foster parents to a girl named Kelly. ("The Chosen One")

**September 29, 2007**

Leonard Meltsner leaves for Africa. ("A New Era")

**June 2008**

First Kidsboro novel released—*Battle for Control*.

**September 2008**

50th album released: *The Best Small Town*.

## Episode Information

The first 13 dramas set in the town of Odyssey aired on the *Focus on the Family* daily broadcast in 1987. These episodes laid the foundation for future *Odyssey* dramas. These dramas are known as the *Family Portraits* Series.

### FP1: **Whit's Visitor**

Original Air Date: 1/5/87

Writer: Steve Harris

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Malachi 2:13-17

Theme: The effects of divorce on children

**Summary:** Whit finds eight-year-old Davey Morrison in his basement. Davey wants to move to escape the pain of his parents' divorce.

### FP2: **Dental Dilemma**

Original Air Date: 1/12/87

Writer: Susan McBride

Sound Designers: Steve Harris & Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Psalm 27:1

Themes: Teasing, dealing with fear

**Summary:** Middle-schooler Mark Forbes plants fear in the heart of his younger sister, Emily, as she anticipates her first dental appointment.

### FP3: **The New Kid in Town**

Original Air Date: 1/19/87

Writer: Phil Lollar

Sound Designers: Steve Harris & Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Proverbs 18:24

Theme: Making new friends

**Summary:** Whit meets a 13-year-old girl named Shawn Walker who is new to town and has no friends.

### FP4: **No Stupid Questions**

Original Air Date: 1/26/87

Writer: Susan McBride

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Proverbs 18:15

Themes: Respect for the handicapped, the value of seeking knowledge

**Summary:** Young Meg Stevens asks a constant stream of questions, which annoys a cranky man named Chris Gottlieb.

### FP5: **You're Not Gonna Believe This . . .**

Original Air Date: 2/2/87

Writer: Phil Lollar

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Proverbs 18:7; 22:1

Theme: The importance of a good reputation

**Summary:** Fourteen-year-old Budgie Wentworth III exaggerates the truth, which makes it hard for his cousin to believe anything he says.

### FP6: **My Brother's Keeper**

Original Air Date: 2/16/87

Writer: Paul McCusker

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Proverbs 12:18

Theme: Sibling conflict

**Summary:** A boy named Phillip Callas wants to get rid of his younger brother, and his wish might come true—permanently.



**FP7: While Dad's Away**

Original Air Date: 3/2/87

Writer: Phil Lollar

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Malachi 4:6

Theme: Absentee fathers

**Summary:** Whit tells the story of Mike Brettman, a vice president for a local company, whose job keeps him from seeing his family.

**FP8: The Letter**

Original Air Date: 3/9/87

Writer: Steve Harris

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Ephesians 6:1-4

Theme: Communication with teens

**Summary:** A teen named Stacey, who is talking on the phone with a friend, gets into an argument with her father after he takes away the phone and hangs up on her conversation.

**FP9: A Different Kind of Peer Pressure**

Original Air Date: 3/16/87

Writer: Steve Harris

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Romans 12:2

Theme: Peer pressure

**Summary:** Richard Hudson is upset when his 14-year-old daughter, Blair, gives into peer pressure.

**FP10: In Memory of Herman**

Original Air Date: 3/23/87

Writer: Phil Lollar

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: 1 Peter 3:1-2

Themes: Life after death, salvation

**Summary:** Amanda and Vic Hardwick are a married couple who disagree about Christianity. Amanda is convinced that she must persuade Vic to accept the gospel so he won't go to hell.

**FP11 and 12: A Member of the Family, I and II**

Original Air Date: 3/30/87 & 4/6/87

Writers: Susan McBride & Steve Harris

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 3:11-12; Ephesians 6:4

Themes: Discipline, family conflict

**Summary:** When Whit's grandson, Monty, arrives for a summer in Odyssey, they are in for more trouble—and healing—than they expected.

**FP13: A Simple Addition**

Original Air Date: 4/13/87

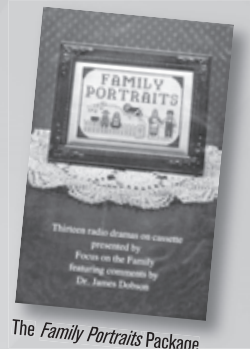
Writer: Susan McBride

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Romans 12:10

Theme: Sibling rivalry

**Summary:** Elementary-schooler Nicky is upset that his baby sister is taking his parents' attention away from him.



*The Family Portraits Package*

# *Meet the Cast*

## **Chris Anthony—Host**

*Chris is the voice of hundreds (or thousands!) of toys, including Barbie.*

**Q:** What is your favorite *Adventures in Odyssey* episode?

**CA:** One of my favorites is “The Imagination Station” [album 5] when Digger Digwillow meets Jesus. I love when Digger talks about looking into Jesus’ eyes.

**Q:** How is your real-life personality like the “host” Chris’s personality?

**CA:** Both Chris and I love kids. When I’m with a group of people, I usually end up talking to the kids rather than to the adults.

**Q:** Are you really that happy?

**CA:** I’m a pretty happy person. God has blessed me a lot in my life. When I’m doing the show, I’m *really* happy. The best way I can describe myself is like a helium balloon. If you push that balloon under the water, it’ll go down, but it always pops back up. And the helium in my balloon would be the Lord.

**Q:** What inspires you?

**CA:** God, my husband, Jerry, and my daughter, Kelsey, because they’re all very creative.

**Q:** What has working on *Odyssey* meant to you?

**CA:** Sometimes when I’m working on the show, I picture myself in a big comfy chair talking to the kids and sharing the Lord with them. I’ve been doing voice-over for more than 20 years, and *Odyssey* has been the most rewarding. Nothing compares!





## **Katie Leigh—Connie Kendall**

*Katie's voice can be heard as Baby Rowlf on the television program Muppet Babies (1984–1990), "Honker" Muddlefoot on Darkwing Duck (1991–1995), Sunni on The Gummi Bears (1985–1991), and Alex on Totally Spies! (2001–present). She's also the voice of the hungry kitten in Babe: Pig in the City (1998).*

**Q:** What is your favorite *Adventures in Odyssey* episode?

**KL:** I really liked the ones driving to Washington, D.C., with Joanne Allen [*In Hot Pursuit*, "album 41"] because I had made the exact same driving trip in real life just a few weeks before. It was like reliving my vacation only with more adventure and not as much humidity.

**Q:** How are you like—or not like—your character?

**KL:** I am like my character in almost every way except I'm older. It's a little scary sometimes. Right after I went on a missions trip to Peru in real life, we recorded a CD-ROM game where Connie and Whit go to Peru! I hate darkness, and I can't stand it when the curtains or blinds are shut. There was a show where Connie said that exact same thing. However, I would never wear green leggings! Ever!

**Q:** Would you like to share any special *Odyssey* memories?

**KL:** I remember when I cried so hard during the recording of one of our scripts that Marshal Younger got me some jelly beans to help me feel better.

**Q:** What inspires you?

**KL:** God, love (same thing, right?), really good writing, and being able to make people laugh.



Connie Kendall

**Will Ryan**—Eugene Meltsner, Harlow Doyle, Officer O’Ryan

*Will has played numerous voice roles in the entertainment business, including the sea horse in The Little Mermaid (1989), Papa Bear in Looney Tunes: Back in Action (2003), and Petrie in The Land Before Time (1988). The Emmy Award-winning producer, lyricist, and composer also voiced Tigger and Rabbit on the long-running Welcome to Pooh Corner television series (1983–1995).*

**Q:** What is your favorite *Adventures in Odyssey* episode?

**WR:** Although I tend to gravitate toward those episodes in which Eugene sings and plays ukulele (or which involve vehicular instruction), my favorite episodes are usually the ones we’re about to record.

**Q:** How are you like—or not like—your character?

**WR:** Like Officer O’Ryan, I enjoy driving around with the siren on. Not unlike Harlow Doyle, I’m amazed at almost everything . . . And, like the character Eugene Meltsner, I play ukulele and the Humanatone.

**Q:** What are your hobbies?

**WR:** Refereeing pie fights. Selecting special jelly beans to cheer up Katie. And appearing as America’s Favorite Radio Cowboy on radio, television, and personal appearances. And making new music recordings.

**Q:** What inspires you?

**WR:** In acting, it’s watching the rest of the cast work. They’re so great!

**Q:** What is your favorite word?

**WR:** Contrary to the question’s presumption, my favorite word is probably not the familiar pronoun “what.”

Photo courtesy of Mammah Motion Pictures



Eugene Meltsner

**Paul Herlinger**—John Avery Whittaker,  
1996–Present

*Paul Herlinger has produced scores of television documentaries and public-affairs programs for 25 years. He has narrated dozens of PBS documentaries, commercials, and films, including The Sixties: The Years That Shaped a Generation (2005).*

**Q:** What is your favorite *Adventures in Odyssey* episode?

**PH:** It's a toss-up between "Clara" [album 28] and "Silent Night" [album 45]. Both shows are not only very touching emotionally, but they also give Whit a lot more dimension.

**Q:** How are you like—or not like—your character?

**PH:** I'm similar to Whit in that I like people and enjoy being with them, but I couldn't dispense as much good advice as he does.

**Q:** Would you like to share any special *Odyssey* memories?

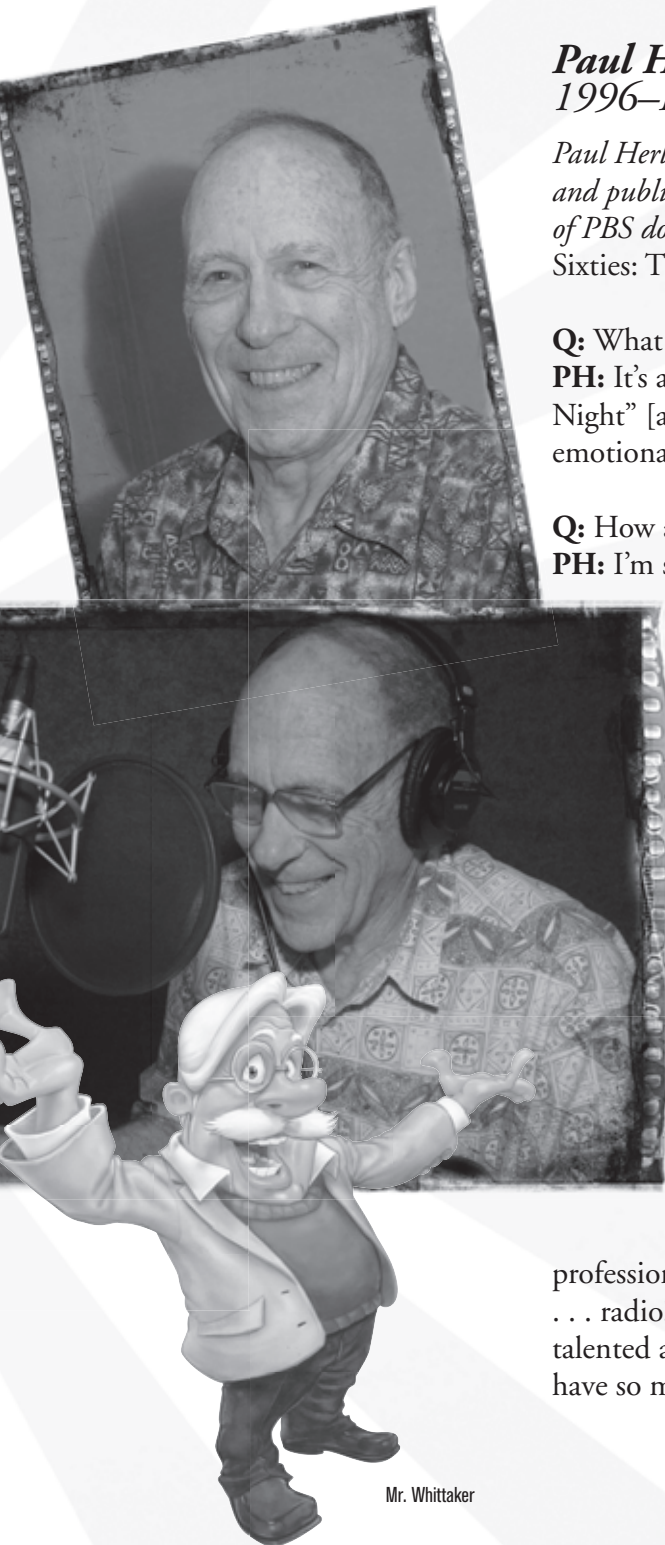
**PH:** It was quite daunting to pick up where Hal Smith left off. My special memories are those of being accepted by my fellow cast members as we recorded more and more *Odyssey* shows! I felt as though I was being taken into a warm and caring family!

**Q:** What inspires you?

**PH:** Hearing my wife, Ilona, tell stories about her escape from Europe in World War II.

**Q:** What has working on *Odyssey* meant to you?

**PH:** It has given me a chance to work in the profession I started in as a high school kid and still love most . . . radio! At the same time, I work with a lot of extremely talented and dedicated people in producing programs that have so much meaning for so many people.



Mr. Whittaker





*From left: Coordinator Carol Rusk, Dave Arnold, Jonathan Crowe, Nathan Hoobler, Kathy Buchanan, Bob Hoose, Christopher Diehl, Marshal Younger, Nathan Jones*



# *Meet the Crew*

**Steve Harris**—Cocreator, producer, writer, director, sound designer (1987–1988)

**Q:** What is your favorite *Adventures in Odyssey* episode?

**SH:** No question about that one. It was “Gifts for Madge and Guy” [album 1]. Phil Lollar and I wrote that one together in my office, and I can’t remember ever laughing that hard. Our sides ached, and at times we had trouble breathing.

**Q:** You were involved in *Adventures in Odyssey* for the first year. What’s your opinion about how the stories and the characters have been developed since you left?

**SH:** When our children grow up and leave home, we watch them begin lives of their own. We’re proud of their accomplishments, even though the credit rightfully belongs to them. That’s exactly how I feel about *Adventures in Odyssey*. It’s my little baby, all grown up. The people who succeeded me are all wonderful, gifted, hard-working professionals. I believe that they have taken the program to heights I might never have been able to achieve.



Steve Harris



**Phil Lollar**—Cocreator, writer, director, producer, voice of Dale Jacobs (1987–2000)

**Q:** What is your favorite *Adventures in Odyssey* episode?

**PL:** “Someone to Watch Over Me” [album 10]. It was based on a teleplay I wrote for the new but short-lived version of the old *Twilight Zone* series. The original revolved around the idea that for a completely paralyzed man, sleep would be a welcome escape from reality—he would be able to move, jump, run, and have all sorts of adventures. The worst thing that could happen to him would be waking up. *The Twilight Zone* didn’t want it, so I twisted, turned, and pulled the idea a little bit, and came up with what turned out to be one of our most popular episodes ever, thanks in a large part to Dave Arnold’s incredible production.



**Bob Luttrell**—Sound designer (1987–1995, 2000–2005)

**Q:** Which *Adventures in Odyssey* episode is your favorite?

**BL:** “Fairy Tal-e-vision” [album 43]. I enjoyed the challenge of having to re-create all of the different types of TV programs that were used in the show.



**Q:** Who is your favorite *Adventures in Odyssey* character?

**BL:** Connie. When she was a new Christian, she would say and ask things that most people would think twice before saying out loud.

**Q:** What inspires you?

**BL:** Being with other creative people.

**Q:** If you could have another job, what would you do?

**BL:** I’d be a mattress model in a department-store window.

**Chuck Bolte**—Executive Producer (1988–1996), voice of George Barclay

**Q:** What is your favorite *Adventures in Odyssey* episode?

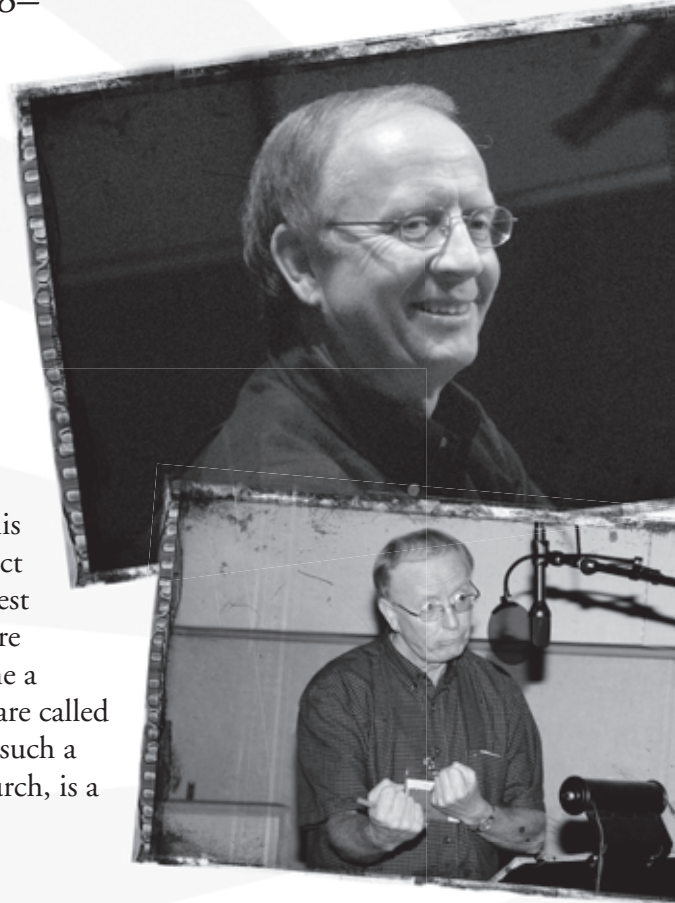
**CB:** “Our Best Vacation Ever” [album 5] because it showed that you don’t need a lot of money to have a fun family vacation. Also “It’s a Pokenberry Christmas” [album 31]. I can’t remember having more fun recording in the studio.

**Q:** How are you like—or not like—the character of George Barclay?

**CB:** Probably my greatest similarity is that George had a very open, fun, and honest relationship with his children. Yet George, like me, was far from the perfect Christian father. Sometimes he wouldn’t make the best decisions, but his intentions were always good. Where we differ is that I have absolutely no desire to become a pastor. I have the deepest admiration for those who are called to minister in this way . . . but zero desire to pursue such a vocation. And trust me, the world, as well as the church, is a better place because of it!

**Q:** What has working on *Odyssey* meant to you?

**CB:** I can say without reservation that being involved with *Odyssey*, particularly since its inception, has meant more to me than any other thing I have done in my professional life. The fact that God has seen fit to use *Odyssey* in such incredible ways in people’s lives over so many years is humbling and rewarding beyond words. When individuals continue to come up to me and share the stories of how *Odyssey* has eternally affected their lives or the lives of their children, I am simply awed at what God has done. All of us involved in *Odyssey* were, and are, very creative people, but we simply couldn’t have conceived how many shows we would actually produce, how many different manifestations of the original radio idea would be produced, how many lives would be touched through it, and how many







lifelong friendships would be built as a result of it. I have had no greater pleasure or privilege in my life than to be a part of *Adventures in Odyssey*.

**Paul McCusker**—Writer, director, producer, executive producer (1987–1998; 2000–present), voice of Philip Glossman

**Q:** What is your favorite *Adventures in Odyssey* episode?

**PM:** This is always a hard question to answer. But lately, as I've been listening to the episodes again with my kids, I've developed a particular affection for "Best Intentions" [album 16], probably because all the characters were so very true to themselves, and it still makes me laugh out loud. The performances and production were perfect.

**Q:** What inspires you?

**PM:** On my own, probably movies, music, and literature. But I'm also inspired by ongoing interaction with other people—like the *Odyssey* team.

**Q:** What has working on *Odyssey* meant to you?

**PM:** I don't know how to answer this in a single paragraph. Participating in *Odyssey*—in a program that seems to have impacted so many lives in so many different ways—is as humbling an experience as I could ever have. It has shaped everything I know about writing and formed my relationship with God in the deepest possible ways. And to work with such a talented team makes me believe I'm one of the most blessed men on earth. And to think, I nearly turned it down to work as a book editor.

**Dave Arnold**—Sound designer, writer, director, producer, executive producer (1988–1998, 2005–present)

**Q:** Who is your favorite *Adventures in Odyssey* character?

**DA:** It's impossible to say because different seasons have different highlights for me. In the early years, Whit was my



Dave Arnold



Album

1

The Adventure Begins

### ***The First Album?***

What is the first album of *Adventures in Odyssey*? It has come in many different packages, for many different reasons. Initially we created a 13-episode collection for *Odyssey*'s predecessor, *Family Portraits*. It included all of the episodes that aired on the Focus on the Family daily broadcast as a test run.

When the program got its own time slot, the entire series, along with the first collection of episodes, was called *Odyssey USA*. The series was renamed five months later, and yet another “first” collection was created—*Adventures in Odyssey*. Unfortunately, that album contained the character Officer Harley (see “The Trouble with Harley” sidebar at the end of this chapter), and Officer Harley's episodes were withdrawn. As a result, the earliest *Adventures in Odyssey* episodes were unavailable for a couple of years.

In 1991 we temporarily fixed the problem by creating an album called *The Early Classics*. But it created a new problem since it included episodes such as “The Trouble with Girls” that were out of chronological order (see notes on *The Lost Episodes* album).

Finally, when we embarked on the Gold Audio Series, we were able to restore the proper chronology of the episodes and replace the “out of sequence” shows with two that had never been included in albums before (“A Member of the Family” and “A Change of Hart”).

## Episode Information

### 1: **Whit's Flop**

Original Air Date: 11/21/87

Writers: Steve Harris & Phil Lollar

Sound Designers: Bob Luttrell & Steve Harris

Scripture: Romans 8:28

Theme: The importance of failure

**Summary:** Davey Holcomb, a young boy with a reputation for making mistakes, learns there's a positive side to failure.

### 2: **The Life of the Party**

Original Air Date: 11/28/87

Writer: Paul McCusker

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: 1 Samuel 20

Theme: Friendship

**Summary:** Craig Moorhead's middle school friends like having him around because he makes them laugh. But then Craig faces a problem that isn't funny at all, and his friends aren't so friendly anymore.



### 4: **Connie Comes to Town**

Original Air Date: 12/12/87

Writers: Phil Lollar & Steve Harris

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Philippians 4:11-12

Theme: Being content

**Summary:** Even though teenager Connie Kendall has just moved into Odyssey, she can hardly wait to go back to California . . . and 10-year-old Bobby has secretly made up his mind that he's going with her.

### 5: **Gifts for Madge and Guy**

Original Air Date: 12/19/87

Writers: Phil Lollar & Steve Harris

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-20

Theme: Giving

**Summary:** Mr. Whittaker tells a "fractured" version of a famous Christmas story, starring an unusual couple named Madge and Guy.

### 6: **The Day After Christmas**

Original Air Date: 12/26/87

Writer: Paul McCusker

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Theme: Caring for the poor

**Summary:** Annie McNeal, a young girl who is already bored with her Christmas presents, wanders into Whit's End looking for something to do.



Whit

## 7: Promises, Promises

Original Air Date: 1/2/88

Writer: Phil Lollar

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Romans 3:23

Theme: The folly of making promises you can't keep

**Summary:** Connie makes a resolution to be more patient no matter what, which turns out to be far more difficult than she imagined.

## 10: Nothing to Fear

Original Air Date: 1/23/88

Writer: Paul McCusker

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: 1 John 4:18

Theme: Dealing with fear

**Summary:** Shirley Ziegler is afraid of just about everything. But when a real emergency comes up at Whit's End, she is forced to face her worst fear.

**PARENTAL WARNING:**

The nightmare scene and the scene in the basement at Whit's End may be too intense for younger listeners.

## 12: The Tangled Web

Original Air Date: 2/6/88

Writer: Phil Lollar

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Proverbs 12:22

Theme: Lying

**Summary:** Connie reads the story of Jeremy Forsythe, a boy who tells his mother a fib about some missing money. Both Jeremy and Connie learn that one lie leads to another.

## 17 and 18: A Member of the Family, I and II

Original Air Dates: 3/12/88 & 3/19/88

Writers: Steve Harris & Susan McBride

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 3:11-12; Ephesians 6:4

Themes: Discipline, family conflict

**Summary:** When Whit's grandson, Monty, arrives for a summer in Odyssey, the family finds they are in for more trouble—and more healing—than they expected.

## 19: Recollections

Original Air Date: 3/26/88

Writer: Phil Lollar

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Galatians 6:9

Themes: Fighting for your convictions, making good out of bad circumstances

**Summary:** Whit's best friend, Tom Riley, tells Connie the story of how Whit's End was created amid tragic circumstances.

## 27: A Change of Hart

Original Air Date: 5/21/88

Writer: Paul McCusker

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:16-17

Themes: Salvation, living a changed life

**Summary:** Freddie Hart is constantly teased by his middle school classmates. But when he switches schools, he finds that his troubles follow him.



"Whit's Flop"



Actor David Griffin, voice of Jimmy Barclay

### ***Behind the Scenes: Whit's Flop***

"Whit's Flop" was the first *Odyssey USA* episode and the first *Focus on the Family* daily broadcast drama program that aired in its own time slot. In this show, listeners got a short tour around Whit's End, and we introduced the Train Station, the Inventor's Corner, Whit's workshop, and the displays.

### ***Goof Alert!***

In "Whit's Flop," Whit says that Davey knocking over the backstop was a coincidence. However, it's clear from later episodes such as "A Single Vote" (album 3) and others that Whit does not believe in coincidences.

### ***BTS: The Life of the Party***

The original title of "The Life of the Party" was "The Tears of a Clown," which was also the name of a hit Motown single by Smokey Robinson and The Miracles. It featured the debut of two actors who would later take on different and more prominent roles—David Griffin (later Jimmy Barclay—album 2) as Freddy, and Will Ryan (later Eugene—album 3) as Bill.

### ***Sound Bites***

When we were recording "The Life of the Party," we accidentally misquoted the Bible by having a character say, "What you reap, you shall also sow." With careful editing, the sound designers fixed the line to its correct



rendering, “What you sow, you shall also reap.” When you listen to this episode, see if you can tell.

### ***The Eternal Teenager: The Creation of Connie Kendall***

Once *Family Portraits* had finished its test run on the *Focus on the Family* daily broadcast and *Odyssey* was approved as its own series, the team knew it had to do more work on the characters for the show. Producer Steve Harris met with Hollywood writer Joe Glauberg,



Actor Katie Leigh, voice of Connie Kendall

character was written with Katie in mind. At the time, we intended to begin our brand-new drama series with the episode ‘Connie Comes to Town.’ However, when we called Katie in for the session, her son, Adam, was four days old, and she couldn’t make it to the studio. She advised us to recast the part. We couldn’t imagine anyone other than Katie playing the role of Connie, so we delayed Connie’s introduction to a few shows later and recorded the program at a later date. Katie has played Connie for over 20 years now!”

### ***BTS: Connie Comes to Town***

In “Connie Comes to Town,” Whit tells Connie to pick up a uniform, but uniforms at Whit’s End are never mentioned again. Perhaps Whit changed his dress code.

### ***My Take: Paul McCusker***

I originally wrote “The Day After Christmas” around a nostalgic idea of Whit and his memories of Christmases past. But Chuck Bolte wisely insisted that kids wouldn’t relate to an adult’s memories. So I began to think about what happens to kids at Christmas, how they quickly go through their toys and are often bored by the end of the day. Steve Harris

Connie Kendall through the years



who’d worked on television shows such as *Happy Days* (1974–1984) and *Mork and Mindy* (1978–1982), and they worked on developing new characters. Steve remembers: “One of the big things that came out of our brainstorming was the need for another main character—a high school student who could act as a foil for Whit. Connie Kendall was born right on the spot, name and all.

“We had worked with Katie Leigh on *Family Portraits* and knew she would be perfect for the part. In fact, much of Connie’s

suggested the storyline about a cranky elderly woman named Mrs. Rossini, which gave a much better focus to the idea. Ultimately I liked the character of Mrs. Rossini so much that I created another one like her in “An Encounter with Mrs. Hooper” (album 5).

### ***Cut Scenes***

The first airing of “Promises, Promises” featured Connie losing her patience when Tom Riley and Officer Harley couldn’t make up their minds on smoothie flavors. Because Officer Harley had to be replaced, we recorded a new scene in which Connie loses her patience when some kids are trying to figure out a riddle about an electric train.

### ***Sound Bites***

The “Promises, Promises” conversation between Whit and Tom (about reading a Robert Louis Stevenson book) originally appeared in the first *Family Portraits* episode, “Whit’s Visitor.”

### ***BTS: Nothing to Fear***

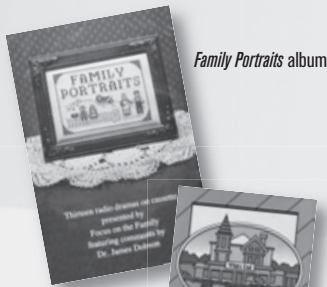
“Nothing to Fear” was the first episode that garnered a large negative reaction. It featured a nightmare scene with a mouse named Luther (played by Hal Smith) that proved to be a little too scary for a lot of children—which was ironic, considering the episode was intended to help children *deal* with fear.

### ***Sound Bites***

In “Nothing to Fear,” Shirley’s mother was played by Janna Arnold, wife of sound designer Dave Arnold.

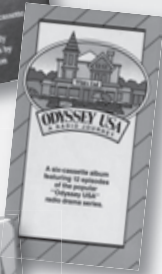
### ***BTS: The Tangled Web***

The first script for “The Tangled Web” featured Jeremy Forsythe refusing to accept an award; instead the 11-year-old broke down and confessed to a lie in front of the entire town. However, in later drafts the ending was changed so Jeremy accepted the award on stage and never confessed. This drove home the point that even an undiscovered lie can create damage.



*Family Portraits* album

*Odyssey USA* album



The first *Adventures in Odyssey* album

*The Early Classics* album



### ***Sound Bites***

When we first recorded “The Tangled Web,” we hadn’t cast Maggie Malooly as Connie’s mother. When Connie called her mom at the end of the show, no voice was heard on the other end of the line. Later, we needed to go back into the show and take Officer Harley out of an earlier scene. Since we had to make that change anyway, we decided to add Maggie at the same time saying hello when Connie called home.

### ***BTS: A Member of the Family***

“A Member of the Family” introduced Whit’s family—his daughter, Jana, and grandkids, Monty and Jenny. We also learned that the Whittakers had moved to Odyssey shortly after Whit’s older son, Jerry, died in Vietnam. It was also the first time that Whit’s younger son, Jason, was mentioned. We learned that Whit made many mistakes while raising his children, which was in contrast to the kind and gentle way he treated kids at Whit’s End. This flaw made him seem more real, approachable, and not quite so perfect.

### ***BTS: A Member of the Family***

D. J. Harner played Whit’s daughter, Jana. Hal Smith and D. J. Harner also played father and daughter in the *Focus on the Family* daily broadcast drama “House Guest.”

### ***BTS: A Member of the Family***

“A Member of the Family” originally aired as a *Family Portraits* episode and featured a Whit’s End employee named Jimmy (voiced by Bob Luttrell). When we brought the show back to air on *Odyssey USA*, we replaced Jimmy with Connie (Katie Leigh).

### ***BTS: Recollections***

“Recollections” revealed the history behind the creation of Whit’s End. It was also the first time we met the weaselly city councilman Philip Glossman, who would play a major part in the later “Blackgaard Saga.” Glossman promoted an offer from the Webster Development Company, which we later learned was owned by Dr. Blackgaard. We also established



Fillmore Recreation Center

that Whit was a middle school teacher and that he is, in fact, quite wealthy.

Also in this show, Tom told Connie that the city council put off the vote on the Fillmore Recreation Center for a month. Much later, in “Clara” (album 28), we found that Whit’s childhood friend, Jack Allen, took Whit to Nebraska for that period and that Whit almost adopted a daughter.

### ***My Take: Paul McCusker***

“Recollections” was one of the few episodes that Phil Lollar wrote but didn’t direct because the recording date fell during his family vacation. I remember his last words to me: “Don’t let them ruin my show.” Chuck and I were particularly worried about the death-bed scene—that it might come off with too much melodrama. It didn’t, thanks mostly to the great skills of our actors. And, in the end, the show wasn’t ruined at all, but became an *Odyssey* classic.

In fact, the only thing that *didn’t* work about the episode was the voice of Philip Glossman. I was coerced into playing the part, probably because no one else would do it, and we had no idea that he would turn into an ongoing character. I don’t particularly like the sound of my voice and would rather not work on that side of the microphone.

### ***BTS: A Change of Hart***

“A Change of Hart” was the first *Adventures in Odyssey* episode that didn’t have any of our regular characters in it. We were anxious to prove that the *Odyssey* concept was broad enough to accommodate a variety of stories and characters, even those that didn’t involve Whit, Tom, or Connie. This show also marked



Paul McCusker and Dave Arnold in the studio

the first appearance of executive producer Chuck Bolte as Dr. Julius Schnitzelbonker. (By the way, his name came from a German restaurant in Silver Spring, Maryland, that Paul McCusker’s family frequented.)





# The Trouble with Harley

Officer Harley (played by Will Ryan) made his first appearance in “Lights Out at Whit’s End,” an episode that is buried in the archives. Harley was a bumbling policeman and the producers loved him for his comic potential, but not everyone felt the same way. After parents complained that he gave a bad impression of law enforcers, Dr. Dobson insisted that Officer Harley disappear from the show.

Producer Steve Harris remembers, “At the time, we were working day and night to get the program on schedule. I’m sure my fatigue contributed to my temporary frustration with the decision to take Harley out of the show. In hindsight (there’s nothing like 20 years of experience to change your perspective!), Dr. Dobson was absolutely right. We needed to be proactive in teaching respect for legitimate authority. Looking back, I can see that God definitely had His hand in that whole situation.”

So Officer Harley eventually left the show during its first year. Some of his shows, such as “Doing Unto Others,” “Bobby’s Valentine,” and “Missed It by That Much,” were later rewritten, retitled, and rerecorded without Harley (see “The Officer Harley Remakes,” album 8). Others (including “Addictions Can Be Habit-Forming”) were dropped completely and never aired again. In a few shows like “Promises, Promises” and “Rumor Has It” (album 3), we replaced his voice with another character or simply cut the scenes in which he appeared. Finally, a few traces of Harley remain in shows such as “Gifts for Madge and Guy” and “Recollections” where he was not a main character. Officer Harley originally appeared in “The Tangled Web.” He was replaced by a well-meaning neighbor who had gone to a private detective school. This foreshadowed our permanent replacement for Harley—a private detective named Harlow Doyle (album 14).

Careful listeners will find brief cameos by Officer Harley in “Peace on Earth” (album 3) and “A Thanksgiving Carol” (album 12). Finally, Eugene calls Harley on the phone in “Curious, Isn’t It?” (album 8).

By the way, when “Peace on Earth” first aired as a special on the *Focus on the Family* daily broadcast, Dr. Dobson noticed the appearance of Officer Harley at the end and good-naturedly exclaimed, “Hey, I thought we got rid of that guy!”



# Original Novels

## *Like the Radio Show . . . Only Different*

If you're familiar with the radio series, you might be surprised to find that most of the audio characters don't appear in the *Adventures in Odyssey* novels. That was done on purpose. The radio show is produced on a weekly basis, and the characters change much more quickly than is possible in the published books. A book that covers only a few weeks of a character's life takes at least a year to write, edit, and publish. By the time a few books are in print, a kid from the radio show might have graduated from middle school, grown up, gotten married, and moved away! We decided to place the novels in an *Odyssey* time period prior to the arrival of characters like Connie and Eugene. Most of the original novels take place in a pre-radio-show time period. Only one of the novels, *A Carnival of Secrets*, overlaps the time period of the *Odyssey* radio show.

Still, we felt it was important to include some familiar elements from Whit's End so the novels didn't feel completely different. One example is the Imagination Station. But how could the Imagination Station appear in several of the novels when, technically, that invention wasn't introduced until *after* the arrival of Connie and Eugene? Author Paul McCusker answers: "I decided when I wrote the novels that Whit—being the compulsive tinkerer that he was—had worked on early prototypes of the invention before presenting it to the public. That's why in the novels the Imagination Station is hidden away in the basement."

The Imagination Station also works differently in the books than it does in the radio series. For example, book character Mark Prescott goes back into his own past, which no one in the radio show did until "The Mortal Coil" (album 16). And when Mark gets into the invention in *The King's Quest*, he winds up in a fictional world—which is something that didn't happen in the radio series until much later.

## Novel Information

### *Strange Journey Back* (Four Books in One Volume)

#### 1. **Strange Journey Back**

Original Publishing Date: 1992

Writer: Paul McCusker

Themes: Friendship, responsibility

**Summary:** After his parents separate, Mark Prescott arrives in Odyssey with his mother and finds adjusting to the quirky small town hard to do. When he discovers the Imagination Station at Whit's End, he wonders if it's the solution to reuniting his parents.

#### 2. **High Flyer with a Flat Tire**

Original Publishing Date: 1992

Writer: Paul McCusker

Themes: Friendship, family ties

**Summary:** A local bully accuses Mark Prescott of slashing his bicycle tires, so Mark sets off to prove his innocence—encountering more suspects than he was prepared for.

#### 3. **The Secret Cave of Robinwood**

Original Publishing Date: 1992

Writer: Paul McCusker

Themes: Faithfulness, forgiveness

**Summary:** Mark Prescott learns a hard lesson about friendship as he betrays the secret of a good friend in order to impress the Israelites—a gang he wants to join.

#### 4. **Behind the Locked Door**

Original Publishing Date: 1993

Writer: Paul McCusker

Themes: Trust, honesty, purity of thought

**Summary:** While his mother is away, Mark Prescott stays at Whit's home where secrets seem to abound behind locked doors. Keeping his curiosity under control is nearly impossible, and a chance opportunity allows Mark to encounter a painful truth from Whit's past.

### *Danger Lies Ahead* (Four Books in One Volume)

#### 1. **Lights Out at Camp What-A-Nut**

Original Publishing Date: 1993

Writer: Paul McCusker

Themes: Friendship, helping others

**Summary:** While attending a summer camp, Mark Prescott is paired with his nemesis, Joe Devlin, in a treasure hunt that leads them both into danger.

#### 2. **The King's Quest**

Original Publishing Date: 1994

Writer: Paul McCusker

Theme: God's control in difficult circumstances

**Summary:** The good news is that Mark Prescott's parents have reconciled. The bad news is that Mark must now move away from Odyssey. To show Mark how to trust God in any situation, Whit sends him on an adventure in the Imagination Station to a place of brave knights, evil wizards, and a quest for a precious ring.

#### 3. **Danger Lies Ahead**

Original Publishing Date: 1995

Writer: Paul McCusker

Theme: Trust

**Summary:** Jack Davis befriends the new kid at school—but soon finds himself caught up in the boy's many stories. Are they true or not? Jack nearly loses his closest friends—and finds himself in peril—trying to find out.

#### 4. **A Carnival of Secrets**

Original Publishing Date: 1997

Writer: Paul McCusker

Theme: Trust, honesty

**Summary:** Patti Eldridge disobeys her parents and listens to a fortuneteller at a traveling carnival. Strange events soon follow, and Patti is quickly caught up in a web of intrigue and mystery.



## ***Point of No Return*** ***(Four Books in One Volume)***

### **1. Point of No Return**

Original Publishing Date: 1995

Writer: Paul McCusker

Themes: Counting the cost

**Summary:** When Jimmy Barclay becomes a Christian, he is certain that his life can only get better as a result. But when everything goes wrong, he wonders what his faith is all about.

### **2. Dark Passage, Part I of II**

Original Publishing Date: 1996

Writer: Paul McCusker

Theme: The sanctity of life

**Summary:** Jack Davis and Matt Booker take an amazing journey back to the 1850s. Matt is captured as a slave and Jack joins the abolitionists to rescue him.

### **3. Freedom Run, Part II of II**

Original Publishing Date: 1996

Writer: Paul McCusker

Theme: The sanctity of life

**Summary:** To keep a promise to a young slave, Jack Davis and Matt Booker step back into the Imagination Station and return to the Underground Railroad.

### **4. The Stranger's Message**

Original Publishing Date: 1997

Writer: Paul McCusker

Theme: Following Jesus in every situation

**Summary:** A homeless man's arrival in Odyssey challenges Whit and the kids to consider what it means to answer the question: "What would Jesus do?"



*From top. Strange Journey Back, Danger Lies Ahead, and Point of No Return*

### ***Behind the Scenes: Behind the Locked Door***

In this book, we find out that Whit has kept a room for his son Jerry set up in the attic. Whit and his family had moved to Odyssey while they were mourning Jerry's death.

### ***Goof Alert!***

The cemetery worker in *Behind the Locked Door* says that Jenny Whittaker is buried in California. However, in the radio episode "The Decision" (album 28), Jack Allen says that she is buried in Odyssey.

### ***BTS: Lights Out at Camp What-A-Nut***

Mark Prescott and Joe Devlin get stuck in a bomb shelter in this book. In the radio episode "Connie Goes to Camp" (album 5), Lucy Cunningham-Schultz and her friend Jill are caught sneaking out at night heading for this same shelter.

### ***Release Dates***

The *Adventures in Odyssey* novels were originally scheduled for release in 1991. But the first *Odyssey* videos were also scheduled to come out then, and some members of the team were concerned that releasing two new products would confuse our audience. As a result, we decided to delay the release of the book series so that they would not compete with the video series. However, in an unexpected twist, a publisher asked for permission to release the novels in England. So the first three novels came out in England (with different covers) several months before they were available in the United States.

The release schedule wasn't the only

conflict between the videos and the novels. Mark Prescott's name in the original manuscripts for the book series was David Prescott. But the producers of the videos didn't want their audience to confuse David with the character of Dylan, so the name in the novels was changed.



The 1991 British covers

### ***BTS: The Stranger's Message***

Originally outlined as a four-part radio episode, this book was a modern-day retelling of the 1896 Charles Sheldon book *In His Steps*. In every situation, the book's characters considered the question, "What would Jesus do?" Around the time *The Stranger's Message* was being written, the same question caught on in the Christian market and led to the popular WWJD? campaign.

### ***BTS: Danger Lies Ahead***

This book is told from Jack Davis's perspective. Though we never heard much of Jack's parents in the audio series, this story explores his home life. The book also features Oscar and Lucy Cunningham-Schultz, popular kid characters from the audio show. Paul McCusker dedicated the book to "Genni, Donald, and Joseph," the actors who played Lucy, Jack, and Oscar, respectively.

### **Goof Alert!**

In *Point of No Return*, Mary says that Grandpa Barclay died when Jimmy was five. But he appeared alive and well in the radio episode “And When You Pray . . .” (album 4), which takes place later in the chronology than this book. Maybe it was “Grandpa Barclay” from another side of the family.

### **Goof Alert!**

The first printing of *Dark Passage* and *Freedom Run* included a pastor named “Ferguson,” though the same character was named “Jamison” in the corresponding radio episode, “The Underground Railroad” (album 24). Subsequent printings corrected this error.

### **BTS: Freedom Run**

*Dark Passage* and *Freedom Run* are two parts of the same story. However, *Dark Passage* is told in the third person and *Freedom Run* is in the first person—or, rather, “first-persons,” since the chapters alternate between Jack Davis and Matt Booker as our narrators.

### **BTS: The Stranger’s Message**

This book bridged the gap between the book series and the radio show. The final chapter of the book retells the opening scene of the radio episode “Connie Comes to Town” (album 1).

### **BTS: A Carnival of Secrets**

Oscar’s last name was never revealed in the audio series or the previous novels. *A Carnival of Secrets* finally puts the mystery to rest. His last name is “Peterson.”



### **Mysteries in Odyssey!**

Two *Adventures in Odyssey* mystery novels were released in 2002. *The Case of the Mysterious Message* was written by Marshal Younger and featured Cal Jordan and Sarah Prachett discovering a lost bag of mail from the 1960s. *The Mystery of the Hooded Horseman* was written by John Beebe and told a story about one of Whit’s contacts in the National Security Agency who hid some government information in an old violin.



## Passages Novel Information

### *Where in the World Is Marus?*

The Passages novels begin with a mystery involving a series of manuscripts that claim to be true stories about another world called Marus. Each manuscript is written by a different author and chronicles the adventures of several kids from *Odyssey*, in different times, who travel to an alternative world.

Through each novel, Whit and Jack Allen investigate, unearthing yet another story—six in all. The stories themselves may seem very familiar since they're all taken from Scripture. But the readers are left to guess which Bible stories the kids from *Odyssey* are experiencing. (Note: Read about the *Adventures in Odyssey* radio episode titled “Passages” in album 34.)

### Darien's Rise: **Manuscript 1**

Original Publishing Date: 1999

Writer: Paul McCusker

Theme: Belief

**Summary:** Kyle and Anna, two kids from 1950s *Odyssey*, find themselves transported to a strange new world called Marus. They are immediately caught up in a struggle between a power-mad king and his valiant young general.

### Arin's Judgment: **Manuscript 2**

Original Publishing Date: 1999

Writer: Paul McCusker

Themes: Trust, obedience

**Summary:** Wade Mullens, a young boy who lives in post-World War II *Odyssey*, enters the world of Marus when the nation is in rebellion. Some believe that Wade Mullens is the pivotal player in a battle for weapons that could destroy the world.

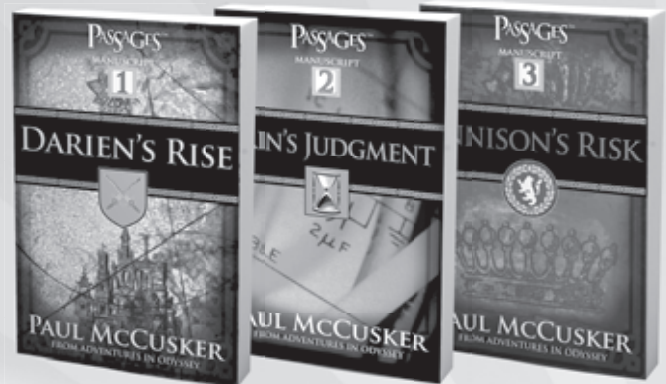
### Annison's Risk: **Manuscript 3**

Original Publishing Date: 1999

Writer: Paul McCusker

Theme: Justice

**Summary:** A game of hide-and-seek takes Maddy Nicholaivitch to Marus where she is taken in by a beautiful princess who has just married the conquering king. After overhearing the secret plans of the king's most trusted advisor, Maddy must decide if her loyalty to the princess is worth the price of her life.





Glennall's Betrayal: **Manuscript 4**

Original Publishing Date: 2000

Writer: Paul McCusker

Theme: Loyalty

**Summary:** In Depression-era Odyssey, James Curtis runs away from home and joins a mysterious group of gypsies. Along the way, he is kidnapped and sold into slavery where he meets a young man named Glennall. Together, James and Glennall journey to the capital in Marus and discover that there is a higher purpose to the random events of their lives.

Draven's Defiance: **Manuscript 5**

Original Publishing Date: 2000

Writer: Paul McCusker

Theme: Standing up for what's right

**Summary:** Knocked unconscious in a railroad tunnel, Scott Graham finds himself in a land where a cruel king and queen rule with fear and hopelessness. Time itself seems to have stopped. An encounter with a man who claims to speak for the Unseen One takes Scott to corridors of power and a life-threatening confrontation.

Fendar's Legacy: **Manuscript 6**

Original Publishing Date: 2000

Writer: Paul McCusker

Theme: Faith

**Summary:** Carried along by a wild crowd, Danny Taylor, his brother, Wayne, and Michelle Brewer tumble head over heels into Trickle Lake and emerge in a fountain in Marus. Michelle is seized by the police and taken to the palace, while brothers Wayne and Danny wind up in the company of a man who is determined to lead his oppressed people to freedom.



## ***The Creation of Passages***

by Paul McCusker

A few years ago I was involved with efforts to create stories that would communicate a Christian point of view in a way that would influence people who may not be Christians. *Focus on the Family Radio Theatre* was the first effort. The Passages series was the second.

Passages was the result of a wild idea I had to take Bible stories and retell them plot point for plot point in an alternative world. I thought that approach would allow people who were overly familiar with the Bible stories to get a fresh perspective on those events and characters. And I believed that those who didn't know the stories were from the Bible would still enjoy the books and might just go back to the Bible to read the originals.

To start, I had a picture in my mind of King David as a swashbuckling hero living in a nineteenth-century-type country where steam locomotives cut across the landscape and horse-drawn wagons still took produce to the village marketplaces. Or, in fact, it was like England—a country where I once had the pleasure of living. Astute readers have noticed that the name of my country—"Marus"—is actually the ancient name for England, "Sarum," turned inside out.

I pitched the idea to Focus on the Family's publisher Al Janssen and editor Larry Weedon. They liked the idea and suggested that I write the stories in the context of the *Adventures in Odyssey* series, which seemed like a pretty good idea. We discussed which stories to tell, and I worked out the prologues and epilogues with Whit and Jack, writing them in such a way so that those who didn't know *Odyssey* could still appreciate the stories.

I never wanted readers to know the stories were based on the Bible stories to the extent that I resisted putting in any disclaimers or explanations in the books themselves. I wanted to follow in the footsteps of writers like C. S. Lewis and others who told their stories without overtly pointing to their source material. I had hoped readers would figure it all out along the way and perhaps even identify *which* Bible story I was telling. It seemed more fun that way. And, as was true with Jesus' parables, I wanted readers to have their own "Aha!" moment when they finally figured out what I was doing.

## ***What's the Title?***

These books went through several name changes. Originally, they were titled Corridors, reflecting the idea of "halls" between one world and another. Then the name Tesseract was suggested. (In geometry, a tesseract is a "four dimensional cube," where the fourth dimension represents the change of the cube through time.) Finally, we settled on Passages, a word that evoked a journey and also hinted that the books paralleled passages of scripture.

## ***Behind the Scenes: Glennall's Betrayal***

The original title for this book was *Glennall's Revenge*. But, since this novel was based on the biblical account of Joseph and that story didn't include revenge as a theme, we decided to change it. To fit an established page count for the series, nearly one third of the original *Glennall* had to be cut. However, some sections were restored for the rerelease of the series in 2006.

# Videos

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Focus on the Family created a best-selling series of part live-action, part animated films titled *McGee and Me!* To follow up on this success, a series of animated videos based on the *Adventures in Odyssey* radio dramas was developed.

To adapt a radio series to a visual medium is a difficult task. When the first *Odyssey* videos were created in 1989 and 1990, the only visual representations of the characters and world of *Odyssey* had been a few album covers. Each listener imagined his or her unique version of what every character and place should look like. The *Odyssey* videos adopted a visual style reminiscent of classic Disney, and the radio series art soon morphed to match this new style.

Alongside the existing characters of Whit and Eugene, the videos introduced a new cast of characters, including Dylan Taylor, his parents, and his younger sister, Jesse. While the radio program was aimed at 8- to 12-year-olds, the videos were geared for a younger audience.



## Video Information

### 1: **The Knight Travelers**

Writer: Ken C. Johnson

Directors: Mike Joens & Ken C. Johnson

Theme: What is truly important

**Summary:** Dylan and Whit set out to retrieve the Imagination Station from the clutches of the evil Fred Faustus. Along the way, Dylan discovers what is truly important in life.

### 2: **A Flight to the Finish**

Writer: Ken C. Johnson

Directors: Mike Joens & Ken C. Johnson

Theme: Caring

**Summary:** The race is on! Dylan bolts from the starting line, determined to win Odyssey's super-hot soap-box derby. But when Holly's car careens out of control, Dylan's faced with a tough dilemma—helping her or winning the race.

### 3: **A Fine Feathered Frenzy**

Writer: Ken C. Johnson

Directors: Mike Joens & Ken C. Johnson

Theme: Responsibility

**Summary:** After mowing down Mrs. Harcourt's prized rose garden, Dylan tries to make amends by agreeing to watch her treasured parrot Napoleon. When the bird escapes, it's a chase against time to retrieve the pet before Mrs. Harcourt returns.



The Knight Travelers



Shadow of a Doubt

### 4: **Shadow of a Doubt**

Writer: Mike Joens

Directors: Mike Joens & Ken C. Johnson

Theme: Loyalty

**Summary:** There's a cat burglar on the loose in Odyssey and the trail of clues leads to . . . John Avery Whittaker! It's up to Dylan to prove Whit's innocence before it's too late.

### 5: **Star Quest**

Writers: David N. Weiss & Rob McFarland

Directors: Robert Vernon & Stephen Stiles

Theme: Jealousy

**Summary:** When Dylan and Sal Martinez learn that their favorite sci-fi TV show is filming in Odyssey, they are determined to get in on the action. But they wind up getting the ride of their lives when a robot goes out-of-control.

### 6: **Once Upon an Avalanche**

Writer: Paul McCusker

Directors: Robert Vernon & Stephen Stiles

Theme: Brotherly love

**Summary:** A hair-raising toboggan ride lands Carter, Dylan Taylor, and his sister, Jesse, into the bottom of Avalanche Canyon. They must work together to overcome the many obstacles in their path to safety.

### 7: **Electric Christmas**

Story: Robert Vernon

Writer: Stephen Stiles

Directors: Robert Vernon & Stephen Stiles

Theme: The true meaning of Christmas

**Summary:** Sparks fly when Dylan and his scheming neighbor, Doug Harding, both enter Odyssey's yard-decorating contest. While Dylan and Doug go all-out with a flashy, larger-than-life exhibition, Jesse's humble manger scene seems to pale in comparison.

### 8: **Go West, Young Man**

Writers: Paul McCusker & Robert Vernon

Directors: Robert Vernon & Stephen Stiles

Theme: Responsibility

**Summary:** Strap on yer chaps, grab yer hat, and get ready for a rip-roarin' ride to the Wild West, where Dylan and Eugene face off with the Dalton gang.



# Alphabetical Episode Index

Through episode #642, album #50

## Index Key

- A#– Album number
- AA– Action adventure episode
- Barc– Barclay family episode
- Camp– Camp episode
- C-mas– Christmas episode
- Comedy– Comedies
- E#– Episode number
- FP– *Family Portraits*
- Hist– History episode
- Int'l– International adventures episode
- IS– Imagination Station episode
- L– Love story episode
- LE– *The Lost Episodes* album
- Myst– Mystery episode
- N– No episode number or no album number

<i>Title</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Album Number</i>	<i>Categories</i>
<b>A</b>			
A . . . Is for Attitude	E#110	A#08	
Accidental Dilemma, I	E#634	A#50	AA
Accidental Dilemma, II	E#635	A#50	AA
Act of Mercy, An	E#115	A#08	
Act of Nobility, An	E#187	A#13	AA
Addictions Can Be Habit-Forming	E#11	A#N	
Adventure in Bethany, An, I	E#226	A#16	IS
Adventure in Bethany, An, II	E#227	A#16	IS
Adventure of the Adventure, The	E#138	A#08	
Afraid, Not!	E#261	A#20	
All the Difference in the World	E#303	A#23	
All Things to All People	E#522	A#40	
All's Well with Boswell	E#125	A#08	Comedy
All-Star Witness	E#578	A#45	
Aloha, Oyl, I	E#256	A#19	Comedy, Barc
Aloha, Oyl, II	E#257	A#19	Comedy, Barc
Aloha, Oyl, III	E#258	A#19	Comedy, Barc
Always	E#579	A#45	
Amazing Grace	E#384	A#29	Hist

American Revelation, The, I	E#508	A#39	IS, Hist
American Revelation, The, II	E#509	A#39	IS, Hist
And That's the Truth	E#556	A#43	
And the Glory	E#240	A#17	Comedy
And When You Pray . . .	E#60	A#04	Barc
Angels Unaware	E#325	A#25	AA
Another Chance	E#332	A#25	AA
Another Man's Shoes	E#419	A#33	
Arizona Sunrise	E#402	A#30	Hist
Around the Block	E#593	A#46	Comedy
Aubrey's Bathrobe	E#504	A#39	
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Back to Bethlehem, II	E#136	A#10	C-mas, IS
Back to Bethlehem, III	E#137	A#10	C-mas, IS
Back to School	E#43	A#03	
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Bad Guy, The [Split]	E#444b	A#34	
Bad Hair Day, The	E#252	A#19	Comedy
Bad Luck	E#107	A#08	
Barclay Family Ski Vacation, The	E#99	A#07	Barc
Bassett Hounds	E#516	A#40	Comedy
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By Faith, Noah

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Hallowed Be Thy Name

On Solid Ground

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Hallowed Be Thy Name

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