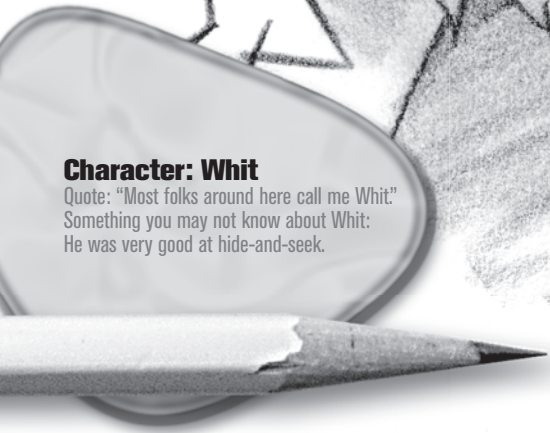




Character: Whit

Quote: "Most folks around here call me Whit."
Something you may not know about Whit:
He was very good at hide-and-seek.



Album

16

Flights of Imagination

Whit's Brush with Mortality

“The Mortal Coil” is one of the popular *Adventures in Odyssey* episodes, but it was also one of the more controversial. Even before the show aired, we knew that it would trigger a lot of listener responses because of its cliff-hanger ending, so we put into place some unusual efforts to help offset the intensity of the fans’ reactions. We asked the local stations to have their on-air announcers warn parents about the show, suggesting that they listen before allowing their children to hear it.

We also had executive producer Chuck Bolte replace Chris Anthony for the wrap-up at the end of part I, hinting at the happy ending to come when he said that “Whit’s adventure would continue” the following week. What we didn’t fully realize was the effect the show would have by airing the Saturday *before* Thanksgiving—which meant that a lot of families wouldn’t be at home for the conclusion the next Saturday. The letters and phone calls came. Kids begged us, saying, “Please don’t kill Mr. Whittaker,” while a few parents were annoyed that we would put their children through a week of suspense. Despite all this, the episodes proved powerful, and many listeners wrote in to thank us for producing them.



Episode Information

209: **Columbus: The Grand Voyage**

Original Air Date: 10/24/92

Writer: Phil Lollar

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Psalm 22:27-28

Themes: Christopher Columbus, courage.

Summary: Lawrence Hodges joins Christopher Columbus for an incredible trip across the seas by way of the Imagination Station.

211 and 212: **The Mortal Coil, I and II**

Original Air Dates: 11/21/92 & 11/28/92

Writer: Paul McCusker

Sound Designer: Dave Arnold

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 4:18-5:2;

1 Thessalonians 4:13-15; Revelation 7:17; 21:4

Themes: Death, heaven

Summary: Whit programs the Imagination Station to show what life after death might be like. Against the advice of Tom Riley, he tries the program on himself . . . with dangerous results.

PARENTAL WARNING:

This episode about life after death may prove to be too intense for listeners under the age of 10.

213: **Best Intentions**

Original Air Date: 12/5/92

Writer: Paul McCusker

Sound Designer: Dave Arnold

Scripture: Matthew 25:36

Theme: Compassion

Summary: Connie and Eugene try to ensure that Whit gets his rest while recovering from being in the hospital.

214: **The Living Nativity**

Original Air Date: 12/12/92

Writer: Marshal Younger

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Romans 13:1-7

Theme: Freedom of religion

Summary: A nativity display at Odyssey's city hall sparks a controversy over the "separation of church and state."

216: **Like Father, Like Son**

Original Air Date: 12/26/92

Writers: April Dammann & Paul McCusker

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Matthew 7:1-2

Theme: Judging others

Summary: Teenager Eric Myers is accused of stealing from the soccer team's cash box.

219: **Treasures of the Heart**

Original Air Date: 1/16/93

Writers: Paul McCusker & Geoff Kohler

Sound Designer: Dave Arnold

Scripture: Matthew 6:19

Theme: Setting proper priorities

Summary: The Barclay family holds a yard sale to tidy up their cluttered attic.

220: **This Is Chad Pearson?**

Original Air Date: 2/20/93

Writer: Marshal Younger

Sound Designer: Bob Luttrell

Scripture: Philippians 2:3-11

Theme: The folly of hero worship

Summary: Bart Rathbone holds a big contest and the winner gets a date with television star Chad Pearson. It's a prize every girl in Odyssey wants . . . except the winner!

221: **It Is Well**

Original Air Date: 2/27/93

Writer: Phil Lollar

Sound Designer: Dave Arnold

Scripture: Philippians 4:12-13

Themes: Trusting God through all life's circumstances, the power of faith.

Summary: Whit tells Lucy the moving story behind the writing of the old hymn "It Is Well."

PARENTAL WARNING:

Though this is an inspirational and moving story, it does contain a realistic shipwreck as well as several deaths. While handled tastefully, these scenes may frighten younger listeners.

226 and 227: **An Adventure in Bethany, I and II**

Original Air Dates: 4/3/93 & 4/10/93

Writer: Paul McCusker

Sound Designers: Bob Luttrell & Dave Arnold

Scripture: John 11:1-12:11

Themes: The biblical story of Lazarus, the power of Jesus

Summary: Lucy takes an Imagination Station trip to first-century Bethany where she meets Marta, Miriam, and Eleazar preparing a feast for a special guest—Jesus!

228: **A Game of Compassion**

Original Air Date: 4/17/93

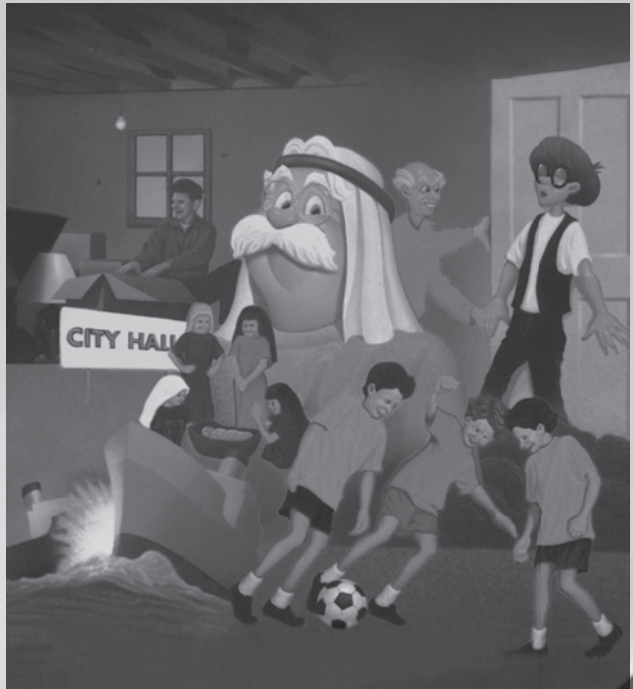
Writer: Jeff White

Sound Designer: Dave Arnold & Mark Drury

Scripture: James 2:14-26

Themes: Helping others, sacrifice

Summary: Eric Myers makes a secret promise to help a despondent widow, but the promise will keep him from the season's most important soccer game.



Flights of Imagination cover art

Sound Bites

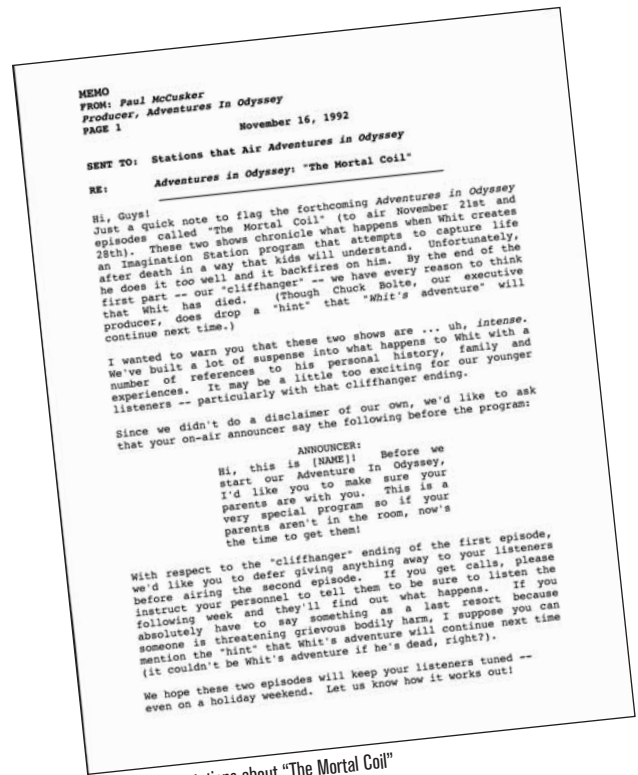
Actor Brian Cummings, a voice-over legend, made his first *Odyssey* appearance as the title character in “Columbus: The Grand Voyage.” He later played a variety of characters including Jesus in “An Adventure in Bethany” and Wooton’s boss in “Welcoming Wooton” (album 36). “Columbus” also featured the first appearance of actor Carol Bilger. We liked her voice so much that she became the “new” Mary Barclay, the last in a long line.

Behind The Scenes: The Living Nativity

Marshal Younger, a freelance writer who would later join the *Odyssey* staff at Focus, wrote this episode for his first show. The controversial nature of this story launched an hour-long debate among our actors in the studio about the first amendment and the true meaning of “separation of church and state.”

Sound Bites

“The Mortal Coil” was actor Walker Edmiston’s favorite episode. Walker remembers a moment when his character Tom Riley had a lengthy scene at Whit’s bedside: “The feelings between Hal and me at the moment, being close friends, brought something to that show that you don’t normally feel in acting unless the true emotions get in there. When I read this speech—this monologue—I thought, *I can get through that*. I said, ‘Let’s not rehearse. Let’s just turn the machine on.’ That’s the way we recorded it—without any practice at all. We got that raw emotion.”



Memo to radio stations about "The Mortal Coil"

My Take: Paul McCusker

We wrote the first part of “The Mortal Coil” to be put away in case Hal Smith died. The plan was to record part I, and then put it away until we needed it. But we liked the story so much that we decided to finish it. Sadly, Hal’s wife, Louise, died weeks before the recording, so we were worried about how Hal might react to the content. Being the professional he was, Hal insisted that the show must go on. We dedicated the shows to Louise.

BTS: The Mortal Coil

When Whit is in the Imagination Station thinking back through his life, we hear the line, “I’d like you to meet Jenny. I think



The Whittaker family during recording of "The Mortal Coil."

you've seen her at the Pasadena Library." Years later, when "The Triangle" (album 36) told that full story, we made sure that character Jack Allen said this exact phrase. This way, it sounded like Whit's Imagination Station adventure was flashing back to a scene from "The Triangle." Sound designer Jonathan Crowe delivered this line in "The Mortal Coil," but *Odyssey* producer Marshal Younger played young Jack in "The Triangle."

Sound Bites

In "Best Intentions," much of character Tom Riley's fumbling with the Old English in *The Pilgrim's Progress* was genuine. We didn't show the script to actor Walker Edmiston ahead of time and recorded his first pass at trying to figure out the obscure words and phrases. Much of his ad-libbing was so funny that we left it in the final show.

Sound Bites

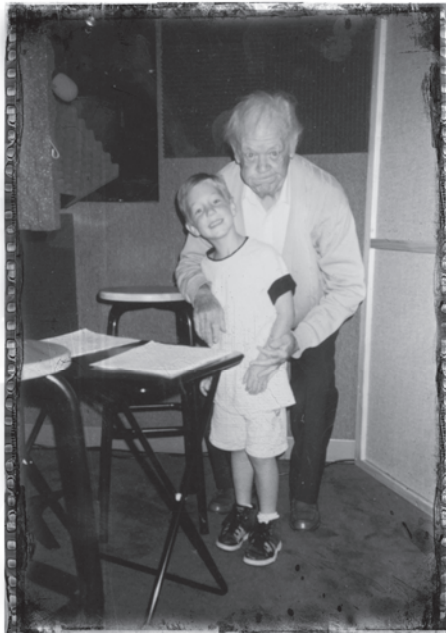
At the last minute, actor Steve Burns (who plays Rodney Rathbone) was unavailable to record "Like Father, Like Son." Actor Matt Hurwitz stepped in and did an admirable impression of Rodney. In fact, we've never received a single letter from anyone asking why we had a fill-in voice. Dave Arnold's son, Landon, played Rodney's cousin Scrub. He later went on to play Cody Carper.

Sound Bites

In "An Adventure in Bethany," Martha was played by Lucille Bliss, who is well-known as the voice of *Crusader Rabbit* (1949–1951) and Smurfette on *The Smurfs* (1981–1989).

Sound Bites with Dave Arnold

Midway through production on "A Game of Compassion," I had a sports accident (appropriate for a show about soccer!) that took me away from work for a week. Since we were so close to the broadcast date, Mark Drury stepped in to finish the show, even though he'd never done a full production for *Odyssey* before. This was a proving ground for Mark, and he went on to become one of the most talented sound designers for the program, producing more than 50 episodes.



Actors Landon Arnold and Hal Smith share a comic moment.

Where Odyssey Is Not

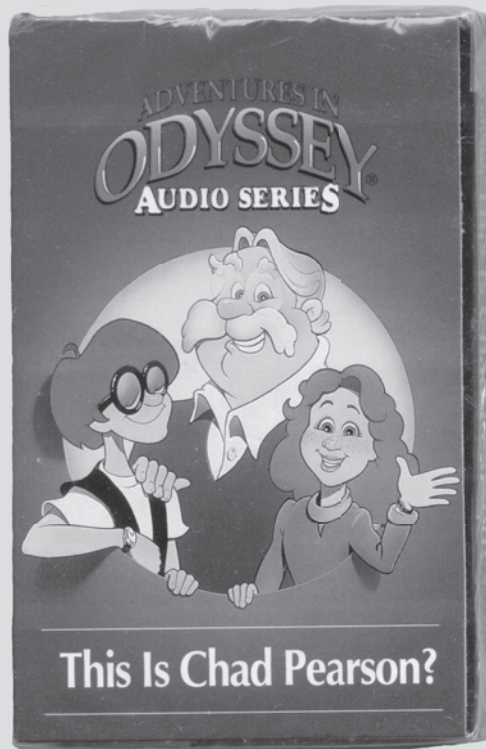
Listeners always want to know where Odyssey is located. It might be easier to figure out where Odyssey is *not* located, based on lines from Odyssey characters. Thanks to OdysseyScoop.com for this information.

State:	Episode:	Line:	Speaker
Alaska	The Black Veil	"I'm in Alaska."	Jason Whittaker
Arizona	It Happened at Four Corners	"We're right outside Four Corners, Arizona."	Bernard Walton
Arkansas	Our Daily Bread	"The company is closing the Odyssey plant and moving it to a place called Hope, Arkansas."	George Barclay
California	Stormy Weather	"I don't want to go home. I want to go to California."	Connie Kendall
Colorado	Third Degree	"Precisely where in Colorado are we?"	Eugene Meltsner (after having traveled through several other states)
Connecticut	Blessings in Disguise	"My pen pal, Thor Douglass. He lives in Connecticut."	Brenda Perry
Florida	Family Vacation	"We're going to Florida to Uncle Burt and Aunt Ruby's."	Jimmy Barclay
Hawaii	Aloha, Oy!	"You, Jimmy Barclay, and four guests will fly first class on an all-expenses-paid trip to . . . Hawaii!"	Bart Rathbone
Idaho	Fifteen Minutes	"It was a local commercial. . . Kuna, Idaho. Didn't run very long."	Greg O'Neil
Iowa	Second Thoughts	"We're in the middle of Iowa."	Bernard Walton
Kansas	Welcoming Wooton	"I'll betcha it's from Mrs. Randolph's granddaughter in Kansas."	Wooton Bassett
Maine	Green Eyes and Yellow Tulips	"I moved here last week from Maine."	Robert Mitchell
Maryland	By Dawn's Early Light	"Odyssey? Is that here in Maryland?"	Dr. Banes (Curt replies, "No, it's in another state.")
Montana	Around the Block	"Barring the time in Montana when I was a child and my head was wedged between two fence rails."	Eugene Meltsner
Nebraska	Clara	"I came here and took [Whit] back home with me . . . Nebraska."	Jack Allen
New Jersey	Double Trouble	"There was that time in New Jersey, sir."	Walter Shakespeare
New York	Where There's Smoke	"I won [my boxing ring] back in New York."	Nick Mulligan
North Carolina	Thank You, God	"When I was about Rodney's age, we moved to Raleigh, North Carolina."	John Whittaker
Oregon	Breaking Point	"I've got family in Oregon!"	Barry Muntz
Pennsylvania	Top This!	"Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia."	Hannah, explaining where she's from
South Dakota	Chains	"I'm from South Dakota."	Mary Hopkins
Utah	A Day in the Life	"You give the man a wrench in Utah, he thinks he owns the world."	Clark Gilbert
Virginia	The Benefit of the Doubt	"You're moving to Virginia?"	Connie Kendall
Washington, D.C.	Where There's a Will . . .	"Our head office in Washington wants me to work for them . . . and that's why we might have to move."	George Barclay

My Take: Marshal Younger

“This Is Chad Pearson?” was one of many episodes included in the Chick-fil-A Kids’ Meals. It triggered controversy thanks to the comedic line that “27 Middle-Eastern terrorists” were holding someone hostage. A handful of people decided to protest against Chick-fil-A. Unfortunately for them, they held their protest on a Sunday—when Chick-fil-A is closed.

I never realized I was such a controversial person until my first two *Odyssey* shows (this one, and “The Living Nativity”) both caused such a stir. I was fortunate the *Odyssey* crew didn’t give up on me.



Chick-fil-A cassette sleeve package of “This Is Chad Pearson?”