

**TEN YEARS  
BEFORE THE  
MIKE**

**TED HUSING**

*Ten Years  
Before the Mike*

By TED HUSING

*ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS*

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ONE: JUST YESTERDAY

## CHAPTER I

### JUST YESTERDAY

NOT LONG AGO I had my nose broken. Wait a minute—I know that one doesn't *have* his nose broken. He *suffers* a broken nose. In this case, though, I did have mine broken. By a surgeon. Some of the acoustics experts and sinus engineers decided my voice would have a bit more resonance if my antrums were widened. Or is it *antra*? Anyhow, since the technical people had spent years perfecting microphones especially for my vocal vibrations, I couldn't see how I could hold back on my antrums, personal as they are to me. So I went to the sawbones, took a couple of shots of coke, and had 'em broken out.

Well, the point is, it's quite a jump in progress between the present, when even facial surgery is called upon to help bring radio's voices out intelligibly above the roar of crowds and rush of civilization, and the broadcasting of only a dozen years ago. About that time Jerry Sullivan was announcing from WQJ in Chicago. Jerry was a bad singer who went over big on the air for four years on a single gag—the way he pronounced Chicago. *Tchuh*—then a pause—*cahgga*. Something like that—I can't imitate it phonetically.

That Tchuh-cahgaa of Jerry's wowed 'em in those days. Remember, the big kick in radio then was getting any reception at all, so a tidbit like Jerry's whimsy stuck out like a moving currant in a bun. Farmer Josh, who owned the only



receiving set at the crossroads, would invite in the neighbors. "Ye ought ter hear that feller in WQJ say Chicago. I swan, ye'll bust a hamstring." So they gathered and put on their earphones—or maybe turned on the tin-horn loud-speaker. The program was coming through—musical, probably, and probably, as the French say, pretty louzay—and the great moment approached. Farmer Josh would hold up his hand, ready to explode. Here it came: "Station WQJ, Tchuh—pause—cahgga."

And from Ashtabula, Ohio, to Muscatine, Iowa, they'd be rolling on their mail-order carpets.

Radio is now such a vital part of every-day life, it is hard to realize in how short a time it has sprung up. It is hard to believe that only twelve years ago nobody had yet heard of a theme song, that the word mike was just an Irishman's name, that such now familiar locutions as entertainment "hours," being "on the air," sustaining programs, the radio audience, networks, hookups, and kilocycles were still in the future. No orchestra, except the symphonies, yet had a national reputation, no crooner yet competed with the movie idols for the fan letters of lovesick janes. Great singers, great musicians, great actors of the speaking stage were only names to the masses. It was a national fashion to despise good music or intellectual fare of any kind. Only a dozen years ago! Quite a hop from that to the spectacle of a popular cigarette broadcasting grand opera in order to reach an audience wide enough for its advertising message. And they say radio doesn't educate! It would have taken all the schools, pulpits, lecture platforms, newspapers, magazines, and the movies themselves half a century to raise public taste as much as radio has improved it in ten years.

If you want to measure that progress, remember back to

the early 1920's, when transmission blooped and howled, and reception, to call it that, was a hobby with a handful of the mechanically minded. Anything that made a noise went for broadcasting. Amateurs yelled songs into the mikes, parlor entertainers that now couldn't make the grade of a Fred Allen Amateur Night pulled gags that must have been good, for they had certainly stood the test of time. The air was Hickville on Saturday night, and that goes for the so-called big-time stations of New York, too.

Think back about some of this early Bedlam, such low-down vaudeville as that committed by the "Blaa Club," for example, or the "Red Onion Club," or the "Cuckoo Club" (not to be confused with the later "Cuckoo Hour" conducted by Raymond Knight). If you were an early radio listener, you must have picked up one or another of those ethereal mis-demeanors. Compare it with the suave entertainment nurtured last Christmas afternoon by Alexander Woollcott over the Columbia System—the urbane wit of the master of ceremonies himself, his polished introductions, his graceful method of "throwing" the program to other stations, and the talent he presented—Beatrice Lillie, Lionel Barrymore, De Wolf Hopper and numerous lesser artists. You couldn't buy entertainment like that on Broadway, if only because there isn't a hall in New York big enough to seat the audience it would take just to pay the cast. Yet, if you had even a ten-dollar midget set in your home, it was yours free—three hours of sheer enchantment.

That *matinée* registered tops in radio amusement, but on that same day news broadcasting had also set a new high in the Empire Christmas Party staged by the British Broadcasting Company and sent to the United States by short-wave. This, if it were nothing else, was a thrilling dramatization of

the boast that the sun never sets on the British Empire. The New Zealand sheep herder laughed into the mike that, while he was willing to celebrate Christmas with the Empire's party, it was really December 26th with him. In the hill country of India a British bugler was just playing taps. Mid-afternoon traffic was humming through the new vehicular tunnel under Morsey at Liverpool, a Christmas morning ice carnival was in progress in Toronto, and at Vancouver the announcer in the short-wave station above the city spoke of the lights outlining the bay as the more eager children were getting up to see what Santa Claus had brought them.

Within a space of ninety minutes the radio brought us the pageant of English home and colonial life. A New South Wales fisherman paused from drawing his net, and above the noise of the surf spoke his Christmas philosophy. A tender on the new bridge across Sydney harbor collected tolls from automobiles. Kaffirs employed in a gold mine of the Rand chanted a savage rhythm. Planters in Africa, Asia, Central and South America told of their lives. Lonely islanders off the coast of Scotland joined the party. London bells chimed, a parish choir sang in an English village church. Winter exchanged oral greetings with summer, the Tropics with the Poles, as radio shrank the climes and dominions of the British Empire to the dimensions of a shepherd kingdom at history's dawn, when the ruler sat on the council rock and addressed all his subjects at once.

And at the end of this cosmic council of good-will the King spoke to his people, too—spoke in a kindly, thoughtful voice but one full of majesty. How many listened to him—one hundred million, two hundred million—who knows? The whole British Empire and much of the United States, at least. Sitting in his quiet study with only a microphone in front of him,

without irreverence I think that His Majesty King George V must have shared some of the feeling of God.

From the Blaa Club to the Town Crier, from studio readings of ticker-tape bulletins into the mike to the B.B.C.'s Christmas broadcast—and there are kids not yet in high school whose lives have spanned the whole evolution! The drama and excitement of that swift development I am going to try to impart in the story that follows, together with something about my own part in it. Or maybe vice versa. Anyhow, let's get on with it. O.K., Husing, take it away.

And so, after a musical curtain, we go back to a day in late November, 1901, when a little child was born in a room above a quiet corner saloon in the Bronx. Old Man Husing—bless him! he'll be reading this—was of Danish blood and former German nationality, the mother of Austrian descent. The momentarily proud parents named their new son Edward B., little recking that, condensed to Ted, it would some day be a swell radio tag. But there weren't even airplanes then.

Husing, Sr., was a club steward, in which profession he picked up many a tip, both monetary and financial. The former he banked, the latter he stored up in his memory, where some day they were to serve him in good, as an old saying puts it, stead. Club-stewarding was also migratory; and so there are boyhood memories of living in Johnstown, N. Y., in Gloverstown, N. Y., and on Morningside Heights when the old man became steward of the Catholic Club at Columbia University. Here young Ted first became interested in sports, hanging around the gyms and playing fields and becoming mascot for the varsity baseball team, the basketball team, and (in 1915, when Columbia resumed football after a ten-year vacation) of the varsity eleven. Hence nowadays, when Ed

Kennedy, Andy Coakley, Harry Fisher and Carl Merner, the swimming, baseball, basketball and track coaches at Columbia respectively, listen in, perhaps, to a Husing broadcast they point with pride or possibly irritation to their former water boy.

No use holding out on you—in spite of these genteel contacts young Husing turned out to be a hellion. The old man whaled the everlasting bejeezus out of him, his mother died a thousand deaths, but it did no good. An early ambition to become a technical engineer (with his father all set to put him through college) died before a new interest. Men were fighting in Europe. Stuyvesant High School established a training unit—one of the few high schools in America that did—and, coming up as a freshman, Husing went military, thinking and dreaming only of heroic command. Unfortunately, he couldn't take it; and after a few months Stuyvesant High gave him the air for insubordination.

It was no better at Commerce High, to which he transferred. At both Stuyvesant and Commerce he made the squads of various teams, for he was getting to be a strapping big boy, only to be thrown off for bad deportment. Commerce finally decided it could raise its scholastic standing by getting rid of Husing, and, so far as schooling was concerned, our subject decided to call it a day.

Then followed a period on the bum, as it is called, but always with a certain amount of luck. That is, young Edward B. might ride on freights and the blind baggage, but he never panhandled his meals and always had the price of a room in the Railroad House so as to keep out of the hobos' jungles. The experience included shilling for a street carnival and working in Kansas and Iowa wheatfields. He liked to travel, he discovered.

This country got into the war, and under the name of Hastings, and by the use of a phoney birth certificate, Husing enlisted in the Regular Army at Governor's Island. Assigned to the Intelligence, with duties taking him to Boston, Philadelphia, Wilmington, Washington, even to Charleston. More travel. After the Armistice and his discharge, he met a girl and, in twenty minutes, asked her to marry him. She looked pityingly at the 18-year-old lad.

"How are you going to support a wife?" she asked.

That hadn't occurred to him. Under her encouragement he tried out several jobs, getting fired from all of them. Finally he answered an ad calling for young married men to be furniture salesmen. He told them he was married. He was taken on and stuck as a dealers' representative in a wholesale house. After a year or so, he'd saved enough money, and he and the girl were married. An officer of the furniture house happened to read the publication of the license and fired Husing for untruthfulness. That was his wedding present.

Meanwhile an economic change had come to the Husing family. A kitchen boiler exploded and badly burned and mutilated Dad Husing's face. Always sensitive to appearances, he went into hiding and submitted himself to the new plastic surgery, coming out of the operations nearly as good as new. In that period of idleness he drew from his memory of real-estate tips given him by propertied men of New York and decided to become a realtor himself. He located on Tenth Avenue at 69th Street. That was eighteen years ago, and he's still there in Hell's Kitchen. The corner is now the old Husing Homestead.

These biographical details out of the way, I come to the main story and the first person simultaneously. I was twenty-one years old and married, out of work, and a baby was com-

ing. For about a year I shuttled around in New York trying to place myself. One day I met an old Stuyvesant High pal, Ernest W. Rovere, who'd gone on to college—Harvard, I believe—while I was bumming around the country and selling bedsteads and parlor suites. He told me he had a swell job—radio announcer—and explained to me all about it, including what a radio announcer was.

“How'd you get it?” I asked him.

“An ad in the *Times*,” he told me. “They wanted a college man, cultured, expert in music, and all that. I had the qualifications—or said so.”

While there wasn't anything in this for me—I hadn't been to college, had I?—I was interested. As a Boy Scout I'd fussed some with wireless myself—worked spark sets in the homes of other Scouts and learned the Morse and International codes. But right at that time there was a greater excitement than the embryo radio. The Florida real-estate boom was starting. Dad was beginning to have more confidence in me. That was quite a demonstration of the sobriety I'd given in the furniture house. So he agreed to stake me to a fling at the Florida racket. In St. Petersburg I formed a partnership with a young Texan, we took options, and in a few months were rich—on paper.

It looked as if I'd get the wife and child down soon, when a telegram came for me—father very sick, come at once. Then and there I seemed to know that Florida real estate was not for me. I sold out to my partner at a ruinous figure, crammed the cash into my pockets, and ran for the train. In Washington next morning there was an hour's stop. I walked into the station, bought a *Times*, and sat down to read it—the Want ads, of course. All of a sudden my eyes popped. Under HELP WANTED—MALE I found this:

RADIO ANNOUNCER.—Must be young, married, conscientious, social by nature, college graduate, have knowledge of the terminology of music and ability to say the right thing at the right time. Box X611.

Remembering how Erny Rovere had grabbed off a job by answering a similar ad, I walked to the telegraph counter and sent Box X611 a eulogy of myself, copying from memory what Erny had replied. I mentioned my cultured background, pinned a B.S. from Harvard on myself—if Harvard had known that on a November day seven years later!—and dilated on my passion for concertos and operas. I signed it E. B. Husing and gave my address on Tent' Avnoo.

If they didn't actually ask to see the sheepskin, I felt I might possibly get away with the cultural part of it. Maybe I had grown up on the sidewalks of New York, but I wasn't exactly a dese-dose guy. Association with small-town boys upstate, and with the sons of Columbia professors, had given me an early chance to hear the correct lingo, so even when riding the bumpers I spoke the King's English as well as I could, and maybe better than some college men. Traveling around hadn't hurt me any, either I imagine even the way I traveled. I'd kept my eyes open.

Another thing I should mention—as a kid I was nuts about books. I spent all my pennies for books, and some places where we lived in New York I had the only lending library on the block. That's funny to me now, for today I wouldn't give you a dime a dozen for books. I never read them. I don't have time. It's as much as I can do to keep up with the sport pages. My apartment looks like the home of the original guy in the Christmas story who already had a book. No, wait—I've got a book, one book which I consult habitually. It's a heavy



tome, always open on a revolving stand—Webster's Unabridged.

When I got home that afternoon, two pieces of good news awaited me. Dad had passed the crisis and was getting well, and there was a message for me to report to the Radio Corporation of America, Stations WJY and WJZ, Æolian Building, 42nd Street, next morning. A horrible thought struck me—those station letters sounded familiar. Was that where Erny Rovere worked? I'd given a phoney endorsement of myself—but Erny wouldn't split on a pal. Not good old Erny. I barged in next morning anyhow, and found it was not only Erny's studio but that I was one of about a hundred bright young men competing for Erny's own job.

Always with an ear to the ground listening for progress, Ernest Rovere had been hearing rumors of the development of talking pictures at Hollywood. There didn't seem to be much future in radio. R.C.A. kept its two stations going largely for the benefit of the salesroom on the street floor. Sets had to give out noises, if they were going to sell, and you had to give the customers something to hear after they'd carried their open-face, tin-horn models home. But when the market was saturated with radio sets, what then? Erny Rovere answered by resigning as an announcer and taking a job in Hollywood, where, I believe, he has done very well.

I needn't have worried about Erny's discretion. There were too many applicants cluttering up the studios for him to bother much about me. Followed a week of auditions in which our numbers were thinned down, until finally there were just six of us left. It began to dawn on me that in claiming musical knowledge I had taken a large bite. It was this musical phase that was knocking off most of them, and I shuddered to think what would happen when it came my

turn. The company made a big point of musical pronunciations—and rightly, for music was the principal thing broadcast. But extemporizing was equally important. There were no program departments then. The studio picked up entertainment as best it could—always free entertainment, of course—and announcers, company officials, and anybody enlisted talent. Sometimes the volunteer artists wouldn't show up, and then the announcer had to fill in the time somehow until the next program was due.

Just in time I got a break. After the war General Harbord had come in as head of R.C.A., and he had loaded the broadcasting end with military men. The assistant studio manager was a West Point graduate. He took a fancy to me, especially after he learned I had served in the Regular Army. As my ordeal approached, I went to him and made a clean breast of it. He briefly told me how to pronounce the Italian *allegro-non-groppos*, etc., and wrote out for me a phonetic list of composers' names—Gounod equals "Goo-no," Chopin equals "Show-pan," Dvorak equal "Dvore-zhak"—like that. I retired to a corner with it and passed the musical audition, though not exactly with flying colors. I was good on the German names, however, having spoken that language from birth.

Next came extemporization. The studio judges took me last of all, but I was ready for them. The day before there had been a bad airplane crash out West, and I had primed myself with every word printed about it in the New York papers. I sat down at a microphone, alone in the studio while the committee watched and listened from the control room, and began to talk. Long before that audition was over I knew I had at least one gift to bring to radio—the gift of gab. The other candidates they had cut off after ten or fifteen minutes. They let me keep going. My watch showed twenty minutes, twenty-

five. Husing was getting groggy. Thirty, and I was squeezing from my brain the last scraps of information about airplanes and flying I had ever heard, or even imagined. Thirty-five, and I took the count. I looked up to see how my stuff had gone over. The control room was empty. My oration had chased out even the judges, and I had been talking to a blank wall.

Disheartened and humiliated—somebody might at least have waited to tell me I was putrid—I found my panama and slunk home. I had scarcely reached there when I had a phone call. Despair changed to rejoicing. Nobody had walked out on me; the chiefs were simply in a huddle in another room electing me to the post. Extemporization did it. But there was still a formality—I had to be approved by the great David Sarnoff, then as now the guiding spirit of radio and the man to whom the Government had turned in its first attempts to control the growing anarchy of the air.

Out I rushed and bought me a hand-me-down dinner suit—my first. From the very beginning radio took itself solemnly. Long before visitors were admitted to broadcasts, announcers and most performers wore formal attire. That night, feeling handsome as the devil in my new elegance, I visited WJZ. The great Sarnoff took a look at me and nodded. The job was mine—at forty-five bucks a week. Date: September 13, 1924.

And that, toots, is how radio announcers used to be born.



TWO: PIONEER STUFF



## CHAPTER II

### PIONEER STUFF

MEANWHILE, though broadcast entertainment was still fuddled, a lot of water had already run under the radio mill. Actually, broadcasting had reached its fifteenth anniversary in 1924, though nobody remembered it. We all assumed we had something brand-new—something that had been developed since the War, and really in the three years after 1921. The truth is that when most of us fresh kids who had been attracted to the new toy were still in high school, some wise old heads were peering farther into the radio future than we were able to see in the mid-20's.

Civilization, content with its new horseless carriage, stirred and stretched one afternoon in the venerable year 1909. On the bare stage of the Metropolitan Opera House that day, and in the presence of only a handful of electricians, watchmen and charwoman, Enrico Caruso stood up before a funny paper cone attached to a musician's tripod and warbled an aria.

The cone, with a vibrating diaphragm in its apex, was hooked to a telephone wire connected through to a laboratory on the Harlem River, in which sat a black-haired, black-mustached young scientist named Lee W. DeForest. He took the phoned music from the first remote-control wire in history and hurled it into space with his spark-transmission set, and two hundred wireless operators on as many ships at sea reported

afterwards that they had heard at least a few of Caruso's notes through their earphones.

It was the first broadcast, the first recorded event leading to the radio we know. Civilization took a long stride forward that day. Dr. DeForest's curious laboratory stunt, which attracted less attention than the news of the great liner *Titanic* then building on the Clyde, was to affect the world more profoundly than the open-sided autos banging occasionally through the startled streets, more than the *Titanic* and its successors, more even than that coming war in Europe, then only five years away.

Twenty years later, singers unworthy to black Caruso's shoes were snootily scorning to cheapen their art by performing before the mike. The fact remains that the first broadcaster of all time was the greatest tenor of all time. It says something for Caruso's character and brain that DeForest could persuade him to lend his golden voice to the scientific experiment.

During the next five years two men—DeForest in America, and the great Guglielmo Marconi in Italy—were experimenting in the wireless transmission of sound. By 1916 Marconi could stand on one Italian hillside and hurl his voice to a distant hill with complete fidelity and regularity. The war was a shot of strychnine to invention. The vacuum tube appeared. Some laboratory man discovered that if a live tube were placed close to a phone or telegraph wire, it could take off the messages by induction; and so its first practical use was to serve war as a mechanical spy.

It was of paramount importance that commanders of air squadrons be able to communicate with their pilots at all times in flight, preferably by the spoken word. The scientists responded to the spur of war. The tube was taken up, light transmitting and receiving sets devised, and by the end of the

war radio telephony—and that's radio—was an established fact.

Then, not long after the Armistice was signed, a miracle occurred. Nobody, to speak generally, yet foresaw radio as an instrument of civilization, beyond its obvious and already ancient use as a safeguard for ships at sea. Even the masters of radio, then the directors of the great electrical manufacturing companies, had not yet envisaged commercial public radio entertainment. Not much importance was yet attached to wave lengths, and nobody had heard of a wave band.

But some unknown and unsung genius, who rates a place in the same niche with the guy who deciphered the Rosetta Stone, saw the whole future clearly. Mentally he had a picture of humanity reaching eagerly for this new blessing, stations springing up everywhere to meet the demand and appropriating air space, first come first served, with a resulting chaos that might disgust the public at the start and delay for years the development of something that could quickly become one of the major industries of the earth.

This clairvoyant genius went to Washington and convinced interested officials of the validity of his vision. All modern American industrial evolution—quantity production and the Machine Age—was based on the ability of sellers to reach large masses of consumers with advertising. Radio was the most beautiful device science had yet evolved to reach all the public—and at an infinitesimal cost. It could make even the reader audiences of the popular magazines look like ward caucuses. No program had ever been broadcast then, there was not even such a thing as a home radio receiving set, except in the work-rooms of an amateur wireless experimenter here and there; but this scientist, whoever he was, advised the Government to grab the air space while there was time.



Legislation was promptly passed appropriating the ether above the United States into the public domain. Its use to support radio emanations sent out by private individuals was to be a privilege accorded only by revocable license. Having the licensing power, the Government could allot wave lengths and control their use. The Department of Commerce was commissioned to enforce the law. Presently the United States was sitting in world conferences demanding certain wave bands exclusively. And there was still as yet no broadcasting nor home reception.

Perhaps I am going too far in assuming that any one individual could have deduced such a comprehensive view of the future. The vision might have emerged from a meeting of master minds—such pioneer radio engineers as Carl Dreher, Pierre Boucheron, and O. B. Hanson, with perhaps an under-secretary of the Department of Commerce to supply the political implications. At any rate, before broadcasting ever began a chart appeared, showing how the future broadcasting licenses should be apportioned. It prevails today, that chart. Once or twice during the feverish expansion of commercial broadcasting we were near chaos, but the system kept control, being basically sound. It is the Magna Charta of radio.

It seemed simpler for the Government to deal with a single head in the management of wave lengths, and when Herbert Hoover became Secretary of Commerce under President Harding he promoted the formation of the Radio Corporation of America. The intermediary between Government and Capital was David Sarnoff, and to him Secretary Hoover granted a monopoly of all radio wave lengths. So far as I know, that monopoly has never been revoked. I have a hunch that if Mr. Sarnoff wanted to, he could knock off the air every station

that competes with his National Broadcasting Company. I'm going to ask him some day.

But by this time broadcasting had made a beginning. The Westinghouse station in Pittsburgh, KDKA, has the reputation of being the first radio program station in the United States. It was the first to put on a daily broadcasting schedule, but the station on Medford Hill, near Boston, was the first to broadcast program material, though its operation was not regular. Other stations soon opened—WJZ, broadcasting on 450 meters, WJY, on 405 meters, WEAJ, WBZ of Springfield, Mass., KYW of Chicago, and KFKH of Hastings, Neb. These, with KDKA and the Medford Hill station, were the pioneers.

In only one respect were these early dreamers in science at fault in their deductions. They assumed that increase in a station's power meant a corresponding increase in its broadcasting distance, and therefore that no two stations on earth, no matter how widely separated, should be allotted the same wave length. They had only to increase their sending forces, it was assumed, to meet and create a stratum of howling dissonance.

What they did not understand then was that any station's emanations tended to crowd back those of another, so that when stations were dotted across the continent their sending zones packed in together like cells in a honeycomb. Another technical phenomenon not at first well understood was that all stations' night-fading curtains surround the sending antennæ at the same distance, regardless of the station's power. Increasing the power does not widen the guaranteed service area one mile.

But power remained the goal of engineers until the end of the 1920's. One early visionary, Harry Sadenwater, a General Electric engineer, was fighting for a 500,000-watt station as early as 1925—at a time when even a 5,000-watter was a gasp.

The mania for high power abruptly wore itself out, but not before a 500,000-watt station, WLW, had been built at Cincinnati. Most of the twenty-four hours its great strength serves it no better than would 50,000 watts; but often, late at night when interference dies down, you can bring it in booming on the Atlantic seaboard.

A curious condition existing in the vicinity of WLW vividly illustrates what physical strength there is in radio emanation. The electric power company that once operated in the territory has lost its customers. All the farmers within ten miles of the radio towers have thrown out their electric meters and now light their houses with induction current taken gratis from the ether by their radio aerials.

It makes a person wonder what the effect of less powerful waves are upon us physically. Every instant of the twenty-four hours our bodies are permeated through and through by a score of radio vibrations of different lengths. Will they eventually affect health or physical stature? Will they change the habits of vegetation, or even alter the climate? Those are questions for the future to answer.

Well, I'd got in, even though largely on false pretenses. Coming up that way today, I'd never have made the grade. Judging from the specifications the great broadcasting companies now demand (on paper) in an announcer, an applicant must have the qualifications of an ambassador, a college professor, a symphony conductor, a managing editor, a sales manager, and what have you. They don't quite hold to these ideals in the auditions, but it takes a brainy lad to break through, at that.

One thing I did have, apparently—a knack! Radio was right down my alley. I can see now that I was probably destined for some branch of public entertainment. When I

came into WJZ I had already learned to tap-dance almost good enough for the two-a-day. That was the first thing the p.a.'s picked up to publicize about me—my dancing. They did everything but photograph me in a leopard skin.

My first broadcast—the first time I ever spoke into a live mike—remains, of course, a vivid spot in my memory. The funny thing about it was, I didn't know I was making it. I got down to the studio early that next morning after I was hired and for most of the day sort of hung around on the outskirts. I began to wonder if they'd forgotten about me. Then in the afternoon Milton Cross, in a very kind way, led me into a cavern—which would look like a closet now—and asked me to read some market reports for him. I thought this was some sort of a test to see where I could fit in. We sat down at a table side by side—there *was* a microphone in front of each of us—and I began wading through a godawful bunch of figures. It took me twenty-five minutes to finish them.

“How's that?” I asked brightly, when the ordeal was over.

Instantly Milton raised a hand to hush me, threw a switch, and signed off the station for the afternoon. We used to sign off in the afternoon for a recess.

Then I realized that I had been speaking for a broadcast. I had been talking to New York. All of New York! I visualized the subway jams, the theater crowds, the Fifth Avenue congestion, the Sunday line-ups of cars at the ferry stations, the wilderness of Brooklyn, the suburban trains threading through the suburbs of New Jersey and Westchester—I had been speaking to all that. New York's moiling millions! Actually my voice had gone into a few radio stores and to the baker's dozen of set-owners interested in market reports.

“Come on,” said Milton Cross, “that's all till tonight.”

I tried to get up but found to my astonishment that I

couldn't. My legs refused to obey me. They had lost every bit of their strength. It took several minutes for the shake to leave them so that I could totter from the studio. Right then I developed a mike fright that has never since entirely left me.

Three names of announcers of the present-day type were already fairly well known to the public when I crashed the radio gates in 1924. Major J. Andrew White, who was to be my first model and tutor, was known for his sports broadcasts. It was he who described the Dempsey-Carpentier fight for the mike—the first news broadcast to make a stir in this country. Probably 1,000 people in all heard that broadcast, but it caused a stampede for radio parts with which to build home-made sets.

Graham McNamee was building a reputation as a news and sports announcer for the infant hookup controlled by the American Telephone & Telegraph Co.'s station, WEA. Norman Brokenshire, on WJZ's midget circuit—honest, it went as far west as Chicago!—was creating a polite sensation with his chatty come-into-my-parlor type of announcements—a new and prophetic note in radio. He did all the silk-hat events—inaugurals, swell funerals, etc.

These three were the heralds of radio entertainment as we know it now, but none of them in 1924 was as famous or as popular as any one of a wide group of local station announcers scattered over the country, who had built up personalities, or rather characters, for themselves under various whimsical tags. If you were an early BCL (slang for listener), you must have known all of them—"The Hired Hand" at Dallas, Texas, "The Little Colonel" at Atlanta, "The Bellhop" of St. Louis, "The Merry Old Chief" at Detroit, "Gloomy Gus" of Lincoln, Neb., "The Solemn Old Judge" at Nashville. The air was yet un-

crowded, and with any kind of a tube set you could bring in almost every station in the country.

All these radio "characters" were essentially parlor entertainers—amateur comedians and philosophers, neighborhood celebrities of the type the Elks call in for a big evening. They were the first to throw comedy into the bored American home. Even New York City had one of them—"N. T. G.," of Station WHN, an ex-preacher named Nils Thor Granlund, and known to his friends as Granny. He clowned, read poetry in exaggerated ham fashion, insulted performers at the mike, and started the first phoney radio feud—with Harry Richman, whom he introduced to the air. Later on, the feud became the real McCoy. Granny announced: "We are now broadcasting from the Club Richman at 115 West. Carnegie Hall adjoins us." This was one of radio's first belly-laughs, since everybody knew the Club Richman was a speakeasy. Granny was a great inspiration to me, as I used to listen to him on a tickler set. He's now producing shows for night clubs.

In 1924 came the first radio popularity poll, and the announcers' cup went to "The Solemn Old Judge" (George Hay of WSM, Nashville). Even so, the doom of all the Solemn Old Judges and Merry Old Chiefs was already in the stars. Radio was about to go past them in stride. Two developments put them out—the network and the commercial program.

It's funny now, considering their present revenues from leased wires, to remember that the phone and telegraph companies at first resisted the use of their lines by radio. Until 1922 no commercial station had ever broadcast a remote-control program—a program originating outside the studio and brought in by wire. The phone experts said it wouldn't work anyhow, and besides they couldn't tie up their service for the sake of a handful of cockeyed radio fans. WHN, in New

York, went to the mat with the phone company, wired a hotel dining room by hook or crook, and put on a demonstration. The broadcast was perfect, and the eyes of the telephone wizards opened. Here was dough to be had. They began wiring other places in New York from which entertainment could be picked up.

This was Step No. 1 toward the network. Step No. 2 originated in the brain of George McClelland in WEAF, a subsidiary then, you remember, of American Tel. & Tel. Hook two stations together by wire for the simultaneous broadcast of a single program, McClelland argued, and you could wholesale long-distance to commercial advertisers. By leased wires he linked to WEAF a station in Boston, one in Philadelphia, and one in Washington. WJZ retorted by leasing Postal Telegraph wires and joining six cities, including Pittsburgh and—hold on to your chairs—Chicago.

Familiar, easy and cheap as long-distance telephoning is now, in 1924 the average citizen used it only in some life or death emergency. Most people had never phoned beyond their city limits, few people in New York had ever talked to anybody farther away than Philadelphia. So, to sit in a Manhattan apartment and hear the voice of somebody in Chicago come clearly out of your loud-speaker—it knocked the pioneer set owners for loops.

The parlor entertainers couldn't compete with that for thrill. But it was the commercial program, which the new networks were fostering, that put them out for keeps. Advertising was a solemn thing. The commercial sponsors wanted dignity in charge of their broadcasts, the salesman's voice, somebody who could put over the advertising message. They wanted a Graham McNamee, a Norman Brokenshire, and if I may say so, some of the rest of us. Not until the top comedians of the

stage went on the air did they discover that they could also kid their advertising and still get sales results.

When I breezed in to WJZ, the rudimentary networks were functioning, and several commercials were broadcasting regularly. I remember Lucky Strike Cigarettes, Gimbel's store, the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Reading Railroad, and, I believe, the A. & P. chain stores had started their "hour." Among entertainers becoming known on the nets there was, of course, Vaughan de Leith, New York's original radio girl. In 1922, when she began her broadcasts from WDT, everybody who had a set listened in, and she is still a favorite in 1935. Jones and Hare, sponsored by a chain of candy stores, were winning popularity, as were "The Record Boys"—Al Bernard, Sammy Stept, and Frank Kamplain. Vincent Lopez was experimenting with an "identification melody"—a tag that was later to be called an "air mark" and finally (via Hollywood) "theme song."

Harry Reser and his Esquimos were coming along, as, I believe, were also Harry Horlick and the Gipsies. Other orchestras beginning their air careers were Frank Black's, Nat Shilkret's, and Gus Haenschon's. The Record Boys were the first to keep a musical background running through a program. Vincent Lopez's original identified melody was "When You Come Down to New York Town."

In the early 1920's phonograph owners bought records made by a high-brow classical musical team known as the Shannon Quartette. About the time radio was spreading into networks, this group conceived a cosmic idea. To the rendition of a popular melody they added a vocal frill—vo-do-dee-o-do. That lick lifted harmonizing right out of the barber-shop, Sweet-Adeline, college-glee-club class and made it something new. In keeping with their frolic spirit, the Shannons changed their



name to Revelers and were an instant hit on the air. The original four are no longer together, but the Revelers remain the highest-priced quartette in radio.

Against these pioneer network features flourished still an earlier type of commercial program—the sponsored road show that went from station to station donating its entertainment and in return being permitted to broadcast the advertising of its backer. Wendall Hall, still a popular radio performer, was one of the best known travelers. He was paid by a radio battery concern and broadcast from more than 500 local stations before he got on the nets. The Ray-O-Vac Twins, also sponsored by a battery maker, was another well-known traveling number. Then, too, subsidized impressarios went from city to city, organized and trained amateur shows, and put them on the local stations free, with incidental mention of the commercial sponsor. A year or so after joining WJZ I announced one of these shows in Washington. It was a mystery drama called "The Step on the Stairs." Its sponsor was a radio magazine.

At WJZ I joined a group of four announcers—Milton J. Cross, Norman Brokenshire, J. Lewis Reid and the late John B. Daniel. Tommy Cowan, New York's oldest announcer, who began his mike career in 1920, had been at WJZ but had gone over to another station. He now announces for WNYC, New York's municipal station. Milton Cross remains the dean of big-time announcers. He is a big, hearty, happy type of man, intensely sincere about everything and a swell person generally. He is specially interested in music, having been a professional singer—a light tenor. He was engaged at a time when every announcer was an entertainer in an emergency and therefore had to have some talent besides oratory. I was one of the first men taken on for announcing alone, only Graham McNamee, I think, antedating me.

John Daniel was one of the tragedies of the studios. We all think he would have been one of the outstanding radio figures of the present, had he lived. He had everything—brilliant education, a wonderful mikeside manner. He could handle gracefully any type of broadcast except sport, about which he knew little. He died suddenly of appendicitis in 1927, having made a great name for himself in three years. I learned a great deal from him. But all the boys helped me at the beginning. Every Monday we held an announcers' meeting with the station director to talk over our problems, and out of those sessions I carried much practical wisdom.





THREE: TECHNICALLY SPEAKING



## CHAPTER III

### TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

IN 1924 the newspapers were starting radio departments full of engineering diagrams. Strange four-dollar words like heterodyne and neutrodyne leaped out of their pages at innocent subway readers. From the "El" people began to observe broomsticks and clothesprops supporting wires on New York's tenement roofs—the advance saplings of a forest soon to materialize.

A gentleman named Hazeltine, and another named Flewelling, were cashing in by selling circuit diagrams to amateur set-builders. Touring motorists saw even greater evidence of what was to come, since farmers were the first class of the population to go for radio in a big way. At Shenandoah, Iowa, Henry Field started a station to broadcast crop and weather reports—"bringing," as his slogan put it, "the cracker barrel into the home." His audience liked it so well they elected him to Congress.

In the studios, the rattling, squawking paper microphone—that's right, Husing, go technical on us!—had given way to the carbon-diaphragm mike, still used in portable work. It was succeeded by the condenser mike, now the one most widely in use, though two other types—the dynamic microphone and the ribbon mike, which is a vibrating ribbon of steel—are coming into the studios. The engineering sharps say the microphone of the future will be of the inductive type.

People in 1924 were learning about A, B and C batteries. The plug-in set was not to appear for three years yet. By the end of 1924 two million commercial sets had been sold in the United States. Since 1921 you had been able to buy the R.C.A. Radiola 3, the Ware Neutrodyne, the Bremer-Tully, the Atwater-Kent and some other makes. These were all lacquered, "open-face" models, but the advertising now bragged of a big improvement—all wires had been hidden! Loud-speakers had supplanted earphones, the speaker being a magnetic diaphragm amplified by a megaphone. Western Electric had not yet brought out its revolutionary loud-speaker—a vibrating pin at the apex of a parchment cone. That loud-speaker pointed its cone toward you. The final development was to reverse the cone and put it into a stout cabinet, which acted as a sound-ing-board and greatly improved reception.

Transmission from the studios was no better than the early sets deserved. Most stations used cheap transformers, which fact lay at the root of their broadcasting imperfections. Stations then, as now, were of two types—the licensed, which used standard equipment from the factories, and the engineer-built. As the manufacturers standardized and perfected broadcasting machinery, the licensed stations increased in efficiency and have now about crowded the tailor-made jobs out of the picture.

Tuning was still an expert task, since for true correspondence you not only tuned with tubes but pointed the antenna. The word blooper came into the language, meaning the careless tuner who set up regenerative howls and blocked reception in his neighborhood. Yet in spite of roaring transmission, in spite of hick programs, in spite of the mess made by batteries and the fuzzy, whistling, crackling reception, it was still sheer magic—this self-contained apparatus with which you

could snatch free entertainment out of the air. Nobody seemed immune to its fascination. It took a lot of potential gangsters off New York's corners and bent them over home workbenches. Wealthy hams (slang for amateur station owners) spent thousands for electrical equipment, as among high and low radio fever spread.

Stations had needed identity on the air and, radio being the flower of the Machine Age, had given themselves Robot names—combinations of letters. Previous to commercial broadcasting, radio's use had been largely at sea. For quick identification, ships on the Atlantic Ocean used the letter K to begin their designations in code and those on the Pacific W. Land radio reversed this system, and took W for the Atlantic and Gulf side and K for the West. Today, every radio station along the Atlantic seaboard from Maine to Texas has the W identification initial except two—KDKA at Pittsburgh and KYW, the pioneer station recently moved to Philadelphia from Chicago.

Most station names, like WAAF and WJZ in New York, have no significance beyond mere identification, but many of the letter combinations have inner meaning. WINS, New York, for instance, is the International News Service's station. WBEN was founded by the Buffalo *Evening News*, WEEI by the Edison Electric Illuminating Co., of Boston. A Grand Rapids laundryman who started a broadcasting station named it WASH.

Sometimes the purely haphazard combinations of identity letters were later discovered by Chambers of Commerce and boosters' committees to have profound intrinsic sense. Poesy entered the drab business of real estate when Miama deduced that WIOD, the name of its station on a Biscayne Bay island, really stood for Wonderful Isle o' Dreams. It didn't take



Atlantic City long to interpret its WPG as World's Play Ground, while KTHS at Hot Springs, Ark., was master-minded into Kum To Hot Springs.

Besides their letters, many stations adopted identifying sounds of one sort or another—chimes, metronome ticks, cuckoo clocks, and so on. Some even had station theme songs, played from records during interludes. The most played song of all time—publicly played—is one that was never a hit and which many listeners have never even heard—Ted Lewis's "Good Night," a melody based on the bugle call Taps. One-third of all the broadcasting stations in America and many in foreign countries use it still with which to sign off late at night. At one time there were 300 American stations playing it.

Any song hit nowadays gets from 1,400 to 1,500 radio renditions a week. Not long ago, "No, No, A Thousand Times No" was going strong, making it (any week) No, No, One Million Four Hundred Thousand Times No; though, by the time these tidings are in print, the young lady of the ballad may be down to a couple of thousand refusals a week, so short and merry is the ride radio gives a hit. Yet for seven years Ted Lewis's "Good Night" has averaged 2,000 public performances a week, putting George Gershwin and Cole Porter back among the also-rans, not to mention Beethoven and Chopin.

Once radio caught hold of public imagination, it grew much too fast for its clothes, filling the air with chaos and the studios with confusion. The Federal Radio Commission was created, and it straightened out the one—an event which made the public more radio-conscious than anything else that occurred. Internal evolution—plus the organization of station owners and managers into the National Association of Broadcasters—took care of the other.

As I say, the first programs were hit-or-miss affairs at which the volunteer performers might show up or not. There was no such thing as a written and rehearsed continuity for a broadcast period. Everything was extemporized, and an announcer kept his eye on the clock. The growing number of set-owners demanded something better. In the studios it began to dawn that people liked music at luncheon and dinner and loved to dance in the evening, that morning was a good time to address women, and so on. This brought the program man into existence.

He lined up talent and laid out broadcasting schedules for days in advance, so that listeners would know on what they were tuning in. He insisted on written and timed continuities, and made the first beginnings with dialogue and dramatic presentations. Hence, rehearsals—calling for some sort of stage director. This need brought in still a new type of studio employee, called the production man. For a while this was O.K., but programs began to get monotonous, and no wonder. Program and production people were mostly youngsters with no experience outside of radio, and they were up against putting together as many as 112 shows a week. So the cry went up for experts, and radio turned to the theater.

Up to this time the stars of the stage and screen had lifted their eyebrows in radio's direction. Radio as yet paid little to its employees, and the first production managers from show business were small fry—assistant stage managers, assistant directors of movie theaters. But it was a start toward better entertainment. These new people brought in real actors, and the ball kept rolling until now the greatest stars clamor to get before the mike. When commercial programs got a foothold, the advertising agencies organized radio departments and wrote the continuities for their own broadcasts. Naturally,

they wanted the supervision of these shows, so they also hired production managers, usually taking them away from the studios. Today, at any important broadcast, two production men sit in the control room—one, from the agency directing and speeding up the performance, and the other, the studio man, standing by.

The first man from Broadway to make a success in radio was Samuel Rothapfel, who devised his own programs and broadcast from the Capitol Theatre an act called Roxy and His Gang. In two years he built up such a following for this entertainment that he could build a theater of his own, financing it by selling stock to his radio audience.

Programs had not gone far up this ladder I have been sketching when I joined WJZ. We had a program director, but that was about all. Announcers wrote their own continuities. Now, all that is done for us by alleged experts. Pardon, if I seem to speak bitterly. In 1924 the only man in a studio during a broadcast who drew pay was the announcer. Everybody had to be on time to the split-second—General Harbord's ex-majors and captains saw to that.

And dignity? Boy, we had more than WEAF has now in Radio City—red plush carpets everywhere and evening dress always after dinner. We might be existing mainly for the purpose of broadcasting into the radio shops, but we were a big-time station supporting a real network. We never played phonographs into *our* mikes but always gave the public genuine acts.

We kept jealous watch over WEAF, which had gone frankly commercial and was expanding its network faster than we. The mother stations in New York then announced all the stations of the hookups at identification time, and this took some fast talking as the networks grew. It used to be a treat to hear

Graham McNamee over at WEAF rattle off the letters of 22 stations in the fifteen seconds allotted to him.

As a cub announcer, I drew the least desirable work. I opened the station at 9 o'clock in the morning and closed it at 11:30 P.M. The 15-minute broadcast was yet unknown: all our programs ran one-half hour or one hour. I did all the morning programs, the luncheon and dinner music, and announced the dance bands at night. We used to "throw" the next program on cue and not on time, as it is done now. As a result, sometimes the broadcast you expected to get from the loud-speaker didn't materialize, and then you had to use your noodle and read *The Wreck of the Hesperus* or something. I often had to announce four programs in a row. Sometimes I had simultaneous programs, one on WJZ and one on WJY. You went nuts with it, but it was grand. We were all kids then and felt we were going places. Maybe it was the red plush carpet and evening clothes that gave us this sense of destiny.

We had only the two studios, but since three out of four programs came from outside, anyhow, and rehearsals were unknown, we didn't need any more. Besides the studios and a control room, there was a reception room, a powder room, and offices for our rudimentary sales and promotion departments. You could put the whole layout into any modern main studio. I must mention our colored attendant, Alvin Simmons—linguist, infallible diplomat, confidant of all the staff, and (because he saved his money) a friend in need to a cub announcer broke before payday. Genial Al went on with WJZ into the merger with WEAF and is still with the National Broadcasting Co.—up in Radio City now—a grand guy and the friend of almost everybody in big-time radio.

Keith McLeod, now also with N.B.C., was our studio manager. Like almost everybody else around the stations then, he

could also pinch-hit when some program failed us, being a pianist. His assistant was Godfrey Ludlow, a fiddler, who had charge of the mikes and studio pick-ups. On the air we always announced him as "The great Godfrey Ludlow, the eminent Australian violinist." The great Godfrey, however, was temperamental and quarreled a lot with McLeod, who finally refused to play his accompaniments. So we had to hire another pianist to complete our stand-by team. That was a blow.

Ludlow was the first studio theorist I ever met. In miking for a broadcast he made the floor into an imaginary checkerboard by hanging big letters at spaced intervals on the front wall—A B C D E, etc.—and numbers on the side walls—1 2 3 4 5. Then he called all the musicians of an orchestra by algebraic names. A piccolo player wasn't a piccolo player to the great Godfrey Ludlow, he was D<sub>9</sub>, A<sub>4</sub>, or something like that. He said he got "balance" of the instruments against the mikes by this system.

A year passed while I was picking up such impressions and experiences and getting my rudimentary training for the air. Major J. Andrew White was still doing all our sports broadcasts. He was what we called a retained announcer. His main job then was running a radio magazine, and he took our sports assignments on a contract basis. Major White's story of his epoch-making Dempsey-Carpentier broadcast—how he had to slug his way to the ringside—is one of radio's classics.

My first association with Andy White came early in October, 1925, when he broadcast the World Series baseball games. This was a studio job. We had a man at the park who sent us a play-by-play description by ticket—balls, strikes, fouls and everything. From the tape Andy vocally re-created the game for the listeners. As the only announcer of the studio who had played baseball, I was assigned to help him. After that Andy

went on to broadcast football. In the light of my later experience in that difficult business, I can only say now, God knows how.

The first real break of my career came to me a few weeks later. Two days before Thanksgiving Keith McLeod walked into the studio and waved a couple of ducats tantalizingly under my nose. They were Annie Oakleys for the Penn-Cornell game, to be played in the new Franklin Field in Philadelphia. To me this was like a red rag to a bull, for I hadn't seen a football game since I was mascotting Columbia. I begged him for a ticket, pleading that I could help Andy White with the broadcast. Finally he agreed to ask our station director, the late Charles B. Popence.

The boss called me into his office.

"So you're another one around here who thinks he can broadcast football, eh?" he remarked. "Well, that makes it unanimous."

"I've played the game—if that's anything," I said.

He thought a while and said finally: "O.K. Get in touch with Major White."

Was I tickled? Andy said he was glad to have my help, and we went over to Philly together Thanksgiving morning. At North Philadelphia, where we got off, Andy said he would take the opportunity to see some members of his family in Philadelphia—his mother and sister, I think—since I could go out to the field for him in advance and see that everything was set up for us. He told me not to worry—he'd be along.

The upper deck of the grandstand at Franklin Field was not yet finished. I found WJZ's station up in a monkey tower used for hoisting concrete. It was raining, and our only shelter was a tarpaulin thrown over the scantlings of the scaffold. This tent constantly bellied down with the weight of water,

and every now and then I had to poke up my fist and empty the lake.

I tried out everything with the control man and found it O.K. The crowds were growing thick, the varsity bands were playing and cheer leaders doing their stuff—but still no Andy. As the seconds ticked off, I began to get nervous. Our signal came: "You're on the air," and there I was on the live end of a big hookup. At least it seemed big then. Washington was plugged in. So was Boston, Schenectady, Pittsburgh, and Canton, N. Y., seat of Owen D. Young's alma mater, St. Lawrence College. But we didn't even have a station in Philadelphia, where the game was being played.

There was nothing to do but make a start. I began giving the color—the crowd, the weather, the music, the cheers. I couldn't say anything about the teams, because I didn't know anything about them. Then, just in time, the major arrived, and I introduced him to the listeners. He broadcast that game with no aid other than his eyesight and what information I could scribble on paper and hold up for him to read. In return, he allowed me to comment on the game between quarters.

When we were packing up our stuff that evening Andy said: "I think I'll use you in football next year, kid. You've got something."

Right then I began to figure out a system for the quick and infallible identification of plays and players in football—work that resulted eventually in my own private electric annunciator which I now use with Les Quaily, my assistant, and about which I will have more to say later. And from that day to this I have never ceased to prepare a whole year in advance for each season's football broadcasts.

In Philadelphia that Thanksgiving Day I discovered that for

an announcer there was more to radio than enunciating genteel phrases in a plush studio. Radio could be a thrilling adventure. The outside announcer was about to join the army of soldiers of fortune who see history made before their eyes, into which he had been preceded by the newspaper and magazine correspondents, the news photographers, and the news-reel men.







FOUR: DOWN AMONG THE SOLONS



## CHAPTER IV

### DOWN AMONG THE SOLONS

IT USED TO BE Radio Corporation's practice to send its WJZ announcers in rotation to its Station WRC in Washington for a period of training. Training was the right word for it. WRC operated with a compactness—meaning its relative number of originating programs—that made it tough for the local announcer, who had to do everything single-handed. From morning till late at night there was scarcely an outside broadcast to give a guy a chance to breathe.

My turn came early in 1926. Before the bellhop had parked my bag I found out what Washington was to be like. I walked right into a hotel broadcast. From that moment until I'd served my stretch I hardly saw my wife and baby, whom presently I brought down from New York and ensconced in a modest apartment up on 14th Street, near the studio.

Washington, then as now, was big stuff on the air. People sat up for Washington, and the bosses of radio treated it with due reverence. The chief responsibility for an announcer was, of course, the President, who might at any time decide to make a public utterance. You had to be ready for anything. On April 6, 1926, I introduced President Coolidge over the mike twice in one day. In the morning he spoke at the meeting of the Pan-American Union. In the afternoon he laid the cornerstone of the National Press Club building. This radio feat drew headlines all over the United States—the first national publicity I had yet received.

Congressional speeches, diplomats' speeches, political speeches, important conventions like the D. A. R., Red Cross, and U. S. Chamber of Commerce—all were grist for the WRC broadcasting mill. In Washington were three fine Government bands which broadcast programs regularly both locally and on our chain—the Marine Band, of which Captain Branson was bandmaster, the U. S. Army Band, Captain Stannard, bandmaster, and the Navy Band, directed by Lieutenant Benter. I had to write the continuities for all these broadcasts.

It was a big change from announcing jazz in Broadway's hot spots to introducing senators and cabinet members to the air in the national capital, but it was great training. Every moment I could snatch away from the studio I had to spend in the Congressional and Public Libraries reading and studying. Even the band concerts required research. I had to know *something* about the music.

The average radio listener may not realize that even the simplest announcement that comes over the air requires thorough research in the subject which it touches. Nowadays this is done for the studio man by others, but it is done just the same. The outside announcer, who may have to stall and extemporize, must still do his own research work. Without a background of understanding he may pull some boner on the mike that will make him a laughingstock and put him in Dutch with the studio.

As a result of handling alone a spread of broadcasts ranging from a hotel dance program to a senatorial debate on the World Court, and having to be familiar with all of it, I honestly believe I packed into those few months in Washington the equivalent of a college education in mental discipline. This much is true: every announcer who "did" Washington in

those days and came back to WJZ—and came back—has since made good on the big time.

Our leading regular feature from Washington on the network then was the regular news analysis by Frederick William Wile. Mr. Wile, Notre Dame alumnus and veteran international correspondent, was the pioneer news commentator of radio. He built up an immense following which he holds today. Like myself, he later left the N.B.C. chains and came over to the Columbia Broadcasting System. He and H. V. Kaltenborn now constitute Columbia's brain trust in its approach to public affairs. I consider Kaltenborn the finest mind now on the air regularly anywhere.

Having consecutive broadcasts to announce, often from widely scattered spots, made the lone announcer for WRC cut some sharp corners. It was our custom to broadcast a morning organ recital every day from 11 A.M. to noon in the Homer L. Kitts studio on G Street. I didn't attempt to dictate the programs to the organists, except to insist that the final piece be some 10-minute number, like Rossini's *William Tell Overture*. I'd announce this selection, then grab hat and coat and scam like hell for the Washington Hotel on 16th Street, six or eight blocks away.

Arriving there, I'd tune in on the recital and listen for the "feed-back line"—an agreed-upon cue, usually a little unnoticed *poop-poop* in the bass, to tell me that the *Overture* was through. I'd hear the Kitts operator close the phones, my operator opened his mikes, and then, controlling my gasps and in my best Milton Cross manner, I'd say: "And this, ladies and gentlemen, concludes a recital of organ music you have been hearing," etc., etc. A pause, and then, in a slightly different voice: "Station WRC, Washington."

At this point I'd wave my finger at Irv Boernstein, leader

of the Hotel Washington orchestra, who'd pick up his fiddle and play a theme melody. Then, in my own Ted Husing voice I'd announce: "And now we are in the Washington Hotel in the balcony overlooking the main dining room about to hear Irving Boernstein and his Washington Hotel concert music."

It was a great life. One day Vice President Dawes pressed a key and opened an Elks' carnival in Honolulu, the ceremony being broadcast. Then the V. P. and yours truly were photographed together before the mike, and the picture was radioed to Hawaii for reproduction in the Honolulu papers. More headlines.

A very funny broadcasting break occurred during the time I was in Washington. Breaks made over the air are a fascinating subject, both in the studios and out. They do not happen as often as most people seem to think—it is now practically impossible for them to happen, unless perpetrated deliberately—but they have occurred, and still do. Some are merely boners—words spoken deliberately but interpreted differently from what the broadcaster intended. For instance, not long ago a famous comedian sprung over the mike some sort of a gag about Clara Bow sleeping crossways in bed. To you or me that might seem harmless, but it drew a lot of protest from the prurient-minded. The comedian, it seems, wasn't supposed to know how Clara Bow lies in bed. He took a vacation from broadcasting for several weeks after that, waiting for the anger to die down.

About once a week, on the average, I meet some guy who asks me if I heard the break Uncle Don made over the air the other night. Uncle Don, it is almost needless to explain, runs a bedtime hour for kids every evening over WOR in New York.

"No," I always answer. "Did you?"

"Did I? I laughed my head off." And then he goes on to tell me how, when Uncle Don was through telling the kiddies where their birthday presents were hidden, and whose yeast to eat, and supposed himself off the air, he remarked for the radio world to hear: "There, that ought to hold the little bastards for another day."

"Listen, big boy," I reply. "I don't want to call you a liar or anything, but you're about the zillianth person who's told me that tale during the past five or six years. Uncle Don must sign off with the line."

Of course, though the *New Yorker* printed the story, without names, as true, it never happened. But something like it did happen in Philadelphia in 1921, back in radio's antediluvian days. Most people must know, or guess, that there are at least two microphones in every broadcasting studio—one for the announcer and the other, always called the concert mike, for the artist. In the old days the announcer sat at a table on which was a box housing called a three-way switch. If the lever were down, it cut off the concert mike and threw in the announcer's. If up, the concert mike was live and the announcer's dead. Then there was a neutral middle position that killed both mikes and silenced the studio.

At the Philadelphia station in those early times was a guy who did an evening kiddie stunt under the name of Uncle Whip—not to be confused with an Uncle Whip character created afterwards by the late Chris Graham. The Philadelphia Uncle Whip was one of radio's pioneer bedtime raconteurs, and he was an embittered man. Anybody would be—or ought to be—broadcasting night after night for little Johnnie to eat his spinach and little Betty not to bite her nails. There came an evening when Uncle Whip reached the breaking



point. He was broadcasting that day from the announcer's table. At last he reached the blessed line: "Now, good night, children. Don't forget to eat your Malted Mush, and be sure to tune in on Uncle Whip again tomorrow at this same hour." With that he viciously turned off his mike—turned it off so hard that the switch crossed neutral and brought in the concert mike.

Muttering to himself, Uncle Whip gathered up his continuity sheets and started for the door. As he passed the live concert mike, the full crushing burden of his woes descended upon him.

"I'm a bastard," he informed the world in general, "if this isn't one hell of a job for a he-man."

He said this with his back to the mike, and the broadcast was dim, but it went out just the same. Considering this, and the small number of receiving sets then, it is not likely more than a couple of hundred listeners heard it at all. Yet it registered and has persisted in various versions to this day as radio's classic bad-break story.

It was one of those old-fashioned three-way switches, too, that caused the tragedy in Washington I mentioned a while back. This occurred during a broadcast of Sam Korman's Orchestra, then playing dinner music at the New Willard Hotel. At the control table sat the operator—the electrician who controls tone volume in a broadcast—and a young announcer. Not me, honest—a guy from a rival studio. During the intervals between song announcements the two young men were holding an earnest discussion. The subject, curiously enough, was girls.

Evidently it was a sort of debate, the announcer being full of praises for the blonde genus of janes, the operator equally firm for brunettes. The orchestra reached the end of a number,

the argument suspended for a moment, the announcer switched in his mike and announced the impending rendition of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Chanson d'Hindou*. Then he switched off again and took up the cudgels for the platinum dolls.

But alas! he didn't make a good connection for the concert microphone. Both mikes remained open. The announcer, to carry his point, then went into an involved story about a blonde girl-friend of his, the crux, dénouement, and clincher of which was that the dame in question had scrubbed his back for him one day in the bathtub. All the while, as a background, the violins were sobbing through the Song of India. Somewhat daunted by this case history, the operator replied stoutly with a story of his own about a brunette, but the radio audience was never to hear the conclusion of this episode. The *Chanson d'Hindou* came to an end, the announcer introduced another number, and thereafter kept his mike properly closed.

The concert ended with both protagonists completely unaware that their remarks had been shocking a large part of the population of Washington and northern Virginia. Nor did any of the station executives then know it. Ordinarily, the break couldn't have occurred. At the station, listening to the broadcast, sat an engineer behind a switch that could cut off any program in an emergency. But you can't chain an engineer to his chair. This one had gone to see a man about a dog, leaving, during the awful interval, as the studios say, "dead air." When he returned, the broadcast was going along regularly, and all seemed well.

Next morning a mail truck backed up to the studio and began unloading sacks of penned indignation. The two culprits went into a back-stairs huddle and then lied like gentlemen, denying they'd ever made any such remarks and claiming that it must have been an inducted telephone conversation

which by some mischance had jumped to the remote-control wire. That became the studio's story, too, and it stuck to it.

Among the letters received was one from an eminent member of the United States Senate. This communication was critical only in the better sense—constructive, you know. After saying that it was the most interesting broadcast he had ever heard, the Senator went on to laud the station for its originality and daring. Evidently radio was getting out of its swaddling clothes and setting its teeth into real stuff. And, particularly, he wanted to compliment the station on its showmanship. The obligatto of Rimsky-Korsakov music added just that Belasco touch which made the thing perfect.

"By the way," the Senator asked, in conclusion, "didn't either of the performers ever know a redhead?"

The gentleman who wrote that letter is now a member of President Roosevelt's cabinet.

Sports broadcasting has been more prolific in breaks than any other type. There is so much excitement, so much happening, and the announcer has to speak so rapidly, he has no time to choose his words. The most notorious boner in radio history was pulled by me in the Harvard Stadium one autumn afternoon in 1931—the incident which these memoirs will reach in due course. But Gustavus T. Kirby, former president of the A.A.U., former chairman of the Olympic Committee, once got off a horrible one while broadcasting an indoor athletic meet in Madison Square Garden. Ralph Metcalfe, the negro sprinter of Marquette College and the fastest short-distance man the world had yet known, was competing in a dash. As he came down to the tape, Mr. Kirby yelled admiringly into the mike: "That big nigger is certainly plowing up the boards." A ferocious protest followed, two of every three letters coming from white people.

The first football broadcast ever made—perhaps it was the first news broadcast of any kind—wound up in shocking fashion. In 1921 or 1922 KDKA, at Pittsburgh, attempted the broadcast of a local game—Pitt against somebody or other. For an announcer, the station secured the services of a Pitt sophomore, who carried a mike up and down the sideline, with a trailing wire that constantly got tangled up with the feet of the linemen. The lad was a loyal follower of the big Pitt eleven—so much so that he had hocked his coonskin coat and wagered \$100 on the varsity to win.

For much of the game, his bet didn't look so good. In fact, by virtue of having missed an important kick, Pitt came into the final quarter trailing by a point. Then the team snapped together and began a long, stubbornly contested drive down the field. First down followed first down as the quarter wore away. Two minutes left to play, one minute, half a minute, and the ball was in the shadow of the enemy's goalposts. As the kid broadcasting saw a hundred bucks floating in his direction, he became delirious with partisanship. Particularly was he fulsome in his applause for Hoozis, Pitt's all-American back. The two dozen listeners of that day heard the end of the broadcast come through their earphones about as follows:

"Thirty seconds left to play, ladies and gentlemen, but it's enough. Only inches to go. One buck by Big Jack Hoozis, and it'll be all over. Old Jack Hoozis will be the hero on Pitt campus tonight, all right. Time in—they're coming out of the huddle—they're lining up—double wing-back formation, and Hoozis will take it. Signal—here comes the play—Hoozis has his arms out for it—the ball's passed—and . . . O-o-oh! the goddám bonehead fumbled it!"

The story goes that at this point the kid, suddenly realizing the enormity of his offense, dropped the mike and beat it for

an exit. To this day he has never been seen again by any KDKA official.

Something of the same sort occurred a couple of years ago during a broadcast of Garden fights for an independent New York station. The broadcaster was a local sports writer who privately owned a piece of one of the preliminary battlers. In his introductory remarks he commented upon this boy, predicting that he was a coming champion, that the evening's tiff with Young Schmeling, or whoever it was, would be just a breeze for him, and advising the public to watch Kid Palooka.

The fight started, but the Kid didn't seem to be in form that evening. He took a count in the first round, and another in the second. Still, the announcer told the audience not to worry. Palooka was a slow starter, he was just getting a line on Young Schmeling's style, and so on; but wait till the third round. The third round started.

"That's the bell. They come out from their corners, Palooka leading with his left and watching for an opening. There's dynamite in that right of his. Young Schmeling misses a wild swing to the head, as the Kid dances away. Young Schmeling is trying to mix it again. He'd better watch his step, he lays himself wide open with those roundhouse swings. He comes in with both arms flailing——"

At this point one of those haymakers connected with the Kid's jaw, and he went down cold. The announcer didn't even wait for the count.

"Holy jumping Jesus!" he blurted into the mike. "That squarehead son of a bitch knocked him out."

But this news hawk was a quick thinker. Instantly he alibied. Turning his head away from the mike, he called severely: "Gentlemen, gentlemen, restrain your excitement,

please. This microphone is broadcasting to millions, and anythink you say back there goes out." Then, into the mike again: "Sorry, ladies and gentlemen, but a fan behind me got a little excited just then and leaned over my shoulder to yell at the ring. We'll try not to let it occur again."





**FIVE: BEGINNING TO MOVE**





## CHAPTER V

### BEGINNING TO MOVE

ALL DURING THE SPRING that I spent in Washington, Station WJZ in New York was stepping up its power from 1,000 watts to 50,000, becoming the first super-power broadcasting station in the world.

Meanwhile, I was keeping on. My greatest improvement was in my voice, which was apparently gaining the note of authority I had been attempting to give it. When announcing music from Manhattan night clubs and restaurants I never had much sensation of addressing a wide audience, but from Washington I felt I was talking to the whole U. S. A., even though our network wasn't, in fact, quite that large, as yet. Broadcasting the Government to the people, as I imagined myself to be doing, put into my voice a quality of confidence that I needed, and when, early in the summer of 1926, Radio Corporation got ready to open its 50,000-watt superstation, I was lucky enough to be the announcer chosen to do it. They brought me back to New York, and John Daniel went down to Washington to take his turn with WRC.

That new station was a honey. There was nothing else anywhere near its power to collide with its waves and knock them down. Its emanations covered half the globe. When the engineers were testing it they kept asking listeners for reports on reception. The response swamped the station, as mail came

in by the truck load. I'm sure a lot of those letters have never been opened yet. It was the first big audience response radio had inspired.

The station's promotion department went nuts over it. Today, with high-powered stations everywhere hemming each other in like soap bubbles on a basin of water, nobody, as I said earlier, can guarantee reception—that is, twenty-four hours a day and under any conditions of weather and static—for a distance of more than forty or fifty miles. This guaranteed zone or circle is called the station's service area. The new WJZ, being pre-eminent in power, claimed for its service area practically the whole universe.

Letters telling of reception came from every country in Europe. Australia heard us clearly. The R.C.A. promoters got a big map of the world and stuck in pins to show to prospective radio advertisers, each pin representing a point from which a listener reported reception. Of course, the man in Vladivostok perhaps only caught the station for a minute and might not pick it up again for a week, but with our office enthusiasts every distant report stood for steady reception. When they got through sticking in their pins, the Western Hemisphere had broken out with a WJZ rash.

Yet that experience showed how swiftly radio was taking a place in public interest. Just before WJZ opened the superstation, it was receiving about two thousand fan letters a week for all programs.

Fan mail has undergone its evolution with the rest of radio. At the beginning of commercial broadcasting, almost every advertiser insisted on getting fan mail. A client might have half a dozen radios in his own house, you could show him the telephone chart showing the drop in business during the Amos 'n' Andy broadcast, and read him the squawks of the theaters

and movies that radio was cutting in on them, but it was no use. He couldn't believe that anybody listened to his program unless he got a mail response, and he keyed his broadcasts to incite fan letters.

Nowadays it's just the other way—the big, steady air advertisers fight off fan mail, which it costs them money to handle. Radio has proved itself—the audience is always there. If some broadcast fails to produce the usual sales results, the advertiser lays the blame where it belongs—on his sales message.

Some advertisers, of course, use radio now in direct business promotion, and then it shows its immense power of starting quick mass movements. In an afternoon broadcast not long ago Edna Wallace Hopper offered a free sample of a beauty preparation to anyone who would write in for it. She got 250,000 answers!

Back in New York things really began to move for me. I started announcing my first commercials—Maxwell House Coffee, the Pennsylvania Railroad hour, the Reading Railroad. The newspaper radio pages were loosing their engineering-text-book appearance and printing program schedules, comment, and criticisms of acts and performers. On August 27 the New York *Herald Tribune's* radio editor gave me a swell boost with an editorial about my voice. Then, at the end of September, I got the greatest thrill I had yet experienced in radio.

One day during a broadcast coming in by wire, I was sitting in the studio and happened to overhear the big Government station at Arlington sending out warning of a tropical storm approaching the Florida east coast. Gales of hurricane force were blowing at the center of this disturbance, which was expected to strike in the vicinity of Miami. I realized immediately that somebody must warn the people of Florida, and at that moment I was possessed of the loudest voice in the world.

Stentor's was a whisper compared with mine, for mine could go out carried by fifty thousand watts of electrical power through unimpeded air.

I grabbed a mike, interrupted the program broadcast, and began radioing to Florida, warning of the near approach of the hurricane and telling people not to go on picnics or auto trips or fishing expeditions but to barricade themselves in their homes. I also requested all radio stations picking up the warning to relay it into Florida. This was the great storm that wrecked Miami a few hours later, and when the first Press Association dispatches got through, they all said that the loss of life would have been heavier except for the warning broadcast from a New York station.

The football season opened, and I began helping Major White, getting my name bracketed with his both on the air and in the newspapers. I was announcing myself as "Ted" Husing by now. Also, I used a mechanical identification machine which I had built during the winter out of a couple of apartment-house doorbell boards. The first game in which I broadcast plays was the Princeton-Navy clash at Palmer Stadium that year. This proved helpful publicity for me, and I was put on more commercial programs at the studio.

Late in October Queen Marie of Roumania visited the United States. There must be plenty of listeners yet who remember the fiasco in which her scheduled broadcast ended. This untold story is one for radio's book, and I'm going to spot it in as a separate chapter. The point now is that the affair gave me another lucky swing of national publicity, much of it on the front pages.

At the end of the year Radio Corporation bought the A. T. & T. station, WEAf, together with its network, and formed the National Broadcasting Company, putting M. H. Ayles-

worth at its head. The second popularity poll for announcers was taken. By now the Solemn Old Judges of pioneer days had disappeared from the picture. Milton J. Cross, of WJZ, was given first place. Then followed in order: 2. Lewis Reid, now with WPCH, of New York; 3. Norman Brokenshire, who had also gone over to WPCH; 4. Ralph Wentworth, of WEAJ; 5. Major J. Andrew White, WJZ; 6. Phillips Carlin, WEAJ; 7. Ted Husing, WJZ; 8. Colin Hager, of WGY at Schenectady; 9. Graham McNamee, WEAJ; 10. John B. Daniel, WRC.

To reward me for a good year, the National Broadcasting Co., by some cockeyed piece of executive logic, then removed me as an announcer altogether and appointed me a salesman. All the advertisers whose hours I was announcing asked to have me retained in the studio, but the official answer was "No." As a matter of fact I really believe the company thought it was doing me a service. There was supposed to be a better financial future at that time in selling radio to advertisers than dishing it up for listeners. Maybe there was, but my heart wasn't in the job. Consequently, when in the following spring I got an offer to go to Boston and open a station for the *Transcript* newspaper, I snapped it up.

There is not much to tell about my Boston experience. I built and organized the station—a small one-man job. The Boston Braves baseball club had consistently opposed the local broadcasting of their games at home, claiming that it would reduce attendance at the park. I broke down their attitude and instituted daily broadcasts, and attendance increased. Incidentally, the Braves' games have been broadcast daily ever since.

From New York I heard a rumor that the Columbia Phonograph Co. was building a "third chain." In fact, it was more

than a rumor with me. I got it straight from Andy White, who was to be president of the new network, if it ever came together, and I was assured, too, that I would have a place in it. I found I didn't like small-time radio, and at the end of the summer I quit my job with the *Transcript* and came to New York as a free-lance sports broadcaster.

My first step in the big town was to tie up with WHN and the New York *American* newspaper. I organized my own crew—an assistant and a control engineer. Then I made a ten-strike. With Columbia University's football authorities I signed a contract giving me and WHN exclusive broadcasting privileges at all of Columbia's games to be played in New York that season.

At this point I began to build up a personal following on the air. The *American* got behind me one hundred per cent, running eight-column blurbs across the top of its sport page urging readers to tune in on these *American*-sponsored broadcasts and calling me modestly "the greatest sports broadcaster of all time." At the end of the season the *Herald Tribune* radio editor wrote: "Husing has been consistently better than the more famous Graham McNamee and Phillips Carlin." Moving along, eh, toots? In the midst of the excitement I sneaked out an exclusive broadcasting contract for the Army-Notre Dame game that year. Football, largely because of radio publicity, was then entering the terrific popularity it still enjoys with the public. On game days we were virtually blocking the N.B.C. out of New York, and WHN began having visions of building a chain of its own.

That dream fell through, but the Columbia Phonograph Co.'s scheme coalesced. On Christmas Day, 1927, I went to the new Columbia Broadcasting System as assistant to the president, the president being Andy White.



SIX: HER MERCENARY MAJESTY





## CHAPTER VI

### HER MERCENARY MAJESTY

BACK IN THE LAST CHAPTER I engaged to give you the low-down on the visit of Queen Marie of Roumania to our gold-paved avenues and money-worshipping population in October, 1926, with particular reference to the broadcast she didn't give over WJZ.

It is still an untold story. When I divulged a few of its highlights in *Cosmopolitan Magazine* some months ago, I little realized that I was spilling beans that had been carefully hidden in official pigeonholes for lo! these eight or nine years. But I was, and they rattled not only over the palace floors in Bucharest but along the marble corridors of Washington as well.

The first thing I knew, a couple of mysterious guys—G men, I guess—were making discreet inquiries. Could it be possible that a reigning monarch had actually commercialized her good-will visit to our shores? And if so, what about her income tax? There'd been no official mention of any "gate." The Government cracks down quick and hard on prize-fighters, playwrights, and lecturers from foreign climes who take our coin in influential quantities. Was a Queen immune?

Then various persons who had been principals behind the scenes of the celebrated fiasco began writing me letters, bawling me out for my indiscretion and setting me right about

details. For the magazine piece I'd been drawing only on memory, and I *was* slightly inaccurate in one or two statements. David Sarnoff, whose name I brought into the story, informed me more in grief than anger that I should have consulted him before I rattled this biggest skeleton in radio's closet. Didn't I know that everybody connected with the affair had sworn an oath of eternal secrecy? No, I didn't know it. I was one of the leading goats of the Queen's temperament myself, and if they'd wanted me to keep my mouth shut, they might have taken me more into their confidence.

Anyhow, the fat's in the fire now, and I might as well shoot the works. Here it is—the whole truth and nothing but the truth, swelp me:

That autumn I'd been announcing a weekly series of programs for the Royal Typewriter Co. Not only announcing them but arranging them besides, those being the merry old times when an announcer did everything. I'd been cutting down well-known operettas and condensing them for the mike. I'm not sure but what they were the first musical plays ever to go on the air. They had a solid audience following; and George Ed Smith, president of the Royal Typewriter Co., was nuts about them.

Good old George Ed Smith! Heaven's first answer to the announcer's prayer! While other sponsors were nibbling at the radio audience with song and frolic, nothing but the big, front-page stunt satisfied Ed. It was he who sponsored the first sensational broadcast ever to enthrall the population of this country—the Dempsey-Tunney fight. In the middle of it a sewer contractor in Texas wired him: "Dear Smitty, I wish you made shovels." That about summed up the audience attitude toward Ed and the Royal typewriter. Between stunts,

we held and hopped up Ed's radio following with the operettas.

Dorrance, Sullivan & Co., advertising agents, handled the Royal Typewriter account. There's never been such hectic excitement in their offices since. There was one serious element in their campaign. Ed Smith was afflicted with high blood pressure and had been warned to lead a monotonous life. Sturges Dorrance, president of the agency, was always afraid one of those black-headline broadcasts for Royal Typewriter might knock his client off.

So, in the fall of 1926, the name of Ed Smith was synonymous with big money and spectacular advertising. He was a mark at which even a queen might shoot.

The first intimation that Her Majesty of Roumania's impending visit might not be entirely a pilgrimage of love and kisses came one day early in October, when Sturges Dorrance was interviewed by a Mr. R. Bennett, representing Exclusive Attractions, Inc., the president of which was the impressario S. Hurok. At that time Queen Marie was on the bounding main, headed for New York in the royal suite on the S. S. *Leviathan*. Ostensibly she chose this vessel for her passage as a compliment to the nation whose guest she was about to be, though actually the Company gave it to her for nothing. Exclusive Attractions, Inc., numbered among its clients at that time the well-known dancer Loie Fuller and her troupe. Loie was a pal of the approaching monarch. She had often been entertained at the royal palace in Bucharest. Broadway understood that Miss Fuller was to act as American advisor to the Queen during her visit.

Mr. Bennett had a proposition for Mr. Dorrance.

"You know," he began, "the Pennsylvania Railroad plans giving Her Majesty a free special train for her trip West. How

would you like it if Marie sent a wireless from the S. S. *Leviathan* to General Atterbury asking him to place a Royal portable in her private car?"

"Fine," said Sturges, "Ed Smith would sell a typewriter."

"I mean," explained Bennett, "you could use the radio message in your advertising any way you saw fit."

"Better yet," enthused Sturges. "Er—would there be any charge?"

"Not much," said Bennett. "Forty thousand dollars."

Sturges Dorrance let out a hearty laugh.

"Forty Grand!" he gasped. "Boy, you murder me. Why I could get Mrs. Astorbilt for a crayon portrait, and a testimonial for our client, the American Tobacco Co., for lots less than that."

But the advertising executive knew Ed Smith's passion for the spotlight. He suggested, therefore, that if Her Majesty would deign to go on the air for Royal Typewriter with an exclusive broadcast, his client might be interested.

What kind of a broadcast, Bennett wanted to know?

"Well," said Dorrance, "she might pull a line about the American business woman—how she admires 'em—sob stuff—you know, the inference being that using Royal typewriters has boosted them to their present eminence in the Queen's estimation."

"Sure," said the confident Bennett. "She'll do anything we want her to. Forty grand, eh?"

"Lay off those astronomical figures," Sturges chided him. "Let's take up some of the details before going into the money part. In the first place, the broadcast would have to be absolutely exclusive in the East."

"How do you get that way?" said Bennett. "Do you want to crab Her Majesty's trip?"

"Well, exclusive for two weeks then," Dorrance insisted.

Bennett said he thought it might be arranged. Dorrance put the proposition up to Ed Smith. Meanwhile, though, the advertising man had been thinking it over and advised Smith against it. For some other product, maybe; but the conservative business houses of the country—banks, insurance companies, and so on—were the chief buyers of typewriters. Dorrance feared they might regard the exploitation of Queen Marie as publicity just a little too flaming for a typewriter.

But the minute Ed heard the proposition he went haywire over it. To bag a queen for his radio string was something he couldn't resist.

"How much would it cost," he asked?

Dorrance thought \$15,000 or even less would buy a half-hour of the monarch's time. Smith told him to go to it. Negotiations between Dorrance and Exclusive Attractions, Inc., began immediately upon Her Majesty's arrival. The parties grew nearer together on the terms without actually reaching a definite agreement. In these sordid interchanges Loie Fuller acted as spokeswoman for Queen Marie. Business it might be, but it was conducted with that formality upon which Royalty insists.

The pay-off was as fantastic as anything else in this goofy episode. Her Majesty had gone to Philadelphia to visit officially the Sesquicentennial Exposition, and the blue bloods of the Quaker City were groveling at the royal feet. Dorrance couldn't get the Queen pinned down to a contract. Both sets of intermediaries had by this time grown so suspicious of each other that neither would trust the other alone around the corner.

The Exposition was throwing a big *soirée* for Her Majesty,

and the elite of Philadelphia turned out in force in Rolls-Royces, swank City Troop and and everything. Just across the street from the Centennial grounds was a little Italian restaurant, and the back room of the spaghetti establishment was serving for the final conference room of the negotiators. Sturges Dorrance and H. M. Overstreet were there for the agency. S. Hurok and R. Bennett looked out for the interests of Her Majesty of Roumania. Every few minutes Dorrance retired to the pay booth and talked privately to Ed Smith at his home in Great Neck, L. I. Then Hurok or Bennett would dash across the street to the Exposition building to consult their principal. But not in person—oh no! They spoke to Loie Fuller, who wormed through the décolletées and swallow-tails to whisper in Her Majesty's ear.

All evening long the negotiating went on. The final agreement was on \$8,000 for the Queen, provided she broadcast a speech written in by the advertising agency, and provided further that she refused all other broadcasting offers for a period of two weeks following her Royal Typewriter plug.

Sturges Dorrance believed in the Biblical injunction: "Put not your trust in princes" or in princesses either. He stuck out successfully for the following terms of payment: Six grand at the time of the broadcast; the final two thousand smackers at the end of two weeks, thus guaranteeing that Her Majesty would not fall into that little European habit of treating a contract as a scrap of paper.

Agreement reached and put down in writing neither side would permit the other to hold the contract. It was finally decided to send this document in a sealed envelope to Bob Newton, business manager of WJZ, to be held in escrow by him until its terms had been completed. Then Newton, upon the presentation of two receipts by Hurok for \$6,000 and \$2,000 respectively,

would return the contract to Dorrance, Sullivan & Co., presumably for its destruction.

The reason for such extraordinary secrecy is obvious. Secrecy was the essence of Queen Marie's business deals in America. If the public had ever become aware that the Queen was on a mere money-making prowl, her words of flattery would have sounded hollow, her stock would have fallen like the 1929 market, and—though this is stretching supposition far—even society might have chilled toward her.

It was after midnight when both sides declared themselves satisfied. The contract was sealed in an envelope. With a letter of instruction to Bob Newton, it was placed in another envelope, addressed and stamped for special delivery. On the corner near the spaghetti joint was a mail box. Dorrance volunteered to take the letter to the box. Hurok insisted on accompanying him—to make sure that the advertising man didn't palm another mis-sive into the box. The letter went in, the slot door clanked, and the thing was done.

After the sensational way in which the whole affair ended it was denied officially, and even *sub rosa*, that any such contract had ever been drawn. I am in a position to prove the contrary, for I have the contract itself. Here it is—just as it emerged that night in the Philadelphia Italian restaurant—in the form of a letter addressed to Exclusive Attractions, Inc., by Dorrance, Sullivan & Company:

You have proposed to us in various talks at this office, a Radio Broadcast talk to be given by Her Majesty, Queen Marie of Rumania. This talk is to be given under the auspices of our client, The Royal Typewriter Company of New York, over stations WJZ and WEAJ and a chain of affiliated stations, arrangements for which we will make and pay.



Her Majesty, Queen Marie, is to broadcast on Friday evening, October 22nd, between the hours of eight-thirty and nine P. M., from the studio of WJZ, 33 West 42nd Street. A short selection or group of selections by the Royal Concert Orchestra, in her honor, will precede and follow the talk.

It is understood and agreed that the talk to be given by Her Majesty, Queen Marie, will be addressed to the Women of America and shall follow a general synopsis or outline that we will furnish to you in advance of her appearance before the microphone.

This talk will express her admiration for American Women generally and particularly for the independence of the American Business Women. She will express her admiration for their ability to follow business careers, which makes possible independence unknown to women in other countries, and an ability to dress and share luxuries and pleasures unknown in Europe. She will also mention her admiration for the beauty and talent of American Women, but stress must be laid upon Business Women, their independence, earning power and the opportunities that these features make possible.

On Saturday morning, October 23rd, following the broadcasting by Her Majesty, Queen Marie, as covered by this arrangement, we will pay for the account of the Royal Typewriter Company, to your Representative, Mr. R. Bennett, the sum of \$6,000 in cash, and on November 6th, two weeks later, we will pay \$2,000 additional, a total of \$8,000—if—during the period covered by these two weeks, Her Majesty, Queen Marie does not broadcast any continuous talk on any particular subject from any other stations throughout the United States, other than short, formal replies to speeches of welcome at necessary social affairs. It is understood that the broadcasting expenses for the tie-up with WJZ, WEAJ and of a chain of affiliated stations, will be paid for by the Royal Typewriter Company and the sum of \$8,000 is the final and total payment for the service rendered as called for in this agreement and releases us and our client, The Royal Typewriter

Company, from any subsequent claims or obligations of any kind.

The original copy of this memorandum of agreement is to be signed by all parties and is to be deposited with the Radio Corporation of America through its Broadcasting Station WJZ and is to be held by them until the terms of the contract have been complied with and the monies called for in compliance of these terms paid. Upon presentation of receipt for the monies as covered by the agreement, The Radio Corporation is to surrender this contract to Dorrance, Sullivan & Company. The signature of S. Hurok as President of Exclusive Attractions, Inc., is to be on this agreement and also to be supplemented by the personal signatures of S. Hurok and R. Bennett, as expressing their personal liability for the fulfillment of their part of the agreement.

Attached to the contract was a list of stations over which the Queen's broadcast was to go, twenty-one in all, reaching as far West as Kansas City and tapping an estimated radio audience of twenty-two million people. It was a big hookup for those days.

Dorrance and Overstreet caught the one o'clock train out of Philadelphia and reached New York at three A.M., though not to sleep. They worked the rest of the night on advance publicity for the stunt, which was to come off only two days later. In fact, neither man went to bed for sixty-six hours preceding the scheduled appearance of Queen Marie on the air. In the publicity, however, there was no ballyhoo for Royal Typewriter. This, with the endorsement of Ed Smith, was Sturges Dorrance's gesture toward royalty. He might be a hard-boiled New York advertising man, but he knew how to behave toward a Queen—at least publicly.

At six o'clock on the fateful evening Messrs. Dorrance and Overstreet regarded their labors as done and the broadcast on

ice. There was nothing to do then but wait for half-past eight, when Her Majesty was to go on the air under the auspices of the Royal Typewriter Company. But at that moment Mr. Bennett, of the Hurok organization, rushed into the Dorrance, Sullivan agency with devastating tidings.

"My God!" he yelled as he dashed through the door, "Her Majesty's sick in bed and can't appear."

Sturges Dorrance wasn't going to waste those sixty-six hours of lost slumber, to say nothing of his arduous debate over the minestrone.

"Listen, boy," he yelled back, "Her Majesty *is* going to appear, sick or no sick. We've got her on a contract, and if she wants the sweetest line of adverse publicity any Queen ever got in this country, she'll just back out now, that's all."

All three men jumped into a taxi and raced to the Plaza Hotel, where Loie Fuller lived. She and Mrs. Oliver Harriman went with them to the Ambassador, which had presented the Queen with an entire floor free for her New York stay. Outside, on the Park Avenue curb, were the two Lincoln cars which represented Henry Ford's homage to royalty. Wherever the Queen traveled in America she had two free Lincolns through the courtesy of the homespun Dearborn democrat. Miss Fuller held conference with Marie and brought back word that, though Her Majesty was slightly indisposed by a cold, she would be on hand at the broadcast time, eight-thirty P.M.

Meanwhile the Dorrance agency and the Radio Corporation of America were making great preparations for the event at the WJZ studios in Æolian Hall. A special room had been set apart, decorated with flowering plants and American Beauty roses. For the press, Sturges Dorrance had endowed a special chamber with two dozen bottles of contraband Scotch,

as well as with caterer's entertainment. About 8 o'clock an imposing Committee of Welcome began to collect, garbed in such a regalia as it considered correct for a royal presentation. It would be too cruel even now to give the names of those who so eagerly accepted the honor of serving on this committee, but they included some of the best known business and society figures of the metropolis.

Sturges Dorrance hadn't missed any bets. He even had a throat specialist there for the royal larynx.

And then the blow fell. At just ten minutes past eight—some of the welcoming committee not yet having arrived, though, worse luck! all the ladies and gentlemen of the press were on hand—Her Majesty entered the station accompanied by Mrs. Oliver P. Harriman, her social shepherdess in New York. Trouble brewed immediately. Mrs. Harriman lifted a lorgnette—not figuratively, either—and some mention was made of the lack of a red carpet downstairs. No red carpet! Asking a reigning queen to set her foot on a dirty American sidewalk!

Sturges Dorrance's ears were redder than any carpet. He had overlooked that detail but hoped the interior arrangements would be in keeping with the august nature of the occasion. The Committee of Welcome had not yet assembled—the ladies were twenty minutes ahead of time—would Her Majesty make herself comfortable—

At this point Mrs. Harriman took complete charge, and Admiral Byrd would have felt right at home in the frigid atmosphere. Ahead of time? How could a queen be ahead of time? Her Majesty must go on the air at once. The studio manager explained that the chain wouldn't be hooked up until half-past eight, but his statement meant nothing to Mrs. H. She insisted. The poor queen had to sit there and take it. She

could hardly explain to Mrs. Harriman that she had signed on the dotted line to be at WJZ on a certain minute. A helpless victim of circumstances, she could only lift her lorgnette, too, and lead the socialite out in aristocratic dudgeon.

It was one hell of a mess! In a few minutes every radio fan in the East, from the President down to the set-builders of the Bronx, would be listening to what a queen had to say to them—and Mrs. Harriman had trumped the queen. An SOS went to David Sarnoff, master mind of the R.C.A. and, for that evening, its ambassador plenipotentiary and one of the distinguished members of the hand-picked reception committee. Mr. Sarnoff rushed up, dazzling in his evening attire. He had been awaiting the call to appear with the Committee, only to find out that the royal guest had given us the brush. Mr. Sarnoff was not one to take it lying down. Instructing me to keep the program going, he, Dorrance and Bertha Brainard, program manager for WJZ, grabbed a taxi and rushed to the Ambassador.

On the fourth floor they were confronted by the austere façade of the socially correct Mrs. Harriman, who lost no time in telling Sarnoff what she thought of R.C.A. and the treatment Queen Marie had received at the studio.

"My dear madam," said Sarnoff, "it couldn't be helped. It was physically impossible to have done as you asked."

His words fell on deaf ears.

"But Her Majesty knew the time," he argued. "I ask you now to plead with the Queen to come back with us to the studio and not disappoint twenty million listeners."

He was talking to a stone wall, and if Queen Marie listened outside, she must have been burning up. Her social directress was high-hatting her out of eight grand, and she couldn't say a word to prevent it. Mr. Sarnoff tried once more.

"Mrs. Harriman," he stated, "let me inform you that Her Majesty made a solemn agreement to be at our studio at half-past eight."

Solemn agreement? Half-past eight? Mrs. Harriman icily reminded Mr. Sarnoff that he was speaking of the Queen of Roumania. Mr. Sarnoff lost his temper.

"So far as the Radio Corporation of America is concerned," he barked, "the Queen of Roumania is simply a paid entertainer for the Royal Typewriter Co."

Mrs. Harriman nearly dropped her lorgnette. With an agonized gesture she besought the irate radio executive to lower his voice, lest Her Majesty hear.

"I hope she does hear," retorted Sarnoff. "It would do her good."

Then Mrs. Harriman terminated the interview, and the mission left, empty-handed.

Meanwhile things had been happening at WJZ. The reporters were guzzling Sturges Dorrance's Scotch and having a good laugh at our broadcasting bust. One of the sob sisters from the *Mirror* got into a fight with Mr. Bennett of the Hurok organization. She said she knew positively that the Queen had accepted a piece of change to give the broadcast. Bennett denied it hotly. The newspaper lass told him he was lying and left, vowing to print the low-down in her morning edition; and it took the whole influence of R.C.A. and the Dorrance agency, with threats of an advertising boycott, to induce Mora Boyle, General Manager of the *Mirror*, to apply the gag to this dame.

Just to finish out this phase of the story, it actually was hinted in print a few days later that the Queen was to have been paid for the Royal Typewriter broadcast. Reporters rushed to Sarnoff, Dorrance, and Ed Smith for confirmation,

but all three lied like gentlemen and said that the proposed radio address had been the free and voluntary offer of Her Majesty.

In the studio the rising young announcer Ted Husing was doing the first big-time stalling and ad libbing of his career. The Royal Typewriter orchestra was giving an all-Roumanian concert—you know, old Roumanian folk songs like "Play, Gypsy, Play" and "In a Little Gypsy Tea Room"—and between numbers I kept asking the radio audience to be patient because the Queen would appear at any moment. Never once did I doubt the ability of Mr. Sarnoff to bring her back. My first intimation of a break in the routine was when Bertha Brainard appeared at the studio door shaking a finger at me sideways. I took this to be the signal that Her Majesty had got over her pout, so I stopped the music and announced quickly: "And now, ladies and gentlemen, Her Majesty Marie, Queen of Roumania!"

Even as I was speaking these words an awful feeling seemed to creep into the studio. Glancing through the window of the control room, I saw several announcers and operators there, their jaws sagging, horror in their eyes; and then, at the door, Mr. Sarnoff shaking his head violently and pointing to himself. Like a flash I added: "But first, ladies and gentlemen, I introduce to you Mr. David Sarnoff, vice president of the Radio Corporation of America."

Mr. Sarnoff stepped to the mike and told the radio audience bluntly and ruefully what had occurred—or almost all that had occurred. His speech was taken down and I here reproduce it verbatim:

It is with a keen feeling of disappointment and a sense of regret that I must inform you that it will not be possible this evening for us to broadcast Her Majesty, Queen of Rumania.

One of the attributes of radio broadcasting is to be able to make the facts, and nothing but the facts, known to the people throughout the country, and I therefore wish to tell you precisely what occurred through an unfortunate misunderstanding about time, the program having been arranged for Her Majesty to speak between eight-thirty and nine.

As I say, through this misunderstanding which was interpreted to Her Majesty as being between eight and eight-thirty, the arrangements did not connect as we had hoped. Therefore, Her Majesty came here accompanied by Mrs. O. P. Harriman fifteen minutes after eight, before the arrangements were in operation for Her Majesty to speak.

Being somewhat indisposed this evening and having come here at very great sacrifice personally, I have been asked by Her Majesty to explain to the radio audience this occurrence and to express in her behalf the wish that an opportunity may present itself in the very near future whereby she may be able to address the people of the United States over the air, and with this explanation, I join you in your disappointment and wish you good night.

At the conclusion of this speech we got a stand-by program going and went into a huddle. Were we sore? Mr. Sarnoff, who had had to take the rap at the mike, was breathing vengeance.

"She can't get away with this," he said. "We'll put her on the air anyhow. She's making two speeches tonight—one before the American Bankers Convention and one at the banquet of the Iron and Steel Institute. Ted," he turned to me, "you've got to pick her up at one or the other."

The Iron and Steel Institute looked like the best bet. It was to be held in the banquet room of the Commodore Hotel, and we already had that wired for radio. I went over to take a look at it. Those were the days in which people were still spending money. I found the great room banked with palms



and American Beauty roses while, from the balcony, all the way around hung cages of twittering canaries and ornamental baskets of cut flowers. I sketched one of these baskets and had it duplicated, orchids and all, in the hotel florist shop, planting a mike at the bottom of it. Then I went back to the banquet room and dropped it down from the balcony until it swung just above the chair the Queen was to occupy.

Later that evening I had to do plenty more stalling. I expected the Queen to come on at ten o'clock, and we cut in at that hour with our complete hookup. Actually she didn't speak until nearly eleven, and since my floral mike wasn't placed to pick up the speeches of any of the others, I had to occupy the time myself. I bet there were plenty of yawns that evening around the great American family fireside. But when Her Majesty did rise, her voice came over clear as a bell. I was so excited I didn't hear a word she said. But we got away with it, anyhow, and the success saved us a lot of razzing, for the Queen's speech got the headlines while the studio fiasco was played down.

There were other aftermaths to the story. The next day, for instance, Her Majesty actually tried to collect the Royal Typewriter dough, or at least some of it, in spite of the throw-down she gave us. Of course, the Queen did not make this attempt in person but through a representative of the Hurok organization.

"Try and get it!" was Sturges Dorrance's answer.

Next day, too, Marie was scheduled to make a shopping trip. A big Fifth Avenue department store had offered her (privately) a lot of jack—I have always understood it was \$7,500—if she would visit that store exclusively and permit the fact to be used in the store's advertising. But, having observed

the way Her Majesty double-crossed Royal Typewriter, the store management kicked out of the bargain.

Confidential word spread through the commercial structure of the United States. Exclusive Attractions, Inc., found itself rebuffed at almost every turn, and Queen Marie's tour of the United States turned into a financial flop, due largely to the use Mrs. Harriman made of her lorgnette in the WJZ studio.

It would be a shame, though, to suppress for ever the little speech which the gracious Queen of Roumania was to have broadcast that night and didn't. I have in my scrapbook a copy of it just as it was prepared by Dorrance, Sullivan & Co., and forwarded through diplomatic channels to Her Majesty by the broadcasting department of R.C.A. I understand Sturges Dorrance wrote it. Here it is:

This synopsis is respectfully submitted to Your Majesty in order to facilitate the preparation of Your Majesty's broadcasting speech. Your whole talk should be addressed primarily to the women of America and should treat particularly of their independence and their achievements in the business world.

Time: 8:30 to 9:00 P.M. Friday, October 22nd.

Place: Aeolian Hall, 33 West 42nd Street.

I am deeply grateful that this opportunity has been provided for me to realize a long cherished ambition to talk to the women of America.

I am told here in the broadcasting station that my message is being listened to by over twenty million people. So do not wonder if I seem to be, at first, a little nervous—for my audience is larger than the entire population of my country. Besides, this is, I fear, the only chance that I will have to address you American women over the radio and I am so anxious to have you return the warmth and the admiration that I have for you.

I have most deeply admired—yes—envied you for so many years

—envied you without really knowing you—yet I find that the impressions built up through my reading and my personal contacts with American women whom I have been privileged to entertain at the Palace at Bucharest, have been more than fulfilled now that I am with you—in your land. So I look forward now with even greater enthusiasm to my trip across your wonderful continent.

IT IS SUGGESTED HERE THAT YOUR MAJESTY DISCUSS BRIEFLY YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION OF THIS COUNTRY FROM YOUR RECEPTION AT NEW YORK

.....

THEN YOUR MAJESTY MIGHT TELL YOUR AUDIENCE BRIEFLY ABOUT YOUR RECEPTION IN WASHINGTON AND YOUR OUTSTANDING IMPRESSIONS ON THAT OCCASION .....

.....

I do wish that you could all forget this evening that I am a Queen. I think that I could feel nearer to you and impress you more with the depth of my admiration for you if you could listen to me just as another woman with your own ambitions and your own problems. For I do have troubles just as every one of you—and sometimes they are very, very real.

My King, I am quite sure, is not, as you would say, “listening in,” so I can be quite frank with you tonight. If any of your husbands are listening to me, and I rather hope that they are, it will make me happy if my words impress upon them what a privilege is theirs to have before them constantly the inspiration of these wonderful American wives and these equally wonderful American girls.

YOUR MAJESTY’S MESSAGE TO THE WOMEN OF AMERICA SHOULD TREAT PARTICULARLY OF THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND OF THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS IN

THE FIELD OF BUSINESS, COMPARING THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN AMERICA AS AGAINST THOSE IN EUROPE.

These opportunities have been created by American women themselves and by the ability they have shown to adapt themselves to the changing and progressing conditions in the business and social life of America.

From the time when your women first entered into business life and into the situations and contacts that formerly belonged to man's sphere alone, they have proven themselves thoroughly capable of assuming these new responsibilities and tasks.

In Europe one very seldom sees women occupying high positions in business. In America such conditions do not seem to be so rare. You have women here occupying responsible positions in some of your biggest commercial organizations and even as heads of their own businesses.

Here, of course, you do not have the distinctions and the barriers of class so prevalent in all European countries. A woman does not have to be born to wealth and social position in order to attain recognition and esteem. The way is wide open for every one of you who has ambition, the ingenuity and the talent,—to rise to the very heights. I wonder if you realize what a heritage you have as free-born Americans.

In my country, as in all European countries, it is much more difficult for the woman in business to overcome the handicap of class. I do not mean so much that they are oppressed, but that their talents and their abilities are not given the recognition that will enable them to rise to positions of higher responsibility. You who have been so used to your freedom and your independence—always—cannot know and cannot appreciate your good fortune.

Yet I say that you have made the best of these privileges, and from deep in my heart I admire you. You have benefited too,—perhaps without fully realizing it, because I say, this independence

is a part of your very makeup. You women and you girls of America enjoy luxuries and refinements of dress and of all manner of life that in our country only the women of wealth can enjoy. You earn money, many of you, that in my country would be handsome income for even nobility. Yet you seem to have the discretion to spend not lavishly but wisely. I see about me everywhere in this large city and in your Capital and en route, the evidences of refinement of taste and of culture that we in Europe must not recognize except in our own social strata.

So I am prouder than you can dream—of the reception, the enthusiasm that you have given me—for I think that it is genuine and sincere and natural. I like to be that way and I want you to think of me that way while I am talking to you.

THESE THOUGHTS ARE SIMPLY SET DOWN TO INDICATE THE NATURE OF YOUR MAJESTY'S TALK—TO BE ELABORATED UPON BY YOU.

It is unnecessary for me to comment at any length on this suppressed message to the American public. The royal visitor was to make no mention of typewriters, but Sturges Dorrance had put plenty of other poison in the good-will message. The speech practically admitted to the royal palace in Bucharest on the plane of social equality the vast army of stenogs and women office workers of the United States, and naturally none of them was going to get mad if the boss put into the office the typewriter which had sponsored this heartening message.

But Dorrance, in the script submitted to Queen Marie, had also looked out for the personal interests of Ed Smith, who after all was the guy putting up the do-re-mi. To the script speech he tagged a P.S., suggesting, but only suggesting, that it would be a nice gesture if Her Majesty would wind up her remarks with the following sentence:

I want particularly to extend my appreciation, in the presence of my radio audience, to Mr. George Ed Smith, president of the Royal Typewriter Co., who has so generously provided the facilities that make it possible for me to talk to you this evening.

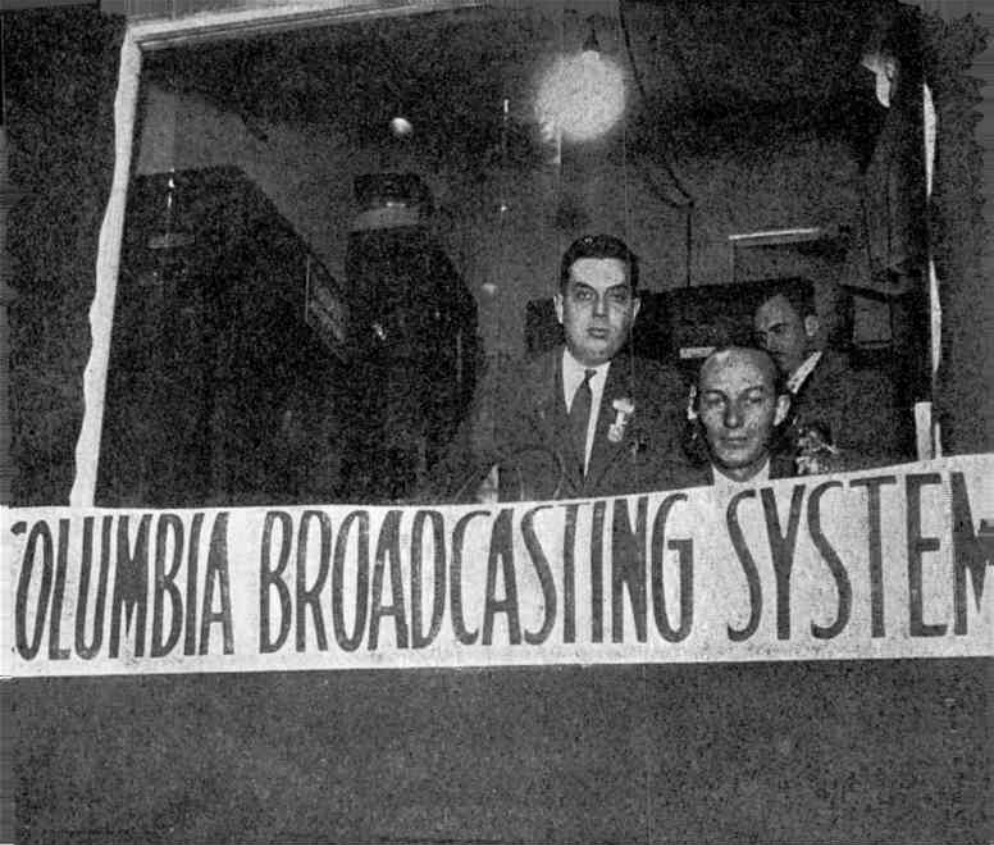
If a queen had actually broadcast that sentence over the air, Sturges knew that Ed Smith would have regarded the broadcast as cheap at fifty grand. But whether Her Majesty would have made this little bow to the man whose money she was so ready to take, we will never know.

We were sitting around the studio that night fanning it over, when suddenly Sturges Dorrance jumped to his feet with a yell.

"My God!" he screamed. "I'd forgotten about George Ed Smith's blood pressure! Get me a phone—I bet this has killed him!"

But Ed, though spiritually he would never be the same, physically had survived, and as for Dorrance and the sixty-six sleepless hours he had dedicated to the job—well, at least he has the distinction of being the only advertising man who ever hired a queen—even if she didn't work.





SEVEN: OVER THE TOP





## CHAPTER VII

### OVER THE TOP

THE PRESUMPTUOUS "third chain," as the newspapers called the new Columbia Broadcasting System at the end of 1927, was neither organized nor operated as were its greater competitors. We had no physical plant—no stations or technical equipment of any kind. We aimed rather to be impressarios of radio entertainment and brokers of radio space. We thought there was room in the field for an organization that devised programs, sold them to advertisers, and then leased wires and broadcasting time to make hookups of any size the clients desired.

In New York we used WOR to originate our network programs. Our entire layout involving any capital investment fitted comfortably into a couple of office rooms in the Paramount Building on Times Square.

On paper, our scheme sounded fair enough, but in practice C.B.S. began dropping into the red at once. After a few weeks the Columbia Phonograph Co. had taken enough and sold out to Jerome H. Louchheim, a Philadelphia traction magnate. My job was to announce one program a week and handle all the office work—sales, organization, station relations, everything. By spring the handwriting was on the wall. We looked like a sure flop.

Then, in April, the German war aces Koehl and Baron Huenefeld, and their mechanic Fitzmaurice, flew across the

Atlantic and lost themselves in Newfoundland. Our own war ace and polar flier Floyd Bennett was killed in the search for them. The tragedy made a profound impression on the country. Bennett's body was brought back to New York to be taken on to Washington for interment in Arlington Cemetery. Late that afternoon Andrew White and I sat alone in the Columbia offices.

"Andy," I spoke up, "let's broadcast that burial tomorrow down in Arlington."

"Would they let us?" asked the major.

"Why not?" I answered. "They broadcast the Unknown Soldier, didn't they? That's a precedent. And think what a line we'd have—to permit America to worship at the grave of a man who laid down his life for his enemy!"

Andy jumped at it. It was then six o'clock in the evening. We had some sandwiches sent up and got busy. Andy went haywire buying extra time all over the country. We were at the end of our string anyhow. A stunt like this might give us a new lease of life. If the broadcast fell down, we'd go down with it. I was on another phone arranging with an independent Washington station to have the local telephone company lay wires to the grave during the night. Later on we added that station to the permanent Columbia network.

I left for Washington at midnight with full instructions from Major White. His last words to me had been to overlook no detail, however slight it might seem, for the broadcast was life or death for us. I was up and dressed when the train reached Washington early next morning. Stopping only for a cup of coffee, I grabbed a taxi and went over to Arlington. There I found our installation O.K. The linemen had found a long-forgotten connection post for phones outside the cemetery and had run in the wires over the trees. It was a miser-

able day, cold and a drenching rain falling. The grave was a yawning mudhole, and casual ponds had collected on the ground. Over those near the grave the linemen had floated our wires on boards. For our broadcasting booth we had taken a corner of a shelter tent put up for the reception of floral offerings. Meanwhile, the N.B.C. had got wind of what we were doing and was running its wires into the cemetery, too.

I raced back to Washington again and wired Major White that the broadcasting set-up was perfect. But we still lacked our permits. I was at the War Department when the doors opened at nine o'clock. In a few minutes I had the necessary authorization and then went back to the cemetery once more for the final permit from Superintendent Robert Dye. While he was reading my departmental credentials I happened to glance at the wall of his office. There I saw a framed notice, reading: "It is forbidden to take photographs of interments in Arlington Cemetery without written consent from the families of the deceased persons. By order of the Superintendent."

"Would that cover broadcasting, too?" I asked Mr. Dye.

"Certainly," he said. "But, of course, you have Mrs. Bennett's consent."

"No," I admitted. "But if there's a phone booth here, I'll have time to get it."

"I don't see how—" he began, but I was streaking for the telephone.

In a minute I had New York on the wire, yelling to them to get Mrs. Bennett's approval in writing. There was barely time for it, as the funeral train was to leave within half an hour. One of our boys hurried to the Pennsylvania Station and caught Mrs. Bennett on the train platform. She graciously signed a consent for the broadcast. This was sent directly to Superintendent Dye by wire as a photograph. It reached him

within an hour, and he issued me my card. About noon a detachment of Marines arrived to police the funeral. The first thing the officer in charge did was to ask for our broadcasting permits. I had one, the opposition had none and couldn't get one, and the officer ordered the N.B.C. lines out.

By this time I was all in. For hours I had been running around in wet clothes. I ached in every bone and was cold and shivery. About fifteen minutes before the cortège was due, I opened up the broadcast; but the procession was very late in arriving, and for nearly an hour I had to stall over the mike. When the services at the grave finally started, I stood within a foot of Mrs. Bennett. I had a handkerchief over the microphone to keep the rain out of it and spoke so closely into it that Mrs. Bennett never knew until afterwards that I had been broadcasting.

As soon as the funeral was over I collapsed with a fever of 103 degrees. They wanted to send me to a hospital in Washington, but I insisted on going home, and was taken to the train on a stretcher. However, my sickness proved to be only a grippy cold, which I shook off in a few days.

The Floyd Bennett funeral broadcast gave C.B.S. its first big boost. It had rivaled a Presidential inauguration in listener interest, and we had had it exclusively. Columbia's prestige shot up, and we began getting important commercial accounts. A lull of a few weeks followed, and then we scored our first big news beat in the way in which we handled the Democratic National Convention in Texas. The radio press was almost unanimous in voting C.B.S. the orchids on that occasion.

Major White then took a trip through the Middle West, looking out for our interests there, leaving me in charge in New York. It quickly became evident that, for the first time, politics was going in for radio in a big way. I kept hopping

around selling time to the various parties. Though our net as yet did not extend west of Omaha, Major White and I decided that I should go to Palo Alto, Cal., and handle Hoover's acceptance speech. It was no time for us to be pikers. Before I left I hooked up a whole western circuit by telephone, offering not only to pay for station time but the wire charges as well. Overnight Columbia expanded to forty-five stations and had a net to offer to the political parties that could speak to the radio audience on equal terms with N.B.C.

I was only in California a day, but in that time I not only broadcast the Palo Alto ceremonies but tied up to Columbia the chain of California stations operated by the American Broadcasting Co. Right after Mr. Hoover had finished his speech I left for the East, flying part of the way back.

With a big nation-wide network now behind us—though we still didn't own one broadcasting station—C.B.S. began to get enormous publicity. There wasn't a radio set in the United States that couldn't pick up some Columbia station. More commercial accounts came our way, but it was the political money that really lifted us out of the red.

That year Major White and I did the World's Series baseball games, splitting the actual play-by-play descriptions between us. We also handled the football games the same way. These were the first sports broadcasts I had ever made on a network, having previously served only as Andy White's assistant. The WHN broadcasts had been only local. That year, too, Columbia had exclusive broadcasting privileges for the tennis championships at Forest Hills.

But the broadcasting feat of that year of which I'm still proudest was the C.B.S. report of the election returns, which I took care of single-handed, compilations and all, working from 8 P.M. to 6 o'clock in the morning, much of the time at the

mike. We sent out a combination of concert and election returns that night, incidentally shooting it by short-wave to Australia. I worked in the office of the *New York World*, using their returns and cutting in with my figures whenever a concert number ended in the studio. We went way ahead of anybody on that broadcast. I announced Hoover's election to the United States an hour before the *World* conceded it, though I was using *World* figures in my calculations. C.B.S. received 12,000 telegrams of congratulation from listeners that night, and afterwards came columns of editorials from all parts of the country.

Things were breaking for Columbia, and the year that had begun so shakily turned out to be a grand one. It also, at the end, nearly spelled finis for Ted Husing. I had been out West and at the station in New York was met by C.B.S. people telling me that the *Graf Zeppelin*, which was on its first transatlantic voyage from Germany, was expected over the city at any moment. I was to broadcast an eye-witness account. They rushed me up to our new contract station, WABC, then in Steinway Hall at 57th Street and Sixth Avenue. There I stood on a broad ledge twenty stories above the street, often grabbing window-washers' handles and leaning out to look up at the great dirigible.

Once when backing, with my eyes on the airship, I tripped over the trailing wire of the microphone. Rush Hughes, the son of Rupert Hughes, saw my danger. Hooking one arm around the window sash, with the other he grabbed me around the knees. With that support I toppled back to safety, but it was the narrowest escape I ever had.

During this same year of 1928, when the embryo C.B.S. was struggling to its feet, we were the beneficiaries of a break which gave the radio audience a news broadcast which for

sheer horror and drama is still unique and no doubt always will be. The broadcast, fully as much as did that of the Bennett funeral, brought the new chain into public attention and helped Columbia start on its way toward the position it now occupies. It is the pitiful fact that this boost sprang from the agonies of some scores of the most wretched men that ever died under the wheels of civilization's Juggernaut—the convicts who perished in the Columbus Penitentiary fire.

It was also just after this broadcast, and because of it, that the Fourth Estate and the new Fifth—radio—began showing their fangs at each other. The newspaper war with broadcasting started, to continue until the Radio Press News Bureau was started and the big nets virtually withdrew from spot news coverage.

Over across the Scioto River in Columbus, Ohio, stood the ancient pile of brick that was one of the first State prisons built west of the Alleghany Mountains. Formerly it had been too large for domestic needs, and the State had rented out cell space to the Federal Government and to western States that had not yet built penitentiaries, but in modern times it had become jammed with purely home criminal talent. Humanitarian methods had come into the prison administration, and the convicts were encouraged to go in for group activities both in sports and cultural diversions. So there was a prison baseball nine and a prison football eleven, as well as a prison band, prison male quartettes, etc. Once a week the convicts gave an intramural concert; and after a while the American Insurance Union radio station in Columbus—WAIU—with the warden's consent wired the prison and broadcast these concerts as a regular weekly local feature.

After we linked WAIU into the C.B.S. chain that year, we sometimes took these prison broadcasts in the East for their



novelty. Actually, they weren't half bad. We always used to listen for one performer—No. 22,742 was the only name we ever had for him—who put on a Little Jack Little or Whispering Jack Smith number, singing in a soft barytone to his own piano accompaniment. He had what it took; and after his parole we heard that he had been snapped up by a vaudeville circuit on the strength of his radio work. I've no doubt he's making good somewhere today.

One evening between 9 and 10 o'clock I was in the offices in the Paramount Building cleaning up some work and with one ear listening to our radio to check the concert going out through WABC, when the phone rang. Switching off the music, I answered. On the phone was the station manager of WAIU in Columbus. He told me that a bad fire had broken out in the pen and hell was to pay. At first I thought he meant to set up mikes at points of vantage near the prison, but he interrupted me.

"No—we're in there already," he reminded me. "Our boys are at the mikes right now, and we're sending it out. If you want it for the net, it's yours."

Did we want it? I tried to cut off and get busy, but the WAIU man held me a second longer.

"I want to warn you, Husing," he said, "—it's—it's pretty awful. It's got this town frozen already."

Then he hung up; and in a moment the WABC announcer was saying: "Ladies and gentlemen, we interrupt our program to bring you an important news broadcast." Meanwhile, I was calling key stations all over the net, telling them to plug in and notify the stations in their territory. Within a few minutes early sleepers all over the United States were being waked up and hauled to the loud-speakers, and friends were calling each other up excitedly to make sure they weren't missing an

experience that could come only once in a million years—a news broadcast out of the very flames of a world disaster.

None of us was prepared for the horror of it. The Columbus announcers didn't have to throw any synthetic emotion into their voices that night. They couldn't have done so if they'd wanted to, they were so sickened by what they were witnessing. The horror broadcast itself. We heard the roar and crackling of the flames, the shouts of firemen, the oaths of trusties and guards trying to effect rescues, sometimes even the distant screams of the poor rats trapped in their cells. Now and then we'd catch the whisper of one of the announcers warning the other not to look at some seared, whitened object brushing by on a stretcher.

Our people were right under the burning wing itself. Their position grew more and more precarious. They kept telling us that engineers were setting up mikes in a safer place, but they'd try to keep the broadcast going from the burning wing until the new position was ready.

"No, we've got to go now," one of them cut in hurriedly. "It's getting too——"

There was a confused sound in the loud-speaker, and the broadcast ended. In two or three minutes Columbus had us on the wire. Our mike wires had burned out, and the announcers had had to run for their lives. It would be a few minutes before the new mikes were ready, but hang on. We passed the word on to a horrified radio audience to stand by, filling in with anything for ten minutes or so. Then it came on again.

But with what a difference! All we had heard before had not prepared us for what was to come. There was among the Columbus convicts a well-known prison character—an old, peaceable, pious Negro preacher, born of God, a man of com-

passion and fear, but whose foot had once slipped. He was a murderer serving a life sentence, but penitent now and a trusty. Sometimes he was permitted to harangue the other felons on the errors of their ways, and he was a powerful exhorter at whom the gangsters and thugs of the cells used to laugh. In this crisis the warden sent the old fellow to the mike to tell the radio audience about the disaster from the convict's viewpoint.

Was that an address! Excitement whipped up the natural eloquence and dramatic genius of the preacher's race, and his rich voice poured out a torrent of words, part description, part sermon, part a prayer. Nothing could have so built up the terror of the disaster. I wish electric recording had been in existence then to have caught and canned that impromptu sensation. I can't really remember a single sentence of the masterpiece, but this will give the idea:

De radio gemmun done already tol' you better'n dis ol' preacher kin 'bout what's goin' on in de big jail house. O you blessed ones in your homes, our eyes is lookin' on hell in here tonight—de everlasting torment of de Good Book, de fiery pit where Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego walked without scorchin' the hem of dere garments. But us in de jail house ain't sanctified like dem, O blessed ones. No, Lawd. No indeed. Us is wicked sinners, sunk in iniquity. We done stole and lied and killed our brethren and busted all de Lawd's commandments, an' now God in His wrath's layin' a heavy han' on us. When de fire come in de wing, wasn't no time to pull dem out'n dere cells—

Dey's bringin' 'em out—bringin' out my brethren—de ones I've worked with side by side in de factory, de ones I've prayed with when de Warden let me, de ones I done et supper with tonight in de mess hall—bringin' 'em out dead an' dyin' like brands plucked from de burnin'. Bringin' 'em—

What dat? You hear dat, people—all dat smashin' an' crashin'? De roof done tumbled down like de walls of Jericho. De fire blaze up ag'in, an' now dey ain't gonna pluck no more out erlive. No, suh—too late now. Dey's dyin' in dere through dem hot windows. Men dyin'—my precious ones. Thy will be done, Lawd, Thy will be done; but ef it be Your pleasure, Lawd, let this cup pass from our lips—

So it went on—terrified, passionate words peppered with Bible references and prayers for mercy. When the speaker finished, the Columbus announcers framed his talk with a border of silence, and in those few electric seconds one could almost feel the applause of a listening, unseen nation.

Columbia Broadcasting System sent the man—identified to us only by his prison number—a check for \$500, but the prison authorities returned it. Then we sent it back made out to the Warden, with the request that he cash it and deposit the money at interest as a fund for the unknown broadcaster, if he should ever get out of jail. I hope he's out now.

That broadcast was an immense news scoop for us. We began crowing about it in our advertising, though more to make headway against National Broadcasting Co. than to show up the press. But the newspapers took umbrage at our cocky attitude, and from that moment began to belt radio at every opportunity. We were already cutting in on the advertising and now seemed to be trying to muscle in on the news prerogative as well. Ill feeling grew on both sides until the rift was wide open.

We were a brash, young outfit with new blood, grabbing off a lot of new money, and we were going places. But in the annual compilation in 1928 of the blue-ribbon radio events, Columbia took all the honors. We had everything to gain and little to lose, while N.B.C., now a hoary radio veteran at least

six years old, had its dignity to maintain. We hadn't yet equaled N.B.C. in prestige and grandeur, but we had passed it in reporting news and sports.

Just at the end of the year, William S. Paley, a young, rich and brilliant business executive, bought the Columbia Broadcasting chain and became its president. He picked up all the loose ends we had left, completely reorganized the company, increased its personnel and bought Station WABC outright. Now we could operate our originating station all day and night without conflicting with programs on time leased by others. It was the beginning of a new era.



EIGHT: THE BIG YEAR



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BIG YEAR

1929! So FAR AS radio is concerned that year ought to be haloed every time it appears in print. That was the year in which radio took its most dramatic place.

It was the year in which short waves began pounding in from Europe with any degree of regularity and pounding out of the United States to Europe, to Africa, to South America, to Australia, to Labrador and Alaska, to China. The international broadcast became common. Manhattan's bumpy spine bristled like the fretful porcupine with aerial poles, and the roof surfaces of all other cities were equally unkempt.

Plug-in, cabinet receiving sets, with encased speakers, were sweeping all other types off the market. The sale of these expensive pieces of furniture—by the million, on easy terms—had a lot to do with the wild prosperity of that final year of the Coolidge-Hoover boom. A survey in 1928—the boys were always making surveys in those days and drawing impressive charts for prospective radio advertisers—showed 9,000,000 sets in American homes. By the end of 1929 there must have been twice that number.

That year, too, programs reached high in the artistic world. Big names of the stage, screen and concert platforms began to appear in the broadcast schedules. With symphony orchestras broadcasting Beethoven and eminent clergymen starting



"churches of the air," the most finical artists could no longer look on radio as a cheap toy. As a result, delights undreamed of by the masses, music, drama, comedy, romance, travel, enlightenment of every sort—in a word (consulting my Webster), culture, pressed down and running over—began to flow freely from early morning till late night alike into the hovels of Pittsburgh steel workers and the mansions of Southampton millionaires. Radio became the Fifth Estate.

Set manufacturers were first to improve the quality of radio entertainment, just as they were the earliest big buyers of station time. As the stark novelty of reception wore off, there was a short lull in radio expansion, as the blasé set-owners yawned at the amateur offerings broadcast for their amusement. Set-makers had most immediately to gain by restoring the attractiveness of contrived broadcasting, and it became easy for the studios to sell them good programs. Atwater-Kent, Philco, Victor, Brunswick and several others were the first to sponsor "hours" that gained fame through their artistic merit. Those entertainments, starting about 1925, enormously increased the popularity of tuning in.

When general business followed radio manufacture on the air, it was forced to adopt a similar course. The advertiser found himself competing with other high-class programs, sometimes simultaneously, and unless he provided appetizing fodder he could not hold an audience for his advertising message. The radio auditorium has the easiest exit of any amusement house in the world—a simple turn of the dial. So the artistic standard automatically built up, until today the salaries of radio stars make small change of the fabled stipends paid in Hollywood.

And to me this is one of the wonders of radio—the new setup it has made of the national stage. Names like Kate Smith,

Amos 'n' Andy, Jessica Dragonette, Stoopnagle and Budd—all radio products and a development of half a dozen years—are household words throughout the United States. Radio takes an obscure two-a-day comedian like Joe Penner and turns him into an entertainment Titan drawing \$13,000 for a single broadcast—and worth it, too, because of his listener-following. Radio takes a Brooklyn sub-editor and makes him, next to President Roosevelt, the most influential thinker in the United States. Horace Greeley, Henry Watterson—none of the great editorial personages in our history had one-tenth of the influence of H. V. Kaltenborn has over American public opinion.

And if, as it is said, invention is to add to radio another improvement whereby the listener can touch a button on his set and register his reaction to any program or proposition on the air—a vote to be recorded in the central broadcasting stations and automatically counted with millions of others within a few moments of time—then the public will become even more sensitive to radio influence. The whole population may become a single company gathered into one hall and swaying to the tides running through its mass psychology.

It took the news and sports broadcasts, however, to put radio over the top commercially. Though the set and tube makers with their improving programs made the public radio-conscious, conservative business still regarded radio as a luxury and a public plaything and held off. The news broadcasts of 1928—the conventions, Al Smith's "raddio" talks, and the election returns—demonstrated to Big Business how vital a thing broadcasting had become in the national life. Then the broadcasting companies began putting on intensive sales campaigns and simply mowing down the prospects. The biggest companies in America fell into line, programs became more notable

both in quality and variety, and it became hard to find any unoccupied time on the air.

Columbia Broadcasting System can underscore 1929, for that year established it as a permanent American institution. During the year it remodeled and occupied its own building—on Madison Avenue at 52nd Street. We left behind in Steinway Hall an inadequate set of smelly, unventilated studios—merely office rooms hung with monkscloth for sound-dampening. We moved into studios built by ventilation and insulation engineers and specialized in size and shape for all broadcasting's purposes. We had studios for auditions, studios for rehearsals, studios for simultaneous programs being sent to regional networks. We had studios with live ends and dead ends (referring to their sound-swallowing properties) and the suspended mikes traveled along ceiling trolleys.

N.B.C., of course, was making similar physical progress. America learned the technical art of program transmission much more quickly than other countries. Foreign radio engineers used to come to study our methods, marveling at the perfection of our broadcasts.

To me 1929 will always be The Year When Everything Broke for Ted Husing. That year I handled my first World's Series alone. I had my best football season. I broadcast my first Kentucky Derby and put international polo on a big network for the first time. I announced the funniest and most exciting prizefight I have ever witnessed—a fight which today, because of the peculiar circumstances in which it was fought, is known to sports editors only by hearsay. I kept an exclusive hold on tennis. There wasn't a national sport I didn't touch.

As a starter for the year I broadcast the Army-Stanford and East-West football games for charity—Columbia's first gesture

in putting Pacific Coast sports on the air. In addition to my sports broadcasts, I broke in on such news events as New York's civic welcome to Captain Fried after the first thrilling rescue he made at sea, and was the announcer for several big commercial hours.

1929 marked the début of Paul Whiteman as a radio star. Whiteman, a sensitive artist, was one of those who had been prejudiced against radio. Before 1929 he had taken part in perhaps half a dozen sporadic broadcasts and that was all. Then he accepted the Old Gold cigarette program, and I introduced him at his first concert as a regular feature on a big network.

More than any other man, Paul Whiteman is responsible for the present method of orchestral playing of popular music. Before his day, a broadcasting band played melodies exactly as they were written. Whiteman took jazz and dance music and made it symphonic, besides putting in variations in rhythm. This development kept on until all the best orchestras were playing in what is now called "advance style"—that is, the melody oozes out against very simple but intricate-sounding rhythms in the accompaniment, and rhythm contrasts are used to supplement the classical beauties of contrasts in key modulations, and between major and minor. It takes fine musicianship to do this successfully, but the bands on our commercial programs have attracted the best musicians in the world.

And here is a good place to explain how singing has kept pace with this evolution. A singer on the air today tries to put into his rendition of a song what is called "lick." Lick means a liberty taken with a song as written, usually a liberty with its tempo, which further contrasts with the rhythm variations being played by the orchestra. In other words, the

singers put into their voices what the players put into their instruments. The public, though it may not know it, is now very lick-conscious, and if it wants to measure how much, it has only to listen to some of the singers on the present amateur-night hours—a time-honored radio entertainment which has lately been revived to make a 1935 Roman holiday for listeners. If the singer lacks lick, his song sounds wooden and dead. Bing Crosby is a good example of lick singing, as are also all the crooners.

Familiar as this type of music has become to us now after five years, it fell on the delighted ears of 1929 with a charm that was thrilling. After a few months on the air Paul Whiteman had become a national personage so famous and popular that he and his band were engaged to go to Hollywood to make one of the first musical pictures—"The King of Jazz." The sponsor of the cigarette hour got behind it and supplied a ten-car special train. In that we traveled leisurely to the Coast, giving concerts in 17 cities and broadcasting them either locally or on the hookup. Flamboyant billing preceded us everywhere, and the whole thing was a big stunt—the first program troupe ever to travel, tapping the circuit from city to city and giving its sponsored broadcasts. On that trip I fulfilled my promise made quietly to myself when I was an Iowa farmhand. I came back in state.

Out on the Coast there was plenty of excitement for us. We discovered at once that we would have to have automobiles, and the boys made a rush for the new Fords that had succeeded the old Model T cars. It may have been the distances one had to cover to get anywhere around Hollywood, but the Whiteman gang, fresh from the congested East, began to think it was a collection of Barney Oldfields. Bing Crosby, an unknown youngster with a pleasing voice, then a member of

Whiteman's male trio, was the wildest of the lot, in jail half the time on charges of reckless driving. It kept us busy bailing him out. Naturally, with such driving there were plenty of accidents. In one of them Mario Perry, our accordionist, was killed, while another mishap on the road sent one of our musicians to the hospital badly injured. One night we gave a concert in a Los Angeles hall that was having labor troubles and was picketed. In the midst of the recital the lights went out, somebody having cut the wires.

Sound pictures were then in their infancy, and we found after all that the studios weren't ready yet to begin shooting "The King of Jazz." Paul Whiteman decided to go on with his concert tour in the special train. This was more than I had contracted for. I was due back home to broadcast the Poughkeepsie Regatta—in fact, would have to fly back in order to be on time. We had to have an announcer, though, on the Whiteman train, and nobody could be spared from our California stations.

I looked around and found an inexperienced kid who, after an audition, I thought would do. His name was Harry Von Zell. I coached him in the Old Gold routine, and he did very well on the tour. Harry is now at WABC in New York and has become one of the biggest shots in the Columbia Broadcasting System, that rare find, an all-round announcer. In fact, all-round announcers—men who can conduct studio programs, put over an advertising message impressively, announce a musical concert, jump out and cover a news event, fill a broadcasting gap with interesting extemporization, broadcast a sporting event satisfactorily, and act as stooges for comedians with contributory clowning are so hard to get that radio now trains its voices to specialize. There are a few, however, who are good in every department of broadcasting

like Graham McNamee and Ernie Smith, of San Francisco.

Some weeks before the start of the Paul Whiteman tour, I had helped broadcast the Hoover Inauguration, an event that might pass here with that statement alone, except for an incident that occurred in its course. I was stationed outside the White House that day. As the Coolidges appeared in the front portico, leaving the White House for the last time, the upper windows of the mansion were full of the heads of the household servants, some of them in tears. The silk-hatted head of the ex-President kept straight ahead; but the lady who had graciously presided over America's First Home for nearly eight years turned clear around in the open carriage, saw the retainers in the windows, and waved goodbye to them all—her last gesture in official life.

As an observer of this touching bit of color, I naturally described it into the mike but thought no more about it until next day. Then letters of appreciation began pouring in to me and C.B.S., many from women who wrote that they had cried when they heard the description. To this day I meet people who remember me chiefly by that broadcast.

The Hoover Inaugural was really the first of the modern big-time news broadcasts. The Harding Inauguration occurred in the year one B.B.C.—Before Broadcasting. Two announcers covered the Coolidge Inaugural single-handed—Norman Brokenshire for WJZ and Graham McNamee for WEA. McNamee and Brokenshire, who is Canadian by birth, are the only announcers who have worked at three Presidential inaugurations.

In 1925 Mr. Brokenshire had two assistants with him in Washington and five engineers, or control men. In 1929 C.B.S. had seven announcers and fifteen others to cover the

inauguration of President Hoover. Four years later our inauguration staff numbered 65—15 announcers, 35 engineers, 5 special men, and numerous publicity people and staff employees. On that occasion Columbia picked up Mr. Roosevelt as he got out of bed in the morning and never let him get out of sight of some man with a mike until midnight, after the Inaugural Ball. In the processions up and down Pennsylvania Avenue Mr. Kaltenborn followed the new President in a car equipped with a short-wave sending equipment, and we had ground men posted along the entire route, even in the Capitol corridors. I broadcast the entire Inaugural Parade that year, and afterwards covered the Ball.

Early in August, 1929, the *Graf Zeppelin* came over on her second visit. The broadcast of that event seemed to have a peculiar fatality for the announcers who took part in it. The National Broadcasting Co. had three men on the job. Two of them—John B. Daniel and Bill Lynch—died of appendicitis shortly afterwards. I came down with appendicitis myself but made a recovery. The third man of the N.B.C. trio was Floyd Gibbons, who brought out for the first time in our radio history the one-man portable short-wave transmitter, carrying the electrical apparatus in a pack on his back and holding the mike in his hand.

We used two men to cover the *Graf's* arrival. I had to start in a hurry for Lakehurst, and for an assistant I picked up a young studio announcer named Frank Knight, just then breaking into radio. As we drove down through New Jersey I discovered that he couldn't extemporize. It was too late then to make any change, so all the way down I urged Frank to remember to observe just one thing at the field that might strike his interest or fancy. Then, whenever I threw over the mike to him—I only needed him to hold the air while I would



be going from one of our broadcasting posts to another—he could tell about that thing, making certain to tell about it differently each time. If he could do that, I thought we'd get by.

We reached Lakehurst at midnight, and the first thing that attracted Frank Knight's attention were the red lights outlining the roof of the giant hangar. There was his subject—the red lights. Anybody could talk about red lights. Frank took his station up on the roof, while I covered every spot on the field which our engineers had miked. In the intervals when I was off the air, Frank expatiated about the wonders of the red lights. By studio check I broadcast for two hundred minutes—over three hours—that night between midnight and morning, the rest of the time being occupied by Frank's eulogiums on ruby illumination. We took some gentle kidding afterwards in the radio columns. Frank Knight is now a brilliant announcer though he is weak on extemporization.

Competition between the two big networks had by then grown so keen that the boys out on the news assignments weren't above a bit of trickiness now and then. As soon as I had met my N.B.C. rivals at Lakehurst, I realized that I had one advantage. I was the only announcer on the job who could speak German. As soon as the great airship was moored, there was a rush of reporters, photographers and radio people to get Count Eckener, the ship's commander. For the interview we led him into the hangar, where the photographers and news-reel men had set up their equipments. A fast one flashed into my head. In German, which my colleagues could not understand, I told the Count that the camera people wanted him to take off his cap. As a convenient hook for it, I indicated the N.B.C. mike.

Then, as flashlights went off and news-reel men ground, everybody fired questions at Count Eckener, who replied in

such English as he could command. But for five minutes Columbia had this crucial part of the broadcast exclusively. Until it was discovered by a disgusted opposition, the eminent commander's water-tight and nearly sound-proof nautical cap had blanked the N.B.C. reception.





NINE: A HOSS RACE AND LIGHT'S JUBILEE



## CHAPTER IX

### A HOSS RACE AND LIGHT'S JUBILEE

SHORTLY before the start of the Whiteman tour, I was sent out to Louisville to cover the running of the Kentucky Derby. I didn't know anything about racing then, for I'd only seen a few races in my life and hardly knew a horse from a heifer. But by this time Mr. Paley, the head of the C.B.S., thought I could handle anything in sports broadcasting and sent me out over my rather weak protest. The race attracted a lot of attention that year. Louisville was jammed with visitors, and both broadcasting systems sent staffs to cover the blue-ribbon event. National Broadcasting had fourteen men at the track; the C.B.S. staff consisted of me.

It was a rainy day, the track four inches deep with mud. A horse named Blue Larkspur was the hot favorite to win, though the bad racing conditions might cause an upset. As the thoroughbred runners were paraded past the stands I made an effort to fix them all clearly in my mind so that, if they came home in a bunch, I could tell them apart. My point of observation, from which I had to describe the start, the race itself, and the finish, was a cupola 150 yards from the wire. Near me was the chief N.B.C. broadcaster, Clem McCarthy, the best racing man on the air. He was to give only the struggle of the race itself. The start was handled by an N.B.C. man stationed right at the barrier; and as the horses passed our

booth McCarthy was to turn the finish over to an assistant at the wire.

I'm willing to admit that McCarthy did a better job than I in describing that race, but mine apparently got by. Up until almost the end of the race it looked as if Blue Larkspur might win. But the favorite tired in the mud and was overhauled on the stretch by a horse named Clyde Van Dusen—thank heaven I identified him correctly!—who flashed past us in the lead and got under the wire first. But remember, the Kentucky money was on Blue Larkspur—and the local N.B.C. announcer at the finish line was a rabid race fan. In the excitement of the moment he named Blue Larkspur as the winner.

In his office in New York Mr. Paley, president of C.B.S., was entertaining some friends at a Derby broadcast party. Two loud-speakers in the room brought in both descriptions, ours and the opposition's. Before the race started Mr. Paley kept bragging about me.

"That boy can do anything in the sports line," he told his friends. "Now you listen to his description. He's never seen a race before in his life, and he's up against an army of experts at the N.B.C. mikes, but I'll bet two to one our broadcast is as good as theirs, if not better."

The race started, and at the end the party in New York heard the running description come from our speaker about as follows:

". . . They're rounding into the stretch now. Larkspur seems to be tiring. They're bunching up. They're in the stretch, and a big horse is coming fast up the outside. Still in a bunch—too far yet to see—that big horse is closing the gap—it's—it's Clyde Van Dusen. Clyde Van Dusen is challenging the favorite now. They're neck and neck—thundering down at us through the mud. Boy, what a race! What a

finish! Van Dusen is out ahead now—half a length—ONE LENGTH as they pass here. A hundred yards yet—Larkspur dropping back—it looks sure for Van Dusen—they're over—AND CLYDE VAN DUSEN WINS THE DERBY!"

At the same moment from the N.B.C. speaker came the words: "BLUE LARKSPUR WINS!"

The shout of laughter that went up in Mr. Paley's office drowned out N.B.C.'s instant correction. The boss was a good sport about it, though. He sent me a quick wire: "Sorry about the finish. You did a swell job, kid, up to that point." Then, when the razzing died down, they were all stunned to hear both speakers describe the presentation of the winner's wreath not to Blue Larkspur but to Clyde Van Dusen.

On the night before that historic Derby I broadcast from a Louisville arena the craziest prizefight it's ever been my privilege to see. We arranged only at the last minute to cover it, I don't know why—a hunch, maybe, or maybe I was just lonesome in a strange town and wanted to do something to pass the evening. The main bout came on so late that only the southern and western parts of our network heard it.

But that fight—between the champion Mickey Walker and a young light-heavyweight named Paul Swiderski—turned out to be a honey! The broadcast even inspired a Dixie poet to lisp in numbers, and I have in my archives the script of the ballad he wrote from my excited description of the battle over the air. As originally scheduled, Walker was to be pitted against the middleweight Al Friedman, but Friedman broke his hand in training and kicked out. In order not to lose the sucker money in the race crowd, Swiderski was substituted for Friedman, a match that was to be just one of "Those Things," Swiderski having been a former sparring partner in Walker's camp and a push-over for him. The sucker money,



however, wasn't so easy. There had been an advance sale of 9,000 tickets for the Walker-Friedman embroglio. When Swiderski was named, 3,000 ducat-holders canceled.

A lot of bad blood had been stirred up in Louisville during the preliminary negotiations for the fight. Jack Kearns, Walker's manager, came on and attempted to tell the local hicks where to head in. There was a quarrel over the referee. Kearns threatened to call the bout off unless he could name his own referee. The Kentucky Boxing Commission stepped in, insisted on the original choice for referee, and warned Kearns that unless he put his boy in the ring on the scheduled evening, Walker would be blacklisted as a fighter in Kentucky. In the midst of this turmoil Walker notoriously broke training.

So it was a pretty smelly mess all around. As a fight, the Walker-Swiderski affair didn't look worth broadcasting, but there seemed a good prospect that the evening might wind up with a lynching.

When the main bout started the house was only about half full. Mickey Walker may have been sore at the attendance, for as soon as the boys shook hands and the bell started Round 1, he aimed a K.O. at Swiderski's chin. Swiderski, too, seemed peevish, for simultaneously he swung a wide one at Mickey's head. Both missed, both whirled clear around, and at the second swing both connected. Both went down cold. Swiderski came up groggily at the count of six. Mickey took nine, and even then only what is called fighting instinct brought him to his feet. If ever a boxer was unconscious but mechanically going through the motions of fighting, it was Mickey Walker during the rest of that round and part of the next.

Seeing his advantage, Swiderski tore into the champion mercilessly. Worse than mercilessly—fouly. Walker went

down a second time, and his opponent deliberately fouled him as he lay on the canvas. Walker came up again only to be floored a third time, and once more fouled. Up again—down—and another foul. Ringsiders yelled with rage at the referee, but that official closed his eyes to Swiderski's tactics. Anything went. Walker was in bad with Kentucky boxing, and it was evident that Swiderski was being permitted to finish him in any way he chose.

That fourth knockdown was legally curtains for Mickey. He was clear out that time; but Teddy Hayes, one of his seconds, sneaked around and rang the bell, ending the round twenty seconds too soon and saving his principal. The time-keeper's yelp was lost in the general excitement. During the entire round the interior of the arena had been one solid yell. In the uproar, the premature bell was not heard. When the crowd saw Mickey's seconds dragging him back to his corner and the referee waving Swiderski's to his, indicating that the fight would go on, the attendance started as one colonel for the ring.

In a minute they were swarming all over us at the ringside and packing into the roped enclosure, being held off the fighters themselves only by the slugging fists of the handlers. A riot promptly started, the lynching seemed at hand. A squad of big Louisville bulls *armed with machine guns* then forced its way into the ring and began to clear it. I said machine guns. They were plenty prepared for trouble that night. All the time I was barking hysterically into the mike. You can imagine my broadcast. This was probably the most exciting fight there had ever been.

Even the respite granted him by the riot was not enough for Mickey Walker. As he came out for the second session, his eyes were still glassy and dead. Wham! Down he went once

more. A count of nine, then he pulled himself to his feet. It was a slaughter, as Mickey had no defense to put up. Thud! Again a knock-down. This time, as Walker fell, Swiderski either hit, kneed, or kicked him on the back of his head, and the jar jolted his wits into a functioning combination. His eyes cleared as he got to his feet, and enough of his science returned to him to hold Swiderski off as he swayed around the ring, blinking like a man who had just waked up in a strange room. His eyes fastened on me and seemed to plead with me to tell him what had happened. Standing up in my place, I leaned over into the ring and, pretending to be broadcasting, yelled at Mickey:

“Walker has now been knocked down six times in two rounds and fouled every time.”

Comprehension came to the battered champ. He nodded his thanks and then slowly winked one puffy eye at me. Then he started in on his adversary. Next time it was Swiderski who hit the canvas, but Mickey hadn't gathered enough strength to finish him in that round. It seemed, though, to be only a question of minutes until he did.

But meanwhile something else had happened. Our frantic broadcast, and the tumult that went over the air between rounds, had started taxis buzzing away from every hotel and boarding house in Louisville. Cash customers were milling up to the doors of the fight arena, anxious to see even the end of this Homeric set-to. The word was tipped to Mickey Walker, who had an interest in the gate receipts, and he began stalling. By Round 8 he had Swiderski begging him to hit only on his chest, where it didn't hurt so much—and the crowd had increased by 5,000 paying guests. Mickey gave the late comers a couple of exhibition rounds and then wound it up with a knockout.

For me, the great radio event of 1929 was our broadcast of the Golden Jubilee of Light. The Golden Jubilee of Light—luscious name, fragrant with the poetry of a public relations counsel's imagination!—purported to be a great, national, spontaneous shout of acclaim for the fiftieth anniversary of Edison's discovery of the electric lamp. Really, it was a General Electric publicity stunt hatched in the brain of Edward L. Bernays. I've seen a few press-agent feats in my time, but this was tops, enlisting the unwitting services of the President himself and even drawing from the Postoffice a special issue of commemorative stamps.

With President Hoover and the hierarchy of American industry taking part, it was nothing that either press or radio could laugh off. The celebration itself—though the whole nation was supposed to be holding the thought for Mazda lamps, etc.—was billed to take place in "Greenfield Village," that outdoor museum of the early American scene built at Dearborn, Mich., by Henry Ford. There, to match his Faneuil Hall and other replicas of historical American buildings, Mr. Ford had put up for the celebration a reproduction of Edison's original laboratory in Menlo Park, in which it was proposed that old Mr. Edison should re-enact his discovery.

Until it was ready to send out a staff to cover this entertaining event, Columbia Broadcasting System was unaware that the National Broadcasting Company had sewed up the whole celebration exclusively for itself. N.B.C. was closely linked to General Electric through its chain station at Schenectady, and Mr. Edison's two camping and fishing cronies, Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone, both had commercial programs on N.B.C. time. Our people were completely blocked out. We couldn't even get an accurate time schedule of the celebration in New York. It was a dirty trick they were playing on us.

It's always a dirty trick when the opposition pulls it; when *you* slip over a fast one, that's just ingenuity.

I had been out on the road three weeks, shuttling between Philadelphia and Chicago to broadcast the Cubs-Athletics World's Series and handling a couple of football games afterwards. A wire from New York brought me and my control engineer, Jack Norton, in a hurry to Detroit, where we met Herb Glover, C.B.S.'s director of news broadcasts, who had rushed out from New York to help. In Dearborn we found ourselves up against a stone wall, but we squawked so hard that finally we got consent to mike Greenfield Village, if we wanted to. O.K., then where should we put our mikes? What was going to happen? Well, that was up to us to find out, wasn't it?

No cooperation! The three of us started snooping around to see what N.B.C. was doing. I was prowling through one of the buildings when I noticed on a table a stapled sheaf of typewritten pages. It was N.B.C.'s continuity, timed to the second, evidently left there for a moment by one of their engineers. I slipped this under my vest, collected Herb and Jack, and we raced to a hotel. In an hour we had our own continuity, paraphrased from the opposition's script.

We knew now the order of events and where to place mikes, but at once found ourselves facing new difficulties. We were welcome to all the outside stuff—the chimes in the steeple of Faneuil Hall and any part of the celebration taking place out of doors—but we couldn't mike either the Menlo Park laboratory or the banquet room in Faneuil Hall. Since the most important parts of the program were to occur in those two places—the discovery of electric light in one, President Hoover's address in the other—we were still as good as out.

We put up an awful bleat. They couldn't cut a national net-

work out from broadcasting a public speech by the President, etc. Finally, we threatened so many injunctions and mandamuses, the Jubilee managers yielded so far as the banquet room was concerned, but they were adamant about the laboratory. The President wasn't going to speak there, and N.B.C. should have it exclusively.

It was almost the end of the afternoon on the day before the celebration when we finally started our wiring. It was too late then to get out material from Detroit, and we used anything we could find on the spot—even fence wire. After we saw this job under way, Herb Glover and I went in to Detroit, leaving Jack Norton in charge. Late that evening Jack phoned in a new SOS. When he had attempted to put his mikes into the banquet hall, he'd been stopped again. Anything less than silver microphones were beneath the dignity of the President of the United States. N.B.C. had installed silver ones, he'd been informed, and we'd have to do likewise or lose the President's broadcast.

We didn't have a silver mike nearer than New York. There was only one chance. Interrupting a midnight dance program from our Detroit station, we broadcast an appeal for platers who could do an emergency silver job. Before morning we had twenty responses. Just before the banquet started next evening, we put our mikes on the President's table—literally dripping from the plating bath, but silvered.

Graham McNamee headed the N.B.C. forces next day at Greenfield Village. We were able to broadcast the scattered daytime events shoulder to shoulder with the opposition, having a script identically timed with theirs. But where they had the jump on us was in the coming laboratory scene, though we didn't intend to be beaten on that, either, if we could help it. During the day I had to find time to rent a tux in Detroit for

myself to be able to appear at the banquet. To make things worse, it began to rain in the afternoon, a slow, cold, soaking drizzle.

President Hoover was due to arrive in the village at dusk, when the discovery play would start in the laboratory. He had been on a speech-making tour of the Ohio Valley, and with his party Columbia had its Washington commentator, Frederick William Wile. As part of the ceremony, the village was to be left unlighted, except by candles, until Mr. Edison's experimental lamp came to life. Then all the lights would come on, and the power would start Faneuil's bells ringing in the new era of illumination.

The President, however, was delayed, and Mr. Edison started the laboratory program without him. The interior of the laboratory was dimly lighted with candles, under one of which stood Graham McNamee and his mike, apparently having the place to himself. He didn't know that C.B.S. was also broadcasting the rites simultaneously. We had tipped an employee to lower one of the laboratory windows a little from the top. Then we had propped ladders against the building outside and run a wire to them. I was on one of the ladders looking into the laboratory. On the other stood Jack Norton holding an umbrella over me and the mike and pointing the beam of a flash lamp down on my continuity script. I couldn't hear anything that was going on inside, but I kept watching McNamee. Every time he turned a page, I did. If I beat him to the bottom of one, I stalled and waited for him. If he beat me, I skipped.

Finally Mr. Edison got cold or impatient or something—or maybe the old man just thought it was all hokum anyhow. Suddenly he up and pulled a switch and turned on all the outer lights in the village, leaving the candlelight era only in

the laboratory for President Hoover to see. At once the Faneuil bells began to ring, almost splitting Herb Glover's eardrums. He'd gone up in the steeple to give a last look at our mike up there. I jumped straight over in my continuity to the climax, throwing the mike to the bells and jumping it back to myself again to proclaim the Birth of Electric Illumination, while poor Graham, unaware of what was going on outside, was still broadcasting in the Dark Ages. Then the President came, and the laboratory ceremony was completed.

Meanwhile, I'd stopped broadcasting. We'd arranged in advance for Mr. Wile to give a fifteen-minute radio résumé of the President's day as soon as he reached Greenfield Village and the laboratory scene was over, having set up a mike for this purpose in the back of the banquet hall. I shinned down my ladder and went to Faneuil Hall to see how that broadcast was going. The drama of electric lighting was to be repeated there as a banquet stunt, and that room was still illuminated only by candles when I arrived. Mr. Wile had evidently had trouble trying to read his script, for Herb Glover had taken a candle from a wall sconce and was holding it up behind our news commentator's shoulder.

Near them was standing an inconspicuous, retiring sort of man—about the type Victor Moore could play—who was evidently much interested. Finally he made bold to speak to Herb.

"Is he—ah—," he whispered, "broadcasting?"

Herb nodded. "Frederick William Wile," he whispered back.

"May I stand here and watch?" requested the diffident gentleman. "I'll be very quiet."

"That's all right," Herb gave permission. But Herb was worrying about those silver mikes on the speakers' table—they'd



just been installed. "I tell you," he whispered to the stranger, "would you mind holding this candle up for him? I've got some other things to look after."

"Not at all," said the retiring man with a look of pleasure. "Very glad to do it."

Herb peeled some candle grease off his wrist, and he and I went to inspect the microphones. When we returned, Wile was just finishing.

"Much obliged," Herb said, taking the candle from the stranger. "I guess you got some grease on your coat, though."

"It does seem to be spotted, doesn't it?" agreed the gentleman, scratching at a hardened drop of candle wax on his dinner-jacket sleeve.

"My name's Glover," said Herb, handing out his card. "Columbia Broadcasting System. Next time you're in New York, drop in and see me, and I'll show you a big studio broadcast."

"Thank you, very much," answered the gentleman. "Here's mine, too."

Herb took it and shoved it into his breast pocket. Then I took Mr. Wile's mike and began ad libbing the banquet preliminaries, pending the President's arrival.

Late that night Herb and I sat in a Detroit hotel, patting each other on the back. We'd got away with it, broadcast the whole Golden Jubilee of Light, and even beaten the opposition to one important phase of it.

"Ho-hum!" yawned Herb. "These big business shots out here are pretty hick, if you ask me."

"So what?" I said.

"That guy who held the candle for Wile," he explained. "I bet he never saw a mike before in his life."

"It was a big treat for him, all right," I agreed.

"Some baby-buggy manufacturer from Grand Rapids, I bet," scorned Herb. "Or maybe sewing machines."

"I bet his missus will have something to say," I observed, "when she sees that candle grease on his best suit."

"Wonder who he is, anyhow," mused Herb. "Nice accommodating fellow. I'll be seeing him, though. He'll be in some day to watch a program."

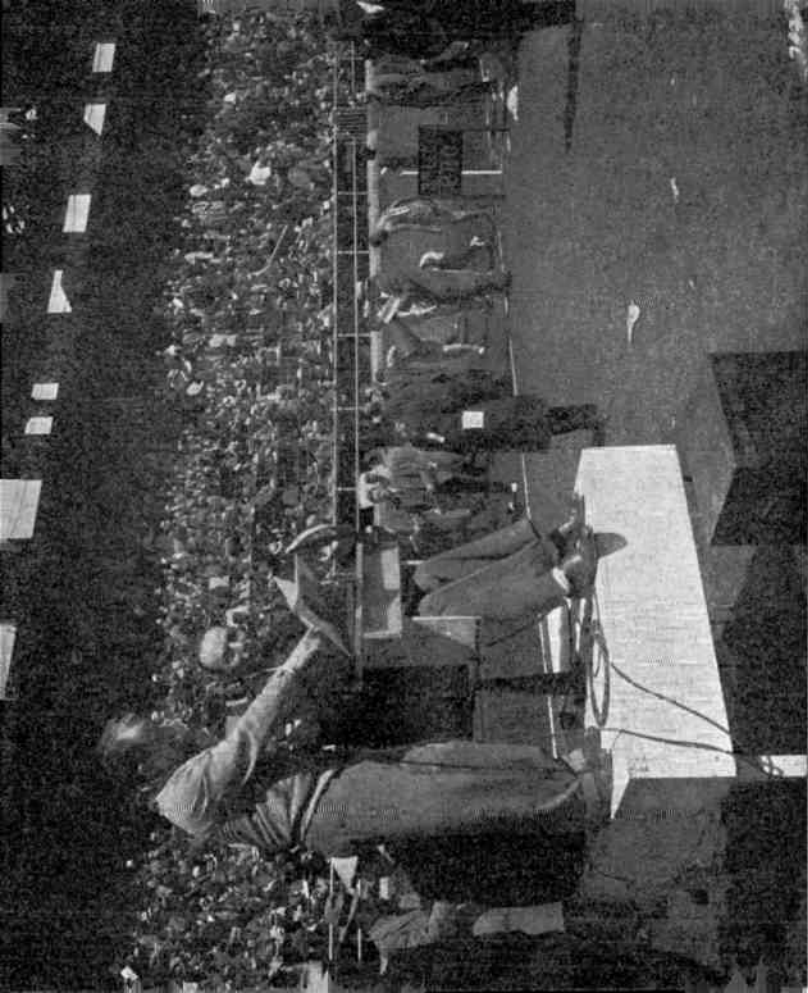
"He gave you his card, didn't he?" I said.

"That's right." Herb explored his pocket and brought out the card. He looked at it, then stared at it, then without a word handed it to me.

I read: "John D. Rockefeller, Jr."

Even then he had approved the project and was buying the site for Radio City!





TEN: ROCKNE AND SPORTS BROADCASTING



## CHAPTER X

### ROCKNE AND SPORTS BROADCASTING

TO ME 1935 isn't just another year. It's my tenth anniversary as a sports broadcaster. It was on Thanksgiving Day, 1925, that Major Andy White took me with him over to Philadelphia to help him handle the Penn-Cornell football game over the embryonic N.B.C. network, and I got a first giddy taste of describing a sporting event to an absent audience.

What a pageant of crowds, champions and heroic deeds unrolls in my memory from that day to this! From my booth above bowl and stadium, field, racecourse and the black cinders, I try to pick out the greatest thrills I have had by some number—five, ten, or what have you? I can't do it. I've had fifty greatest thrills—a hundred. Believe you me, by rights I'm dead of heart failure right now.

So I'm going to confine myself to unique experiences as a radio observer of sports—times when the unprecedented happening drove the crowds crazy, when the zillion-to-one shot came through. I'll start with the most exciting half-hour of sports broadcasting I ever knew or maybe ever will know. It was at the Poughkeepsie Regatta in the spring of 1929. Nine crews were in the race that year—nine 8-oared shells—including that of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which had no business to be there. What did a bunch of electrical and mining engineers know about rowing? Let 'em stick to their logarithms—and local school races.

It struck me that year that it would be a fine idea to broadcast the race from the deck of a regular yacht. Thus, from an elevated and traveling point of view, I could see the agony on the faces of the crews and also the agony on all but one of the faces of the coaches, who would be on the accompanying flotilla. I sold this idea to Commodore Cunningham of Detroit, who let us come aboard his *Maid Marian*, which was the last word in modern yacht construction—100 feet long, equipped with Diesel engines, and everything else. If she had a fault, it was that she was just a little too big to be following a crew race. Just a little too big.

We fitted out her forward deck with a short-wave set and prepared to hang a shanty on the classic optic of N.B.C., which had only Graham McNamee on a bridge three miles downstream, where he couldn't see any of the agony, even through binoculars. I say *we* literally, and not editorially, since Herb Glover, then news director for Columbia Broadcasting System, was with me. And I bring in Graham's name, because both of us announcers more or less took it on the chin that day, and I guess he won't be sore, if I give the low-down on myself, too.

Anybody who follows boat racing knows that the Poughkeepsie Regatta is the Derby of American rowing. The course is four miles long, starting at Crum Elbow and going downstream. It's a big river there—a mile wide. The crews start near the west shore, but the course soon carries them out to the middle of the river, and they stay out there until the finish. The start of the big varsity race always takes place at sundown just at the break of the tide. All the shells start from stake boats, which are rowboats tied together stem to stern in a line. In each stake boat is a boatman holding on to his particular shell by a short rope attached to its rudder. At the

starter's shout of "Row!" he lets go his rope, and the crews are off.

There was a terrific wind blowing up the river that evening, meeting the down current and kicking up a rip that promised to make trouble for the fragile racing shells. Those on the sheltered western side certainly had the best positions. M.I.T., the parvenus, had the worst place—the outside, to the east. Columbia, next to them, had wisely equipped its shell with canvas splashboards, of which, as the hick editors say, more anon. Besides the wind, a big thunderstorm was brewing off to the west. The sky was black in that direction.

We picked a good position for ourselves—right in the middle behind Stake Boat No. 5, which was Cornell's. The starter sent them off, but in a moment called them back again. A slide had come out in one of the shells, and the cox had held up his hand. Under the rules, any cox can stop a race in its first minute, if an accident occurs on his shell. Meanwhile, the heavy *Maid Marion* bore down on the Cornell stake boat. I was broadcasting the false start at the top of my lungs, forgetting that Captain Anderson in the pilot house couldn't look over the high bow at what was happening below. We were gathering speed. Herb Glover was beside me frozen with horror at the impending doom of the Cornell stake boatman.

"For God's sake, jump!" he yelled, and his words broadcast above mine.

That Cornell boy has probably grown up by now to be a big executive, if there's anything in the adage that to know how to give orders you must know how to take them. The guy certainly knew an order when he heard one. Without even looking around, he dove and came up thirty feet away, just in time to see the sharp prow of the *Maid Marian* cut his late shallop in two.



We backed out of the mess and resumed our former position. The referee's boat then came up and bawled us out. The Coast Guard boat bawled us out. The Committee boat had its word to say, and there were volunteer chiders besides. Were we unpopular? By this time they'd brought in another stake boat for Cornell, and then the crews made a good start.

We followed—a bit timidly now. Inshore, M.I.T., rowing an old Oxford shell, made good weather of it at first, and to the stupefaction of everybody actually took the lead. The step-child of the race was showing up all us experts. Out in the middle, about a mile down, however, they hit the wash and immediately rowed under. The last I remember of that crew, just their heads were sticking out of water, but the undaunted cox was yelling: "Come on, you sons of bitches, keep at it!"

Columbia now held the outside, but with splashboards managed to keep afloat. Before we reached the three-mile mark and Graham McNamee's bridge, three other crews had sunk. Columbia, being seaworthy, held the lead without trouble. Our yacht was tailing Syracuse closely, and that crew could hear every word of my description of the race. Just under the bridge Syracuse sank, too.

"Shall we stop and help you?" I yelled, for now the boats were strung out.

"On your way!" the cox retorted. "If your rescue work is anything like your broadcasting, we'd rather wait for the Coast Guard."

There was no answer to that except, "Nuts to you."

Finally the Navy sank, making six of the nine starters gone under. Columbia won easily, largely by reason of still being afloat. The two most sheltered crews also finished.

But McNamee had brought M.I.T. all the way in as the winner! In his excitement at seeing, through his glasses, these

interlopers actually take the lead, he had failed to notice that they had disappeared from the river. Knowing that their position was on the outside, he had picked up Columbia as M.I.T. and scored an astonishing radio victory for the engineers. When the surviving crews came down to his bridge, there were so many exciting things going on that Graham forgot to identify the leader.

Beside him sat a man who could have put him right—Edward J. Neil, the A. P. sports reporter, who was the first sports writer to get a mention in the Pulitzer Prize awards. But Eddie just then was peeved at Graham. Shortly before, he'd covered a prizefight for the A. P. with a blow-by-blow bulletin description as Graham broadcast the fight beside him. Graham was loud most of the time, and Neil got mixed up.

The reporter had kept breathing through his grinding teeth: "If there's any justice under heaven, I'll get even for this some time."

At the Poughkeepsie race Eddie at first had a generous impulse to slip a correction to McNamee, but then the memory of that fight curdled his milk of human kindness.

"It's Graham's story," he thought, "let him stick to it."

And Graham did.

For the most delirious football game in my broadcasting span I take you to State College, Pa., where on October 26, 1929, Penn State met its traditional rival, Lafayette. The teams that year were evenly matched. On State were two boys who formed as perfect a playing partnership as there was in college athletics—Frank Dietrich and Cooper French. The two were always spoken of together. Through prep school, and then on through freshman, sophomore and junior years at State, they had been a combination—a great infield double-play pair in baseball, a great pair of running backs in football.

But against Lafayette that day they had little chance to show their stuff. Each eleven put up such a defense that it had the other shackled. Three plunges at the line for a trifling gain and then a kick—that was the type of play. Neither side could get into the other's territory.

Then, near the end of the first quarter, Lafayette got a break. State had the ball on its own 20-yard line. Cooper French called the play. They shifted, Lasich hopping into the running position. The ball was snapped, and Lasich crashed over left tackle, fumbling as he hit the line. There was a general scramble for the ball, and Rothenberg, left end for Lafayette, fell on it. It was the Maroons' ball on State's 20-yard line, first down and ten to go. Two ineffective thrusts at the line, an incompleting pass, and the ball was still on the same spot. Lafayette lined up, shifted into a quick, place-kick formation. Tellier, the quarterback, touched it down, Cook's leg swung, and it went over for a placement. Lafayette 3, State 0.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, seemed to be the way the game would end. At the end of the third quarter Lafayette's 3 looked as big as 30. It loomed like a mountain as the clock measured off the final seconds. Penn State had once more punted out of danger, and the ball was Lafayette's on its own 27-yard line. A loss, a penalty, and the Maroons had the ball on their 17-yard line. Third and twenty to go. Then, a pip of a play—Woodfin of Lafayette took the ball, faked a wide end run, cut back and knifed through tackle for 15 yards. Another plunge, and Lafayette made its first down. Then State stiffened, three Lafayette plays gained only five yards, and they were forced to punt.

What of it? The official time showed only five seconds to play. The game was as good as over, and the crowd was moving toward the exits. The Maroons came out of their huddle

and fell into kick-formation. French and Dietrich raced down-field to be ready to receive the punt. Would the ball even get into play? Yes, it was snapped back, but almost instantly the whistle blew. In the 60 full minutes allotted to a football game, Lafayette had scored 3 points and Penn State 0.

But, though technically over, the game was not yet over legally, since the rules insist that any play started when time is called must be finished before the game officially ends. The punt came down the field, a high looper, end over end. Cooper French was waiting to take it on his own 40-yard line. He caught the ball and streaked to the right for the sidelines, the entire Lafayette team converging upon him. He eluded a couple of tacklers, but a Maroon end cut in and French left his feet.

All over now, but—nope! Just as French was tackled, he wheeled and threw a pass backward in the direction of his old palsy-walsy Frankie Dietrich. Ten yards behind, Frankie took it and scrambled for the opposite sidelines. Run ragged by such basketball tactics, the Lafayette players untangled themselves from the pile on French and took after Dietrich. But State was in the better position now. Interference formed beautifully. Frankie cut in, crossed the 40-yard line, midfield, then Lafayette's 40-yard line. At the 30-yard line his interference dumped two Maroon tacklers on the turf, then another. Dietrich dodged the final defense man, and, now in the clear, raced over for a touchdown a good half-minute after time had sounded; and a dazed Lafayette team left the field still wondering what had happened. The game they had won in technical time they had actually lost, 6 to 3; and the French-to-Dietrich backward pass from a punt after the gun ended the game still remains without parallel in football annals.

Now, a different scene—Shibe Park in Philadelphia during

the fourth game of the memorable World's Series of 1929. The Athletics had opened the series at Wrigley Field, beating the Chicago Cubs the first two games, thereby setting what now seemed to be a precedent, for the Cubs in turn had taken the first game in Philadelphia and were just breezing through the second behind the pitching of Charlie Root. He had allowed the famous Philadelphia sluggers only two hits in six innings, while his mates were hammering the Athletics' offerings to every corner of the lot. With the score 8-0 against him in the seventh, Connie Mack began feeding his second-string pitchers to the ravenous Cubs, saving Rommel for the fifth game. The fourth game was on ice for the Chicagoans.

During the intermission of the seventh inning the vast crowd stood up to rest its collective fannies and bring luck to the home team. But Connie Mack didn't need luck that day—he needed miracles. As the throng subsided, Al Simmons strolled out to the plate to open the latter half of the seventh. It was now or never for the Elephants, since, if Root could take Simmons, Foxx and Bing Miller in order, he'd have weak batters facing him in the eighth and would leave the opposition only the desperate hope of a Frank Merriwell finish in the ninth.

Slugger Al picked out the first ball Root threw up and parked it in the centerfield stands for a homer and his team's first run of the day. He got a great hand as he loped over the plate. At least Charlie Root wasn't going to shut out the Athletics. Jimmie Foxx then watched a couple go by and cracked out a clean single. Bingo Miller was up. Charlie grooved one, and Bing socked out another single. The crowd woke up. Three successive hits—one more than Root had allowed in six innings—a man on first, another on second, and the score 8-1. The Cubs' infield gathered inquiringly around

their pitcher, then went back to their positions again. Root was going to continue.

Jimmy Dykes was up next. Spank went a single for the fourth straight hit of the inning, and Foxx scored from second. Joe Boley followed with another, scoring Miller. Boy! what a rally! Score, 8 to 3 now, nobody out, and two still on the bases. Now the Cubs surrounded Root with anxiety. Evidently the pitcher thought the five hits of the inning were accidental and that he had as much stuff as ever. McCarthy, the Cubs' manager, let him keep on, but started Art Nehf warming up in the bull pen. Root carefully worked George Burns, sent in to pinch-hit for the Athletics' latest pitcher, and he popped to Woody English at short for the first out, as the yells of the fans died to a vast murmur.

Then Maxie Bishop, head of the Philadelphia batting order, came up. Crack! Another single, and Dykes scored for the fourth run. The crowd went nuts. McCarthy then yanked Charlie Root and sent in Nehf. That seemed to end the rally, for Nehf, mixing curves and a fast one, caused Mule Haas to wallop a long, high fly to Hack Wilson in center. Wilson didn't have to move from his tracks to take this one. But suddenly the fielder threw his arm over his head and ducked. He had lost the ball in the sun. When he recovered it, Boley and Bishop had scored and Haas was roosting on second, officially credited with a double. The score was now 8 to 6, and the loudest yell that ever issued from a ball field was rising from Shibe Park. Nehf was so shaken that he threw four wild ones to Mickey Cochrane, and Mickey walked. The stands were a simple bedlam. It was impossible to broadcast above the roar.

That pass finished Nehf. "Sheriff" Blake came in to replace him; and with six runs across the plate, two men on the bases

again, still only one out, and the great Simmons coming up for the second time in the inning, I wouldn't have taken his job for all the tea in China.

Simmons promptly singled, for his second hit of the inning, and Haas scored from second. Score, 8 to 7. Jimmy Foxx up again. He singled, and Cochrane ran home with the tying run. That ended Blake. McCarthy brought in Pat Malone, with a prayer to him to still the resounding bats of those Athletics, who now seemingly could hit anything. Bing Miller up. Here came Malone's first pitch. It dusted Miller's jacket, and the fielder took first base, rubbing his ribs. Now the bases were full. What a spot for Jimmy Dykes, up next! Here came the pitch, and as the crowd went mad **DYKES HIT A DOUBLE, SCORING SIMMONS AND FOXX**—and the A's were out in front, 10 to 8. Then Malone fanned Boley and Burns in order, and the greatest rally in World's Series history was at an end.

And that's the way the game ended—10 to 8. The mad onslaught of the wild riding White Elephants equaled 17 records in that big inning and broke six, and the momentum carried the Athletics on next day to win the game and the series, four games to one.

Since 1929 the years have been a kaleidoscopic panorama of scenes and events for me, studded with personalities and interwoven by the shuttle of travel by air, rail, boat and car as I popped in and out of almost every corner of the United States and adjacent islands.

Former Presidents died and were buried, a new one was nominated and elected, explorers arrived from the poles or departed for the jungles, oceanic flyers dropped in from Europe or Australia, twinkling heels flashed and set new records of the physical strength of man. It was history making itself;

some of the events real, some like *The Birth of Light* trumped up by modern publicity methods, but all of them held action and glamour for me.

Air-reporting changed. Announcers stopped screaming hysterically into their mikes and steadied down, grew more and more like newspaper reporters. Journalists like Edwin C. Hill and Lowell Thomas came into radio. With the advent of such professionals, I began concentrating on straight sports broadcasting, though never leaving the news field entirely. Lately my evolution has taken a turn toward the studios again, though now as a featured performer on commercial programs, giving sports talks, acting as stooge for comedians, and sometimes attempting to pull a little comedy myself.

Along about 1930 radio fostered a new industry—the making of speakophone records for broadcasters. The speakophone people, either on order or speculation, began taking broadcasts directly off radio-set amplifiers and registering them on phonograph discs made of an aluminum composition. They sold these to broadcasters, at first charging \$25 for a fifteen-minute recording. Later, as speakophone companies multiplied, prices dropped until they are now around \$7.50 for fifteen minutes, and a new disc material, a product of wood chemistry, has come into use.

I've invested hundreds of dollars in speakophone records myself, and nearly all regular broadcasters buy them. Whenever I have any important broadcast in prospect, I engage a speakophone company to take a record of it. These disks are highly important to me, since if I want to re-create any event of the past I have witnessed, especially a sporting event, I can listen to my own contemporary description at any time. Every advertising agency now, I think, makes speakophone records of its commercial broadcasts, sending them to their clients for



their files. In that way disputes over the details of any broadcast are avoided.

I bring in this subject here because it has a bearing on a memorable radio incident of 1930 which I am about to relate. I could not regard this account as complete without somewhere in it paying tribute to one of the grandest human beings that ever lived in this sometimes smelly world—Knut Rockne. I don't care how blue or disgusted with things you might have been, you only had to talk with Rockne a few minutes to begin feeling that life was worth while after all.

During the last few years of his life I became very well acquainted with Mr. Rockne. Though he was not a radio man, he taught me much of the radio football I know. No trouble was too great for Rockne to take to further the game he loved in any of its details. He talked with me by the hour, telling me what *he* as an expert wanted to hear in a radio broadcast of a football game, and much of the form which I take in my football broadcasts today is due to the pointers he gave me when he was alive.

In 1930 the Army and Navy resumed football relations in that famous charity game the tickets for which cost \$50 per. I thought it would be a good stunt to have Knute Rockne with me on that occasion as guest commentator. He was then out on the Coast making a series of football shorts for the movies, but I thought he was about through with them and might speed up his work a little so as to come on for the Army-Navy game. Over the long-distance phone he told me he would still have to stay some weeks in California but would come on for the game anyhow. As a sheer courtesy to me, he kept his word, flying both ways.

At the half intermission I introduced Rockne to the listeners, and he proceeded to make the most astute, accurate and alto-

gether remarkable prediction I have ever known in any sport. The first half had ended in a scoreless tie. Rockne foretold that the Army would win and named the final score—6 to 0. He said that at some time during the second half Ray Stecker, the Army back, would break away and run fifty yards for the only score of the game, and that Army would afterwards fail to convert. That was exactly what happened, and this amazing analysis of the strengths of the two teams was the last utterance of the famous coach on the air.

It sounds like one of those legends that spring up around great men after they are dead. Well, here's the point: a speakophone man in Genesee, New York, took down the talk on a disc, a duplicate of which he sent to me. After Rockne was killed, I donated this record to the U. S. Military Academy, where it is now treasured among the athletic mementoes. And so some day, when I'm stroking my long white whiskers and warming my old toes in carpet slippers, the little ones won't be able to say, when I recount the Rockne story, "Grandpa's hitting the pipe again." I'll have Rockne's own voice to prove it.

Which inspires the thought that if the Give-Me-Liberty-or-Death boys of the future want to live resoundingly on the pages of history, they'd better have a few notes on the cuff. Practically every important utterance now is made into a microphone and will be so more and more as time goes on, with speakophones making imperishable records. Henceforth we're going to know if our Ethan Allens really say "In the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress!" or just "Scram, you bums, or I'll blow the everlasting daylight out of you!"

In 1930 I carried the first portable short-wave transmission set ever used in the broadcasting of sports. At the Penn relays that year I pulled the stunt of striding beside runners and

getting panting words from them for the air audience. That drew a lot of publicity. A more practical use for the portable sender arose during the golf championships. Theretofore we had had to watch these events unsatisfactorily from fixed points. At the 1930 National Amateur (Merion, Philadelphia) I was able for the first time to follow Bobby Jones and other players about the course and describe their play stroke by stroke.

As soon as I had the portable sending set, it became my ambition to see and broadcast a "hole in one"—that ideal shot every golfer dreams about. During the big tournaments I used to plant myself at likely points, hoping that the miracle would take place while I was on the air.

Then, less than a year after the Amateur Championship at Merion, it actually happened. I saw a hole-in-one made by a sharpshooting pro, my short-wave mike was open, I'd promised the audience a thrill—and then I didn't broadcast it. The laugh was on me that time, plenty.

It was during the United States Open at the Inverness Country Club, Toledo, in 1931. For the half-hour I had on the air that afternoon I took a position beside the green of a short par-3 hole, and as the broadcast opened I announced to the listeners that they had a good chance of hearing golf history made. With the greatest shot-makers in the game having only a 165-yard pitch from tee to pin, it seemed a fair bet that some fortunate player would hole out his drive.

They were shooting that afternoon, but nobody could quite make it. I caught three or four birdie 2's in the 30 minutes I was on the air but never a hole-in-one. As shot followed shot and rolled up close or vice versa, I built up plenty of excitement. Finally my time was ending. Two players were on the green putting out, and Leo Diegel and a partner were stand-

ing on the tee. So as not to bother the putters I turned my back to them to sign off.

"Sorry, but the boys don't seem to be up to it today," I apologized.

Just then a big cheer rose all around me. I looked over my shoulder and saw that Diegel had just driven.

"That's a hand for Leo Diegel," I explained into the mike. "He's a hot favorite with the gallery. See you tomorrow. This is the Columbia Broadcasting System."

I just had time to squeeze that in. Then I turned around to watch the play for myself. The players were coming from the tee, but only one ball lay on the green. Diegel's caddie marched onto the velvet sward, picked up the flag, *and lifted the other ball out of the hole*. I kicked myself all the way back to the hotel that night.

But my time was to come. Believe you me—and I'll swear to it on a flock of Bibles—I actually did broadcast a hole-in-one once, and not an ordinary hole-in-one, either, but a premeditated one, shot with malice aforethought. My mike caught and broadcast the click of the club meeting the ball and then the taut plopping of the ball itself in the cup. What a shot! What a thrill!

Then, as I was raving, one of those fresh kids of radio—planted by me—stepped up and blatted: "Say, what's so wonderful, Husing, about a 12-inch putt?"

Sure—just a gag.

A hot July day at the Interlachen Country Club, Minneapolis, in that never-to-be-forgotten golf year of 1930 when Bobby Jones, of Atlanta, scored perhaps the only grand slam any of us will ever witness by taking all four major championships of the English-speaking world. Bobby had returned from England with the British Amateur and the British Open cups

in his baggage and now was meeting the cream of the world's professionals on the tough Interlachen course.

At the end of the first 36 holes Jones was in a dangerous position—dangerous, I mean, to the other competitors—two strokes behind Horton Smith, the Missouri pro, who was setting the pace. Then, on the morning of the final day, Bobby went out and spread-eagled the field by shooting himself a 68. Horton Smith had an indifferent morning and fell back. The title looked good for the Atlanta master.

Believe me, there never was a sporting event in our annals in which the prayers of so many fans followed a single competitor. Bobby Jones was the idol of plus-four and duffer golfers alike. He had told of his ambitions to annex all four major titles that year, and, with his goal halfway attained, the whole world hung on every stroke he made. At Interlachen almost the entire gallery followed Jones, while over the country millions of fanatics sought their homes and clubs to listen to the broadcast.

While Bobby was turning in that splintering 68 in the morning, there was a moment of the round that sprouted plenty of gray hairs on the scalps of his idolators. The ninth hole at Interlachen is a tricky bit of terrain, since a wide pond intersects the fairway. The normal play on it is a drive, a wood shot over the pond to the green, and two putts for a par 4. Bobby Jones that day was as nearly the perfect golfing machine as this world has ever seen. He even seemed to play carelessly, scarcely bothering to address the ball at all. But every shot was perfection.

His tee shot on No. 9 was a honey, giving him an excellent lie for the water carry. He marched up to the ball, pulled a spoon from his bag, merely settled into his stance, and swung. A groan went up from the gallery—the ball was badly topped.

It zoomed up, then curved down sharply like a baseball pitcher's drop, and hit into the pond. A ball dropped in there spelled doom for any close competitor at this stage of the tournament, for it meant a loss of three strokes.

Then, wonder of wonders! The hard-driven ball started skipping, like a flat stone thrown by a kid—once, twice, three times, and it was over and rolling up to the edge of the green. As nonchalantly as if he had planned the shot, the great Bobby walked around the water, floated a mashie-niblick pitch up to the hole and tapped it for his par anyhow. Luck? Yes, but a champion gets the breaks.

The tension of that morning round must have shaken even the Master's nerves, for in the afternoon—the final 18 holes—he started to slip. A slip for him, that is, shooting a round in the middle 70's. Still, his lead seemed safe until late afternoon, when word was brought that MacDonald Smith, following right behind, was burning up the course. Mac Smith had started the final 18 seven strokes behind Jones, but had been picking up a stroke every two or three holes. He now seemed sure to break 70. If Jones took a 76, Mac Smith would tie with a 69 or even win with 68. He looked capable of doing either.

Bobby got his usual good drive on the 18th and then ironed a second to the green, high and forty feet from the cup. As he came up to putt, it was reported to him that Mac Smith was just coming up to the 18th tee, one stroke behind. If Bobby took his par on 18, Smith could tie with a birdie and force a play-off.

Five thousand people were massed around the 18th green as Bobby took Calamity Jane from his caddie and surveyed the contour of the ground. The crowd scarcely breathed. Jones was really the Master then. Having satisfied himself about his

direction, he walked up to his ball and with no hesitation gave it a little tap. It started down hill, gathering speed, caught the side of a declivity and rolled off to the right, then up another slope and down again, reached level ground, lost momentum, trickled straight and true for the hole and dropped in. The yell that went up must have told Mac Smith that Jones had pulled another miracle. The pro's second shot was short, and the Open title was Bobby's.

That 40-foot putt was the greatest shot I ever saw in golf. Forty-foot puts and longer ones occur frequently in championship play, but this one *had* to be made to win, and Bobby Jones made it.

Another scene. The awning-striped marquee at Forest Hills Stadium, Long Island, on September 13, 1930, where, before an excited crowd of 13,000, we had come down to the fourth set of the final round between Johnnie Doeg and Frank X. Shields for the U. S. Amateur Tennis Championship. Doeg had conquered the once invincible Tilden the day before, being the first American to beat the Old Master in eleven years. Now Frank Shields stood as the only remaining obstacle in Doeg's path.

But it was no easy victory for Doeg over Tilden. It took him four sizzling sets to do it, fifty-eight games played in the strain of championship contention, the scores being 10-8, 6-3, 3-6, and 12-10.

Shields had been putting up a stubborn battle against Doeg, the first three sets having run to thirty-five games. The fourth set began with Shields' serving. Each player won his own service, until the set stood at nine games all. Shields nearly broke through Doeg's service in the eighteenth game, being at set point for a moment; but Johnnie held by smashing scorching volleys and saved his skin.

The set went to 10-games-all. Again Shields was one point away from breaking through Doeg's service. Then they alternated their wins regularly until the score was 14-games-all. It had become a tennis marathon. The match had run almost two hours and a half at a terrific pace. The sun was setting, the crowd growing restless. And Doeg was piling this terrific physical strain upon that of his victory over Tilden the day before!

Then came the break. Johnnie Doeg won the twenty-ninth game by breaking through Shields' service on a cross-court passing shot. He led 15-14 and needed only to hold his own service to win.

Both Shields and Doeg are giants in stature, and for hours they had been battling at top speed. When Shields finally lost his service, he seemed to be worn out on his feet, yet in the very next game he began breaking through Doeg. On Johnnie's service the score in the thirtieth game ran to 15-40 against him. Then Johnnie passed Shields with a hard smash of a lob, making the score 30-40. Another overhead smash by Doeg deuced it and left Johnnie only two points from the title. Doeg took the next point with an unreachable volley and stood at the game's set and match point. The tension in the stands was terrific.

Doeg served. They went into a rally from the base lines with deep cross-court shots. Doeg came charging up to the net, and it was as theatrical a drama as I ever saw on a tennis court. Shields, as though mesmerized, kept driving them at Doeg, but the left-handed Johnnie always got them back. Shields drove a cross-court shot, Johnnie just reached it, angled the volley and Shields couldn't make it. Doeg was champion!

What tennis! The final Doeg-Shields set ran 16-14, the longest set ever played in the finals of any American championship



tournament. In 1914, Red McLaughlin and Norman Brooks, playing a Davis Cup match, ran their first set out to 17-15 to write an all-time record in championship play, but Doeg's sixty-five games on his winning day piled upon the fifty-eight of the day before against Tilden, was a phenomenal athletic performance.

One more football memory of mine deserves its place in the list. The Notre Dame-Army game of November 30, 1930. It was the last of the Rockne-coached Notre Dame teams that year, and it hadn't lost a game. Army was weak and was not conceded a chance. But you can never tell what an Army eleven will do against the Irish. A hundred thousand damp, shivering spectators in Soldiers Field, Chicago, realized this as the cold rain drizzled down, fog obscured the vision, and, with the final quarter only five minutes yet to go, the score remained tied—0 to 0.

Then the Irish pulled their famous "perfect play." Taking the ball from Carideo and faking an end sweep, Schwartz cut back and broke through, slogging 58 yards through mud to a touchdown. Carideo converted, and the 7-0 score looked like the end. At least, the dope had justified itself, though not by the margin the experts predicted.

But it wasn't the end. Army received Notre Dame's kick, advanced the ball to its 32-yard stripe, was held there, and punted. It was a long kick, and the ball was downed on Notre Dame's 17-yard line. Two minutes to go, the fog was closing in black, and the crowd began to file out. The Army held through two line thrusts. Third and nine, punt formation for the Irish with Carideo back. Carideo kicked, but Dick King, the Army left end, blocked it abruptly. The ball went rolling back. King dived into Carideo to prevent a recovery. Trice and Price of Army were through and going back after the

ball. It rolled across the goal line, Trice dived for it as the Irish came thundering in, he slid and held it, and it was a touchdown on a blocked kick. True, Brochous failed to kick goal, but it was a moral victory for Army and one of those upsets that make sport the drama it is.





ELEVEN: PARTNER LES QUAILEY



## CHAPTER XI

### PARTNER LES QUAILEY

BY 1930 LES QUAILEY and I had teamed up to form the first, and still the only, professional sports-broadcasting partnership in radio. Between us we have studied and practiced to make the describing of athletic games and sports for the nation's loud-speakers as nearly a science as possible. Les is the eyes and pretty much the brains of the combination; I am the voice. Les is an example of the use radio may have for the poor broadcasting voice as well as the good one. His voice has a peculiar lack of carrying quality. As a result, he can speak aloud to me during a broadcast, and no home listener will hear him.

Not many radio fans, when they hear me rattling through the description of some great gridiron struggle, with 75,000 spectators massed into the stadium and a couple of million vicarious ones sitting at their loud-speakers, realize, I guess, that my broadcast is the culmination of a year of research and effort. As soon as one football season ends, Les and I begin on the next. There is not a day of the year on which we do not talk over some phase of sport or our job.

During the winter we meet and correspond with the coaches. We find out what new material is coming up, and follow the records of the more promising young players back to their high or prep schools. We take in the spring training, keep in touch with the coaches through the summer, and are

out watching early practice in the fall. Before every important game we "scout" both teams to find out what plays they have developed, their line-up formations, and so on. When they trot on the field, we know the men, their individual specialties, and their group combinations in play almost as well as if we had coached them ourselves.

But that is only background work. When the game starts, remember, we must keep on top of it all the time, which means broadcasting occasionally at a rate of 400 words a minute, and yet make as few mistakes as possible; sometimes, indeed with good fortune none! If you think it isn't easy to make mistakes, try calling a few plays yourself the next game you attend. Your seat is usually as good as mine. You may be an ardent follower of some team—know every man on it—and yet how often will you be in doubt who recovers a fumble or intercepts a pass! Your announcer has to know instantly. This may be simple enough on a dry day when the players' numbers show plainly, but what about such a game as that between Army and Navy in 1934, which was played in a sea of mud? In two minutes all 22 men were evenly coated, numbers, faces, uniforms and all, with yellow slime. Yet Les Quai-ley and I broadcast that game accurately and only occasionally even had to hesitate for an identity.

How do we do it? System. The most important item in our equipment is an electric annunciator which Les and I have worked out through the years with the aid of C.B.S. engineers. Jack Norton, my operator, has done most of the technical work on it. It is an apparatus that packs into two suitcases, one for the batteries and one for the annunciator itself. We keep the machine half-covered with a blanket or raincoat or something during broadcasts to prevent others from seeing the mechanism, no feature of which is patented. Yet there is small

danger of losing our secret. The machine has been photographed several times, and I have shown it to coaches who couldn't tell how it worked. The trick lies in its operation. Once that is explained to them, most football people think it's the nuts. Knute Rockne was a great admirer of the machine.

During that game back in 1925 when I first sat in on a football broadcast, I had tried to help Major White by writing out information on paper or by pointing with my pencil to names on the program. Either way was bad, for the paper came between the broadcaster's eyes and the playing field. Next year I brought to the broadcasts a slanting frame made of apartment-house doorbell panels. There were four slots on each side of this frame into which I dropped cards with the names of the eight players constituting the two backfields, pointing with my pencil to the ones involved in any play. For the line I had a big card on which I had pasted the names of the 14 linesmen; and if there was a substitution in the lines, I rubbed out the player supplanted and wrote in the name of his substitute.

Next year I was out on my own as an independent football broadcaster. That year I first thought of flashing lights to identify players. For the unwieldy frame I substituted a compact box with slots for name cards and red lights to illuminate them. But I only attempted that system with the four backfield players on each team. My assistant still had to point to linesmen's names and the names of tacklers.

In 1929 Les Qualey joined me. We talked football for a year and reduced the box to its simplest terms. Slots covered with ground-glass on which could be written the player's names now substituted for cards. There were 22 slots now, and a white light under each of them. Also a separate keyboard with 22 buttons controlling the lights. That is essen-



tially the annunciator we have today. The feature on which we used up the most gray matter was the arrangement of the slots. We studied and experimented for months before we agreed on a grouping that would show any play in football and give it to me vividly through light combinations that I could instantly catch out of the corner of one eye.

The other essential piece of equipment is a pair of high-power Zeiss binoculars specially made for Les Quailey in Germany. Ordinary binoculars give a round field of vision. These are lensed for an oval field and from a certain height cover twelve yards of a football field from one side-line to the other. Les, of course, works the annunciator buttons by the touch system, holding his eyes always on the game. But both of us during a broadcast keep a paper record of the plays, using specially ruled pads and a quick cipher or code we have invented. Thus either of us can reconstruct play by play any football game we have ever covered together.

With his left hand Les works the annunciator, with his right he makes his penciled notations. We found by test that ten seconds was the shortest time in which he could put down his glass, record a play, and find the field again with his binoculars. So we devised a short, rubber tripod with a swivel connection for the binoculars, which thus remain focused on the play all the time.

During a broadcast I don't try to identify anybody on the field. My distance vision is none too good anyhow, even with glasses, whereas Les's strong eyes are reinforced by the binoculars. I talk straight ahead, relying entirely on the box for the players involved. In advance, I have fixed the names of all players in my mind, identifying them with their light-positions. If a substitution is made, it only takes my memory an instant to make the adjustment. That is all a matter of train-

ing. I never forget one of these names, once I have learned them; afterwards I have to remember them by visualizing their positions on the annunciator.

Of course, I also know the teams and their styles of play very well; and, the touch system not being infallible, if some combination of lights flashes up that looks queer or impossible to me, I stall on the air and nudge Les. He takes a quick look at the board and, if wrong, makes the correction. If right, he insistently winks the light bothering us.

During a football broadcast we seldom speak to each other, and then only in monosyllables through our headphones. Often Les comes out of a broadcast with a splitting headache from eye-strain and concentration. When we arrived at the Stadium to broadcast the Army-Notre Dame game in Chicago in 1930, I had mislaid my spectacles. It was a dark, rainy afternoon, and I couldn't even see the sidelines from our perch. The line-ups were just blurs to me. Yet, because of Quaily's work on the annunciator that day, I broadcast the game so accurately that a Chicago newspaper committee, comparing my description with the wire reports, gave me a special commendation.

In 1932 the Scripps-Howard newspapers began taking a nation-wide poll by categories. This has become the standard poll which all radio people watch. I have been fortunate enough to win all four votes in the sports class, but, as I have said, my friend Quaily should share this honor with me. He is a former quarterback on the Alfred University eleven, and one year he was New York State champion in the 220-yard low hurdles. When we teamed up in 1929, Les turned down an offer to coach a Buffalo high school football team. To short, compact, sandy-haired Les, athletics are almost a religion. He is an admirer of good training methods, has prob-

ably the finest historical records of track events of any sports follower in America, and is, all in all, the greatest *unheard* sports authority in radio.

Not tired yet of my sports yarns? I've got plenty more—and always ready to oblige, you know. Let's commence with that memorable day at the Rye Turf & Polo Club, August 15, 1931, when the wild-riding, hard-hitting open champions of Argentina, the Santa Paula team, met a most determined quartette of polo players representing Roslyn. The Santa Paulistas were the celebrated Reynal brothers, José and Juan, Alfredo Harrington, and Manuel Andrada, while Hal Talbott, Stew Inglehart, Billy Post and that sensational Texan, Cecil Smith, made up the Roslyn four. Eight thousand spectators watched this game, which was played on turf softened by an earlier rain.

From the start the match was a seesaw affair, the Americans finally tying it up, 8 to 8, in the seventh chukker. In the final period José Reynal started it off by scoring two goals in succession, due to some marvelous hitting. Midway through, Cecil Smith converted a free hit, on a foul called on Harrington, and right at the end Inglehart back-handed one in to tie up the score again, 10 to 10.

Under the rules of polo, when a match ends in a tie the teams keep on playing regular periods, except that the first one to score wins. It's a sudden-death game then. The overtime play at Rye was sensational, the crowd grew furiously excited as one side or the other got dangerously close, or someone spoiled a sure goal-shot by a brilliant save. Six minutes went by, and neither four could score. Then Andrada intercepted a fine goal-shot by Roslyn and backhanded the ball brilliantly to Juan Reynal, who nursed it once and then drove it forward to midfield, riding hard to follow it up. Harrington kept off

Inglehart and let the ball rest for Reynal to hit again. The Gaucho raced up for his second shot, and down the field went the ball, soaring straight for the goal. Harrington and Inglehart took after it in a horse race, riding each other off. Just as Inglehart was lifting his club for a save, Harrington rode him away, and the ball went through. A great finish in a game which its enthusiasts think the most exciting of all sports.

The same Santa Paula four engaged in an epic match that same month with Tommy Hitchcock's American team at the Sands Point Polo Club, Port Washington, Long Island. This was a game that will live in American polo history. It was a picturesque scene, with 6,000 spectators lining both sides of the grounds, most of them in their cars, the horns of which they tooted for applause. But the Argentinians themselves, with their blue shirts, floppy pantaloons, wide coin belts, and chin straps on their stiff-brimmed hats, added the exotic color.

Santa Paula was playing its regulars, the skillful Reynal brothers, José and Juan, the burly, blocky Manuel Andrada, and Andres Gazzoti. Tommy Hitchcock had recruited Averill Harriman, Earl Hopping, and Jock Whitney to make with himself a formidable American outfit. At first it seemed as if the Sands Point team would run away with it since the fourth chukker began with the score of nine goals to one against the gauchos.

Then, as if resurrected from the grave, the Argentinians put on a whirlwind attack, netting five goals in five minutes and bringing the score to 9-6. In the fifth chukker Sands Point woke up and scored two more. The Santa Paulistas added another to their total in their half. Still with the score 12 to 7 in the sixth period, the Americans had the game theoretically

won, when once more the Argentinians moved like lightning and scored four straight goals, two in the sixth, and two in the seventh. The eighth and final chukker began with the score 12-11 in favor of Sands Point.

At once Santa Paula proceeded to bag another goal, tying the score. Both sides now began to play furiously, but Sands Point couldn't break through, desperately as they tried. José Reynal shot for the goal and missed. Then Hitchcock rode to the end line for the knock-in, and, mallet swinging in rhythm to his pony's hoofs, he hit it. It was a long high one in the air, 120 yards. It landed near the boards, rolled and kept on running—an enormous hit.

Then came big, powerful Andrada for a difficult shot, the ball moving in toward the boards. He rode over the boundary, swung his mallet and lifted the ball out beautifully. It went straight back where it came from, and for the same distance, moving straight for the American goal. It was a sensational return, and Juan Reynal was riding like fury under it. It came down at the goal mouth, Reynal swung, and the ball went in as the bell rang ending the game. Santa Paula had won, 13-12, scoring six straight goals to overcome what seemed to be a hopeless lead for Sands Point.

And one more—a rowing classic this time—from a memorable Poughkeepsie Regatta. The varsity race looked like a cinch for Columbia. The year before Columbia had almost defeated a Cornell eight that had come within an eyelash of breaking the course record. Columbia had come up to the present regatta with the same crew and the same boat, but the Cornell crew was new and untried. The experts rated Cornell as an outsider, though the crowd looked for miracles, largely because of the reputation of the Cornell coach, Pop Courtney.

With the rowing fans it was a contest between Courtney and Jim Rice, the Columbia coach.

The gun roared. The observation train puffed off on its ambling journey, and a great cheer rose from the banks as Columbia started off with a nice lead. Cornell surprisingly showed a finished stroke on the broad back of the Hudson, yet they followed the wash of Columbia's light-blue and white oarsmen.

Columbia began opening water between Cornell and herself, but all the rowing sharps were surprised to see Cornell's light varsity keeping up well. The more highly fancied eights of Pennsylvania and Wisconsin trailed behind. Columbia kept opening its lead wider and wider. The race seemed to be a runaway.

Under the bridge, with only a mile to go, the veteran Columbia crew opened up another ten feet, and it seemed all over. The Lions had only to hold their lead and coast home. For once, the Gotham university had turned out the cream of the nation's crews.

Less than a quarter of a mile to go! The Columbia rooters were yelling: "Columbia wins!" Back in the Cornell boat Coxswain Kimball yelled for a "20"—twenty fast strokes—beating the boatside with his tiller handles to time them. "Rosy" Bowen, the Cornell stroke, dug in. The task ahead looked hopeless, yet they were pulling. And every stroke brought them up on Columbia a foot or so. Then the miracle that the Cornell grads had been hoping for began to appear. The big red boat began to move as if it were powered by one of Gar Wood's engines. It couldn't be done! Such a thing had never been done before, but they were doing it—and in twenty strokes! Twelve—they were surely closing the gap. Sixteen—

and they were up even, while the crowds went cuckoo, and the world came to an end. Human grit and brawn couldn't stand it. The Columbia bow oar suddenly collapsed. There was a check to the Columbia boat right on the finish line and Cornell shot across, the winner.

Afterwards it was easy to analyze this almost supernatural occurrence. Columbia's race had not been wisely rowed. The crew had set too fast a pace at the start and when they came to the supreme effort, they fell down like tenpins. On a course twenty yards shorter, Columbia would have won. But that belongs in the ash-can of the might-have-been.

1931 was the year of radio's most publicized boner—the one I pulled during the broadcast of the Harvard-Dartmouth football game on November 8. As a result of it I was barred from Harvard home sports for a year, and the incident hit the front pages all over the United States, besides stirring up reams of editorials and comments by columnists. The story of how I happened to make the break and of why the Harvard Athletic Association took such drastic action against me has never been fully told in print, since at the time I kept my mouth shut. Now that all has been (I hope) forgotten and forgiven, I can go into it without hurting anybody's feelings.

It really began the week before the Harvard-Dartmouth clash, when Harvard played Army. That was a game I was to broadcast, so I went up to West Point in advance to "scout" the two teams. By scouting I mean getting a line on the formations and plays they intend to use, partly as information for the radio public but mainly for our own guidance during the broadcast. If we know a formation in advance, we are never in doubt about what player makes a play, even if we cannot see his identity.

I got the dope on Army, and next day Cadet Abel, the team

manager, offered to take me in his car over to Briarcliff, where the Harvard team was stopping. There, Eddie Casey, the Harvard coach, said he couldn't show me anything, since he was holding secret practice, but if I would come down to his hotel afterwards, he would tell me anything I wanted to know. I did so and got all the information I needed, even with diagrams of his plays.

There were a lot of newspaper sports writers hanging around Briarcliff, and before them I pretended to be very dejected because I couldn't see the Harvard practice. It was just kidding on my part, since I was fixed O.K. for the game, but they took me in earnest. They really thought I was sore, I guess.

Now that year the great player on the Harvard eleven, and one of the greatest players in the country, was Barry Wood, the quarterback. On Barry Wood Harvard was relying to overcome the great Yale threat of the year, Albie Booth. Wood certainly justified his reputation next day after I talked to Eddie Casey. Almost entirely due to his work on the field Harvard beat Army 14 to 13. And did I rave about Barry Wood through the mike!

Actually, the following Saturday I was scheduled to broadcast the Navy-Ohio State struggle at Columbus, Ohio—the most important game of the week—but I canceled it to do the Harvard-Dartmouth game. And for this reason. The week before the Army-Harvard game Yale had played Dartmouth. Yale was leading 33 to 11 when Albie Booth was hurt and had to leave the field. Dartmouth thereupon made 22 points and the game ended in a tie, 33 to 33. I was not scheduled to broadcast the Yale-Harvard game at New Haven on November 15, having an engagement with the Pitt and Army elevens at Pittsburgh; so I thought that in covering the Harvard-



Dartmouth set-to I could predict the Yale-Harvard result and let it go at that.

When I went up to Boston I didn't even bother to scout Dartmouth. Eddie Casey gave me all I wanted to know about them. Before the game started, in my preliminary stuff I kept plugging for Harvard and Barry Wood. I said that if Wood opened up the aerial attack he had shown against Army, Dartmouth would think it had bumped into a shower of meteors. The game started, and I awaited with confidence the fulfillment of my predictions. To the astonishment of everybody at Soldier Field, Harvard bogged down. Near the end of the game they were actually trailing in the score—the fastest, smartest team in the East being outplayed by a slow-moving and unexceptional eleven.

That was exasperating enough, but near the end of the game Harvard had a chance to score and go ahead. Then the great Barry Wood threw one of the worst forward passes I have ever seen. It was "incomplete," of course, but on the next play he repeated with one equally as bad. I had gone out on a limb for him, and I probably only expressed the feelings of most of the Harvard rooters present when I threw out the disgusted line: "Wood is certainly playing a putrid game today." I have no recollection to this day of having used such an adjective, but the evidence was against me. Hundreds of letters of criticism followed the broadcast.

But in sport, one minute you're a louse and the next a hero. On his third play Wood threw another pass, and this one was the nuts. A Harvard man was under it, he went over for a touchdown, and Harvard won. And I finished the broadcast raving once more about Barry Wood.

Next day I was made aware of my break. Nothing would have happened to me, however, if some of the newspaper boys

who had been at Briarcliff hadn't remembered my phoney peeve over being excluded from the Harvard practice. Husing was sore, huh? Took it out on Harvard? William J. Bingham, Harvard's graduate manager, read the newspaper comments and ordered me excluded from broadcasting Harvard athletics.

I was in Pittsburgh preparing to broadcast the Pitt-Army game when the news reached me. I refused to make any comment. One of the most garrulous guys in America for once was silent. Mr. Paley, president of Columbia, caught and interviewed in Buffalo, backed me up completely. A flock of old Harvard grads wrote letters of commendation to me, and Yale urged me by telegraph and long-distance phone to broadcast their game with Harvard—played at New Haven that year. Of course, I didn't. Several of the sports columnists, Westbrook Pegler and Bill Corum among them, took up the cudgels for me; and as for that bad boy of the Harvard alumni, Heywood Broun, who's never got over hating school teachers, he saw the episode only as another aspect of the menace Harvard offers to human liberty.

I waited a year for the thing to die down, then went quietly up to Cambridge, saw Mr. Bingham, and made my peace. The only question was and had been: Was my slur on Barry Wood premeditated? The Athletic Association had acted on the assumption that it was. I easily demonstrated that it couldn't have been. Had I been really sore over the Briarcliff incident, wouldn't I have taken it out on Harvard next day in the Army game, when I would have been smarting over Eddie Casey's alleged rebuff to me, instead of waiting a week? That seemed a reasonable argument, and my suspension was lifted.

Sorry as I was to have applied thoughtlessly such a word as "putrid" to a fine athlete like Wood, who after all was an amateur and out doing his best, I've been even sorrier for the slip

because of what it has done to me since. Before that Harvard-Dartmouth game my disinterestedness as a sports announcer had never been questioned. Since then it has never stopped being questioned. I get plenty of abuse in my fan mail along with the praise. "You dirty Irish bastard, you rooted for Army," is the tone of some of it. Last fall, in a broadcast I referred to the Yale eleven as "the sons of the bulldog." A lady wrote to me: "Haven't you learned yet?"

I was destined to discover this new attitude toward my fairness the very day Harvard barred me. When I climbed into the broadcasting booth in Pittsburgh that afternoon, the Pitt graduate manager took a seat at one of my elbows and the Army graduate manager sat at the other. They were there to hear what I might call *their* boys, and their ears looked like tubas to me. This uneasiness, added to my chronic mike fright, gave me a nervous afternoon.

That great football game at Princeton in 1934, when Yale's eleven iron men, from whom nothing was expected, played clear through without a substitution and beat the undefeated Princeton team, brought out another incident of this sort. In the course of it I received a telegram from Jeff Machamer, the cartoonist.

"Can't you throw Princeton a few signet rings?" Jeff wired. "We're losing our shirts."

Over the mike I read the first sentence of this message, then just caught myself in time. Les Qualey is supposed to censor all telegrams before shoving them under my nose to read. This one contained a reference to gambling, and we make it a rule never to broadcast anything about betting on amateur sports. The inference in Jeff's question was, of course, that if Princeton players wore signet rings or brass knuckles, they might be able to slug the iron men off the field and win from their sub-

stitutes. It was just for a laugh—I should think anybody would see it that way; yet three Princeton grads wrote me afterwards, commenting sarcastically on my “love of clean sport.”

Oh well, it's all in a broadcaster's lifetime.





TWELVE: NOMINATING F. D. R.



## CHAPTER XII

### NOMINATING F. D. R.

IT SEEMS to be my fate to be known only as a sports broadcaster. This is tough on a guy that's battled for fame in many other branches of radio and is even now trying to keep in good with the commercials, where the big money lies. Even in 1930 I was getting an exclusive reputation in radioed sports, though that year saw me neck-deep in two big outside news broadcasts—the arrival of Rear Admiral Byrd from the Antarctic and of Kingsford-Smith in his *Southern Cross* plane. Two years later I left tennis, rowing and golf long enough to participate in a honey—the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

I went out to that job with an idea and an assignment to be the color man in the broadcast picture. The net's political brain trust, Frederick William Wile and H. V. Kaltenborn, were to take care of the serious work of the convention. Wile was picked out to do the floor stuff among the delegations, while Kaltie was to handle the platform. I drew the over-seeing job—up in the rafters.

In actual practice, it soon became evident that the news values of the convention could be seen better from above than below, so Kaltenborn and Wile made me head man. And did we give the public a party? I'd spot something and ask Kaltie down on the platform to discuss its significance. Wile, back among the delegates, would get a hot flash, and we'd three-corner it. Thus we kept up a running chatter.



All the time I acted as John Q. Public, who didn't know anything about it, and so the listeners got a full measure of plain information and not a lot of parliamentary tactics only a politician could grasp. While the balloting went on, we continued our comment between announcements of state votes and kept the show always hot for the radio audience. From the angle of color the pay-off was the all-night session, when I told of the sunset in the windows along one side of the hall and, not having left my mike, described the sunrise next morning in the windows of the opposite side.

Radio listeners must be aware that announcers receive numerous telegrams during important broadcasts. Some they read over the mike, though it is always well to give every message a preliminary reading before broadcasting it. As I'll tell in a subsequent chapter, I once got into trouble reading an uncensored telegram over the mike.

Plenty of messages came to me during the Democratic Convention broadcast—several hundred of them, mostly from persons unknown to me. Assuming that there's reader interest in the sort of stuff people wire to radio announcers, I've picked out a few of them to be a sort of cross-section of all. And first, one that came at midnight on the big night:

ACCEPT APOLOGY FOR MY TELEGRAM YEAR AGO LAST  
OCTOBER RELATIVE TO WORLDS SERIES BROADCAST AFTER  
LISTENING PAST FEW DAYS YOU ARE THE DEAN AND NOT  
LOUIS.

What did this St. Louis guy wire me at the World's Series nearly two years earlier? Can you imagine, he expected me to remember!

Next in the heap is one addressed simply to:

TED HUSING WORLDS BEST ANNOUNCER THE PARADE IS  
ON FOR RITCHIE GET IN NOW.

Thanks, old man. The boy brought it straight to me, spelling and all.

After my attack of appendicitis following the broadcast of the arrival of the *Graf Zeppelin*, the malady kept on chronically, and in the spring of 1932 I submitted to an appendectomy in New York, going out to the conventions straight from the hospital. That operation echoed through my wire correspondence. A theater man in St. Louis telegraphed me:

DO YOU KNOW YOU SOUND BETTER WITH YOUR APPENDIX  
OUT KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK YOURE SWELL.

Just as I was feeling good over that one I got this, from a dame in Poughkeepsie:

KINDLY REFRAIN FROM BROADCASTING YOUR TALK OF  
REVENGE.

That left me mystified, but a dear old Kentucky colonel, maybe after his third julep, restored my spirits:

TED HUSING CON HALL CONGRATULATIONS ON THE  
MASTERLY MANNER YOU AND MR CATTLEBOURN HANDLED  
THE CONVENTION IT IS A MASTERPIECE KINDEST REGARDS  
TO YOUR ASSOCIATES AND YOUR DEAR SELF.

Few of them could spell Kaltenborn's name. A lady in Norfolk hurdled his and Fred Wile's as follows:

I THINK YOU AND MESSRS C AND W ARE WONDERFUL  
CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS.

That is, she almost hurdled Kaltie's. While I was glowing over her encomium, a dame from Massachusetts had to come in with this dipper of cold water:

LETS HAVE MORE OF THE FLOOR EXCITEMENT AND LESS OF THE WORD PICTURE.

But, lady, that's what I was hired for!  
From a silver-tongued hundred-percenter in Reno:

GENTLEMEN I BELIEVE THE PEOPLE OF THE RADIO AUDIENCE OF AMERICA ARE UNDER DEEPEST OBLIGATION TO YOU FOR THE EXCELLENCY OF YOUR TRANSMISSION OF CONVENTION NEWS AND INTELLIGENT COMMENTS UPON THE SAME FOR BOTH REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION NEWS IT IS WONDERFUL TO LIVE IN AMERICA.

This came from Walter Fahy, an old newspaper pal in New York:

HAVING INHERITED YOUR ROOM YOUR DOCTOR AND YOUR NURSE AT THE FLUSHING HOSPITAL I THINK I HAVE THE RIGHT TO ASK YOU TO TELL OUR WIVES TO GO TO BED IN ORDER THAT WE MEN CAN LISTEN TO YOU FREDDIE AND THE CHIEF OF THE HOUSE OF MISINFORMATION.

Not Kaltie, surely. Could Walter have meant Graham?  
Then a slap from the old stamping ground:

YOU'RE SO ONE SIDED WHY NOT GIVE SMITHS AND RITCHIES ADDRESSES AS CLEARLY AS THE OTHER CANDIDATES.

BOYS FROM TENTH AVENUE.

On duh level, guys, I didn't have nuttin' to do wit it.  
An information seeker:

GIVE US THE NAME OF THE ORGANIST HE IS THE HIT OF  
THE CONVENTION.

And, just to show that you can't please everybody, take this  
one that came within an hour:

BROADCAST EXCELLENT BUT WOULD APPRECIATE ORGAN  
MUSIC SOFTENED.

"Just Eve," of New York, kicked in with this at 3 A.M.:

I AM A NEWSPAPERMAN'S WIFE AND WISH YOU WOULD  
ADJOURN SO I CAN GO TO BED AND SAY IN THE MORNING  
TO FRIEND HUSBAND THAT I STAYED TO THE BITTER END.

In New York I often eat at The Tavern, a Broadway restau-  
rant run by Billy LaHiff. About noon on June 27, when the  
Convention was organizing, Billy wired me:

YOU ARE COMING OVER GREAT BET YOU A GOOD STEAK  
ROOSEVELT GETS THE NOMINATION.

I took him up. A few days later the California and Texas  
delegations had no sooner broken for F. D. R. than I received  
the following at my broadcasting perch:

WHEN I PICK THEM THEY STAY PICKED YOU BUY THE  
DINNER.

BILLY LAHIFF.

In common with all the other announcers, I mentioned in  
the mike a jane in a scarlet gown who sat in the gallery of the  
hall screaming for her favorite candidates. Wired a Baltimore  
Don Juan:

WONT YOU PLEASE TELL US THE NAME OF THE BABY IN  
RED YOU ARE RAVING ABOUT.

Just before daybreak on the all-night broadcast Mark Helinger and Julius Tannen telegraphed encouragement, but an impatient guy in Knoxville paid rush-message rates on this:

PLEASE THROW ANNOUNCER CULTONBORN OUT BACK  
WINDOW PUBLIC DEMAND.

So that's how it goes with a radio announcer at the mike—the boost and the bird, the rave and the Bronx salute, and all for the same stuff. It shows something, I guess, but I don't know what.

My biggest laugh came in reading a message from one of Herb Glover's pals, who was out at Aqueduct Track one afternoon during the convention when he was seized by an inspiration to wire Herb in Chicago. Reading this dispatch now, only three years later, brings me up with a jolt. It is hard to realize how far into the past has receded already the bitterness roused by Prohibition. Can you believe that when Franklin Delano Roosevelt was nominated for President this country was still legally bone dry? Anyhow, read the message:

AS A DRY AND A MEMBER OF MANY CHURCHES INCLUDING  
THE SCANDINAVIAN I WISH TO PROTEST AGAINST THAT  
JOHNNIE WALKER CRACK OF HUSINGS STOP NO I DONT  
LIKE IT AND A MAN OF HUSINGS ABILITY OUGHT TO KNOW  
THAT EVERY ANTI SALOON LEAGUER PREFERS GOLDEN WED-  
DING STOP NOW SERIOUSLY LET ME TELL YOU THAT YOUR  
CROWD IS STEALING THE THUNDER RIGHT AWAY FROM NA-  
TIONAL AND THAT A LOT OF OUR TURF BIG SHOTS ARE  
COMMENTING ON IT AND LISTENING TO WABC STOP TELL

TED THAT THE TIMBRE OF HIS VOICE IS SUPERIOR TO THAT OF WILE OR KALTENBORN BUT THAT PAIR ALSO DOING A SWELL JOB STOP BE SURE TO SPELL TIMBRE CORRECTLY SO THAT NO ONE THINKS IM MESSING UP TEDS VOICE WITH HIS HEAD STOP AND DONT YOU KNOW THAT TEDS FORTE IS BEDTIME STORIES OR DO I MEAN BEDSIDE STORIES REGARDS.



Dear Mr. Hising -

Please accept this, my first fan letter, as a tribute to the greatest announcer on the air. How often how I have tempted to take my pen in hand in appreciation of any artist, great or small. However, the thrill of your deep, resonant voice - the smoothness of your persuasive tone have led me helplessly, you are my Waterloo.

Perhaps you think it is your voice I'm crazy about, and not your outstanding talent of sports broadcasting. Well, maybe it is, now that I mention it. Your voice stands out among all the voices of the air - I can tell it no matter where I may be. It is the voice of a tender, sweet person - and a great power. You know you must be all of that, that's why I want to meet you. I must meet you, to know you're all that I assume you are. Your voice calls to me, and I can ignore it no longer. Will you write me please, arranging a meeting for us? Anything you say will be convenient for me. I shall wait for your answer most eagerly, and pray that you will see me. I think you will like me too, as I'm not hard to look at as you can see by the enclosed picture.

I shall be waiting to hear from you every minute, and will be listening to your dear voice in the meantime, your voice that will make every moment more bearable until I meet your face to face.

Happily,





### CHAPTER XIII

## CENSORS AND FREEBOOTERS

ALONG ABOUT 1930 the newspapers, which had been whooping it up behind radio, began to change their tune. Their promotion had helped build up a strong business competitor. The first move in open warfare was an agreement among publishers to give no more free advertising to the sponsors of commercial programs. On the radio pages the "A. & P. Gypsies" became just "The Gypsies." The mercantile tags of other well-known "hours" gave way to the blank names of their performers. The public was bewildered. Purely radio newspapers, listing the programs in the old way, sprang up, and in some sections, particularly the South, the regular press lost circulation to them.

Then, it had always been the practice of the studios to take anything they wanted from the newspapers and broadcast it as bulletins. The newspapers maintained the position that their dispatches were private property. Out of this contention came the Press Radio Bureau, a newspaper committee which supplies news bulletins to the broadcasters and in return exacts over the air the familiar plug line: "For further details read your newspaper."

While the major broadcasting systems have accepted this curtailment, there are still points of resistance in the studios. The New England "Yankee Network," for instance, maintains its own news-gathering service and gives its listeners complete

spot-news coverage. WOR, the Bamberger station in Newark, N. J., also sends out its own news. Test cases are going up through the courts, and the news war is still far from ended.

It's been a war of incidents, funny and otherwise. I remember one out in Cincinnati, where the newspapers were particularly sore at radio. When the dignified old *Enquirer* put up a new building and arranged for a spectacular dedication, the manager of the C.B.S. station in Cincinnati thought he saw an opportunity to heal the breach. Broadcast the dedication—give it a big radio play—and then maybe the *Enquirer* would lay off a while.

He secured permission to wire the new edifice for sound, and all seemed hotsy-totsy for the scheme. But the dignitaries who were to take part weren't enough for the ingenious station press agent. He had to gild the lily and supply local newspaper color. So he arranged for a bunch of newsboys to rush in at the psychological moment and begin shouting their papers.

That moment arrived. The speeches had all been made. In Washington the President touched a button, and the mikes caught the rumbling of the big rotary presses. Then a bedlam of yells broke out of the loud-speakers:

"Wuxtry—wuxtry! All about the big murder—*Post, Times-Star*—read all about it!"

Which was a new low in breach-healing—naming the *Enquirer's* rival sheets at its own dedication!

Despite the concessions radio has made, a feeling of hostility to it still runs through the country's editorial pages. Journalistic eyes are always on the watch for radio's slips and follies.

After his wooden-gun escape, John Dillinger was supposed to be trapped in an Illinois wilderness. The radio companies sent out mikmen to cover the capture. One of the C.B.S. an-

nouncers, weary of waiting for the fusillade that would end the bandit's career, fired off a revolver near his mike by way of local color. The state bulls promptly pinched him for disorderly conduct—and then was radio given the editorial bird! Faking its news broadcasts, eh?

An official of the Consumers' League secured radio time at Columbia's Philadelphia station not long ago for a speech. A station executive read the script in advance, saw it was an attack on N.R.A., and canceled the broadcast. The Leaguer complained to the papers, who instantly remembered that out of the Consumers' League researches came the book *1,000,000 Guinea Pigs*, which attacked the products of some of radio's leading advertisers. Yeah! radio's business office was stifling free speech on the air!

Theoretically there is free speech in radio—but subject to station censorship. One of radio's axioms is that anything vital to the interest, convenience or necessity of the public is a *must* for the studio director. But somebody has to decide whether it *is* vital. The Philadelphia affair was clumsily handled. A detached reading of the censored speech showed it to be harmless, but even if it had been loaded with dynamite, there was an easy way of getting rid of it. A diplomat can tell a troublemaker that the station's time is booked solidly for six months to come. No man burning with a public message can wait that long to deliver it. As a matter of record, C.B.S. gave the gate both to the impetuous Illinois announcer and the unimaginative Philadelphia executive.

Radio is very touchy about newspaper criticisms of this sort. Naturally. No other branch of disseminated intelligence maintains such a strict inner censorship. That has to be, too. As I look at it, there is no need for censorship at all over books or plays. Nobody has to buy any one book or attend any certain

play. There is need for a certain censorship of movies. Millions have the habit of attending the movie theaters regularly, regardless of what pictures are being shown. This same need applies to publications, many of which go into homes by subscription. The editors have the obligation not to put into their publications anything offensive to their subscribers.

But this obligation is tripled and quadrupled for radio. There is a loud-speaker in almost every home in America, and nobody in the house can get away from it. The earliest studio law was: "Conduct yourself before the mike as if you were a guest in a cultured living-room." The National Association of Broadcasters cooperates with the Better Business bureaus to keep fraudulent advertising off the air. The Federal Radio Commission watches the tone of broadcasts, justifying station censorship over commercial broadcasts. Certain air taboos are specified: no derogatory racial or religious cracks, no double meanings in gags or song lyrics. Song lyrics have sometimes come close to the edge. There was a much-played hit containing, in the published score, the lines:

*No more money in the bank.  
No cute baby we can spank.  
What to do about it?  
Let's put out the lights and go to bed.*

That would never do on the air. *Bed* was changed to *sleep*, and the country's morals were saved.

The song-lyric rule has been carried to ridiculous lengths. For a while radio rewrote Ben Jonson's immortal "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes" to eliminate the word *swell*, supposed to be unpleasant to the squeamish.

To such rules the commercial sponsors often add their own little private censorships. One big radio advertiser recently

blue-penciled from the routine of his show a belly-laugh about the big New Year's rain in Los Angeles in 1934. He was afraid the Native Sons would get sore and stop buying his cigarettes. Another once forbade any gags about that Delta of the Mississippi, Huey Long. He didn't love Huey but feared that the Senator, if offended, would sock a Louisiana state tax on the advertised product.

Speaking of censorship calls up the memory of the freebooters and crusaders who once afflicted the air until routed out by the Federal Radio Commission. These were the boys who, before the strict control of the air, set up broadcasting stations to promote their own ends. The best-known of these, and the last to be silenced, was D. W. Henderson, a New Orleans iron manufacturer, who was anti-chain-store. To finance his station and its crusade, he sold coffee to listeners at a dollar a pound.

A Mr. Ford, who ran a bushwhacking station in New York, became known to the radio public in the East. He was a Christian Scientist who attacked Jews and Catholics over the air. He kept a telephone in his studio and gave public answers to calls.

Out at Muscatine, Iowa, one Norman Baker ran a station called KTNT, a designation not indicating, as you might think, a western station broadcasting dynamite, but standing for the station's motto: "Know The Naked Truth!" Baker was a yahoo agitator trying to reform the world and telling it to farmers. The Federal Radio Commission finally cut his aerial vocal cords. In Kansas a Dr. John R. Brinkley had his own station for a while. The doc specialized in goat glands or something and broadcast glad tidings of health with incidental prescriptions for listeners at so much per. The F.R.C. got him, too.

Given the bum's rush, the good doctor merely went to Del Rio, Texas and set up a station right across the Mexican border. He now sells astrological readings and such things to listeners at a dollar a throw and seems to be doing well, for he's just wrecked his second yacht and has managed to build himself a 75,000-watt broadcasting layout down there, which is just 50 per cent stronger than WJZ's original superstation. Every now and then I catch his broadcasts thundering into my Scott set in New York. There are two other powerful Mexican stations on the Texas border out of reach of the Federal Radio Commission. One of them, a 150,000-watter, is the second strongest station on this continent. One wonders why they are there. One wonders why.

Broadcasting has had its mystery—its ghost of the air, so to speak. For some time an unknown ran a station in Hollywood, Cal., playing phonograph records 24 hours a day. When this grew monotonous, he began to get humorous. He broadcast his phone number and got laughs by insulting people who called him up. After midnight, when everything else was still, it became a Hollywood indoor sport to get the unknown announcer on the wire and kid him. Tell him some tune he was playing stank, and he'd agree with you and break the record before the mike. He gave imitations of Garbo and other movie stars. Since he was violating no law then, nobody interfered. People knew the location of his studio, but he always kept his doors locked. After a while he folded—probably from exhaustion.

Which brings me, I guess, to the subject of fan mail. Why not? If I'm going to give an adequate picture of radio and its people, I've got to spot in something about fan mail. If you're not interested, you can skip right on to the next chapter and save time, and don't claim I didn't warn you.

Did I say fan mail? Pardon *me*. In the cork halls of radio we don't officially admit the existence of a "fan." The miscellany which the chain receives from listeners—letters, post cards, telegrams, marked newspapers—are filed under the head of "audience mail."

And those who take pen in hand themselves seem to feel that there is something belittling in the term "fan." One big group of them can be divided into two classes: (1) those who begin their missives with the sentence, "This is not a fan letter"; and (2) those who start off: "This is the first fan letter I ever wrote." And they're both liars.

What makes a fan-letter writer? I wish you'd tell me. The nearest I can come to it is that they're all egotists, often to the point of being irrational. Not that I think they're outright nuts—because we all have a screw loose here and there in our makeups—but I do say it's irrational for a Kansas farm woman or a New Jersey garage hand to assume that their opinions have weight with the public figures they address in their fan letters.

Yet they all do assume it. If there's one characteristic common to fan letters, it's the sublime egotism that shines out between their lines. Many writers, you can tell, believe that their critical judgments are going to influence the future development of radio. I get an imaginative picture of them—neighborhood argufiers, pundits of yessing family circles, back-fence oracles. They always address you on a plane of intimate familiarity. When they write to the White House, I bet they call the President, "Dear Frank." By some twist of nature, they regard themselves as celebrities and members of the inner circle of the influential.

An appreciable class among them are the female writers of mash notes. About one in every dozen fan letters I receive



comes under this head, and I suppose I'm about average that way. The number of unsolicited love offerings a mike figure receives depends upon how glamorous his rôle is before the radio public. Take Phillips Lord over at N.B.C. He's young, handsome, adventurous, yet I don't suppose he ever got a radio mash note in his life. That's because the audience knows him only through the quavering voice and sanctified character of Seth Parker. But I'd hate to have to wade through the amorous offerings the postman brings to Richard Crooks. And think of the tribulations of Lanny Ross!

The dirt that some janes bring themselves to write to their public heroes is something you'd have to read to believe. Such letters, though, I hasten to add, are the exception. The rest—well, here's a mild sample excerpted from one that came today from a hick town in the dust-storm belt:

I swear it—You have the most fascinating voice I ever heard and the strangest thing that has ever happened to me—I hear it even after the radio is turned off—Now you may laugh—Yes—get it all over your face—I know it's absurd—I told my husband and my four year old son how I felt and they say it's okey as long as you're in Chicago, but I might write you if I wished. I hope you won't mind. I've enjoyed every bit of your broadcast and marvel at the magnificence of it all—But you Ted (if I may) have “sorta” awakened me—warmed me—thrilled me—given me desires that shall have to be suppressed, of course, but I love it—

I'm going to stop now but before I do—uh—brace yourself! This is gonna be kinda bad—Would you like to thrill a lady in person? No? Well—alright— Yes? Then listen. I go to my Mother's in Raleigh, N. Carolina every year and I go by way of Chicago—and Washington, D. C. spending a few days with relatives in both cities— Would you even consider? No! Well I'm sorry—let's forget it— But if you would “sorta” enjoy such a thing you may say so—

If you will not let me meet you in person, could you say "Hello" through the "mik" some time.

I hope I haven't offended, if so forgive me—If not, could you acknowledge this maybe—Please.

It must be a pleasure to know that dame. Such a sweet character! You can get the picture. After some broadcast she's archly confessed to her husband that Ted Husing is her secret sorrow. He kids her and tells everybody about it, and it's a neighborhood joke. Amid blushes and confusion she builds up her ego. With her, the affair is already under way. Her poor sap of a hubby has just an ordinary job in the hay-and-feed store, probably. He looked good to her at the wedding five years ago; but that was before it had dawned upon her that she was one of the world's great lovers.

Modern, open and aboveboard, that femme. She frankly puts it up to hubby—how about writing me a letter? He says O.K., as long as I stay in Chicago, and so does the four-year-old kiddie. I bet *his* advice was important. It's typical of the mash-note writer to assume that the radio celebrity is at the station she customarily tunes in on. The nets can ballyhoo all they like about coast-to-coast hookups, but the peanut brains of the lady mashers never get farther than WWHY.

Then, having taken the old man into her full confidence, the lady double-crosses him by trying to date me up. What murders me is her kittenish assumption that I'd fall for it—but that's the egotism I was telling about. It never occurs to her that dames who offer the supreme sacrifice to public idols are a dime a dozen. She thinks she's the only one with daring enough to shoot the works.

What I ought to do is send this letter right back to hubby in the feed store and let him hand the little woman a good

sock in the puss. That might bring her to her senses, if any.

But, as I was saying, for every mash-note writer there are ten in other classes. Autograph hunters and picture grabbers swell the U. S. mails. The autograph fiends are nearly all kids. Those who write for personal photographs usually tell you they are "making a collection." The dime chain-letters buried me for a while. Every public character is a mark for the chain-letter fanatic.

Now for some general characteristics of the ordinary fan-letter writers as I've observed them. In the first place, they're wordy. It's common to get a seven- or eight-page letter rambling on about everything on earth. The writers are the poorest spellers on earth, especially of proper names. Only about half of them even bother to get my name right when they're addressing me. About one-third of the letters denote a low scale of education. While critical boosts far outnumber slams—being, in the Walter Winchell scale, about ninety orchids to ten scallions—the writers know only two colors in their judgments, black and white. You're either perfect or a complete bum. Harsh criticisms adopt a smart-aleck tone supposed to be sarcastic. A common way to open a boost is: "I've never been one of your admirers, but—" That puts me, the recipient in his place at once and tickles the writer's ego. Often the letters are full of false pretenses—claims of education and experience which the writing itself contradicts.

Geographically, the writers of radio fan mail seem to cluster in colonies. The Southland—it's always the "Southland" in their letters—produces a lot of them. For some reason Baltimore spawns them, as does also Brooklyn, where they are thick as actors. Highbrow Greenwich Village is fond of taking pen in hand to indite unsolicited missives. The Pacific

Coast, especially around Hollywood, keeps the radio-station postmen in the pink.

Women, probably because they have more time on their hands, far outnumber men as fan writers. Most of the letters I get from male sources are from boys and young men rabid about sports. I appreciate these letters and always read them, if I spot them in time. I don't read many fan letters. In my callow days I used to read them all and acknowledge them. But, no matter how briefly and formally I thanked the writer for her kind words, my reply brought a gushing letter from a new-found pal, and would I say Hello to her over the mike? With endless chains of correspondence stretching out ahead, I dropped that plan.

If I went to my office every day, I might even read fan mail now; but when I'm away a week or more at a time, upon my return the pile looks too formidable. So I just run through the signatures to make sure I'm not passing up something from an acquaintance, and flip them into the basket. It's my only defense.

After the Chicago Convention broadcast Kaltenborn, Wile and myself were buried under fan mail. I got a thousand or more letters, half of which I should say, were written during the time when thousands were sitting up all night to listen to the balloting. We were proud of that broadcast, and the outburst of audience mail was so remarkable that I saved my share of it as a souvenir—a tight, ten-pound bundle of papers which I resurrected the other day and opened.

The writers on that occasion had three tough names to handle—Kaltenborn, Wile and Husing—and not more than one letter in ten got all three right. I was Hussing, Heusing, Husting, Husings, Huesing, Husing, etc. Fred Wile was Wille, Weil, Wild, Wilde, and even While; but Kaltie fared

the worst—the fan writers couldn't spell him at all. Here are a few interpretations I cull from the heap: Kosenborn, Keltenborn, von Kaltenborn, Kattenbourne, Kaltenbaugh, Careltonborn, Clatenborn, Kalterborn, Kattleborn, ad lib. You wouldn't think they could have found so many ways.

There's one type of fan letter which, no matter how badly it may be phrased and spelled, the broadcaster always appreciates—the one that gives a glimpse of the Godsend radio has become to lonely and drab people everywhere. We who live in the crowds and excitements of cities forget the mass of people—the neglected, the shut-in, and the isolated—to whom radio is the chief solace in existence.

I've been too hard, I guess, on the fans for their familiarity. Why shouldn't they be familiar? To millions of them radio's voices are the only outside voices they hear regularly. Those voices become their personal friends, and when they take pen in hand they naturally address these friends as they would any other neighbor. We kid and clown, call radio a racket, and get hard-boiled about commercial entertainment, but just the same we people of the studios think we're in the grandest profession in the world. If we didn't, we'd never go anywhere in it.

And we do think so because we all get fan letters that unconsciously breathe of the miracle and blessing of radio to the forgotten millions. Here's an example selected from the Convention mail—from a woman of a desert village in California:

Dear MR. TED HUSING  
MR. CALTENBORN &  
MR. WILDE

Just to voice my humble appreciation of the wonderous way you brought the Democratic Convention to us. I live in a very small town

near the Tijuana Border in So. California but even if I am of no special importance I certainly enjoyed every session of the convention as though I had been a participant and your very vivid description of each event made us feel you were in the next room. Often, when in another room, after hearing your voices so much & so long, felt as though you were inside the door and one could step in and face you.

But alas even as Radio is so wonderful and so proficient we are unable to do that *yet*.

Ted Husing your voice came across our glorious land as clear as a bell and we stood by & listened to your every word that whole night through, too bad you could not see how much we were enjoying our picture convention that you so ably brought us. I'm sure we were much more comfortable than you.

And Mr. Caltenborn the way you explained those little tricks of Politics was most pleasing and satisfactory. We received so many first hand sidelights we otherwise might not have guessed so soon. And Mr. Wilde your bringing so many celebrities to talk was delightful and brought with it a feeling of close friendliness that only the spoken word can do.

And after all is said and done the C.B.S. certainly deserves to be congratulated and patronized after such a marvelous demonstration of their business ability.

Trusting our fair land elects the right man in November we say Good Bye and *See* you in four years.





FOURTEEN: THE RISE OF TRACK





## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RISE OF TRACK

NOT UNTIL 1932 did radio really become a giant. Then, its world was a teeming, fluctuating one. Depression was reducing the number of commercial sponsors, and the competition became merciless. Stars of one year were unable to get on a program the next. New stars flashed up. The best talent in the world was thronging into radio, the best minds were knocking at its doors. Jealousies flowed in undercurrents around every conspicuous figure on the air. Nobody could afford to step out on a limb incautiously or risk needlessly inviting the javelins of criticism.

Yet that year I staked my reputation, and even my C.B.S. contract itself, on a single foot race—and won. I asked for the privilege of broadcasting over the net the invitation meeting at Princeton between the combined Oxford-Cambridge track team and a team made up of Princeton-Cornell athletes. In particular I wanted to cover the mile run which would bring together for the first time Jack Lovelock of Oxford, the great English star at the distance, and Princeton's crack miler, Bill Bonthron.

The net authorities were cold to it. Track events didn't provide good broadcasting, the radio audience would be negligible, etc.—they couldn't give network time to it. I'd been plugging track since 1929 and getting nowhere, except in Columbia's bad books—a studio man with a bug.

I replied with the prediction that a new world's record for the mile would be set in that race—a piece of history the net ought to give to its listeners. Just one hour, I pleaded. Radio's powers shook their heads. This went on for days.

"All right," I said finally, "if that race doesn't turn out to be the most exciting, record-smashing event in athletic history, then you can have my job and I'll sell shoelaces or something."

C.B.S. yielded, the net stations came in for it, and we got our hour. That race *had* to be good, or Quailey and Husing would be out seeing if there was anything in this "third chain" they were always talking about.

On the statistics themselves my prediction looked like insanity. The world's record for the mile was then four minutes, nine seconds. Bonthron had never run a mile faster than 4:23. He had to clip fourteen seconds off his best—a feat that might seem impossible. Lovelock, in some of the preliminary meets on this side, had run in 4:12, but we had had faster miles run over here, and his work made no stir. These were the figures staring radio's chiefs in the face. N.B.C. didn't even cover the meet.

Yet it was in the cards for one or the other of those two runners to break the record. Les Quailey and I had carefully doped this out together. We knew Bonthron was really much faster than 4:23. Bonthron always ran to win races, never to beat time. He invariably allowed others to set the pace, then breezed ahead just at the finish. If he followed this strategy, he would have in Lovelock a pace-setter who would carry him around twelve seconds faster than he had ever run before, and that would be within a couple of seconds of the record. We relied upon the finish—a final spurt by two indomitable athletes—to turn the trick.

It was a perfect day in Palmer Stadium—a clear July day.

Cricket awnings were out on the lawn—a beautiful sight—and the stadium was full of a summer crowd—college people—girls in light dresses, their escorts in flannels. The mile run started, and the stadium instantly turned into a bedlam. For Bill Bonthron had changed his racing tactics and was setting the pace himself. Unprepared for this, the crowd could only scream.

Above this noise I had to yell into the mike to be heard. It was evidently Bonthron's plan to run Lovelock off his feet and then have it easy at the finish. To do this he had to flash stuff faster than anything he had ever shown before. At every point he was clocked, he was either on the record or below it. Gradually he pulled out ahead of Lovelock. As they came to the finish he was leading the Englishman six yards. Six yards—and only eighty to go. And Bonthron setting a pace that would have left in the ruck every great runner in history, from the shadowy times of Greece to the present. Lovelock was in the ruck—six yards behind with only eighty left. Could he hope to close such a gap?

He did. It still makes me gasp just to remember it. No horse race was ever so exciting as this. As I yelled and blatted into the mike, and pandemonium raged around me, Lovelock smoothly ran through, closing the gap, passing Bonthron, and snapping the tape in 4 minutes, 7.6 seconds—breaking the world's record by nearly a second and a half. Then Bonthron flashed across, setting an all-American record of 4:08.7—the old mile record beaten twice! Was that delivering the goods?

Next year, before the Princeton Invitation Meet, I again predicted the mile record would be broken; and it was, when Cunningham beat Bonthron in 4:06.7. I had guaranteed that the winner of that race would beat 4:07, but I was not out on

a limb that time. The Lovelock-Bonthron broadcast had made radio track-conscious.

Later during the same year after that great race another track day burned itself into my memory—a summer day in Chicago—when, at the National Collegiate Athletic Association meet, I saw Ralph Metcalfe, the colored sprinter from Marquette University, give the greatest exhibition of running on the cinders the world had yet seen. This speed machine that day in *two races broke three world's records and tied a fourth!*

How? The events were billed as the 100-yard and 220-yard dashes, but, in anticipation of the Olympic Games, finish lines were also set for the 100 meters and 200 meters—approximately 109 and 219 yards respectively. Timers were stationed at all four lines, and the athletes ran through the full distances.

That was thrill enough for the lover of track, but I got an even greater kick out of it in retrospect because of certain recent events. In the stands that day watching the beautifully built, 200-pound Negro sprinter from Marquette was a young colored boy from Cleveland, Ohio, who had come to the meet on his high-school track team. When he saw the records toppled by one of his race in such wholesale fashion, he pursed his lips in a whistle of amazement. Yet that same afternoon, this lad, whose name was Owens, tied the world's hundred-yard-dash record in the Interscholastic meet. Nobody at the time, though, thought that the timing could be accurate.

Metcalfe took an interest in the Cleveland boy and coached him; and just the other day, since I began to write these memoirs, Jesse Owens, now of Ohio State U., in two

hours, in four events, himself set three new world's records and tied the fourth—the greatest athletic feat of modern times.

Jesse Owens is thus continuing today the Negro domination of sprint racing that began with Eddie Tolan, of Michigan, and was continued by Ralph Metcalfe. But even now, a new colored figure in the athletic world is flashing stuff that may make him the speediest sprinter of all time—Eulace Peacock, of Temple University. In July, 1935, he took the measure of both Metcalfe and Owens in the 100 meters, running that distance (with a favoring breeze behind him) in the world-record time of 10.2 seconds. This quartette—Tolan, Metcalfe, Owens and Peacock—have given the complete demonstration that sinewy African legs are the fastest driving pistons yet developed by human evolution.

These are mighty names now in the national firmament—names that vie with those of champions in football, golf, tennis, or any other sport. Only ten years ago track athletics were the sporting interest only of college undergraduates and a few alumni who kept up their enthusiasms. Now the interest, thanks to radio, is almost as great as that in football.

I don't take any credit to myself, except that I did have enough enthusiasm for track to start broadcasting it. It was bound to build up itself, once the public had a chance to hear it. Since the days of the Greeks, individual athletic prowess, and the athletic contests of individuals, have always held more real interest for individuals than team matches. Not everybody has played games, but everybody has run and jumped; and so, to every person with muscular sensation, the record-breaking feats of the great athletes savor of the miraculous.

Today every important athletic meet attracts an immense crowd, and its broadcast knocks everything else off the air. Behind this popularity lies a long string of broadcasts on the national hookup which Les Quailey and I have handled: innumerable indoor meets in Madison Square Garden—well, if you insist, twenty-four of them—besides seven Penn relays, four I.C.4-A's (the Eastern intercollegiate), three N.C.A.A.'s (the National intercollegiate), four Princeton Invitation Meets (the blue-ribbon event of all track athletics) and, our biggest sports broadcast of all, the complete Olympics at Los Angeles in 1932.

Radio has not only built up public interest in track sports but it has played an important rôle in the wholesale smashing of track records during recent years. And I'm not kidding, either. Certain champions of the superhuman stripe perform better when crowds are great and the atmospheric pressure tense. Bobby Jones was an example. So was Babe Ruth—and Bill Tilden was another. In form and performance Ralph Metcalfe was always the artist responsive to his audience. Let him know that a meet was being broadcast, and that the whole nation was vicariously his audience, and he became capable of miracles. In the N.C.A.A. successive meets of 1932, 1933, and 1934, all of which we broadcast, he broke at least one world's record each time.

Metcalfe has been, and still is, one of the great personalities of sport. A peculiar phenomenon is his psychological domination of his protégé, Jesse Owens. By individual test Owens is the faster man, yet Metcalfe has beaten him in every match race they have run. Even in the 100-meter sprint at the N.A.A.U. meet in 1935, when Eulie Peacock's heels flashed ahead of both of them, Metcalfe finished second inches ahead of Owens.

Track records are a sacred thing with the authorities. Numerous records standing in the books today as the finest performances of all time have been broken unofficially, some of them more than once. For instance, the present world's record for the 100-yards is 9.4 seconds. Six athletes have run that distance in that time and had their performances recognized. Yet, as early as 1901, a professional sprinter, R. P. Williams, now physical director at Wittenberg College in Ohio, ran the hundred in 9 seconds flat—ran it not only once in that time but on four other occasions during the season. Many watches caught the performances, but the authorities never accepted the record, possibly because they could not ascertain the conditions under which Williams ran. To have a track record stand, it must be made with no assistance to the runner from wind, gradient or anything else.

Bernie Wefers, Sr., the former Columbia track coach, ran the hundred in 9.4 seconds when the record time stood at 10 seconds flat, but this was another performance failing to gain recognition. No doubt other records have been beaten, and there are probably thousands of track followers in this country who can attest to such achievements.

Where are track records going in the future? Will they be continually lowered year after year, or have we about reached the peak of human athletic achievement? The 4-minute mile has, during the last three or four years, become a traditional goal in track athletics. Before every great national meet in which the fastest milers are to participate, the newspapers invariably speak of the possibility of someone running the mile in four minutes.

As a rabid track fan and one who has made a study of running for the past six or eight years, I doubt whether the 4-minute mile will be realized in our day, or if any of the



other principal distance records will be lowered much below the figures we have now. The world will have to breed a race of supermen to exceed present performances to any material degree; and, since human beings are not race horses, it seems unlikely that any such physical evolution will come during our generation.

Take the 100-yards, for example. The present record is 9.4 seconds. That is as fast as human muscle, wonderful condition, and perfect racing form can propel a man's body over that distance from a standing start. The one chance is that some great athlete may clip one-tenth of the second off the time getting out of the hole. The record-breaker must be a heavy man besides, which makes a quicker start all the more improbable. But if a big man can save that fifth of a second on the start, and race to the limit of his power up to eighty yards, his momentum will carry him over the line with his fifth of a second still saved.

When talking about the 4-minute mile, we must remember that human beings have run the mile only eight times in less than 4:10. The present record of 4:06.7 represents a reduction of three seconds in three years. That seems to promise further improvement. In fact, if you carry downward the curve of mile records set during the last ten years, the 4-minute mile looks just around the corner.

In my opinion, the rapidity of the reduction of the mile record has deceived the experts. Personally, I think the mile record is now close to its limit. During the next ten years I expect to see it dropped perhaps two seconds, but no more. Of the principal distance records, the only one I think that will be lowered appreciably is the 220-yards. Owens and Metcalfe have both unofficially knocked plenty of time off the present record.

Nowadays it's fashionable for the experts to step out with specific predictions about what will happen in sports. Here's what I aver will be done to some of the running records during the next ten years—and if I'm wrong, sue me:

Distance	1935	1945
	World's Records	Husing's Prediction
100 yards . . . . .	9.4	9.3
220 yards . . . . .	20.6	20.2
440 yards . . . . .	46.4	46.2
half-mile . . . . .	1:49.8	1:48
mile . . . . .	4:06.7	4:04.5

I have been so occupied giving you my views on the personalities and prospects of the track that I appear to have got away from the yarns I started out to tell you in the beginning of this chapter. Let's get back, then, to the year 1932, and to begin with we'll go to Alamitos Lagoon, Los Angeles, August 14—the last day of the Olympic Games and 75,000 people gathered to watch the final event—the 2,000-meter race for eight-oared crews. The greatest shells in the world were about to do battle—the United States (represented by the University of California), Italy, Canada and Great Britain. Cal had shown itself to have the best crew in America by winning the Poughkeepsie Regatta and the Olympic tryouts, as well as the varsity races on the Coast.

For the Americans, the one worry was that the U. C. crew might have passed the peak of its form. To keep a crew in condition over such a long season through the hot weather was little short of marvelous, so that if Cal were to win the Olympic race in August, the victory would reflect as much

credit upon the coach, Ky Ebright, as upon the crew members themselves.

The long racing basin was surrounded by an immense throng as the time for the event drew near, with the largest crowd in the stands at the finish line. Two thousand meters is well over a mile in length, and those in the stands could see the boats but not the shifting tide of the struggle at the start. Loud-speakers kept them apprised of the race's progress as they did also the entire crowd surrounding the lagoon. The crews came up to the starting line, the four coxswains shot up their hands, the starter yelled, "Row!" and they were off to what was probably the greatest race in rowing history—certainly the best eight-oared race I ever saw.

California and Italy jumped out to a slight advantage and then settled down, to call it that, to very fast rates of stroking. Italy rowed a high, light-dipping stroke that counted 40 to the minute, while California, to keep pace about two feet behind, fell into a deep, strong 36. Both these rates were spurring rates not to be kept up over such a distance as 2,000 meters, but Canada and Great Britain, to avoid being distanced at the start, were forced to adopt the same strategy. They went over the 200-meter mark practically in a tie, Italy a foot or so out ahead of Canada and the United States, now even, with Great Britain holding on valiantly two feet behind.

When would they drop down to normal rowing? Flesh and blood couldn't stand such a pace at the distance. Yet, as they approached the 500-meter mark, California actually put on a spurt. The cox called for twenty fast ones, and, behind the stroking of big Ed Salisbury, the giant California oarsmen dug their blades into the limpid lagoon. They went out ahead of Canada, caught Italy, and at 500 meters actually led by a

boat deck. Now Salisbury *dropped back* the beat to 36, but the Italians still kept up their merciless 40. They crept up on the American shell, caught it, and at the 850-meter mark were half a length ahead and moving away.

When were those Italians going to crack? They couldn't keep it up—but they were. Cal was not to be shaken off. Salisbury dug in again, and did California come! At the 1,000 meters, halfway through, at the end of a long magnificent spurt, the American boat shot out three feet ahead once more to the wildest demonstration witnessed during the Olympics. Italy was now content to let the Americans set the pace, but hung on grimly. At 1,500 meters California still had its three-foot lead, but no more. Italy stepped up a little, and at 1,700 meters the shells were even.

Now it was a struggle between the two shells, with 300 meters to go. The crews were rowing madly. Both coxswains were yelling for more power. Italy went up to a murderous 42. Cal answered with a stiff 38, and Cox Norris Graham beat the gunwales with his tiller handles as he called for a final series of ten. It was beyond description—one hundred meters to go, Italy two feet behind—a maddening, unforgettable finish. Italy crept up. Just feet to go, and the Italian bow appeared in front. But one last, terrific lunge from California, a stroke that lifted the shell out of the water, and it catapulted the line—THE WINNER!

And now let's turn to football and that great game fought out between Oregon and the University of California of Los Angeles in the Multnomah Stadium in Portland, October 15, 1932. This was a struggle won, after the closing gun had sounded, by a team that seemed to have been hopelessly outplayed during 57 minutes of the allotted hour.

It was a muddy, slippery gridiron. Both teams seemed

evenly matched at first, but near the end of the first half, Polpenjack, the Oregon right halfback, on a reverse play caught the Uclans flat-footed, broke through, ran 45 yards and scored standing up. Oregon converted, and the score of 7-0 came right down to the end of the game. With three minutes of play left U.C.L.A. had the ball on their own 33-yard line, and with the field ahead guarded by an eleven that had consistently held the Californians, the game seemed to be in the bag for Oregon.

They lined up and the ball was snapped. Frankovich, the star back of the Uclans, who thus far had failed to shine brilliantly in the game, then threw a long pass down the field. It was caught by Joe Berry, the U.C.L.A.'s end, and he was downed on Oregon's 8-yard line—a gain of 59 yards. On the next play, Berry on a wide reverse around left end fooled the Webfeet and went over for a touchdown. Livesay failed to kick goal, and with thirty seconds of play left Oregon still had the game 7-6.

Oregon decided to kick, instead of receiving the kick-off, which would have seemed to be the smarter move. With only seconds left, they could have frozen the ball until the time ran out. U.C.L.A. received and was downed deep in its own territory. Three forward passes were incompleting. The Californians were forced to kick. The kick was blocked, and Oregon had the ball on its own 44-yard line. Brown, of Oregon, then threw a long forward pass, but Frankovich intercepted it on his own 3-yard line, spun around, and was nailed on his 7-yard line. He staved off a touchdown by that play, but with the final gun ready to sound at any moment the game seemed to be over.

Oregon spread its defense for a pass since that seemed the logical thing for U.C.L.A. to do on its final play. Frankovich

faded back deep into the end zone covered by his interference, then heaved the ball out obliquely to Livesay, who took it over his shoulder on the 30-yard line. Livesay barely sidestepped an Oregon tackler, reached the 35-yard line, the 40, was hit by the Oregon safety man, twisted loose, and broke out into the clear. He led a chase up to midfield, when the gun sounded ending the game. But legally the play couldn't stop until the ball was dead. Livesay put on enormous speed for that muddy field, and, though some of the Oregon sprinters gained on him, they couldn't catch him. He went over the goal line for a touchdown on a pass and run of 105 yards. In three minutes the complexion of the struggle had been entirely changed, U.C.L.A. in that time scoring two touchdowns and winning 12-7. Those things happen once in a lifetime.

A month later that same season occurred a game that will live forever in the memories of those who saw it. It was a different scene this time—Northrop Memorial Stadium at Minneapolis, the date being November 19 and the contestants, Michigan and Minnesota. The event was the final game of the Big Ten season, the game itself would determine the championship.

It was a field turned to granite by the bitter cold. In the stands 30,000 frost-bitten spectators were trying to keep warm by yelling their heads off. To Michigan the loss of the game would have meant more than merely losing the championship. It would spoil their record of an unbeaten season of thirteen games. Moreover, the Wolverine varsity had won twenty-six out of its last thirty games, lost only one, and tied three. People were beginning to talk reminiscently about the great series of Michigan teams from 1901 to 1905 that won fifty-five straight games and scored 2,821 points to their opponents' 40.

Yet by all the dope, Michigan should have lost this day against Minnesota. They were up against a bigger, more powerful adversary who kept hammering away toward their goal. Only the educated toe of Regeczi kept the Wolverines in the picture by punting. In fact, that season, there were other Big Ten teams that should have taken Michigan's measure. But the Wolverines were a light, fast, heady aggregation which took advantage of the breaks and then held on to that advantage by stubborn defensive play.

All during the first half Minnesota had been pressing, but could not shake off the swarming Wolverines and get through to a score. Time and again the ball came looping down the field, kicked out of danger by Regeczi. With two minutes left of the first half, Regeczi had kicked again. Minnesota was downed with the ball on its 28-yard line. On the next play, big Jack Manders, of Minnesota, fumbled after the ball was snapped back to him. Petoskey, of Michigan, dived in and got it on the Minnesota 23-yard line. It was a break for which the Wolverines had been waiting.

All during that season they had seldom failed to score when the football gods were good to them. They didn't fail now. On the first play they were stopped for a 4-yard loss. Followed a beautiful forward pass which Petoskey took at the top of a high jump and carried to the Minnesota 3-yard line before he was smeared by half the Gopher team. Fay dropped back for a touchdown plunge, but the Gophers crashed through and downed it for no gain. Two other plays were equally futile. Fourth down, still four yards to go for a touchdown, and only time for one more play before the half was over!

Michigan went into a long huddle to decide what to do. This seemed to be their one chance for a score. When they came out they lined up in kicking position, Stan Fay down

on one knee to hold the ball. But the Minnesotans decided that this was a fake. They spread out in back to intercept a pass. The ball was snapped, Fay placed it down, Newman took a step and kicked and the ball sailed squarely through the goal posts for a score of three points.

Thereafter Michigan played a complete half of purely defensive football. Time and again Minnesota tried to shake their great broken field runner Lund loose, but he never got away to score. Again and again Regeczi punted out of danger, and when the final whistle blew the score was still 3-0, and the Wolverines had the Big Ten title.

There was only one Babe Ruth. Of the thousands of fans who have watched and admired him on the field, probably each one has a different experience to illustrate the Babe's greatness as a ball player. Let me tell mine.

It was in the third World Series game between the Chicago Cubs and the New York Yankees, played on October 1, 1932. The Yanks had taken the first two games in their own stadium and now had moved on to Wrigley Field in Chicago. At the start of this struggle, they seemed about to romp through the series, since in the first inning Babe Ruth knocked a homer with two of his mates on the bags ahead of him, while in the third Lou Gehrig hit another homer to bring the Yanks' score to four. Then the New York team proceeded to blow its lead. The Cubs scored three runs in the third. And in the last half of the fourth, Ruth missed a catch of Jorges' drive and put the tying run on second. A moment later Lazzeri fumbled a grounder by English, and the score was 4-4.

The Babe took a big razzing from the crowd as he came in to the dugout. The old boy's legs were then beginning to cave in on him, and he didn't get up to that drive by Jorges as fast as a younger man might. In the Yanks' half of the fifth,



Joe Sewell, the first man up, was out on a brilliant stop and throw by shortstop Jorges. Babe Ruth was next to bat, the bases clean, and did he get a riding? The Chicago stands roared with derision of the stout old fellow, and the players in the Cubs' dugout took it up, hoping to rattle the slugger.

Charlie Root was pitching for the Cubs. The first one came in—a ball outside and low. The Babe hitched up his pants, poised his mighty bat, and waited for the next one. A huge roar of delight went up. It was a called strike, center and waist high. The Babe looked over the crowd with an air of grieved reproach. He held up one finger at the stands in pantomime, as though to say: "That's only one strike. I only need one to hit." The crowd roared with laughter. Root smoked one in, and it was a curve that didn't find the plate. Ball two, and the Babe started razzing the dancing Cubs in their dugout.

Once more the white sphere streaked in, waist high but wide of the plate. Ball three! And now the batter, having got the pitcher in a hole, waited for the cripple—the straight one that must come over the pan, if the player were not to get a free pass. Here it came, and the Babe let it float over, as the umpire whipped up his right hand with a triumphant crow of "Stri-i-i-ke!"

Did the crowd roar at the Babe then, jeering and howling to Charlie Root to strike the monarch out. Babe enjoyed it. He answered the thundering tumult by pointing out to center field, 436 yards away. By a gesture he told them that that was where he was going to park the next one. He turned to the Cubs' bench and repeated the gesture; and though the enemy answered with baseball repartee, their remarks sounded a little hollow. I'll say one thing for Charlie Root—he pitched to

Ruth. The ball came in smoking, and the Babe swung. The spat of his bat against the horsehide could be heard outside the park. *He did it.* He hit it where he said he would—a spectacular home run to the base of the flag-pole in center field.





FIFTEEN: MORE SPORTS MIRACLES



## CHAPTER XV

### MORE SPORTS MIRACLES

YOU WANT still more thrills? Then, for a start, come with me to Belmont Park on a fine spring afternoon in 1933, where, as the feature race, they're running the Coy Maid Purse for two-year-old fillies over the Widener course—four and one-half furlongs straightaway. Nine young thoroughbreds face the barrier to contend in bright sunshine over a fast track. The favorite is Barney Baruch's black filly Watch Her, a beautifully-put-together young mare, her sides and flanks gleaming like polished ebony. As they go to the post the bookies are quoting her at even money. Next in public favor is Miss Merriment at 2 to 1, then Early Light at 6 to 1, with Guiding Light, Trillium, Bibbie's Choice, Sun Clothing, Bongo and Fancy Feath at longer odds.

They come up to the barrier, Miss Merriment docile, Bongo moving about a bit, the favorite restive and misbehaving, rearing up and refusing to enter her stall. OOPS! She's just thrown her jockey and broken through, and now she's coming down the stretch like mad—a runaway. Mr. Red Coat takes after her on his plug. Oh, well, she'll run herself out at the end of the stretch and be brought back tired, which makes it tough on the boys that have wagered their long green on her.

But she doesn't stop at the end of the stretch. She keeps on,

and her speed distances her pursuer. Red Coat turns back to head her off. He meets up with her at the head of the stretch. She wheels and gallops back in the opposite direction, making another complete circuit of the track at top speed. Now all the track employees are out trying to corner her. She races this way and that, and by the time she's captured, thirty minutes later, she's run at least five miles. They lead back to the barrier a trembling, panting animal with blood-red nostrils and black sides lathered with sweat from ears to fetlocks.

Meanwhile, the books have held open, and the odds on Watch Her have lengthened from even money to 100 to 1 and more. You can even get 50 to 1 that she won't show. It seems a shame to race her at all today, but those who backed her at even money are entitled to a run for it.

Watch Her is tractable this time at the barrier, and they're off to a quick start. Trillium breaks on top, Guiding Light second, and Early Light third, with the black filly back about sixth. They come up to the first furlong pole, and Early Light steps out into the pace, Trillium fading back, Guiding Light still holding second, Fancy Feath having moved up to third. Watch Her is in sixth place as they run to the quarter.

Now Miss Merriment is showing her class. She's moving up out of fifth place as they hit the quarter pole, running nicely in the good going. But, what? SHE'S DRAGGING "WATCH HER" UP INTO SECOND SPOT! Howling wolves! Is that black baby running? She's only a head off the pace and two on top of Early Light. Watch Her is running like the Broadway Limited! She passes Miss Merriment as they hit the third furlong pole. There she goes—out on top by a length, Merriment second, three lengths on top of Guid-

ing Light. A two-horse race now, and every step sees Watch Her move out. They're at the four-furlong pole, Watch Her on top by a length and a half, dominating the running, Miss Merriment second, two on top of Guiding Light—and so the way they finish!

And that, racing fans, is one for the book. A filly throws her rider, runs twice the length of the Grand National Steeplechase course, and then goes right on to win a sprint in time within two seconds of the track record. That effort, though, must have taken most of the racing spirit out of Watch Her, for she has never starred on the track since.

The wildest and most exciting finish to a horse race I ever saw came during the running of the Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs on May 6, 1933. Ladysman was the hot favorite to win, with Mr. Khayyam and Good Advice as second choices. But there was a hot tip out on Headplay, a horse recently bought by Mrs. Mason. At the start Isaiah broke into the lead with Good Advice and Headplay right with him, Ladysman back about sixth. No need to give the shifting positions of the runners around that brown mile of track. The dark horse Headplay took the lead in the back stretch. Isaiah faded in that running, and Good Advice was through as they reached the final turn. The jockey, Herby Fisher, giving Headplay a smart ride, brought his mount into the stretch by a length and a half. Ladysman tried to challenge on the turn into the stretch but gave up.

Meanwhile, from far back on the outside, an outsider named Broker's Tip began moving up, passing Ladysman, Kerry Patch, and Charlie O. The well-known jockey Don Meade was on Broker's Tip. He caught Headplay in the stretch and thereafter it was a two-horse race.

Then, with less than an eighth of a mile to go, came the



excitement. As both thoroughbreds ran shoulder to shoulder, Jockey Fisher, on Headplay, leaned out and pushed Don Meade away. Meade retaliated by leaning over and tugging at Fisher's saddle cloth. With the horses running neck and neck, the two jockeys proceeded to stage a battle. They tugged at each other's saddles and saddle cloths and tried to push each other off. Just at the finish Meade whipped out a fist and struck Fisher; and as they went over the line, apparently in a dead heat, Fisher was whacking back at Meade. It was a crazy finish, and nobody knew who won until the official numbers went up. No. 16 was posted as winner—the Bradley horse, Broker's Tip.

What thrills and toppling of records there were during the National Collegiate Track and Field Championships at the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago on the night of June 17, 1933! It was held at night on a flood-lighted track before an immense throng of sports followers. Thrill after thrill went through the crowd as the sectional champions wrote athletic history. In the first race, Glenn Cunningham, of Kansas, ran the fastest mile that had ever flashed under human heels in America—in 4 minutes, 9.8 seconds. In the quarter-mile Glenn Hardin, of Louisiana State, set a world's record. Ralph Metcalfe, the Negro sprinter, then went on to tie the world's record for the 100-yard dash; and finally, Gus Meier, of Stanford, tied the record for the 120-yard high hurdles. The next event was the half-mile; and Cunningham, even after the fatigue of his great effort in the mile, came out to contest it.

He certainly would have been the favorite with the experts to win except for the presence among the contestants of Chuck Hornbostel, of Indiana. These two were arch-rivals, but Hornbostel had never been defeated in a half-mile race. The In-

diana boy had also challenged Cunningham in the mile, but had finished back in the ruck. How then could a man who couldn't beat a rival at one distance, hope to do so at a shorter distance? That was what the crowd was asking itself, and the half-mile promised to be the star event of the meet.

A big field came up to the starting mark—Simmons of Abilene Christian University, Ned Turner of Michigan, Labertew of Iowa State College, others—the cream of America's half-milers. They crouched, and the gun sent them away, Simmons in the lead, the rest bunched together. Down to the first turn they all came on the pace, Turner and Labertew disputing the lead with Simmons, and Cunningham behind them running outside. Hornbostel was way back.

At the turn Labertew and Turner fell away, and Cunningham moved up beside Simmons at an early pace that looked too killing for the distance. Cunningham was relentless, however, and fought it out with Simmons on the back stretch, taking the lead at the turn. He paced the pack in over the first lap, hitting the halfway mark in about fifty-six seconds—plenty fast going for a quarter-mile. Now they had only one lap to go. With no change in position they rounded the turn into the back stretch at a sizzling pace set by the increasing leg movement of Cunningham. That great runner had now moved out into the lead by a few feet.

Then suddenly on the back stretch Hornbostel began moving up on the outside, running very smoothly. He passed Ed Labertew and was in fifth place. He crept up on Webster, passed him, and was fourth. But, still, out ahead was the invincible Cunningham, pacing the race with rare judgment and never faltering. Hornbostel set sail for Ned Turner and passed him. Third place now! He began moving up foot by

foot on Simmons. For a few yards they race side by side. Simmons wouldn't let Hornbostel by, but the champion half-miler was not to be denied. He went on and started out to catch Cunningham.

Hornbostel then began really to move. With two hundred yards to go he was neck and neck with the champion miler, running on the outside. In the great struggle that followed they moved out ahead of the rest of the field yard by yard, sprinting like dash men. Cunningham was determined not to let Hornbostel pass. Hornbostel was equally determined to go by and win. The crowd was yelling like mad. They were in the stretch—less than a hundred yards to go—two fighters who had never quit trying short of a finish line—faces drawn, teeth clenched. They kept driving ahead neck and neck. Neither would give up, neither break down.

It looked sure like a dead heat, shoulder to shoulder; but then Hornbostel, with five yards to go, lunged forward and, as Cunningham staggered at the tape, went over, a winner by a foot. Hornbostel's time equaled the world's record of 1 minute, 50.9 seconds, and the announcement of that achievement ended one of the most dramatic races it was ever my excitement to see.

For Thrill No. 4 a different scene—a much smaller and much less vociferous crowd, but one no less tensely keyed up. It is the Forest Hills Stadium on August 26th, 1933, when Mrs. Helen Wills Moody played in the finals of the Women's National Lawn Tennis Championship against Miss Helen Jacobs, the defending champion.

Tennis followers knew that Mrs. Moody was not her old self when she went into this tournament. An injury to her back had kept her out of the Wightman Cup finals, and it was evident that she was still suffering from the weakness.

Still, she had breezed through to the finals easily enough, except in her semi-finals match with Miss Betty Nuthall, of England. The English girl actually took the first set from Queen Helen, the first set the American champion had lost to a woman opponent in this country since 1926. But after that Mrs. Moody went on to win 6-3, 6-2.

Incidentally, in that second set Mrs. Moody, contrary to the rules, served twice in a row. The error was unnoticed by the umpire, and the score stood. The amazing thing was that Miss Nuthall broke through Mrs. Moody's consecutive services and won both games—an unparalleled occurrence in American championship tennis.

Two days later Mrs. Moody was playing Miss Jacobs in the final. Before the match nobody gave Miss Jacobs an even chance. Tennis followers felt that she had won her championship only because Mrs. Moody had stayed out of the tournament the year before, but the finals themselves developed an amazing number of surprises. In seven previous clashes Miss Jacobs had never won more than five games from Mrs. Moody in any one set, but she went out with magnificent tennis actually to take the first set 8-6. Mrs. Moody then rallied to win the second set, 6-3, and her followers breathed easier. The queen was herself again.

Then that historic final set. Mrs. Moody served first. She gained the opening point as Miss Jacobs outed over the baseline. Mrs. Moody then served a double fault but again led the game at 30-15 as her service forced Miss Jacobs into an error. Then Queen Helen backhanded a sharp volley into the net, and it was 30-all. A second double fault put the Queen back, 30-40, and then Miss Jacobs went on to break through service and win the game by forcing Mrs. Moody into an error. The crowd was absolutely silent.

On her own service Miss Jacobs started slowly, trailing at love-30. Then two blazing services brought the score to 30-all. An aching volley that nicked the sideline made her 40-30, and as the former champion returned a backhand into the net for the final point, the games stood 2-love for Miss Jacobs.

Once more Mrs. Moody toed the baseline. Miss Jacobs netted the return, and the score was 15-love. The second point went to Miss Jacobs on an aced volley across the court. Then Mrs. Moody returned a spinning ball just over the baseline for the loss of the third point. Another placement ace by Miss Jacobs, driven straight down the sideline to end a brief, deep-court skirmish, made the score 15-40. Mrs. Moody wasn't even trying to return those lancelike shots. The crowd began to murmur, and Umpire Ben Dwight raised his hand to silence the 7,000 in the gallery. Mrs. Moody served again. Miss Jacobs returned it just to the baseline. They exchanged deep-court drives twice, then Miss Jacobs chop-stroked one just across the net. Mrs. Moody came running up and drove it out by eight inches. Three games-love for the defending champion.

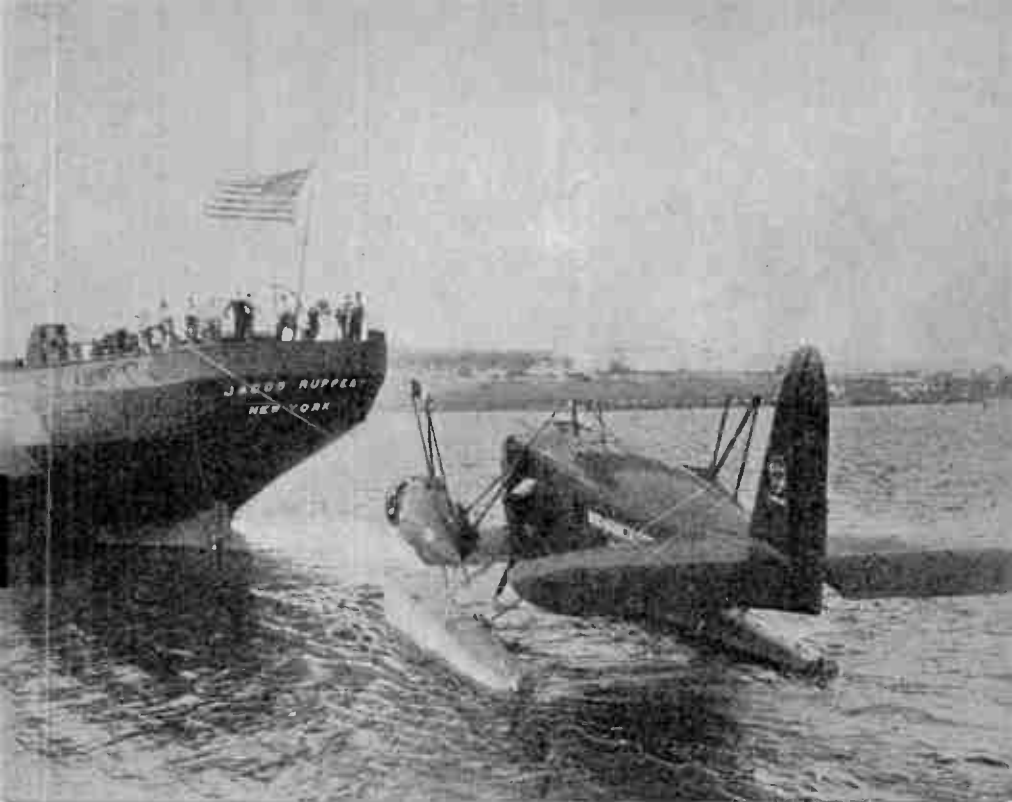
The girls started to exchange courts, and I could see the sadness, even depression, on Mrs. Moody's usually placid face. But wait—she stopped to speak to the umpire. It must have been something startling, for Ben Dwight was bending low to make sure he knew what the former champion was saying. He raised his hand for silence.

"Mrs. Moody defaults," he announced. "She can't go on. The match and championship go to Miss Jacobs!"

It was the most stunning and sensational climax to a match I ever saw and heard. Imagination could not have comprehended such an ending. And while Miss Jacobs' victory was

marred by the default, her inspired tennis that day deserved the championship. Her play was a rapier against a broadsword, and even with Helen Wills Moody at the top of her career, I think it might have won.





SIXTEEN: ADMIRAL BYRD STARTS SOUTH





## CHAPTER XVI

### ADMIRAL BYRD STARTS SOUTH

REAR ADMIRAL BYRD's second departure for the Antarctic was one of the funniest things that ever happened in radio. It played as if Groucho Marx had written it, with Dick and his gallant men in the comedy rôles of the script. I mean, that's the way it seems now. At the time it was far from humorous.

SCIENCE is the ponderous answer given when you inquire how an expedition can be organized at the cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars, to say nothing of the risk of life, to go into an ice-locked empire for which there seems to be so little practical use. That magazine-circulation gag, the austere National Geographic Society, solemnly loud-pedals the scientific importance of such a mission, and the big-wigs of politics and business keep straight faces and play ball at the official send-off and welcome home.

Applesauce! Herb Glover, former director of C.B.S.'s news broadcasts, asked him one day why he had fallen into the habit of going to the South Pole and holing up practically beyond communication with the world. Dick gave the usual answer—he was trying to predict world weather from Polar atmospheric disturbances.

"Science me eye!" retorted Herb. "What's the low-down?"

"Well," confided the Admiral, "I like to get away!"

But the real answer is—DOUGH. On Byrd's last expedition the radio rights sold for a pretty penny, and the sponsors never

felt they were gypped, either. Add the explorer's inevitable book that runs into several editions, count the movies, endorsements, and such things, and you begin to see that Pole-discovering can be a fat racket.

Columbia Broadcasting System's first business contact with Admiral Byrd came early in 1933, when Mr. McNeil, impresario for the proposed expedition, approached Glover on the possibility of putting on short-wave broadcasts from Little America. It would be a good stunt—the whole country listening in—and C.B.S. ought to be able to sell such a program for plenty of jack.

Glover saw the possibilities, and arranged a meeting between Mr. Paley and the explorer. Radio engineers both in and outside of C.B.S. were consulted. Without guaranteeing American reception of Antarctic broadcasts, coming, as they would, out of the world's heaviest static, the sharps thought there might be enough reception to make the attempt worth while. The question was the cost of transporting and setting up a short-wave station on the polar ice. The first estimate was \$50,000, but this figure was finally whittled down to \$28,000.

Then there came the point of how much Byrd wanted for his end. Dick planned at that time to stay only a year in Little America, and wanted to net \$150,000 for the program. After a sponsor had been found, Byrd's remuneration became a subject of negotiation. The explorer finally agreed to take \$62,500 a year for as many years as he might be held in the Antarctic. Since he was away two years, he actually got \$125,000.

The sponsor who finally signed on the dotted line was General Foods, who took it for one of its products—a brown, granulated substance found on the American breakfast table. Since this stuff is going to appear in my own book and not in

a magazine touchy about giving free advertising, I can just as well name the product—Grapenuts to you.

Besides putting up the Admiral's personal guarantee for the broadcast, General Foods agreed to pay for the short-wave equipment plus radio tolls from Buenos Aires, through which pick-up station it was expected that most of the broadcasts would come; plus also all wire tolls in this country and all station time. It wasn't cheap.

Almost as hard to find as a sponsor were the men to handle the broadcasts. It was necessary to have a competent radio engineer down there, and also a master of ceremonies. No regular radio announcer was willing to sacrifice two years or more of a career apt enough to be a short, but merry, one, for the sake of uttering a few words once a week over short-wave that might or might not be heard by the American radio audience. Finally Charlie Murphy agreed to go as announcer. Charlie was a writer who had ghosted Admiral Byrd's first book of polar exploration. I guess, as much as anything else, he was willing to hole up with the penguins and polar bears, if they have any down there, to see if the vivid descriptions he had written for the Admiral had come anywhere near the truth.

With him went Johnnie Dyer as engineer. Dyer was a competent radio man just then out of a job and, moreover, he was seriously interested in science. Particularly, he wanted to observe the behavior of radio in the mesh of static forces at the end of the earth's axis. These two were an ideal pair.

Meanwhile, Manager McNeil had been busy in other directions. From the United States Shipping Board he had secured the gift of an old freighter for the expedition; but the Shipping Board, though political, wanted its publicity as much as the *National Geographic Magazine* or anybody else. So it was agreed that the ship was to be donated with a grand gesture.

Byrd was to attend a dinner given to him by members of the Shipping Board at the new Waldorf. At the end of this repast, when the speech-making had started, out of the clear sky the Board was to offer a ship, and the stunned Admiral was to falter thanks and pay them one dollar to make the sale legal with the government. Afterwards this ship was rechristened the *Jacob Ruppert*, in gratitude for the financial aid the brewing and baseball magnate was giving to the expedition.

At noon of the day he was to receive the ship, Admiral Byrd gave a luncheon to a number of friends in a private dining room at the Waldorf. Gene Tunney was there, Harold June and Ashley McKinley, Byrd's aviators, and numerous other men, including Herb Glover. The Admiral liked a bounteous table, and he and his guests lunched well, especially in the bibulous sense of the term. Dick, himself, was especially fond of sherry. Prohibition had not yet been repealed but he could get all he wanted. After luncheon he took the gang up to his suite and began ordering sherry.

The party continued during the afternoon, as an ever-increasing file of slain sherry bottles lined up along the baseboard of the drawing-room. Noisier and noisier grew the talk and hilarity. The luncheon had been held ostensibly to work on the problem of finding a practical South-Pole broadcasting set. Long before the afternoon was over everybody, engineers and all, agreed that that was no problem at all—there was no need to worry about it.

Late in the afternoon the Admiral, to illustrate a point, got out the priceless personal maps and charts he had used on his first expedition and spread them out on the thick carpet. Then, to indicate geographical positions, he began jabbing his pencil here and there into the charts, ripping them as if they had been so much butcher's paper. Every jab pierced Herb Glover

to the heart. Herb is a great collector of such things, and would have given his right eye for any one of the maps which Dick Byrd was so casually maltreating. But, pally as Herb was with the Admiral, he did not quite dare to ask him for one.

About six o'clock, when the party was at its merriest pitch, the guests observed with howls of laughter that the doughty explorer had passed out altogether. Mirth gave way to horror as someone remembered that Byrd had to appear at the Shipping Board dinner within an hour to get his free boat. It was all hands on deck to sober up the skipper. First of all they undressed him and dropped him into a tub of cold water, but the Admiral remained dead to the world. Sterner measures were necessary. Calling a bellhop, the amateur internes ordered ice—not ice for a few setups but half a ton of it—crushed, too. Presently, porters were staggering into the Byrd suite carrying big wooden buckets. Once more the guests reposed the Admiral in his bathtub, then packed him like an ice-cream freezer. Dick emerged from coma and appeared in time to accept his ship and pay over his buck.

The *Jacob Ruppert* was taken to Boston to be reconditioned and rebuilt for the expedition. The only cargo she took aboard at the port of baked beans and codfish was 20,000 cases of Jake Ruppert's beer. At that time only 3.2 beer was legal but a paternal government, interested in the promotion of pure science, allowed this beer to be stepped up to regular alcoholic levels to prevent its freezing in the bitter temperatures at the South Pole.

From Boston, the *Jacob Ruppert* sailed to Bayonne, N. J., to load its main cargo. There, it was to take on fuel oil and gasoline, complete food and clothing supplies for the expedition, the airplanes which were to reconnoitre the Antarctic conti-

ment, the dismantled short-wave station, a motor boat which Horace Dodge had presented, cigarettes, two cows, plenty of medicinal (and therefore legal) liquor and—oh yes—sherry. The sherry also came under the medicinal head. And—oh yes, again—Grapenuts. Plenty of Grapenuts. At Bayonne, also a pack of two hundred Eskimo dogs, which were to pull the Admiral's sledges over the eternal snows, were driven on board and chained to kennels in the hold under an open forward hatch.

Byrd was scheduled to sail from Norfolk on Sunday evening, October 21, 1933. The Sunday sailing was decided upon because on that evening there was an open hour on the Columbia net which the expedition could have weekly for an indefinite time. On Monday before the sailing, the *Jacob Ruppert* arrived in Bayonne. On Thursday evening Herb Glover, not having heard anything from the ship, went over to see if she were all ready to start for Norfolk. Herb arrived at the dock about midnight; and, far from the ship being ready to sail, he found that only the dogs and the beer were aboard. The fuel oil was going on, though, but only because it could be pumped aboard through a hose. The stevedores, who were supposed to have loaded the vessel by this time, were sitting stubbornly on the pier refusing to touch a single crate or packing box.

Something had slipped. Manager McNeil had been a little careless in handling the details of the loading. He had ordered the work done, but had been indefinite about paying for it. And the stevedores' union at Bayonne put no confidence in fly-by-night polar expeditions. They demanded coin on the table before they would move.

"How much do you want?" asked Glover.

"Four hundred bucks," said the boss stevedore.

Herb had no such sum on him, but offered to sign a guarantee for the dough as agent for the Columbia Broadcasting System. This was different. The head of the union called in his muscular lads, and in a few minutes the hand trucks were gaily rumbling up the gangplank. If the dock-wallopers worked hard, Herb figured, they'd still get the ship loaded in time for Norfolk.

Just as Herb was patting himself on the back for saving the expedition, one of the fuel lines on the forward deck burst and began dousing the Eskimo huskies below with a deluge of oil. The trapped animals at once sent up a terrific howl, but before the oil could be turned off four or five of the dogs had actually been drowned and the rest were up to their necks in crude petroleum. Were they furious? Even under the best of conditions an Eskimo dog has a petulant nature. With his hide smarting with raw oil he is ready to commit murder. Yet, unless the Byrd expedition were to be deferred for another year, there was nothing to do but scrub the pooches with soap and water, since raw oil burns flesh like acid.

Accordingly, at one o'clock in the morning, the crew of the *Jacob Ruppert* was routed out of its bunks and ordered to the kennels to wash dogs. Dozens of the indignant mutts had to be brought up on deck for this operation. Every member of the crew got bitten at least once; and when the huskies had finally been degreased, the decks of the good ship *Ruppert* were slippery with oil and human blood.

About this time Mrs. Glover, a very pretty girl, who had attended the theatre that evening and later accompanied her husband to Bayonne, wanted to come on board to see the famous vessel that was to cope with the polar ice. The deck of the *Ruppert* was by then no place for a lady to walk in evening shoes, so the gallant Swedish captain of the ship offered



to carry her to the cabin. Halfway across with his fair burden, the mariner slipped in the treacherous going and fell; and Mrs. Glover, in evening coat and décolletée gown, shot from his arms and slid into the scuppers. When they picked her up, she was a worse mess than Ed Wynn's aunt.

The longshoremen worked all night and next day, and by Friday night they had the ship ready to sail. Herb Glover, who had somehow got his wife safely back to New York, stayed on the job constantly. When he saw the last case of Grapenuts and the last bottle of medicine aboard, Herb felt it would not be too risky to leave and go down to Norfolk, where he still had plenty to do. He left with apprehension, however, since by this time a hoodoo seemed to be hovering over the expedition. Herb was hardly in his bunk at Pennsylvania Station when an oil-tanker lying in the slip adjoining the *Jacob Ruppert* blew up with an explosion that jarred half of New Jersey and filled the heavens with flame. Fortunately, the fireboats were able to tow the *Ruppert* away in time to prevent serious damage to her.

She made the voyage to Norfolk without mishap, and all was ready for the grand farewell. The town was full of newspapermen and big shots ready to take part in the ceremonies. The Navy was represented by yards of gold lace, the entire Byrd family of Virginia were the guests of honor, and Kate Smith, the old dependable who is called in on everything of that sort, was present to get her moon over the mountain once more and present the departing hero with a bunch of flowers. Then, just one hour before the first Grapenuts' broadcast was to begin, Dick's doctor said he was too sick to take part.

Herb Glover burned up. All the Admiral had was a cold, and Herb thought the medico might have stretched a point and let him appear. Byrd, indeed, was willing, but at the

same time he did not relish aggravating an attack of flu which he would have to take with him on the start of a long sea voyage. Finally, a compromise was struck. A mike was installed in the Admiral's hotel room, and he was to give his message to the American public from bed.

The main farewell took place in an armory in the Norfolk Navy Yard. The remote-control wire to the microphones had been brought in through a window, the wire simply dangling outside. The comedy of errors kept up. Shortly before the broadcast began, one of our engineers had a run-in with a movie cameraman and gave him the rush off the lot. Then the tycoons and celebrities took up so much of the time congratulating Byrd and wishing him Godspeed that the Grape-nuts' hour was practically over before the Admiral could get in his word. He only had a three-minute speech to deliver, but it was not until one minute to ten that he got on the air.

Of course, because of the importance of the event, C.B.S. intended to break into the next hour to let the Admiral finish, but Dick had talked only thirty seconds, and had never reached his good-bye at all, when the wire out of the armory went dead, and the broadcast ended. I don't suppose the Columbia network had ever broadcast to a bigger audience than was sitting around its loud-speakers that night, and practically every listener instantly assumed that a mercenary broadcasting company had cut a national hero off the air lest it lose money on time previously sold. A storm of protest immediately set in, starting at once by telegram and long-distance telephone, and continuing for many days in the form of sarcastic letters. Even diplomats in Washington added to the beating we took.

C.B.S. never found a conclusive explanation of the affair. All we ever knew for sure was that the remote-control wire dropped from the armory window was broken in two, whether

by accident or design nobody could tell. Everyone had a theory. That unpleasantness with the movie people, for instance, may have roused the animosity of the entire picture-taking crew. Then, too, the Byrd family was none too popular in Virginia. A political enemy of the Governor, Dick Byrd's brother, might have twisted the wire in two for revenge. At the same time there could have been a natural twist in the wire that would break. The Columbia Broadcasting System preferred to regard the thing as accidental.

Next day, thank God! the *Jacob Ruppert* sailed.

As to the Antarctic broadcasts themselves, most of my readers know what they were like—sometimes successful, sometimes not. Usually, as had been expected, they came up to us by short wave through Buenos Aires. One night when they were testing the set-up just before the usual Sunday broadcast, I went to the chief engineer's office at C.B.S. to look on and listen. Through my earphones I heard a foreign voice repeating over and over in English:

"B.A. iss ready. B.A. iss ready."

Then another voice, from our office: "We're getting it direct, B.A., but keep your line open."

That meant we were getting 13,000-mile reception out of the worst static in the world. Radio was a wonder to me that night. In fact, it never loses its wonder for me. There is always something new.

Eddie Cohan, our chief engineer, said to me: "Ted, how'd you like to talk to them?"

"Fine," I answered, pulling up a mike.

"Hello," called Eddie. "Charlie Murphy—is that you, Charlie?"

"Sure," came Charlie's voice, clear as a bell. "What's on your mind?"

Then Eddie pulled some of the old boloney—you know, the kind of stuff that makes you so sore when it's about yourself! He began formally:

"Mr. Murphy, as the greatest announcer in Little America, how would you like to talk to the greatest announcer in America?"

I have to admit that this identification at first had Charlie Murphy baffled.

"Hello, Charlie," I called to him.

"Well, for Christ's sake! Ted Husing!" he yelled. "I'd never have recognized you from the description."

We continued talking together for twenty minutes, I guess, short-waving between sultry, summer New York and the black winter of the South Pole. As DX-ers are fond of saying, we might as well have been on the same block.

Finally Charlie said: "By the way, Ted, how would you like to hear our band play a tune?"

"What kind of a band?" I countered cagily.

"Oh," said Charlie, "we've got a few combs, jewsharps and such things."

"You slay me, Charlie," I answered. "You're down there where you can't budge an inch if you want to, and won't be able to move for the next six months, and yet you offer to entertain me, when I have only to walk around the corner to get the best in the world."

Could you tie that?





SEVENTEEN: POTPOURRI



## CHAPTER XVII

### POTPOURRI

FACES, celebrated faces always with that ringed diaphragm in front of them, crowd the panorama of my ten years before the mike. Radio's miracle in finding the talented unknown and swinging him dizzily to the stars. Rudy Vallee, an obscure band leader whom technical musicians hooted; Stoopnagle and Budd, a couple of infinitive-splitters from an upstate station; Phillips Lord, a New England school teacher; Amos 'n' Andy, two nice Virginia boys with an idea. Some could take fame, some couldn't. Some became insufferable prigs, some were broadened and mellowed by celebrity. Bing Crosby is one of the latter class—still the same old Bing he was when he was smashing Fords and California speed laws on Paul Whiteman's first tour to the Coast.

Paul Whiteman himself, moody and lonely when traveling, waking people up in the middle of the night to talk and philosophize for hours about a mad world. Commander Rosendahl of the Navy dirigibles, whose luck it was always to be shifted just ahead of a great disaster. Before the launching of the *Akron* he gave me much confidential dope about the ship so that I might have an intelligent background for my broadcast. Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks at their first joint broadcast. We were photographed together, and they autographed my print. Later they wanted that picture and traded



new autographed portraits for it. Mary's is a bright spot on my wall of souvenirs.

Rudy Vallee. "Heigh-ho, everybody! This is Rudy Vallee and his Herbert's Diamond Entertainers." Did you ever hear it that way? Probably not, unless you were a pioneer New York City set-owner in radio's Stone Age, when the great Rudy was just breaking in. His first commercial sponsor was a Manhattan emporium called Herbert's Jewelry Store. Rudy got \$60 for a half-hour concert, and out of that he had to pay his band. Later, when he opened the Heigh Ho Club, it was for a while "Rudy Vallee and his Yale Men."

If it's an achievement or anything for an announcer to introduce a radio celebrity to the air for the first time, then I have two large feathers in my cap, for I piloted the initial net broadcasts of both Paul Whiteman and Rudy Vallee. Rudy hit big time by sheer accident—and was famous in three weeks.

It occurred back when the Columbia Broadcasting System consisted only of a prayer and a program idea. In other words, 1928. At that time we were using Newark's WOR for our key station, hiring outside time where we could get it, and hooking it all up by wire. We had one regular weekly entertainment program—"Night Club Romances," written by Don Clark. This was the one program I announced. For the rest of the week I was C.B.S.'s office force.

We didn't have any program department but turned our ideas over to the Judson Radio Program Corporation, directed by Arthur Judson, who supplied continuities, cast and everything else. "Night Club Romances" was a popular feature. New York's speakeasies had become famous over the country, and we were really dramatizing the speakeasy. We had some good people in the cast, including Jack Smart and Don Carney, now the celebrated Uncle Don.

Over at WOR the station director was always plugging to us for a young band leader calling himself Rudy Vallee. His name had been Hubert Prior Vallee. Always a showman, he needed a pet tag for the fans to follow. "Huby" Vallee wasn't so good. Hubert P., though, greatly admired the great saxophone player and song writer, Rudy Wiedoeft, and borrowed his name.

Our musical sharps went to listen to this alleged phenom and came back shaking their heads. The kid didn't have a thing except a juvenile idea of what was good in music. His band was out of balance for one thing—no brasses in it at all. His playing was opposed to every principle of good musicianship; and his practice of talking to a background of music—if Rudy wasn't the original talking bandmaster, he was the first to become famous—gave our conservatives a pain in the neck.

But our experts were overlooking one thing—kids liked Rudy's offerings. His stuff might stink technically, but it was young, fresh, unsophisticated entertainment, and college students, especially the femmes, went a hundred per cent for Rudy as soon as they heard him. Those soft saxes and fiddles, his ballads and adolescent crooning, had a big effect on the young. There had been a reason, too, why his band was out of balance, as balance was then understood. Rudy's first engagements were in Greenwich Village speakeasies, and in those snuggeries there wasn't room for a balanced band. By 1928 Rudy Vallee was coming along. He now had his own place, "The Heigh Ho Club," from which he was broadcasting dance music regularly over WOR and finding a growing local audience.

One evening we were all set at WOR for our regular "Night Club Romance." The cast was in the studio, the orchestra,

the script, the announcer and—almost—the zero hour. Then somebody discovered that we had no musical score. Judson's were closed, and we couldn't raise anybody by phone. Scene of artistic temperament and hysteria—what to do? What to do? An idea hit me.

"You're wired into a bunch of night clubs," I told the studio people. "Hook one up, get the band on the job, and I'll go there with the script and ad lib the story."

Two or three engineers jumped to phones, calling up places. By luck they found a maintenance man fixing a battery at "The Heigh Ho Club." He got Vallee on the wire, and the maestro consented. By the time I reached the club he had his Connecticut Yankees—he'd named them that now—in their places.

It's a laugh now, but I wouldn't let Rudy "announce and conduct" his own program, as was his wont. I didn't have any confidence in him. He gave me his list of song numbers, and in narrative style I wove them into the night-club romance dramatization of the evening, talking against the music. In my opening stuff I told the net audience we were giving them a surprise treat that evening, actually taking them into a New York night club—one of the hottest spots, too, on Manhattan—as an hors d'oeuvres for next week's regular show.

People all over the East were enchanted by a new sort of music on the air that night, and the response was instantaneous. Within three weeks Rudy Vallee and the Connecticut Yankees had a vaudeville engagement and were a national sensation.

Mayor Jimmie Walker—always a friend, and a friend who never asked for anything. One night we were out with a gang.

"Ted here ought to be mayor of New York," cracked Jimmie.

"How's that?" somebody asked.

"Because he can talk so much," said Jimmie.

"Is that all it takes to be mayor?" I asked.

"It would seem so," answered the Mayor soberly.

Aviation flared up in a big way for the radio news announcers in the spring of 1933 when, within the space of a few days, Balbo and his Italian air armada, and Wiley Post, finishing his round-the-world flight, landed at Floyd Bennett Field, and the transatlantic Mollisons, aiming for that goal, came down at Bridgeport, Conn., by night, ran off the edge of a poorly lighted airport, and cracked up. Columbia Broadcasting followed the Balbo cruise right across the country. When Wiley Post brought the *Winnie Mae* down, Les Quailey rushed out with a mike and a trailing wire, got caught in the rush, and came out of the mêlée with a badly bruised leg.

Then, when we were all waiting for the Mollisons to land, the flash came that they were in a Bridgeport hospital. There was a rush of reporters, photographers and broadcasters for planes to fly them to Bridgeport. Les and I were rather left out in the scramble. We snatched a good pilot, but the best ship we could get was an old crate that threatened to fall to pieces in the air. However, we made Bridgeport but, in landing in the dark, came within an ace of repeating Mollison's accident. To keep from going into the ditch, our pilot threw the plane into a ground-spin that nearly swung the fillings out of our teeth.

We raced to the hospital, only to be told that the Mollisons could see nobody. I went around in back and muscled in through the laundry chute, you could almost say, found Jim Mollison's room, barged in and asked him to say a few words

to the Columbia net. Though he was under an exclusive contract with the London *Daily Mail*, he agreed for old times' sake; and then, curse it!, I discovered I had forgotten to bring a mike. So I had to wait till morning and share the broadcast with the opposition.

Sir Thomas Lipton. In 1930 he brought *Shamrock V* to the United States on his final attempt to win the America's Cup. We had four candidates that year to defend—*Yankee*, *Weeta-moe*, *Enterprise* and *Whirlwind*—*Enterprise* being finally selected. Sir Thomas came over in May, when the elimination contests were just starting. There was a lot of interest in the revival of the blue-ribbon yachting event of the world, and Columbia Broadcasting System made the most of it. I went down the bay with the press boat to meet the veteran yachtsman and to interview him before the mike. After an exchange of greetings I asked him:

"Which of our boats, Sir Thomas, do you fear most as a contender?"

"Well, young man," replied the baronet, "I'm not afraid of any of them."

"Over here," I said, "we think the *Yankee*—that's the Boston boat—is the best of the quartette."

Sir Thomas, who had a reputation as an after-dinner speaker, was right at home before the mike. His eye twinkled.

"Boston?" he queried. "Let's see—Boston—wasn't that the town where they had a tea party one time?"

"Sure," wisecracked your announcer, "but, Sir Thomas, it wasn't your tea."

And one of radio's belly-laughs. At the time when the chains were going nuts over the portable short-wave sending sets, one of our mid-western stations thought it would be a big idea to describe for its air audience the sensations of a parachute

jumper on his way down to terra firma. The program manager hustled out and hired a dare-devil willing, for pay, to undertake the feat. This was a scarred and battered barn-stormer who titled himself "The Great DeWeese"—a professional country-fair balloonist and parachute jumper, who must have lit on his head a few times in the past, because his skull seemed to be permanently thickened. The program people were a little dubious about the jumper's ability to make himself intelligible, but the jumper assured them that he'd be O.K. in a speech-making rôle.

One thing, however, the program manager emphasized to The Great DeWeese. Since he would be carrying a portable transmitter, that made him legally a broadcasting station. Under the rules of the Federal Radio Commission, he must give his call letters at the start of his broadcast. The temporary identification assigned to him was K5LW. After his jump he must be certain to start off his broadcast with the sentence, "This is station K5LW."

Maybe the program people went a little too strong in this. Anyhow, they succeeded in giving the dare-devil the impression that if he failed to say K5LW the G men would probably send him up for life.

Our people gave the stunt a lot of advance publicity. When the hour came for the broadcast the radio public of two or three states was at its loud-speakers. The Great DeWeese and the plane started up, climbing in circles. The announcer, to put in the time before the jump, described the day and the crowd watching the stunt. Up and up went the airplane until it was a mere speck in the sky. The announcer followed it with his binoculars. All at once he saw a tiny black dot leave the plane, then the parachute opened like a tiny puff of smoke from a daylight bomb.

"He's jumped," screamed the announcer excitedly. "The 'chute is open, and now in a moment, ladies and gentlemen, you'll hear the intrepid DeWeese describe how it feels to be floating down through empty space, the earth spread far beneath him like a map, and above him, as the only salvation preventing him from plunging to a horrible death, a few square yards of silk."

Here the announcer paused to let The Great DeWeese cut in, but no word came from the falling aeronaut. The announcer permitted a full minute of silence, then came on the air again:

"Just a second now until we hear from him. Perhaps the jar of the parachute disturbed the arrangement of his sending set, but he is sure to have it adjusted any second. Stand by ladies and gentlemen, for the only words ever broadcast to the earth from a man drifting through space."

Again a silence and still nothing from The Great DeWeese. Once more the announcer broke in and stalled, but actually the parachute jumper came clear to earth without broadcasting a word. To the announcer he seemed to fall for two weeks. At last, just as the parachute was nearing the earth, the announcer had to say:

"Sorry, ladies and gentlemen, but due to technical difficulties it has been impossible to secure for you the broadcast we promised."

The crowd started running toward the spot where the parachute had come down. There was a general theory that The Great DeWeese must be unconscious or dead. Perhaps in the jump the cords of the parachute had tangled around his neck and hanged him.

"I hope they did," panted the announcer, as he led the chase across the fields. "I hope the s.o.b.'s dead. Don't I hope it?"

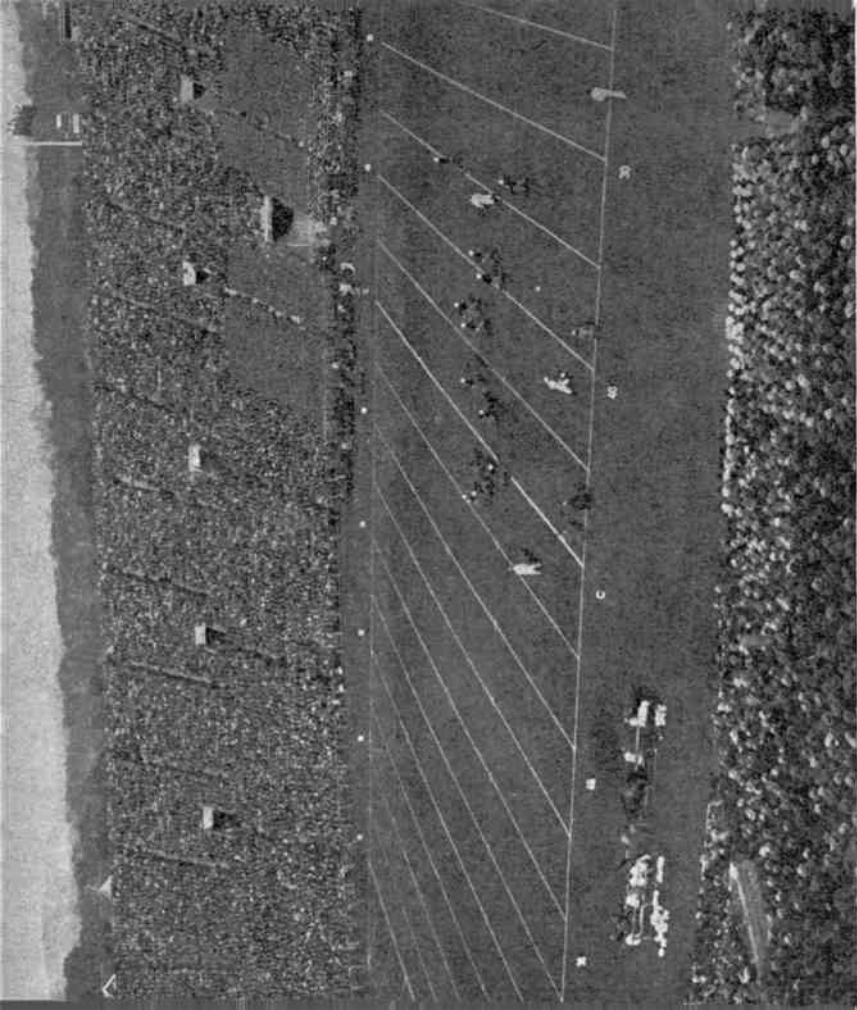
The announcer arrived first on the scene, only to find The Great DeWeese methodically unstrapping himself from his 'chute and sending set.

"Good God, man," gasped the announcer, "why didn't you broadcast something?"

"Aw say," answered The Great DeWeese, "I was goin' to tell you about dat. I forgot dem t'ings you told me to say—dem call letters—and I wasn't goin' to de pen for no fifty bucks."







EIGHTEEN: CRITICS



## CHAPTER XVIII

### CRITICS

ON THE LEVEL, I've got nothing personal against them and wouldn't add a word of mine to their mortification, except that to do a complete job I've got to give the low-down on those underfed capons of modern journalism, the radio critics.

Really, I'm giving 'em a break to call them critics. Even "Radio Editor" is too dignified a title. On most newspapers the radio critic is simply a bum reporter who couldn't make good on any other job. The music critic probably doesn't know he exists. The dramatic critic meets him in the elevator and thinks he's the office boy. Even the movie critic lives in a different world.

Why? Because radio is the only national entertainment hooked up with commercial advertising. If a news rag pans a show or picture, the most it can lose is a little amusement-page advertising. But let the radio critic take a fall out of the Pond's Vanishing Cream program or the Camel Cigarette hour, and he hears from the Business Office in a hurry.

Radio, in fact, has put the nation's press on the spot. If they dared, the rags would drop radio out of their columns altogether. Let 'em try that, though, and see how circulation takes a nose dive! Yet every word of radio publicity they print helps build up their most dangerous business rival. So they compromise. They print the bare program news, and the radio edi-

tor's job consists of clipping and pasting publicity releases from the studios.

This is the general picture. There are still exceptions—radio critics who cut some ice—but they are few and far between. Some of the best ones write for newspapers in the smaller cities.

It's too bad, because radio entertainment would be the better off if it had to stand up to fearless criticism. In the beginning, it looked as if it would get just that. Before the Advertising Managers woke up, all the papers were saying their say about the programs. Imagine picking up your *Herald Tribune* some morning and reading this:

Mr. Husing's announcements for the hour had a nice thin little idea behind them, but the wordy deluges by which it came bloated the idea into an irritant.

If the *Trib* said anything mean like that about me now, or about Ethel Merman or Al Goodman, they wouldn't get a line of Lysol advertising, so there. Yet that sentence did appear in the New York *Herald Tribune* of January 9, 1926, in a radio critique of "The Sundialers' Hour."

The *Herald Tribune*, for a while in the mid-20's, showed the way to the whole country in radio criticism. It was from that citadel that the first radio critic of any importance in New York fired his charges of verbal grapeshot. He was Raymond Francis Yates, a cynical crab who had the idea that he had inherited the mantle of the late Alan Dale. Old-time readers of the New York *American* remember how Dale could razz a Broadway show, if he didn't like it. Yates's forte was the bitter, devastating blast—and it was a shame, too, because nearly all the radio performers in his day were pure amateurs. He broke plenty of hearts. I'll say for him, though, that his stuff

was good and would stand up today with anything in newspaper criticism. He gave the early radio fan a daily lesson in how to listen to his set and what to hear.

Yates wrote under the pseudonym "Pioneer," as did also his less vitriolic but no less keen successor, Stuart Hawkins. It was one of Hawkins' observations on myself which I quoted above. These two men were the forerunners of modern radio criticism, which has, however, now retreated largely to the pages of the radio and entertainment magazines. They told the truth about radio. Radio itself didn't like it. Every morning the *Herald Tribune* radio page lay on every executive desk in New York broadcasting. The alleged experts of the studios pooh-poohed "Pioneer's" cracks, but nevertheless they were gospel with us.

Of the two, Hawkins, who was a former publicity man with WJZ, lasted the longer. What a style that guy had! He was in his early thirties and in type looked like a conservative advertising agent, smart yet quiet in manner and fond of two-dollar words—probably a graduate of some school of journalism. He always pretended to be a good friend of mine, and perhaps he was, though I took from him the worst public razzing I have ever received.

His attitude was: "This hurts me, Ted, more than it does you," and then he'd rip the everlasting bejesus out of me. It did me good, though, I admit, for, while sore at his diatribes, I unconsciously took them to heart and amended my microphone ways.

Half the clippings I saved in 1926 were pannings I got from "Pioneer." The boloney written about me I threw away and kept the stuff that got my nanny. Here are some specimens:

On January 16 "Pioneer" wrote:

Mr. Husing's announcements took him up countless blind alleys of verbosity in search of dubious points for unlovable quips. Such bits as the one about the "Percussion manipulator's" solo that ended "and—oh yes, the song—isn't it *funny* that I forgot to mention the song?—Heh-Heh—it's called 'Funny,'" couldn't be clutched to even a violently mirth-loving bosom with anything approaching delight.

Take this—of January 23—for constructive criticism:

Mr. Husing, like several other current announcers, gives promise of being a pleasing radio personality; very often the promise is not fulfilled. And the main stumbling block in Mr. Husing's vocal career is his inability to sound like himself over the air. More times than not his accents are consciously affected (or sound so), his voice indulges in unnatural posings and what would be most effective statements come out with a deadly stigma of over-smart affectation.

Here's another—date February 12, after I'd taken up the announcing burden at WRC—commenting upon the broadcast of the United States Army Band:

Mr. Edward Husing, who had transferred his activities from Manhattan to Washington since last we heard his voice, slipped into the so-common rut of wordy gratitude. After carefully explaining that time was short, he consumed minutes in telling the band how good the audience ought to think they were.

On May 21, in a review of a United States Marine Band concert:

Mr. Husing appeared as a self-conscious and determinedly rapturous musical footnoter.

Another razz from a Marine Band criticism—June 18:

Mr. Husing unlimbered a pat store of musical footnotes in a scholastic manner.

And that guy claimed to be my friend!  
A spanking on September 27:

When Mr. Husing was young in radio [so I was a vet, now, eh?] his smart insincerities brought him considerable professional woe, a fact that he should not have forgotten as yet.

By September 30, "Pioneer" began to get soft, I guess:

Mr. Edward Husing, whose announcerial accents assumed a fictitious and unnatural role last week, has evidently returned to the even and generally effective tenor of his ways. In last night's Dueber-Hampden hour he interspersed the harmonious musicals with some effective and nicely phrased verbal pertinences. Mr. Husing, as Mr. Husing, is to be greeted with much more warmth via loud speaker than is Mr. Husing as a selfconscious personality.

But then—and I've been planting for this—take a comment by "Pioneer" a year later—November 21, 1927—in his résumé of the season's broadcasting of football:

Probably the deficiencies of the McNamee-Carlin reports would have passed unnoticed if Mr. Edward Husing of WHN, had not entered the arena of radio football service with his descriptions of Columbia and other games. Comparison is the only basis of criticism and judgment where such a temporal and variable business as verbal reporting is concerned. And in this almost-ended football season Mr. Husing has consistently given more complete information, more accurate and prompt news of the changing position of



the ball and more acute observations as to place, possibilities and potentialities of the teams and individual players on the field before him than have either of the more noted announcers. At this writing it appears that Mr. Husing will be broadcasting football games for an as yet unformed chain of stations next year; if and when that happens Mr. Husing is likely to become radio's most appreciated football describer, unless, of course, Mr. McNamee and Mr. Carlin come to realize that the primary purpose of a football broadcast is not to furnish verbal entertainment but to provide immediate news of what the twenty-two football players are doing.

In this same scrapbook I find a curious and almost forgotten note, which indicates that I entered radio myself as a critic. I have a clipping from the radio page of a *New York Daily News* in 1923—I did not preserve the exact date—giving the results of a contest which the *News* was then conducting among its readers—a first prize of \$10 and a second prize of \$5 for the best criticisms of any radio program heard the night before. Here is an excerpt from it:

First honors in the contest and first prize of \$10 go to Ted Husing, 225 West 69th Street, for submitting the following words: "WEAF has the best tonal qualities of the New York stations where the voice and music are concerned, the program for the occasion noted being well balanced, but smacking with the raucous taste of commercialism, etc."

I don't know yet whether a taste can be raucous or whether anything can smack with a taste, but I had them doing both. Little did I reckon then that the raucous taste of commercialism which so annoyed me through my old earphones would some day be the bread and butter of the Husing ménage, not to say its caviare and *crêpes Suzettes*.

Outside of New York City the story of radio criticism is more distinguished. One of the earliest good critics of radio, and one of the most important, was Mrs. Charlotte Geer, of the Newark *Evening News*. She was the first woman in the country who did radio work, and also the first radio editor to get interest in DX listening. I think I have already explained the meaning of those letters, D standing for distance and X for the unknown. At the beginning of radio, DX-ing simply meant catching reception from any remote station, but now it applies exclusively to short-wave reception.

Mrs. Geer, a very smart, canny, good-looking woman, is still an important figure in radio. She built up, and still mothers, one of the largest radio clubs in the world. Originally it consisted of amateurs trying to catch a California station with a one- or two-valve set, but in 1927 she changed it to a short-wave club. I think she has done more to popularize short-wave radio than anybody in the country.

Then, just across the Hudson was the celebrated "One Dialer," whose seldom-published name was C. J. Ingram. "One Dialer's" idea for his radio page in the *Jersey Journal* was to tell of the personalities of radio. Later he went on the air himself—on station WAAT—as master of ceremonies for a news reel of radio artists, and has been keeping it up to this day. His is probably the oldest radio program on the air, having to my knowledge run at least eight years. In that time, "One Dialer" has had every big radio name as a guest artist on his broadcast, and I don't mean nearly every.

These two pioneers—Mrs. Geer and Ingram—are the only two in the New York metropolitan district who have lasted through.

In New York today, radio criticism, to call it that, is a mess. The radio editors change frequently, they are comically jealous

of each other, and a lot of them have private axes to grind. They certainly are a peculiar bunch. Take Nick Kenny of the *Mirror* as an example. Nick is a big burly type with a Cyrano de Bergerac nose—a former sailor with a heart of gold and a deep streak of sentiment in him. I've known Nick personally for years, having in the old days played football against him. You'd never think it to look at him, but he has a yen to write poetry!

Nick's career in radio journalism began on the *Bayonne News*. Then he came on to New York as an assistant radio editor on a metropolitan newspaper. Imagine what an *assistant* radio editor must be! Nick had better have stayed in Bayonne. In New York he wasn't getting to first base.

At that time I'd come back from Boston to broadcast sports for WHN. One evening Perry Charles, the owner of WHN, Morris Littmann, and myself were having dinner together at Dinty Moore's. Broadway veterans remember Littmann's dress shop at the corner of 39th Street in its heyday. He operated on the Klein serve-yourself system and was a big advertiser in the *Mirror* and the other tabs. Perry Charles and I both knew Nick Kenny and wanted him to get along, and I'm not sure but what Littmann was acquainted with him too. Anyhow, the *Mirror's* radio page stank. That sheet needed a new radio editor if any ever did, and Perry Charles and I sold Littmann on the idea of putting Kenny in. This he accomplished easily in a five-minute phone talk with Adolph Kobler, publisher of the *Mirror*.

Then a funny thing happened. As a New York radio editor, Nick Kenny's head swelled up three or four sizes. He bought the first dress suit he ever had in his life and appeared on Broadway as a big shot. At last came his opportunity to in-

dulge his passion for verse. He hooked up with Tin Pan Alley and blossomed out as a song writer, doing the lyrics, and, believe you me, radio plugged *his* songs. It had to.

But in spite of his pomposity and his private interests, Nick has been a valuable radio man in New York. Evening tails haven't stopped him from siding with the unfortunate and the underdog. He has boosted a number of radio amateurs into professionaldom by conducting popularity contests on the *Mirror* radio page and has also promoted numerous benefits to supply free radio sets for hospitals and infirmaries.

Over on the *News* is Ben Gross, a mousey little man, the only radio writer on the New York newspapers who still keeps up a semblance of criticism. He still occasionally reviews a new program that comes on the air.

Before the *Graphic* folded, Jerry Wald was its radio editor. He ran a libelous column of gossip about radio people, and in his palmy days outdid Walter Winchell in publishing private and personal intelligence. For a time Wald, Gross and Kenny, the three tab editors, conducted a private war of hate against each other that made the late hostilities in Europe look like a D.A.R. convention. Wald later got a job as scenario writer, with Warner Brothers in Hollywood and has done several successful pictures. A clever lad.

With the formation of the *World-Telegram*, a new phase of radio publicity really started in New York. Under Scripps-Howard ownership, the *Telegram* had been publishing a Saturday radio magazine, as had also the evening *Sun*. As hostile feelings grew up between the newspapers and radio, the newspapers cut out this grandiose publicity and substituted the daily column of radio news, comment, and gossip. The *Sun* still runs a lot of technical radio information, but now almost altogether confines itself to the short-wave fad. There

were formerly big radio staffs on both these afternoon newspapers, including a number of high-priced technical experts.

The first radio column conductor on the *Telegram* was Jimmy Cannon, a perfectly vicious writer and a flip simile slinger. Jimmy got a reputation on Broadway as a mordant wit. He was in a night club one evening when one of the by-line journalists on the *World-Telegram* staggered in, very tight. This individual began bragging about his achievements to all who would listen.

"I'm the greatest reporter in the world," he yawped.

Jimmy Cannon looked up with a sneer.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Is Runyon dead?"

Cannon caused a furore in New York while he ran his column, but he's out now, and so are several of his successors. Peter Dixon is now the *Sun's* radio gossip man.

But the out-of-town editors and commentators are the most influential in radio today—and always have been. One of the earliest critics of the genuine type was Richard D. Grant of the Boston *Transcript*. He is now private secretary to Governor Curley of Massachusetts. Dick was a dynamic customer who whacked hell out of every bum program that came on the air. All of New York's radio editors read him and took their opinions from him. He promoted the *Transcript* radio station and was the boy who brought me to Boston for my brief sojourn there.

In Chicago, a private war has been on for years between the radio stations and the local newspapers. There was a peculiar situation in that city. The Chicago newspapers were the first to see the possibilities of broadcasting and to start stations. At one time almost every newspaper in Chicago was operating one.

Consequently, the Chicago newspapers at first did not need radio critics but publicity men. The *Tribune* plugged its own programs, the *Daily News* ran information only about its station, and so on. After a while the one or two Chicago papers that didn't own stations lured in some vitriol hurlers and gave them orders to pan all the local programs. This brought about genuine radio departments in the Chicago newspapers.

Today, the three most successful radio editors in Chicago are Yank Taylor on the *Times*, Charlie Gilchrist of the *News*, and Ulmer Turner of the *Tribune*. They are entertaining writers all three, being stylists, but so far as criticism is concerned keep on the reportorial side and tell only what happens.

East of Chicago, the best known and most active radio man in journalism is Norman Siegal, who runs a column on the *Cleveland Press*. While his column is largely given over to gossip and comment, he does indulge in an occasional critical review, which is always quiet and ultraconservative and widely respected among the studios for its opinions. Siegal runs an urbane line of chatter—a gentleman's column, so to speak. As you read it you think of him as sitting at home in a dressing-gown, a decanter of sherry at his elbow, a Havana cigar in his hand, as he judiciously reviews the merits and shortcomings of our widest form of popular entertainment.

Of all the radio editors in the country, the one who comes closest to having the status of a metropolitan dramatic critic is J. E. Doyle of the Oakland, Cal., *Post-Inquirer*, who is known throughout the country as Dinty Doyle. Dinty is a thin, hard-boiled Irishman who gives the public the low-down about everything, no matter how influentially it may be sponsored. His column is masterful in radio. For years he has swayed the

public attitude toward broadcasting on the Pacific Coast, and radio men everywhere follow his writings. He runs his column as he pleases, reviewing new programs and giving all the legitimate dope about the studios and the performers that he can pick up. He has perhaps more friends than any other radio writer in the country. All radio stars drop in to see him when they're in California, and the sports writers of the Coast who come East with the St. Mary's football team every year, when called to the mike to say hello, always send their regards to Dinty Doyle.

Dinty writes in a unique style, but the main thing you admire in his column is its fearlessness. Almost all the other reviewers and commentators in America are overawed by the advertisers.

The radio magazines, being in effect trade publications, do not attempt much in the way of adverse criticism. They confine themselves pretty largely to the news of radio, inside, technical stuff, and the exploitation of personalities, in the style of the movie magazines.

One publication, though, stands out above all the newspapers and magazines when it comes to giving the shifting weekly picture of national broadcasting. This is the Broadway publication *Variety*, whose radio department has become the Bible of broadcast entertainment both from the studio's standpoint and from that of the public.

If you want to know what's going on, what stars are rising and what falling, what programs are meritorious and what ones a waste of your time, there is only one answer—read *Variety*. It prints a comprehensive but unbiased review of every new act that comes on the air, as it comes and wherever it comes, and even reviews spot broadcasts, as the office lingo calls electric recording. *Variety* every week gives the low-down

on the business side of the racket, and on the executive personnel, and does a sweet job with every bit of it. It is incomparably the best radio paper today—as good as all other radio media put together.







NINETEEN: DRESS REHEARSAL



## CHAPTER XIX

### DRESS REHEARSAL

ABOUT THE TIME I started work on these somewhat streptocockeyed reminiscences I went on the air with Eddie Cantor, Rubinoff, Parkyakarkas, et al. in a Sunday night program advertising Pebecco toothpaste. Eddie's engagement with this sponsor was limited, he had a Hollywood contract to fulfill, and at the expiration of his radio term the sponsors engaged the Broadway musical-comedy star Ethel Merman to continue on the same Sunday night air space, though for another of the sponsor's products—Lysol disinfectant. I went on also as announcer and straight man in the Merman show, which was called, "Rhythm at Eight."

These two programs, radically differing from each other as they did, were typical of the modern big-time broadcast built around the personality of a national star. They represented the last word in commercial radio entertainment as developed to date. So, to show what that progress has been since the first clowns and amateurs began putting vaudeville on the air, I'm going to analyze one of these present-day studio shows from its inception as an idea to its final production on the network.

And I'm choosing one of Miss Merman's "Rhythm at Eight" continuities as being even more typical of the evening broadcasts you hear at your loud-speaker than Eddie Cantor's. Eddie's line is so special to himself that he acts as his own radio producer and director. That is, he takes a lump sum for the

broadcast, hires his complete cast, including orchestra and announcer, writes (with a collaborator, Phil Rapp) his own script, directs and times all rehearsals and also the final production, and is responsible for everything, including the music. For his last engagement the sponsors paid him \$10,000 for each Sunday-night broadcast of thirty minutes each, but out of this sum had to come heavy expenses.

Miss Merman, on the other hand, prefers to be the salaried entertainer accepting direction. Although she is influential in determining the continuity of her broadcast, and can even dictate it, if she chooses, her scripts are prepared for her by the advertising agency handling Lysol. The agency also hires and pays the cast, including orchestra, though Miss Merman has the final word on the makeup of her supporting cast. However, she brings certain people with her, too—her pianist, Victor Piermont, and also a male quartette. These she pays herself. Also, at the beginning she chose the band leader, who, as you probably know, is Al Goodman. From past experience she knew that Al had terrific success in providing a musical background for her voice.

At this point it is well to note one radical departure of radio from all other forms of entertainment. If Ethel Merman or Eddie Cantor appears in a Broadway production, they have the play-writing talent of the world to draw from. There is no hurry—in fact, they won't go on at all unless satisfied that the show will click. Then, having opened in a success, they play it over and over again—night after night the same routine during the run of the show, though always before different audiences.

It's nearly the same with the pictures. The script for a movie is also a selection out of what the whole world has to offer. The screen show is hammered together, edited, re-taken, and

smoothed out until it is the best thing authors, players and directors can accomplish. The picture itself may be exhibited ten thousand times, but always, too, before different audiences.

The radio star is up against an entirely different proposition, and a much tougher one. Every week he has to come before the mike with a new show and yet one that will leave the radio audience feeling that it has been well entertained. And it's always the same audience.

Now, when you remember the thousands of stage plays written every year, and the hundreds that actually get production, and then consider that only about a dozen real hits come out of them, you begin to see what the radio author faces. Hollywood has a much richer mine of material to draw from than the legitimate stage, what with all the Broadway productions that can be filmed, all the contemporary novels and short stories, and all the sure-fire classics of the past, besides the original screen plays produced by its force of trained writers and dramatists. And yet, how few pictures, really hit in a big way!

Radio has no such aids. The script writer producing a series of continuities has to give the public fresh material and make good every time. To do this successfully, radio takes a tip from the newspaper comic pages and adopts permanency of form for its programs. One program in a series is identical in pattern with the next, the holes being filled up each time with new dialogue.

The familiarity of the form is what puts it over with the audience. An audience is four times as ready to laugh at the expected than at the unexpected. When Portland says, "Hello-oh," and Fred Allen begins: "Well, as I live and breathe," the laugh is already started. Ed Wynn's "So-o-o-o" and "Tonight it's going to be different," are as stock laughs as the brick bumping Krazy Kat's bean or little Jeff's, "For the love of

Mike, Mutt, be reasonable!" It may not be great art, but it's the best we can now offer, thank you—and try to think up something better!

Now and then a sponsor tires of one routine and insists on another; and then it's a headache for the poor author, who has to work out a transition, unless one program is to be abruptly terminated and another as brusquely started. Out of this idiosyncrasy of the advertisers recently came a poignant tragedy of radio's inner sanctums.

One of the most restless of commercial sponsors is Maxwell House Coffee, whose "Show Boat" epic is a very popular feature of the air. Since that entertainment started, the cast has been shifted several times. They've had three or four tenors and baritones in addition to Lanny Ross, who's lasted through, and finally they even gave the gate to old Charlie Winger, who started it for them.

Well, lately the coffee roasters got tired of the whole "Show Boat" idea, which, after all, was a steal from Jerome Kern and Edna Ferber. "Something different!" went forth the edict from the business office, and the advertising agency came back with the answer: "O.K. We'll turn it into a tent show."

The translation was carefully worked out, and then one night the old "Show Boat" abandoned its familiar routine as an imaginary radio fire broke out and burned her to the water's edge. The "audience" was brought safely to shore, Lanny Ross made some thrilling rescues, and Captain Henry, bloody but unbowed, announced: "It's all right, folks. I'm going to get a tent, and the show will go on."

Was that a bombshell in another advertising office in New York! Even more restless as a sponsor than Maxwell House Coffee is Ivory Soap, ninety-nine and forty-four-one-hundredths per cent pure. (I've always wanted to know what the

fifty-six-one-hundredths ingredient was.) Ivory Soap had started out on the air with "The Gibson Family," a continued story of domestic life. That going sour, they put the Gibsons into a musical show with a highly original idea behind it: the book, lyrics and music were to be written specially for it every week by one team of dramatists, Owen Davis and his son.

It was expecting too much of any pair of geniuses to produce a new one-hour musical hit every week; and after a few months the Ivory Soap boilers saw signs of their program flagging in listener interest and sent out their edict for a change. Entirely unaware that Maxwell House was getting the same idea at the same time, the Ivory Soap impresarios also voted for a tent show.

There was a logical reason for them to do so. The younger members of the Gibson Family were stage-struck and might as well be performing in a tent as anywhere. Moreover, Charlie Wininger, a popular radio figure, had just finished a Broadway engagement and was going to waste. Ivory Soap signed him up, and the script writers started work on the big change.

To them the unexpected fire on the Show Boat was no phoney disaster. They seemed to be sunk worse than Captain Henry's barge. Their spies, though, reported that Maxwell House was going to be in no hurry about making the change—no use wasting the drama in Captain Henry's procural of a tent. Thereafter the lights burned all night long in the Ivory Soap tower. Script writers scrapped their transitional programs introducing Wininger to the Gibsons and banged right under canvas. Meanwhile the cast was being hired and rehearsed as the dialogue came from the typewriters, a band recruited, songs chosen, orchestral arrangements made and everything else. It was day-and-night work for a week, and then Ivory Soap busted its tent right in Maxwell House's façade.



The woe at coffee headquarters was nobody's business. Maxwell House had burnt its boat behind it, if not its bridges. Still, the directors agreed they didn't want to come on the air with a second tent show. Wasn't there some other kind of vagabond drama? Brains went sterile trying to think; but, pending a new flash of genius, the Maxwell House dramatists had to dig up another show boat and go on with the same old plop-plop-plop of the paddles.

Let's get back now to "Rhythm at Eight." The form routine of the show includes three songs by Ethel Merman, each introduced by a sketch, the first usually comic, the second dramatic, the third sentimental. Alternating with these songs are three musical numbers by Al Goodman's orchestra, chosen to be somewhat in contrast to Ethel's numbers. Opening and closing theme routines, interspersed blurbs for Lysol, and one scientific plug fill out the half-hour.

The program starts as a nucleus with Ethel herself. She picks out three songs she wants to sing during a broadcast—either hits with which she is already identified, new songs which she can put over with effect, or popular numbers for which she has secured special orchestrations. These numbers she brings to a conference with Marion Parsonnet, director of the Merman broadcasts, and Everett Freeman, a clever young writer who does the scripts. Both Parsonnet and Freeman are employed by the advertising agency.

In this huddle they work out ideas for the sketches to introduce the songs. Freeman then takes the ideas away and dialogues them. Marion Parsonnet gives the titles of the three songs to Al Goodman to guide him in the selection of his orchestral numbers. Al may also suggest special arrangements for the songs themselves. No radio orchestra leader of any reputation will play anything but exclusive arrangements. In

fact, that's all a radio band is today, generally speaking—a personality leader and his distinctive arrangements.

The public thinks of any well-known band on the air as a permanent group that sticks together year after year. In the popular conception, Rudy Vallee and the Connecticut Yankees of the Yeast program are the same organization that used to play in Rudy's night club. Actually, they are quite different groups; and if Rudy played on more than one radio program, his band would be different in each studio. On the other hand, wherever they go and give concerts, Ben Bernie and All The Lads remain the same.

These two leaders, Vallee and Bernie, illustrate the two types of orchestras that have gained fame through radio—the “commercial” and the “organized.” Rudy is a commercial band leader, Ben has an organized band. Vic Young, Al Goodman, Freddie Rich, Eddie Duchin, Andre Costelanetz, and Frank Black are examples of commercial band leaders. Paul Whiteman's orchestra, the Casa Loma orchestra, and Fred Waring's orchestra are organized bands. Commercial bands have become so much the more numerous as to be typical. Also, they are, as a rule, better. All commercial band leaders recruit their lead men from a little group of no more than two hundred musicians. These latter are the key artists of radio music. The personality leader, setting out to form an orchestra of, say, twenty pieces for a new radio hour, will pick five or six high priced key musicians to insure great artistic performance, and hire the rest from the army of good but not distinguished virtuosi that fill the reservoir of New York's great musical colony.

The two hundred lead men are all superb performers. Half of them are band leaders themselves, capable of making original arrangements and conducting with distinction any rendi-

tions from symphonies to jazz. Most of them have played in the great symphony orchestras of the world, and some are even now members of the Philharmonic and other high-brow musical organizations, doubling in radio bands to increase their incomes.

Luck plays a big part in the fame of a fine musician. Lou Raderman, for instance, one of the lead men in great demand for commercial bands, is practically unknown to the public, though there is probably not one reader of these words, unless he is stone deaf, who has not heard him perform on the violin, not once but many times. Musicians recognize that Raderman has no superior in the world as a fiddler. He is as great as Kreisler and could, if he cared to undertake a long build-up for fame, tour the world in triumph as a concert violinist. Yet he plays fiddle for the czars of radio music, the commercial band leaders.

But don't shed too many tears for Lou. He gets from \$75 to \$100 for each performance, and he may have as many as twelve engagements in a week. On Sunday night he may play in Al Goodman's band, on Monday with the A. & P. Gypsies, on Tuesday with Eddie Duchin, and so on, and thus gains an income which many a celebrated concert performer might envy.

Two weeks or so elapse between that preliminary conference and the time the cast first sees the script. Meanwhile considerable work, besides the playwright's, has already been done. Al Goodman has completed his orchestral arrangements and rehearsed them with his band. Inasmuch as Miss Merman's personal accompanist, Vic Piermont, also plays one of the two pianos in the band at the broadcasts, he has taken part in these rehearsals. It is possible, also, that Ethel has gone over the song numbers with the orchestra. And, of course, she has been re-

hearsing almost daily for the intervening broadcasts. Add her eight theatrical performances during a week, add her voice lessons with her coach, her interviews with composers and arrangers, and all the other business that takes up an actress's time, and it's apparent that she's a busy gal. None busier in New York.

On Tuesday before the broadcast the script gets its first reading by the cast. On that occasion the voices for the minor parts are selected. Except for the principal actors in the broadcast, the cast changes each time. Each advertising agency handling radio programs has a list of character voices on call. If an agency cannot supply a needed voice from its own list, it can procure what it needs from some other agency. Most of the actors are stage professionals, though some have come up purely through radio. Good character people are usually registered in several agencies, and they get plenty of work.

Besides Miss Merman and myself, only one other player is heard regularly in the Lysol broadcasts. This is Ned Wever, a professional chosen from many who gave auditions, because he played the ideal lover to Ethel on the air. He takes part in the sentimental skits.

From the Tuesday reading the cast takes the script away and familiarizes itself with the lines and action. On Thursday comes a check-reading, to make certain that all voices are properly cast. This is followed by the first script rehearsal, in which the music is brought in and the sound effects worked out for the first time.

Friday at noon the whole cast meets again for its hardest work of the week. The Thursday work of whipping the act into shape continues. Scenes and bits are repeated, lines are pointed up, sound effects improved. Part of the time, Marion works with the cast on the stage. Part of the time he listens in

the sound-proof control booth and directs through a special loud-speaker from booth to stage. On the night of the broadcast itself, he directs with silent gestures on the stage itself, setting up a music rack as his podium. Al Goodman, too, spends much time in the direction booth on Friday listening to the ensemble effects of his band.

The final act of the Friday meeting is a dress rehearsal—to call it that—the performance of the “hour” from beginning to end, just as it will be done on Sunday night. A sign flashes up in red Neon lights—“Stand By!” A dead silence falls over the stage. At this podium Marion Parsonnet stands with a stopwatch in his hand. He is to wait just thirty seconds. That time slips by, the red sign winks out and a green warning jumps up—“On the Air!” Marion drops his hand, and Al Goodman’s men crash into the theme song, “I Got Rhythm.”

As the program goes on, an important thing is happening in the control room. Using a split-second watch, the station production manager is timing the script, working from zero up to 29 minutes, 30 seconds. It comes out as a pasteboard chart with the timings marked on the margin. If, for instance, the first sketch is to begin three minutes and ten seconds from the start of the theme song, the manager marks “3.10” in the margin beside the first line of the sketch. Thus every division of the script is timed to the second.

Also, this final repetition of the program is taken down by electric recording. It frequently happens that the last rehearsal, when the cast is working under broadcasting conditions, shows that the script is a few seconds too long or too short. Armed with this time chart and his disk transcription, the director can tell exactly where to cut or pad, and he has from Friday afternoon until Sunday evening to do so. If he has to make any violent changes, such as cutting out an entire sketch

and substituting another, he calls an emergency rehearsal for Sunday afternoon, and the whole thing is done over again.

Rehearsal timing, though, does not necessarily coincide with broadcast timing, since actors do not always play at the same tempo. Therefore, during the broadcast Marion keeps watching his watch and time chart. If the program is lagging, he circles his hands over and over each other in a rolling gesture which means, "Speed up a little." If it's going too fast, he spreads out his hands in a calming gesture, meaning, "Slow down."

Ethel Merman is a grand trouper. Although she is one of Broadway's most glamorous stars and is the hardest-worked member of the Lysol cast, she is also the most patient and willing. In the wearisome grind of repeating bits of action over and over again until the director is satisfied, lesser lights may explode with temperament, but there's nothing but cheerfulness out of Ethel. She is the pal of everybody connected with the broadcast—a co-worker pulling with the rest to do a good job. She is a great success in anything she tries in show business, and nobody in America deserves success more.

When it was proposed to put her on the air as a star, the wiseacres shook their heads. For some reason she was regarded as a hundred-to-one shot. I think this preliminary adverse opinion was due to a contrast. On the stage Ethel sparkles with personality, and at the auditions some people felt disappointed that she did not create so great an effect through the loud-speaker.

While admitting that television will double her value as a radio performer, I still think she radiates personality over the air. Her speaking voice is vibrant with health and youth, and is highly individual, while her singing tones are thrilling. What more can you ask of a radio personality? After her first

broadcast she got one-hundred-per-cent favorable notices from what few radio critics really count, though those crapehangers, the listener-report people, gave her a low mark. That is, where the Crossley system of audience rating, for instance, had been giving Eddie Cantor a mark of 35—meaning 35 per cent of the radio audience listening to him—it graded Ethel Merman, who followed him on the same hour, down to 5.

What radio sponsors want with these audience analyses is a mystery to me. It might seem that the cash register would be the only answer to a program's popularity and pull. Yet half a dozen research companies are making a good thing out of selling program surveys to radio advertisers. The trouble with most of these investigations is that they are merely memory tests for the public. A research company every day calls up five names taken at random from the phone book in every city in the country. The researchers ask these five what radio programs they listened to the night before, and on the basis of the answers make out their little charts.

There is a double fallacy in such a system. In the first place, five people are too few in number to be typical of a city, unless by accident. In the second place, people always remember things familiar to them. They'll nearly all tell you they heard the Amos 'n' Andy broadcast, whether they did or not. Lawyers and judges know how fallible are the most honest of witnesses in their memories.

In radio's own offices, the audience ratings are a pain in the neck. Time and again, the simultaneous calling of hundreds of people in a city while the broadcasts were in actual progress have entirely upset the picture painted by the memory tests.

Famous as she is in New York, Miss Merman was virtually an unknown to large inner sections of this country, and she faced tough competition in the Major Bowes amateur hour,

which was just then eating up the listeners. Yet her rating has steadily grown, until now there is no doubt that she has established herself as one of radio's most valuable program assets. Her sponsors are enthusiastic over the pull of her broadcasts, which after all is the only thing that counts.

For the sake of the record I append here the script of one of her broadcasts:

HUSING: Say, Ethel—what's that book you have there?

MERMAN: Oh, this, Ted? It's a volume of Shakespeare! I'm reading it for the fifth time!

HUSING: It's worth reading a hundred times, Ethel. William Shakespeare is the master of English Drama. I wish our modern literature were written the same way!

MERMAN: Why, Ted, modern writers can't use Shakespearean language. It doesn't fit the present.

HUSING: It fits anything!

MERMAN: Don't be foolish! Can you imagine how a 1935 drama would sound if Shakespeare were alive to write it?

HUSING: Ethel, I feel another one of your sketches coming on!

MERMAN: Why not, Ted? Suppose I present a modern gangster epic written in Shakespearean style. Picture a gangster's moll sitting at home late some night—

[*Fade . . . Clock bongs twice . . . Knock at door.*]

MERMAN: Hark! Who comes a-knocking at my portal?

[*Knock repeated.*]

STEVE [*outside door and excited*]: Egad! Let me in!

MERMAN: Enter—O stranger of the gloomy night!

[*Door slam.*]

STEVE: Mary! 'Tis I—your husband—Stephen Ferdinand Alonzo Duc de la Sourpuss alias the Weasel!

MERMAN: Good Weasel, what brings thee home at this ghastly hour?

STEVE: 'Tis the cops! The bulls! They track me down! Even



now, under the mantel of night, they have put a bloodhound on my trail!

MERMAN: Alas, sweet Weasel, what hast thou done that the police should put on the dog?

STEVE: Ah, Mary—I am basely accused of bumping a guy off and taking his watch.

MERMAN: And didst thou give the man back his timepiece?

STEVE: Nay—I kept the watch and gave him the works!

MERMAN: Ah, Weasel—wilt thou never learn that crime does not pay?

STEVE: Silence, woman! Thy husband is in dire straits! Hearken to the newsboys peddling their gazettes!

BOY [*calling in familiar singsong*]: Here y' are there! What dost thou read there! All about yon robbery in yon rialto!

STEVE: And hearken to the radio which broadcasts news of my crime!

RADIO VOICE: Hear ye, good people! We bring thee a Press Radio Bulletin! This eventide in the market place, an armed thug did hold up and rob a tired wayfarer! For shame on this ignoble person!

STEVE: Aw, shut up!

RADIO VOICE: Shut up thyself! . . . This is the Columbia Broadcasting System!

[*Gun shot.*]

STEVE: That will silence yon blasted radio announcer!

[*Police siren.*]

MERMAN: Hark! What manner of bird is that?

STEVE: 'Tis not a bird! 'Tis the bulls! They come to get me!

MERMAN: Ah, woe, woe!

STEVE: Methinks it would be well to scam!

MERMAN: Nay!

STEVE: Yea!

MERMAN: Nay, I say!

STEVE: And I say yea!

MERMAN [*recites*]: Weasel! Weasel! Do not scam!  
 Take it not upon the lam!  
 Even now they come apace!  
 You'd be nuts to show your face!

[*Siren . . . gun shots.*]

STEVE [*excited*]: They approach! Whither shall I hide?

MERMAN: Stow thy carcass beneath this bed! Hurry!

STEVE: Aye—but I wait with drawn revolver!

MERMAN: Shoot not, Steve! They mount the stairs!

[*Sound of heavy footsteps clumping in unison.*]

VOICES [*singing*]: Hail! Hail! The gang's all here! Prithee, why should we care—Prithee, why should we care—

[*Knock at door.*]

MERMAN: Enter! [*Door slam.*]

CHIEF: Hail, fair lady! We are the minions of the law!

MERMAN: Whence comest thou?

CHIEF: We comest from our car-est downstair-est! We are in quest of Steve the Weasel!

MERMAN: The Weasel has not been here these many moons!

CHIEF: Thou speakest baloney, woman! Zounds, men—search the joint! We must find our prey, else the Commissioner will put the screws on us!

MERMAN: Do not shoot! He lies beneath yon bed!

CHIEF: Ah ha! Come out, Steve the Weasel!

MERMAN: Nay, do not press him! He is desperate and he packs a rod!

CHIEF: Then we shall fling upon yon scoundrel a tear gas bomb! . . . Ho, Guiseppe! One up! And heavy on the gas of sorrow!

MAN: Here it goes, good Chief!

[*Bomb explodes.*]

CHIEF: Ha! Even now the gas of tears doth permeate the atmosphere!

MERMAN: It—it's m-making m-me cry!

CHIEF: Weep not, fair lady! The tear gas is for yon criminal!  
[*Starting to cry.*] Come out, Steve the Weasel!

STEVE [*crying*]: H-here I am!

CHIEF [*crying*]: Seize him, boys!

STEVE [*crying*]: G-goodbye, Mary! That tear gas got me!

MERMAN [*crying*]: G-goodbye, Steve! It got me too!

HUSING [*approaching*]: Say, Ethel—Ethel!

MERMAN [*crying*]: Why—it's Ted Husing!

HUSING: Yes—it's me! This Shakespearean tragedy has gone far enough! . . . Say, what are you crying about?

MERMAN [*crying*]: I—I'm not crying!

HUSING: You are! [*Starting to sob.*] And—and you're m-making me cry too!

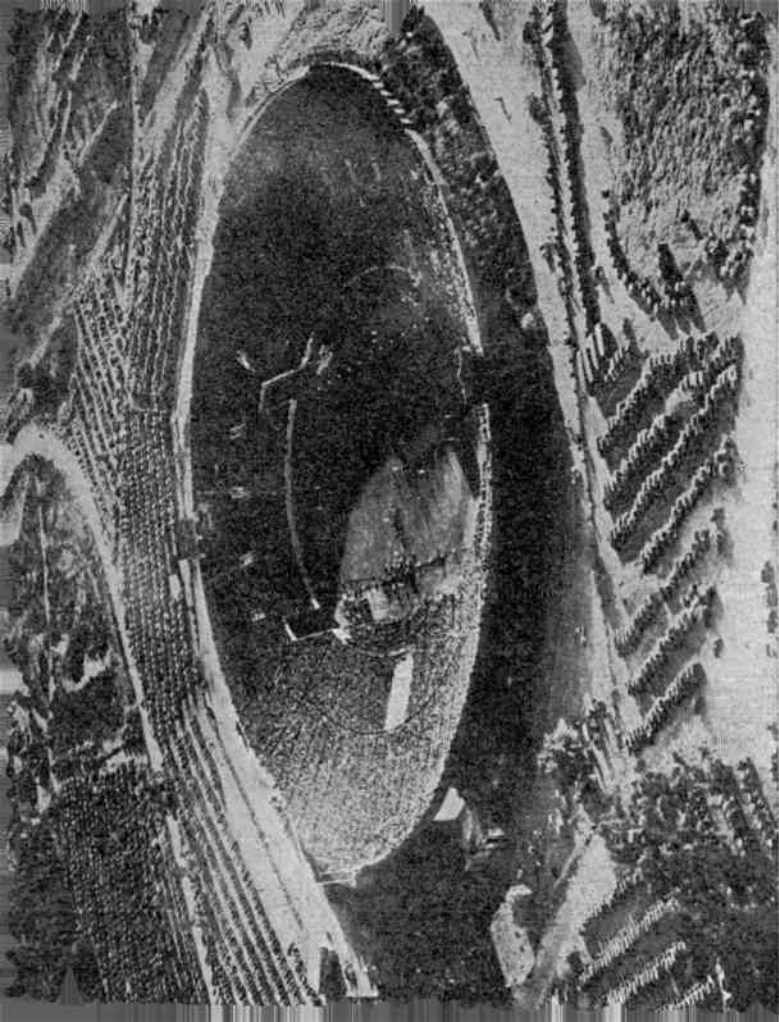
MERMAN [*crying*]: Ted, did you like the sketch?

HUSING [*crying*]: Yes, I—I thought it was v-very f-funny! But you've got to sing a song!

MERMAN [*crying*]: Well, you announce it and I'll s-sing it!

HUSING [*trying to control his sobs*]: Ladies and gentlemen—Ethel Merman sings—she—sings—“Love Thy Neighbor.”

MERMAN AND ORCHESTRA: Love Thy Neighbor.



TWENTY: MAYBE THEY'RE RIGHT



## CHAPTER XX

### MAYBE THEY'RE RIGHT

IT SEEMS TO ME that any life spent in the promotion of athletics is a life well spent, but what burns me up is that people regard me only as a sports broadcaster. I kind of flatter myself, you know, that I'm one of these all-round guys before the mike—one who can announce a concert, put over an advertising message, jump out on a news broadcast, crack wise with a comedian, and still broadcast a football game a coach will approve. Sport's just my side line, you know.

Have I been kidding myself? Anyhow, get this:

Two years ago C.B.S. decided to give me more time to myself for rest, research and education. A vacation—the first real one in nine years! What to do with it? Well, what does a busman do with his holiday—or a postman? I wanted to “see” my first football game. I'd never really “seen” one yet. It was a little late in the year—Christmas—to realize this ambition. Still, there was one game left—Columbia vs. Stanford in the Pasadena Rose Bowl on New Year's Day. And planes to take one out. I went.

It was the year of the big rain Los Angeles is now so touchy about. I've never seen such rain. For seven days it rained. The streets were ankle-deep with silt. Still, I was relaxing and enjoying it. I even went out to the Bowl early to watch the fire departments of three cities pump an ocean of water off the field. The crowd gathered. Boy, there was something after all

in this football spectacle the sports announcers were always raving about. It might have been raining rain for the local climate boosters, but it was just liquid sunshine to me. I basked.

Finally the great moment came. The teams were on the field. The toss-up, the choice of goals, then the whistle. Eleven men started forward. Thump! A toe met leather, and the ball looped down the field. It was caught, brought back, and twenty-two muddy players squashed together in a heap. At last I was actually seeing football played.

One of the guys in our gang tapped me on the shoulder.

"Hey, Teddy," he called, "who ran that kick back?"

I stared at him a moment—and at the chart and pencil in his hands.

"Gimme them," I yelled, snatching his scoring paraphernalia from him, and then proceeded to keep a complete chart of the game, mentally broadcasting every play.

Maybe they're right, at that. Just a sports announcer after all, eh?

THE END









