

LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 1470
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

How to Become a Radio Artist

Betty Van Deventer

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HALDEMAN-JULIUS PUBLICATIONS
GIRARD, KANSAS

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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HOW TO BECOME A RADIO ARTIST

In the last few years, the largest known field for talent of the showmanship type has opened with the advent of the radio as a national institution. The girl or boy with musical or dramatic talent used to take the first possible train headed toward the glittering artery of the world, Broadway. The stage, concert platform, and opera arena could not possibly absorb all of the truly deserving talent which streamed into Manhattan. The situation was pitiful; back of these country boys and girls were slaving parents and mortgaged farms.

Then the invention of the radio was made practical. Every city of any size now boasts at least one radio broadcasting station. Only a small percentage of the programs over the air are so-called network programs which are a hook-up from a centralized broadcasting station. The local people of talent have their chance to perform. In vaudeville, for example, the same troupe can play the same act in countless theaters week after week. Every day a radio station demands new talent of wide variety. For example, many stations start broadcasting at six o'clock in the morning and continue throughout the day until midnight. The ordinary program is only a half an hour long, so it is simple to see the diversity of talent which is required.

In the incubation stages of radio broadcasting, many amateurs offered their services for the mere thrill of novelty in going on the air. Today the business is becoming organized, thousands of individuals are preparing themselves for radio careers. And yet, they do not know how to educate themselves for the radio. This book is written with the express purpose of clarifying some of the mistaken ideas

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about radio broadcasting, and of giving to people interested in radio work some conception of the necessary steps in getting on the air. Then the problem merely starts; plenty of people can get on the air once or twice; they must know how to develop their air personalities so that they are on demand when people tune in to be entertained or instructed by the unseen voice.

Many stage stars who appear upon the radio for the first time find they are suddenly possessed with a strange, all-powerful microphone stage-fright. They have been appearing, perhaps, for years before vast audiences without a tremor of self-consciousness. The diabolical impersonality of the mechanical contrivance sends them into a panic. They cannot watch their audience and weigh its reactions. This new machine god, radio, fills them with awe and fright. This undoubtedly explains why so many radio listeners have been amazed to discover that their favorite singers in opera, for example, are simply terrible over the air. The radio performer must sense his vast, invisible audience to feel that warmth of expression which gives any rendition a deep appeal. The new generation of radio performers will not necessarily come from the stage. Actors and actresses have depended largely upon their visible characteristics to put them across the footlights. Perhaps it was a lovely smile, a way of walking, or an emotional appeal which their presences could transmit to the audience; the radio is cold and relentless in this respect—the artist must get across because of his appeal of voice alone. Of course, the voice does carry the personality of the speaker or singer over the air. But absolutely excellent technique is also needed. The microphone detects the slightest inadequacies such as tremubos, shortage of breath, and nervousness of voice

production. For this reason, the radio artist needs even greater and better preparation than the stage performer.

NATURAL QUALITIES REQUIRED

Not everyone can be a radio artist; to date, the choice of talent has been decidedly hit and miss except in the very large broadcasting stations, and many people of even less than mediocre endowment of talent have performed over the radio. This has been due to the need for many people for broadcasting and also to the financial conditions of many small radio stations. Radio stations are now becoming well-organized and profitable business undertakings, and the time is not far distant when they will all demand good quality in their performers, and they will pay them adequately.

The radio has one great advantage over the stage; it permits individuals of talent whose personal appearances are not prepossessing to perform. I remember going to a station in New York to listen to a program on which a great radio favorite was singing. Over the radio, she was hailed as a beautiful, alluring girl who had a fatal charm for men. Her singing voice was exquisite. I went into the control room from which I could see the people broadcasting. Although I am conversant with the so-called inside dope about broadcasting, even I was amazed to see this particular woman; she was about forty-five years old, and almost repulsive in her appearance. She was tremendously overweight. Yet, in thousands of communities, I am sure many male radio fans had fallen in love with her radio personality. She would never have been able to get the same effect from concert singing. A stage favorite has to guard constantly against any visible signs of

age; the radio artist does not need to fear the approaching years unless they impair her actual ability to perform.

Racial differences are not such a detriment over the radio. The Negro artist has been in demand for his portrayals of Negro songs and folklore. I have seen Negroes playing in orchestras which they could not take part in for a theatrical presentation. Consider what this will mean in the future as an outlet for the vast musical talent of members of the colored race. At present, in dialogue, there are quite a few Negro impersonators; in the future, the Negroes, themselves, should interpret their own race.

The personality equation is very necessary for a radio artist. This is difficult to define. Everyone knows certain people who have magnetic qualities which draw people to them. In radio, this quality of attraction must be expressed in the voice. It cannot be taught; however, someone possessing this personality asset can learn how to use it to the best of his advantage and for the most far reaching results. A part of this charm is naturalness; an affected voice or artificiality of enunciation is most pronounced over the air. Sincerity also counts immeasurably. Again, everyone knows certain people who radiate trustworthiness in every word. Simplicity is one element necessary for radio—simplicity of diction, of artistry, and of delivery of any idea.

Vast audiences believe in radio personalities. Often these individualities are merely playing parts. For example, there is a very popular radio program centered about the life of the average, small American town with its local people and its local activities. Of course, this program is written by an expert, played by good actors and actresses, and broadcast from

a large radio studio. Yet, a good percentage of the listening public actually believes that the events broadcast truly happen. Fan mail frequently asks the exact location of this small town. Many people have evinced a desire to take a trip to see this famous radio locality. One letter requested that the radio station investigate the real estate situation in the town, as the writer would like to move to that town to live. Its inhabitants seemed so genuine and so interesting. All of this was accomplished by putting over that element of sincerity.

Alertness of mind and resourcefulness in action are two natural qualities which the best radio artists must possess. I have seen situations arise on programs which demanded instantaneously clever handling. For example, the string of a violin snapped. One of the members of the cast of this radio promotion went to the microphone and improvised some very interesting remarks while the violin was being put back into shape.

One of the most important qualities for the radio artist to be born with is a voice which carries well. The quality of the voice must be the type which radio utilizes best. Some beautiful natural speaking voices do not go over the air well. The same is true of singing voices. Often it is a defect which mouth to mouth speech does not betray. The microphone is unrelenting in its cruelty in exposure of defects. Lack of proper breath control shows up in a greatly magnified manner over the air. Many people with naturally good radio voices need training to do their best work. The only way to find out about radio voice possibilities is to have a microphone test. Go to almost any radio station and ask for a test. Get a competent judge, accustomed to listening to voices over the air. Is your voice clear? Is it pleas-

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ing. Find out what is wrong, and if the fault can be corrected.

It is an excellent idea to listen to other people over the air in an analytical attitude. If they are pleasing, why are they so? If their voices annoy you and make you want to tune in to another station, try to figure out what quality is displeasing. Keep a notebook of radio impressions. Try to deliver the same type of song or reading yourself, and see if you can improve the program you listened to at home. Do not run words together. Speak in a natural, conversational tone. Remember, the microphone is very sensitive; shouting shocks its every atom.

ACQUIRED RADIO QUALITIES

While innate talents are absolutely necessary for the radio aspirant, these qualities must be trained and directed in the proper directions. As yet there are few good schools which add to their courses instruction in radio technique. The individual must be clever enough to study out the underlying qualifications which he possesses and then discipline these qualities for the desired results.

In singing, the small, "parlor" voice goes over the air very well. This type of singing voice could never before hope to reach a vast audience in an opera or on the concert stage. The voice, to be sure, must be correctly placed so that there is no vestige of a strain.

In speaking, the principal thing to avoid is any type of affectation. Women, especially, are prone to become "upstage" and to talk in condescending tones to their listeners. In basic analysis, this is very insulting psychologically. Women become self-conscious over the air and often assume airs to cover up their own uneasiness. Talk conversationally, as you would to

a friend who dropped in for tea. A natural, happy laugh goes out well over the air if the particular continuity calls for such a laugh. Some women laugh as just a matter of technique, and succeed only in making themselves unfortunately amusing.

Many people think they must shout into the microphone either in singing or in talking. This accounts for the harshness you hear in many radio voices. Poor microphone position is another frequent mistake. Individual voices demand individual microphone placement. As a rule, a voice will blast if the speaker talks close and directly into the microphone. Stand about one foot away from the "mike," as it is familiarly called, and talk from a slightly biased angle. Have an expert listen on the other end of the "mike" in the control room and tell you the results; by this experimentation, you will discover just the proper microphone position for your own voice.

If you aspire to be a radio announcer, there are many considerations which will contribute to your success. A radio announcer is a true public relations man. He is the contact between the station, the advertiser, the talent and the public. Everyone has favorite announcers whose personalities have become very real although they have never actually been seen in person. Many stations do not want the identities of their announcers to be known to the public, as reality often robs the illusion of its greatest power. Friendliness without familiarity is the secret of good radio announcing. The announcer must at least appear to be spontaneous in his statements. His voice must be simple, clear and likeable. He should be thoroughly conversant with public sentiment in the community in which he is announcing. He should, most emphatically, never make any ref-

erence to any political, religious or social complexity in the community. It is difficult for the announcer who is on the air a good many times a day to avoid using the same trite phrases for the various programs which he introduces and concludes. He should study this problem and find his solution. In some cases, the advertiser furnishes the opening and closing announcements for commercial programs, and, in this case, the announcer is relieved of the responsibility. It is effective for the announcer to have cordial relationships with the performers over the air. Sometimes this is done to death, and the demon, familiarity, creeps in with its cheapening results. A radio announcer should avoid too many personal remarks. The audience is interested in getting a definite picture of his personality, but not in constantly hearing a reiterated "I." The announcer must be cheerful, but not professionally so, every minute he is on the air, no matter how much he has to sublimate his personal feelings at the minute.

If the radio performer is making up his own continuity, as is often the case, he must achieve fresh points of view continually. To do this, it is necessary to keep up on everything which is going on in the world, and to have an accurate pulse-count of public opinion. It also means a deep sympathy and understanding of human beings and their likes and dislikes. The success of "Cheerio," for example, who conducts a period every morning over station WEAJ, may be attributed to his basic love for human beings and the help and inspiration he brings to them in their daily living. Many people in the east feel that the day has started all wrong and will end disastrously if they do not hear this voice in the morning. "Cheerio" keeps originality in his presentation

and touches on simple subjects common to all types of people, from the domestic servant to the banker who is waiting to go to work as soon as the "Cheerio" hour is off the air.

In any type of informal, person-to-person broadcasting, keep the audience in mind constantly. Imagine that you are talking or singing to an interested audience of one—then each listener will feel more and more your power and your sincerity. Ask the opinion of the audience on any possible question. Address the audience directly if the type of program permits it. Make the audience at all times feel its importance. This is flattering and entirely correct as the popularity of a radio artist depends upon his ability to gather and retain a large group of "fans." These fans will have a steadfast loyalty to an artist as long as he does good work; "fan" mail will continue to pour in, and the size of the fan mail is the radio announcer's or the artist's yardstick of success. One listener will tell another who in turn will become an ardent advertiser, and the audience will have a mushroom growth. It will have an equally speedy death if it lags in interest continually. It is so simple to flip the dial and to find another station. Audiences are wonderfully loyal as long as the program is good, but they are as fickle as southern girls when the entertainment and the animation die down.

In the smaller stations, as I have mentioned briefly, the artists are sometimes required to build their own continuities and to plan their own musical programs. The usual artist knows nothing of this type of work, or, if he does, it is in connection with the stage or with concert presentations. Radio is different. Let us discuss, first, musical programs. The first thing to determine is what will interest the great

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listening public? This, again, depends upon the time of day in which the program is being sent over the air. In the morning, for example, brisk, bright music is desirable, as it starts circulation going well for the day and stimulates the listeners. In the morning, the woman at home is doing her housework and she likes the novelty of being entertained with music or with talks as she dusts, cooks, or does the mending. I have found that women like to hear singing in the morning. They also like peppy jazz music. It makes them feel younger and more in tune with the times. In the afternoon, almost all types of music may be played over the radio. The tea hour offers an excellent opportunity to present music of the Victor Herbert type. The dinner hour is usually a good time for the music from the current musical comedies, the jazz, to be sure, and the ballad type of composition. This may be varied by light classical music. In the evening, consider that most entertainment programs are to interest both men and women. The widest general appeal must be made so that the greatest number of people may be satisfied by your programs. I think that the majority of people prefer to tune in to popular music; they even like to hear their current favorites played over and over again. However, such repetition is dangerous when carried to the extreme. Since jazz is the most wanted music, it should undoubtedly be the type played most of the time. It should not be the only sort of music, by any means. There is a small but music-loving public which wants to hear symphony, opera and chamber music. This public should not be entirely ignored. Radio, too, has great educational advantages, musically, and thousands of people who have never had a chance to hear any good music in all their lives may be intro-

duced to a new and delightful world by the presentation of really fine music over the air. Every program should be varied enough to be interesting. Short explanations of musical themes are sometimes interesting to the audience, but avoid the use of musical technicalities and too-long dissertations upon the origin and development of a certain type of music. The musical director for radio programs must be at home in all fields of music. He must not scorn jazz and he must not think any music but jazz is ridiculously highbrow. If there are singers on the program, and there probably will be, the musical director must be able to criticize their delivery if it is incorrect and to assist in the selection of proper songs to be rendered. If duets are to be sung, be sure that the two voices have tonal blending. Duets may be all right in the privacy of the parlor when they are wrong, but over the air they are ferocious unless excellent in quality.

Now we come to the question of speaking over the radio. Here there has been no standard of excellence to meet. In music, at least, the average artist has some ability. Many people have been permitted to speak on the air who really know nothing about what they are doing. They may have been good, but their success was fortuitous and due to natural abilities. With training and an understanding of radio technique, they certainly would have been even better.

Let us consider women radio speakers, first. They are criticized most harshly. Yet, there are many of them who are doing excellent work and have tremendous followings. Women have been eager to talk before the "mike" as they have felt it a new means of self-expression. The woman who is criticized over the air is the typical club-woman who thinks that

she should talk over the radio just as she delivers her paper to her Pansy Study Club, or whatever it is called. She reads with a slow, monotonous drawl. She is self-conscious, and she makes the drastic error of trying to be "cute." Loud laughs ensue at the other end of the radio waves. Nothing is so destructive as unintended humorous response on a radio program. Now, consider the successful woman broadcaster. She talks to women about home questions of universal interest, as, for example, about menus for the family, clothing and fashions for women, for their husbands, and for their children. Instead of presenting these talks as dry, monotonous speeches, dialogue may be introduced. Simple dramatization is effective. For instance, have the broadcast in a setting—if the food products are to be broadcast, select the breakfast nook of a modern kitchen—and let neighbors, delivery boys, friends, etc., drop in to call. Perhaps some of these people are musical and go into the next room and play the piano or sing. This music adds variety but does so in a logical manner. We all like women who, in person, are unaffected, and who have originality of thought; the same rules hold good over the radio. Confidence must be built and to confidence must be added entertainment. If the woman broadcaster can get over her own personality and make it delightful, she will be very effective. She should be careful to answer her fan letters in a personal, interested manner, even if a torn letter must be sent out due to the volume of the mail. I know several woman broadcasters who have literally tens of thousands of radio admirers who write to them and ask their help on every conceivable sort of problem, as, for example, how to manage their husbands, what to feed their birds, or what sort of a

vacation trip to take in the summer. The most successful women on the air are very careful to see that their mail is punctiliously answered. The recipient of the answer shows the letter to friends, and the radio artist receives a big boost. Fan mail is not what it used to be. In the early days of radio hundreds of thousands of letters poured in continually. This was because radio was new and listeners thought it great fun to write to an unknown person with a known voice. But the novelty has worn off, and letters are fewer. Still, the size of the fan mail is one of the measuring means for the success of the programs. Consequently radio artists are always seeking some new way to stimulate mail—contests are an ordinary way to beg for a response. If the contest is clever, it is effective. For example, a child writing the best letter about a certain toy will receive a prize. The great danger in this type of competition is that thousands of fans are disappointed when they do not receive prizes, while only one is pleased. Parents are very apt to think their children's letters are best, and to conclude that the judges in the contest were either incompetent or unfair.

Direct-by-mail advertising has a tie-up in that radio programs may be used to make people write in for booklets. The booklets in question must be attractive and informative enough to justify the requests. Special booklets exclusively for radio audiences are now prepared by many of the largest air advertisers. For example, a food manufacturer will get out a recipe book for those requesting it. The Florida Citrus Growers have a network broadcast. They issued a cookbook with citrus recipes and pictures of the cast who were broadcasting the programs. Many requests came for this brochure.

CHILDREN IN RADIO BROADCASTING

Many mothers are anxious to have their children go on the air. This is often accomplished by the artistic teachers in the community who are asked to put on programs featuring their star pupils. Broadcasting is good for youthful artists if they do not get over impressed with its importance. It can give them the poise which results from public appearances.

Unless the program is definitely a children's program for children, and unless it is broadcast during the daytime, I think it is usually a great mistake to put on the air children under six years of age. Their enunciation is ordinarily very poor, and the audience is not able to see their cunning little faces and their appealing mannerisms which cover up a multitude of artistic sins. No child of six, unless he is an absolute infant prodigy, has yet acquired sufficient musical or dramatic technique to really be an entertainment asset.

Older children who have ability make excellent features. Fond parents like to hear other children perform, although they may conclude that their own offspring can do much better. Children need sufficient rehearsals to make their renditions absolutely certain. I should say that at least three rehearsals should be held before the microphone before a program is finally submitted to the critical public for its favor. Even children develop a microphone fear when the current is actually turned on.

Be sure to announce several times during a program of children performers just what the program is so that those who tune in after the introductory announcement will not think

that adults are performing and judge the children by too stringent standards.

Before any child is permitted to broadcast, he should have a try-out and judgment should not be tempered by age or by physical attractiveness. It is better to disappoint one mother than to make an entire listening public suffer from a poor program. Some stations have regular try-out periods each week when mothers may bring their youngsters for a trial performance. Of course, the program does not go out of the studio.

If a child is to take part in a dramatic performance, choose the child with experience if possible. Sometimes schools will broadcast plays or pageants and the responsibility is shifted somewhat from the radio station to the school and its dramatic coaches. If the station, however, is sponsoring a program, have a dramatic coach to teach the children. Watch their enunciation and their microphone technique. Have the "mikes" lowered so that the children are comfortable and not strained when broadcasting. If possible, exclude any audience which may gather in the studio to watch the broadcasting, as the audience will disconcert the children.

Choose numbers which are appropriate for children. On the stage, one often sees children who get by because of their youthful charm. They sing songs which are not suitable for children, and they get by because the songs, for example, are not as important as the appearance. In radio sound is everything and cannot be neglected. No one wants to hear a child of twelve singing a song ostensibly written for a mature person.

Children's programs should be conducted with informality and lightness. The children should be as natural as possible, and should

not read stilted messages to the audience. Let them be themselves and they will get across much better than if they were little puppets repeating what someone else has written for them. If parts are written, they should be done with skill which makes the effect seem spontaneous. Then the innate charm of youth gets across the air.

HOW TO BREAK THE ICE

Perhaps, at this point, you are saying to yourself, "Well, I understand what should be done once a person gets on the air, but how does one manage to get in front of the microphone?" The first step in radio work, like in other work, is the hardest, and persistence is the best technique. Don your most attractive clothes, and go to the nearest radio station. Ask to see the program director. Tell him that you believe you have radio abilities, and tell him why. Ask him to give you a trial. Let your enthusiasm show. Probably he is only another butter-and-egg man who sees many people as merely a matter of routine. If you impress him with vitality and animation, he will single you out. Be prepared either to talk spontaneously or to read what he may hand to you. If you are to sing, be all prepared with your songs.

Another way to get an entry to a radio station is to go there with a specific idea to sell to them. The idea may be for a program to be sponsored by the studio or to be sold to some advertiser who will gain good will or direct sales by use of your program. Work out your ideas carefully before submitting them. Be prepared to write an entire script for the program, if it is desired. If you can first interest a prospective advertiser for the station, do so. Radio stations are in business to sell

time, and if you may bring them a client, they will welcome you with open arms. If you do bring them a client you are entitled to a commission of the price of the time on the air. The usual commission is fifteen percent of the cost. Look over the list of commercial enterprises in your community. Find out which of them are not doing radio advertising. Then put on your very ablest thinking cap, and figure out a program which you think they would like to present. It takes brains and ingenuity to follow through with this idea, but the rewards are excellent, too, and it is the surest way of breaking into the radio game. As yet, the field is unpopulated because it is so new. If you get into the work now, you will have an advantage of experience in the years to come when radio is certain to grow as a means of advertising communication.

Perhaps it is sometimes advisable to go on several programs without pay just to prove your worth. Do so, however, with the definite understanding that you are to be paid when you prove your ability to be a radio artist. Pay for talent varies in the different communities, and the larger cities, as is natural, pay more for radio performers. As one's popularity grows, one may expect more money as one is commercially more valuable because of the large fan audience.

In New York, musicians are paid from \$10 to \$50 for a half hour program. An accompanist receives from \$10 to \$25. Violinists, cellists, harpists, and those in their category, receive on an average \$25 a performance. Strict union rules cover their work. A singer receives all the way from \$10 to \$150 a half hour. Of course, the nationally famous singers name their own prices. In smaller communities, the prices vary and will be found to be less. Wo

men making radio talks in New York are paid from \$25 to \$125 a half hour. Some have contracts to talk every day and the price is lower. Again, there will be regular people in the employ of the radio stations who receive a weekly salary and who may be used for any account. Some radio stations have artists' bureaus and demand a commission of ten or fifteen percent from the stipend paid the performers. This is the same type of commission which a musical or literary agent charges.

Department stores offer a large radio field for women broadcasters. Many stores wish to have shopping programs which tell in a newsy, intimate, woman-to-woman way the various things of interest which are going on in the store. A clever woman can handle these programs and make them seem non-commercial. If prices of merchandise are mentioned, they should not predominate. The store should be presented as a great community center. The woman broadcasting becomes the voice of the store which can grow to mean much in the lives of the women of the community. This woman broadcasting as the voice of the store must be a person of wide interests and with knowledge of the human side of the family life. She must have an artistic appreciation and a sense of the value of merchandise.

If you are particularly interested in books, go to your local radio station and suggest that you do a weekly book review period. Perhaps local book shops or book departments will pay for the cost of the program, if you tell that the books which you mention are to be found for sale in those places.

Cooking schools are very successful over the radio. The local gas or electric company is a logical sponsor for a radio cooking school. Go to one of these companies and suggest that you

conduct such a school over the air. Have a plan well organized before you make your initial talk so that you will not be at a loss when questions are asked. Remember, you are the authority!

If you feel that you are capable of talking over the air, but that you cannot write and direct the programs, find another person who can do that type of work, and form a combine, a sort of a radio promotion partnership. Of course, this means a splitting of the financial returns, and prices must be fixed accordingly. Be sure that the person whom you select as this partner is capable.

Another way to get into radio work is to get a job in a radio station. Here you may watch all the activities which go on daily, and with keen observation you will learn much. Radio stations have jobs for clerical workers, for engineers, for program directors, and for hostesses or receptionists. They also need salesmen and saleswomen to solicit accounts from business firms. I strongly advise the inexperienced person to get his experience at home, in the smaller field. Too many untrained people flock to New York where competition is a deadly game. Armed with experience, New York is undoubtedly the widest and best paid field. In New York there are four very large radio stations and a score of small ones.

You must be able and willing to start your radio work at a small salary because a radio reputation is what demands big money later. Often radio work may be started as a part-time proposition. You might even hold down a day-time job and do some radio work at night. Radio work will be better paid continually, and a most accomplished type of broadcaster will be in demand. In the United States, the development of radio is sure to be along commercial

lines. In England, the radio broadcasting stations are under government supervision and no advertising is allowed. While this may in some way be desirable, it forbids the expansion which commercial backing gives. English radio programs, on the whole, do not measure up in quality to American programs. This is because the stations cannot afford to pay for the very best of talent.

Once the ice is broken, the sailing is comparatively easy. New programs will be coming on the air, and, if you are popular with the audiences, you will be in demand. Select a good radio name for yourself, and get all the publicity possible. You must be modest in getting publicity; let the newspapers seem to seek you out for pictures, but, when the newspaper reporter approaches you, have something to say to him of news value. Speak at women's clubs, at Rotary luncheons, or at any public gatherings unless you specifically wish to keep your radio personality a mystery. This mystery element is sometimes advisable, especially in smaller communities. If it seems best to keep the identity of the broadcaster secret, any audience should be excluded from the station while the actual broadcasting is taking place. The one thing to avoid in this is the appearance of deceit; if the radio public finds out the real identity of a hero or heroine, it is sure to be disappointed unless that identity has been apparent from the first.

If the radio station in your vicinity is not having successful children's hours, you might evolve some plan for them. This may simply be a story telling hour, or an hour of reading children's classics. It can be much more; music of direct interest to children should be included in most programs, even if they are the story telling type. I mention the possi-

bility of organizing a children's hour as one of the easiest ways to break into radio. You must keep in mind that many children today are rather sophisticated and do not like very babyish programs. They wish to be considered quite grown up, and, at the same time, they enjoy the age-old stories for children. Never be condescending to children; never make the mistake of calling them "dear little things" to their radio faces, or of uttering baby talk.

Here is another way to break into radio. Perhaps you are a member of some club in your community. This club has interesting meetings, lectures, or musical programs. It may be a social or a civic organization. Interest your fellow club members in having some of these occasions broadcast. Then go to the director of the radio station and suggest your plan; arrange the matter so that you are in charge. Thus you get radio experience. If the broadcasts are a success, you will be in a position to suggest new program features, at, of course, a fair rate of remuneration. Many churches today broadcast their services. Radio stations do not charge these religious organizations for their time on the air. If another organization, the Chamber of Commerce, the Woman's Club, or a similar group, wishes to broadcast, arrangements for time can usually be consummated easily. The radio station needs features of interest to fill their time, and, if an organization is behind a program, there is certain to be a large audience tuning in.

WHAT A RADIO ARTIST SAYS

This is an interview with the most popular woman broadcasting on the air today. Her name is Mary Olds. I asked her about her background and her rules for success as a

radio artist. She has many interesting points of view to offer. She said to me:

"I started to study singing and voice culture when I was a young girl. Although I have sung all my life, most of my radio work has been confined to speaking. I decided that I must not be a Jill of all trades, but a mistress of one. So I deliberately made up my mind not to sing on the air. I never did until my reputation as a speaker had been firmly established.

"I had done some radio work, more or less in an amateur way, in San Francisco. Then came the opportunity to manage a small radio station there. I took the job, and plunged right into the vital problems of radio broadcasting. I think I was successful in making the station one of the most popular in the vicinity, in spite of its small power. I learned many things every day. I used to listen to hundreds of programs, and I became critical of broadcasting methods. I analyzed the success of the most popular hours. I found out that human interest is the most important key to radio success.

"I came east, and resolved to get into the radio game in New York. It is a rather difficult thing to buck. Finally, I went to a large metropolitan store and asked them to give me a try-out to conduct a shopping period on the air every day. Twenty women were called to a try-out. The judges sat where they could not see us at all, but could hear us. I was chosen out of the twenty for the qualities of my voice. They told me it was clear, pleasing, and above all, animated. I think real spirit shows up in a voice, and people like to listen to lively voices over the air."

I might add here that in this store, Mary Olds built up a tremendous audience who

thought their lives were poverty-stricken if they didn't hear her every morning. Although the basis of the feature was commercial, and much merchandise was sold from the broadcasts, I am certain the audience never once thought of the program as commercial.

"I found my greatest radio asset to be," continued Mary Olds, "my own personality. People were interested in what I thought, and in the comments I would make upon happenings in the world, I broadcast from my own home, and the audience was engrossed in all the domestic drama which centered around this home. Men and women both wrote me frequently telling me they discussed me and my menage every night over the dinner table. I tried to keep in the mind constantly the thought of not imposing any petty thoughts about myself over the air. I never bragged. I truly loved my audience, and was thrilled and filled with respect for the thousands who said they waited impatiently every day for my broadcasting period. I feel in all my radio work a definite responsibility toward my audience. What am I giving them? How can I make it the most interesting? I do a great deal of reading and research work. I try to keep interesting personal contacts with people so that my work may have a freshness of point of view. I try never to be dogmatic in any opinion. Once I was really feeling ill, but I went on the air anyway. I made the mistake which I shall never, never repeat of letting my audience know how I felt."

Mary Olds has now branched out and is broadcasting on a national scale. She is the pivot personality in net-work programs; these are sent out from a number of stations, simultaneously, by means of wired connections. So her voice reaches out to literally tens of thou-

sands of homes. I asked her what advice she would give to radio aspirants. She answered:

"Tell them to have something to give over the air. This must be distinct musical talent, intellectual offering, or charm of personality. Tell them to grow inside themselves every day. And certainly tell them not to be discouraged easily. That seems like a large order. I know from personal experience that it is the best formula—and it probably applies to everything as well as to radio work. Many people tell me that it takes so-called 'pull' to break into the radio field. People who say things like this seem to me to lack confidence in their own abilities. I have always found that real ability is the best 'pull.' While personal contacts may get you a hearing sooner, they will do nothing to further you in your career."

I have talked with many radio artists who say practically the same things, in their own way. I find that the artists who have real imagination and ability are those who last. Given these qualities, a radio career can be longer than the average stage career. It does not demand such great sacrifices from its artists, either, as radio programs are usually short and the market is becoming more stabilized. Radio broadcasting continues the year around, too, while the theatrical season is usually short. The average life of a play is about three months. Then a new job must be hunted. If a radio feature becomes popular, it is likely to continue indefinitely. An actor or actress is at great expense to keep up with the very newest in clothes; the radio artist is heard but not seen.

HOW TO WRITE RADIO SCRIPTS

This is another field from the actual broadcasting, but in radio's present stage, it often

is a great aid to the broadcaster, and it has a future in the radio world. Writing for the radio is different from writing for newspapers, magazines, direct-by-mail, or any other type of publicity. The spoken word must carry the entire message. There intelligence and animation must color the script.

Definite characterization is a valuable asset in the writing of radio scripts. This characterization may be obtained by the use of dialect, by colloquial expressions, or by sheer character delineation. The audience must be able to tell that a character speaking is a young person by the lines which she reads. Dramatic programs which build up characters which the audience always recognizes have a tremendous appeal. It is wise to build a character which the majority of people will like and whom they can grow to know. This may be done by taking the most typical of every day characters, as, for example, the spinster lady, the insurance salesman, the colored maid, and so on.

Good dramatic skits for the radio have action. The action makes the program move with speed so that the audience is surprised when the broadcast is ended. Writers who have transposed theatrical offerings into radio scripts have met with many difficulties because the stage version has much more latitude with scenery, stage business, facial expression, and exits and entrances. The radio writer must make all of these apparent by verbal expression. Sometimes stage directions may be read over the radio, but they usually make a distressing break in the program. Music helps as it conveys the spirit of the presentation.

If you are planning to write a series of programs, have some thread of plot which will carry the audience from week to week. This corresponds to the magazine serial story, only

in radio each episode should be an entity in itself. The radio public may be more fickle than the magazine public, and may miss an installment or two. If each broadcast is complete in itself, yet carries on the general theme, it is ideal. The famous Main Street sketches on a national radio network have accomplished this radio perfection. This is the way they have done it. The broadcasts, as many of you who are reading this will know, are built around the life in a typical small town. Luke Higgins, the storekeeper, is the central figure. Other town characters are brought in, and every week some episode in the life of the town is broadcast. A hint is sometimes given as to what will happen next week. This program has continued for several years and seems to gather much moss as it rolls on over the air.

Try to introduce musical numbers naturally in a radio program which has both dialogue and music. Instead of letting the talking stop abruptly while a musical number is played, weave the music into the continuity. I remember one program which was broadcast to advertise Irish linens. The speaker said that every time she saw a beautiful linen table cloth, she was reminded of a trip she made once in the springtime to Ireland. She had asked a friend of hers to come to the broadcasting station that day to sing for the audience some of the music which she had heard in Ireland. Then the friend sang, and the broadcaster reminisced a little about her impressions of Ireland. Gradually she came back to the subject of Irish linens. The program was immensely popular.

Remember that when you are writing for the radio you are not appealing to any picked audience. Authors have their particular fol-

lowings in books, but the whole world is the radio audience. The well known colonel's lady as well as Mrs. O'Grady are listening in, and both must be captivated.

After your script is written, watch it closely when it is being rehearsed. You will find that there are many changes which can be made for the better in the dialogue. Watch for awkward sounding phrases. If the action does not move smoothly and interestingly, change it. Remember that no Broadway play even went on just as it was written. Do not become closed-minded about your script. It will undoubtedly bear improvement after rehearsals begin. Unless your artists are very experienced, have them rehearse three or four times before the script is broadcast.

CONCLUSIONS

This discussion brings to you new knowledge concerning the inside and the outside workings of the greatest new game in self-expression. It shows you ways to break into this "racket." The one thing I have tried to impress upon radio aspirants is to have something to offer before submitting your abilities for sale. Do not be afraid of radio; few people as yet have had any more experience in the field than you have had. They have simply recovered from any sense of inferiority they might have held concerning themselves, and have had enough nerve to try out radio. In most fields today, experience is one of the open sesame; in radio this cannot be demanded. So your chance is excellent.

Many young men and women all over the country who have turned their eyes toward Broadway will not look into the radio field nearer home. It may be used, in some in-

stances, as a stepping stone to Broadway, but it has a future of its own which can be independent of the theatrical world. Radio has turned to the theater because it has been the most obvious source for immediate talent. Stage stars have failed over the air in many cases because they did not see that radio is different and requires a new technique.

There is no question about the future of radio. It may change; television may be the new toy which all Americans will buy on the installment plan. What of it? The radio artist of the present will become the television star of tomorrow. I think, also, that radio will become decentralized and that the individual stations throughout the country will assume greater importance. Then local talent will be more and more in demand.

Specialization will become the most lucrative pursuit in radio broadcasting in a little time; just now the radio artist must be somewhat a Jack or Jill of all trades and a master or mistress of at least a majority of them. One should look to the future and build a foundation for specialization. Take your most outstanding qualification and use that as much as possible. If singing is the best thing you can do, sing as much as possible over the air. In New York, specialization is now apparent: I know of radio artists who do nothing but Negro dialect, others who do only impersonations. The smaller radio station as yet does not have enough work for this type of artist.

If you want to get in on a rising market, get into radio. I reiterate, that you must listen to programs, study public reactions to types of broadcasting, and feel that you know what the great audience of listeners-in want. Then give them what they enjoy the most!

