

HEAR  
THE VOICES  
OF 15 FAMOUS RADIO  
COMMENTATORS ONCE  
AGAIN--ON THE TWO  
RECORDS INCLUDED  
WITH THIS  
BOOK!

Irving E. Fang

**THOSE**

**RADIO**

**COMMENTATORS!**



Walter Winchell, "Baukhage speaking," Gabriel Heatter, and Edward R. Murrow.

With impressive flair for interpreting the past, author Irving Fang captures the bravado, the ego, and the idiosyncrasies that were hallmarks of these commentators (as well as the paranoia that dogged at least one). With rare insight he conveys also the strength and respectability many commentators brought to broadcast journalism.

**THOSE RADIO COMMENTATORS!** takes you back to an important era and reveals how the impact of these early broadcasters grew in importance and how their performance markedly influenced the events of the twentieth century.

**I know what I'll do when I retire. I'll be one of those high-powered commentators.**

**Franklin D. Roosevelt**

IRVING FANG is a professor of journalism and mass communication at the University of Minnesota where he is in charge of the broadcast journalism sequence. He holds degrees in English, journalism, and speech from the University of California, Los Angeles. He has been a sub-editor, Reuters, London; editorial adviser, *Daily Times*, Lagos, Nigeria; editorial writer, *Star-News*, Pasadena, California; television news writer, KABC-TV, Los Angeles; election coverage specialist, ABC News; and from 1969 has been a consultant for ABC News. He is the author of *Television News* and *Television/Radio News Workbook*.

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**"I should have been the author, but my University of Minnesota School of Journalism colleague has beaten me to it, and I doubt whether I would have done nearly as thorough a job of research."**

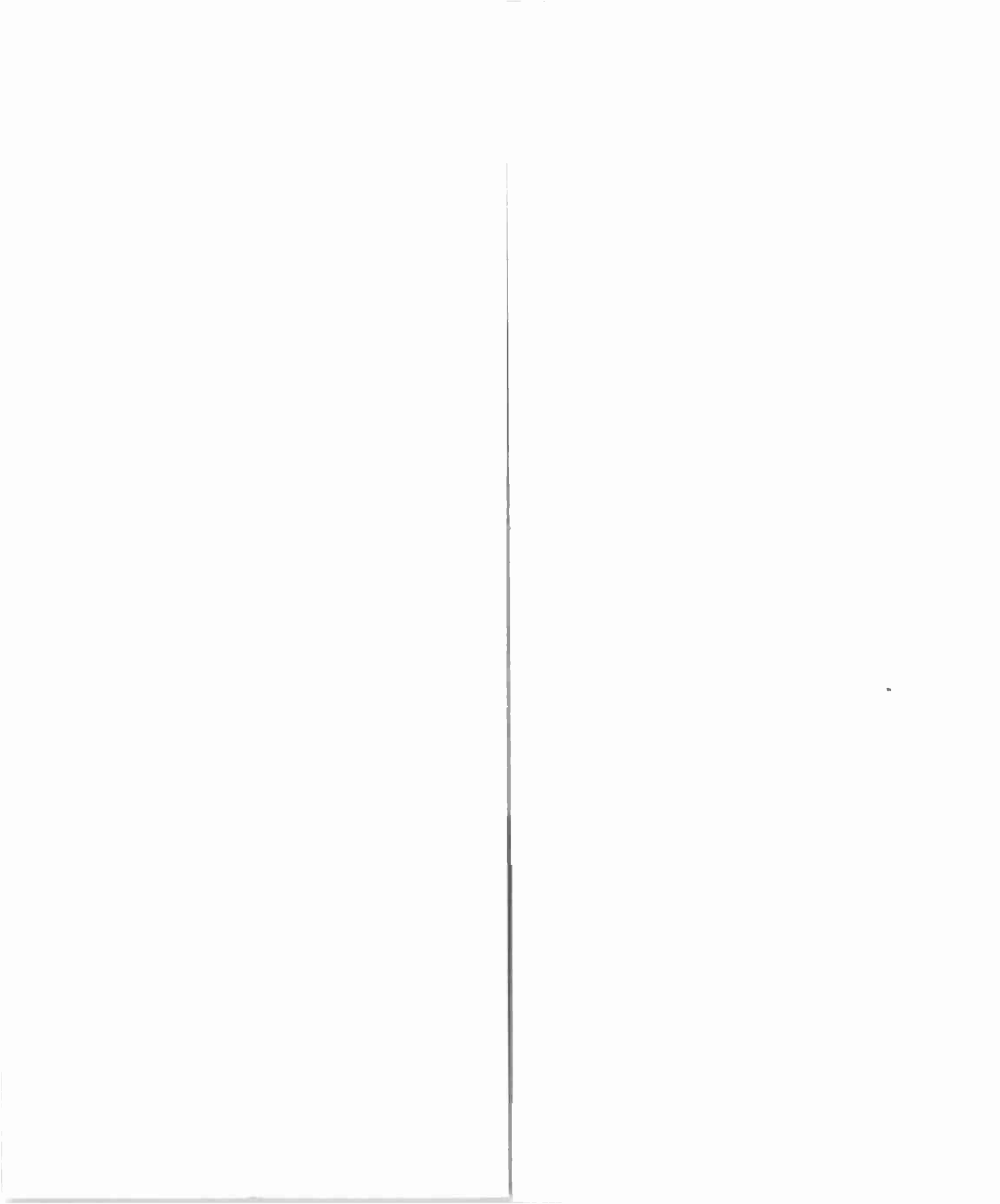
**Lowell Thomas**

THE PRIME TIME OF RADIO lasted two decades—from around 1929 with the arrival of Amos 'n' Andy to 1948 when the early flickering image of Milton Berle appeared on television. The years between were a "golden age" for radio.

Some of the familiar voices then issuing from the Atwater-Kents and the Philcos belonged to an unforgettable group of commentators whose voices were sometimes troubled, sometimes soothing, sometimes strident. It depended on what night you listened and to whom.

These were anxious years. It was certainly reassuring to know your favorite commentator not only could report the news but could, if he chose, explain the day's concerns about the Depression, the New Deal, Japan, Germany, and the War Effort.

Fifteen of these intriguing voices of yesteryear are profiled in these pages by photographs and by text. You'll find the terse H. V. Kaltenborn, the friendly Floyd Gibbons, the calm Lowell Thomas, as well as others: Drew Pearson, Fulton Lewis, Jr., Elmer Davis, Boake Carter, Father Coughlin, Upton Close, Dorothy Thompson, Raymond Gram Swing, the abrasive



"...I picked up Irving Fang's unedited manuscript to satisfy my ego and stayed to spend an hour with the pioneers of broadcast news. Dr. Fang has turned out a fascinating book."

**Walter Cronkite**

"Why, how ridiculous. Anybody should have known it was not a real war. If it had been, the broadcaster would have been Hans."

**Mrs. Kaltenborn**, commenting on the panic over Orson Welles's "The War of the Worlds" broadcast

"The world has a date with Floyd Gibbons  
Sunday evening at half-past nine;  
And you must agree, that includes you and me,  
So be sure and get here on time."

**Mrs. Carrie P. Parsons**

"The President told us that he wished he had a good long ruler, the kind that schoolboys' hands used to be slapped with when he was in school; that he was good and God-damned mad at both of us."

**Elmer Davis** recalling how F.D.R. scolded him and Robert Sherwood

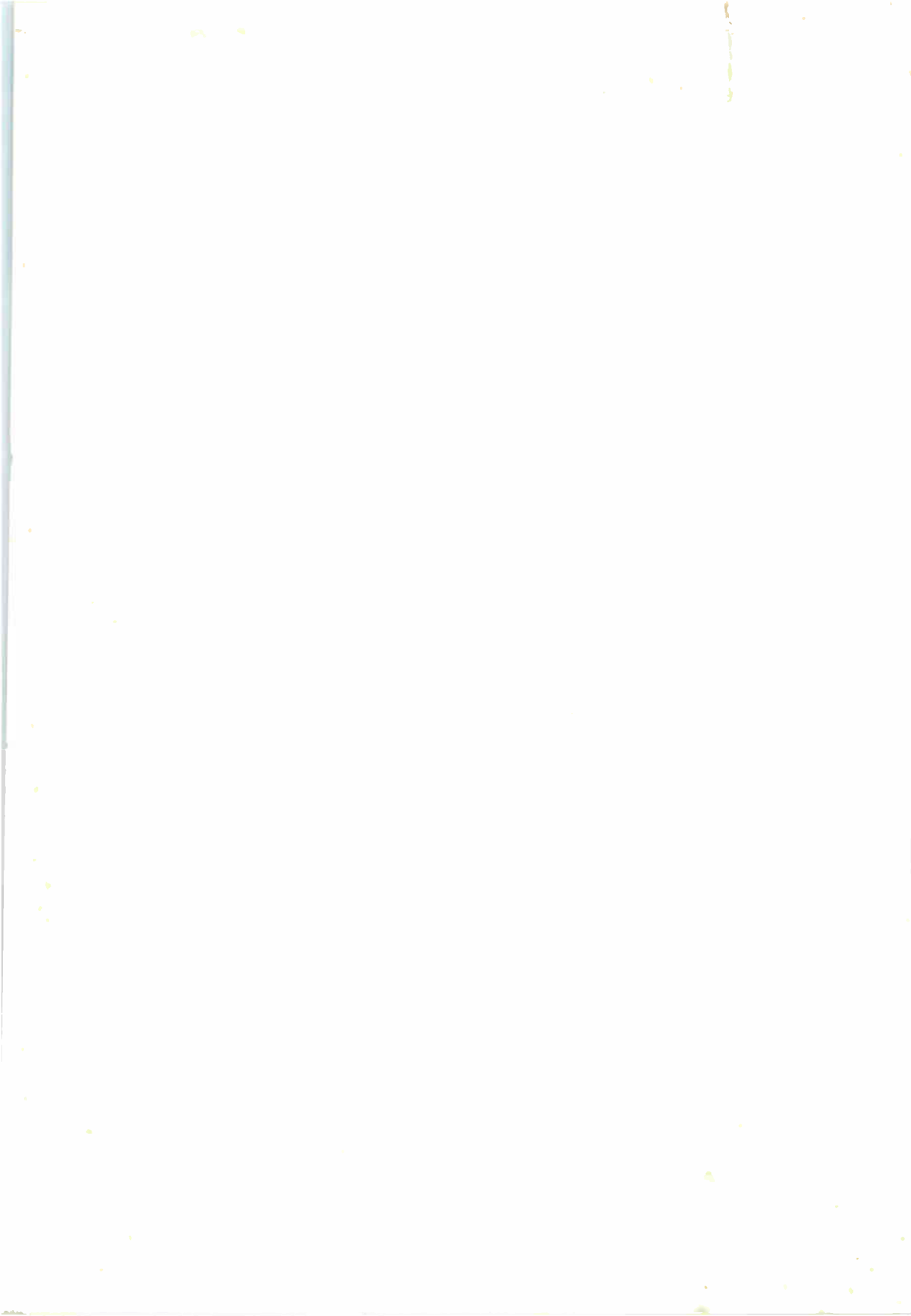
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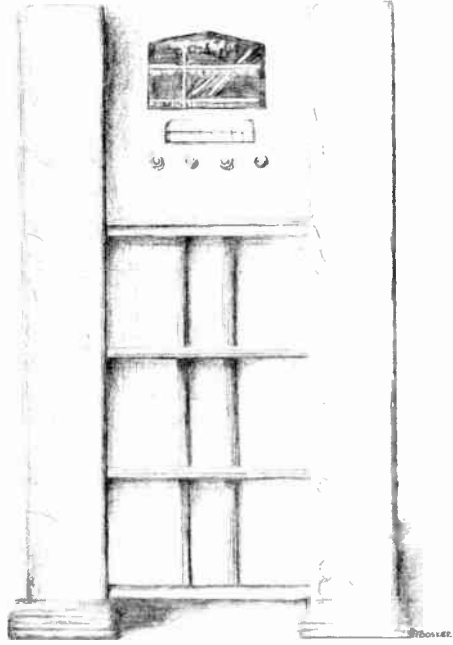
The recordings of Floyd Gibbons, Upton Close, Dorothy Thompson, and Walter Winchell are included through the courtesy of the National Broadcasting System, Inc.



**Those Radio Commentators!**

# Those Radio





# **Commentators!**

**IRVING E. FANG**

**FOREWORD BY LOWELL THOMAS**

**The Iowa State University Press, Ames**

# T O M Y P A R E N T S

IRVING E. FANG, Professor, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Minnesota, is in charge of the broadcast journalism sequence. He holds degrees in English, journalism, and speech from the University of California, Los Angeles. He has been a subeditor, Reuters, London; editorial adviser, *Daily Times*, Lagos, Nigeria; editorial writer, *Star-News*, Pasadena, Calif.; television news writer, KABC-TV, Los Angeles; election coverage specialist, ABC News; and from 1969 has been a consultant for ABC News. He has been awarded IBM and Haynes Foundation fellowships. In addition to *Those Radio Commentators!*, Dr. Fang is the author of *Television News* (1968; 2nd edition, 1972) and *Television/Radio News Workbook* (1974). He has also written articles for magazines and professional journals.

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# Foreword

AS the last survivor of the era covered by this book, and as the first to have a full-time network news broadcast, I suppose it is appropriate for me to write this foreword. I should have been the author, but my University of Minnesota School of Journalism colleague has beaten me to it, and I doubt whether I would have done nearly as thorough a job of research.

All who are mentioned in these pages were my long-time friends, although all of us were so busy we seldom had an opportunity to get together. Murrow was one exception. I lured him to the country where he and his family first occupied a cottage on my lake, then bought property in the neighborhood and Ed spent the rest of his days there. We often played golf together until he became ill and died in the prime of life.

Usually Governor Dewey was in our foursome, also an Irishman who was one of the wittiest men I have ever known, "Pat" Hogan.

Just to give you a rough idea how far back I go in broadcasting, when I did my first solo broadcast over KDKA in 1925, all the present radio-TV newsmen were either still in school or hadn't been born. My first was a one-hour ad lib broadcast, telling the story of Man's First Flight Around the World. At the time Eric Sevareid was 13 years old, Howard K. Smith was 11, Walter Cronkite 9, Mike Wallace 7, Edwin L. Newman 6, David Brinkley 5, and Harry Reasoner was 2. As for John Chancellor, Roger Mudd, Marvin Kalb, Robert Pierpoint, Dan Rather, Barbara Walters, and so on and so on, the stork hadn't made their delivery.

All of which means—nothing, except that the Almighty has been extremely kind to me, allowing me to stay around so long, and at age 85 I'm still as busy as ever, devoting much of my time to television.

The author of this volume has done his work so thoroughly that there is little point in my talking about my colleagues. I'll merely add an anecdote or two.

When I first took to the airwaves with my regular evening news program, in 1930, as I would be leaving the CBS studio H. V. Kaltenborn would be breezing in. We had never formally met and his first remark to me was: "You are the cocktail, I am the main course!" H. V. was always known for his frankness. Although he was far from being a modest man, he was one of the most delightful companions and one of the most inspiring men I ever knew. Baron Hans von Kaltenborn was not only incredibly articulate, he was a man of boundless energy and kept himself in top physical shape, playing tennis nearly every day. Even in his later years he continued playing doubles, with former women's champion Alice Marble as his partner.

That Hans was quite a showman I didn't realize until one night at an informal banquet when he went out on the ballroom floor and did a Charleston. Then, for an encore he went into a tap dance. This from a tall, gray-haired, dignified commentator who had a reputation for vast knowledge of public affairs; a man of many talents.

In the spring of 1945 General "Hap" Arnold, commander in chief of the U.S. Air Force, whom I had known when he was a young officer, phoned and said, "Lowell, there are many of our news people who don't really know what the war is all about. I'm going to send a big 4-engine plane up to Mitchell Field and I want you to round up as many of your colleagues as you can, take them to Europe, and show them around."

Although I had serious doubts as to whether I could ride herd on those able and exceedingly independent prima donnas, I told him I would give it a try. When we got to Europe, some of the group stayed together for a tour of the battle fronts, and others went their own ways. I was in the latter category. At any rate it all worked out to General Arnold's satisfaction. Actually the war in Europe came to an end while we were still there, and for the surrender we were all at General Eisenhower's headquarters. Then before flying home we saw something of the horrors of the German prison camps.

After one more comment I will turn you over to the author, who has amassed much interesting material about the radio newscasters who in their day were famous from coast to coast.

Ed Murrow was the one you will meet in these pages who in a way bridged the transition from the early to the later postwar period. Our group met him for the first time in a London underground bomb shelter. A few years later he returned to America and added to his responsibilities by becoming a CBS executive, and then head of USIS. Millions can still see him as he appeared on TV with smoke curling up from his ever present cigarette. In one of the last conversations I had with him he said: "Why didn't they tell me?" Actually the *Reader's*

*Digest* had been conducting an anticigarette campaign for several years. Also, when I mentioned his remark to one of the heads of the Sloane Kettering research center the scientist replied: "For years we've been telling people. But they won't listen."

Although tempted to go on and on reminiscing about others who are included in this book, I will make only this final remark. In the early thirties only a few newscasters were on the air. Today there must be more than 10,000 of us. I, who was one of the two who started it all, am now the querulous patriarch with the quavering voice who is only too glad to be among those present and able to salute my colleagues.

LOWELL THOMAS





**Those Radio Commentators!**



# The "Excess Prophets"

THERE was a time when radio news was more than headlines ripped from a wire machine and read by an announcer who couldn't care less whether Paris was in France or Kentucky. There was a time when lots of people looked forward each evening to hearing news and opinions from a favorite commentator, a span of 15 minutes that put an exclamation point on the day!

Alas, that time exists no longer. Most radio news is rip 'n' read, bearing as much relationship to an old-fashioned commentary as a fast-food hamburger does to Sunday dinner at grandma's. Television news, with its own fast-paced rhythms, comes no closer to radio news of the thirties and forties, except for the network commentaries. All this is not to say that radio news used to be that wonderful. The commentators could be biased, corny, and irrelevant. They could also make you learn, think, and even gulp. It depended on who your favorite was and on what night you listened. Maybe "the good old days" seem so good because modern radio news is so awful. "We switch you now to Paris . . ." beats "A report from your Action News reporter . . ." any day.

The golden age of radio spanned two decades. It began around 1929 with the arrival of Amos 'n' Andy. It ended around 1948 with the reign of Uncle Miltie on the tube. In tens of millions of American homes the radio was the centerpiece. Whether in kitchen or front parlor, the Atwater Kent, the Philco console, or some other pridefully dusted set was *watched*, not just listened to. As with television today, everyone had a favorite radio program, the one that just couldn't be missed. For a lot of people, that meant a radio commentator. In a nation limited mostly to local newspapers, radio itself became a kind of national newspaper.

These were troubled times. The commentators brought explanations, sometimes along with delivering the day's news. Depression sat at millions of tables in the thirties; the commentators brought understanding. A New Deal was coming out of Washington, D.C., and then the guns began rumbling beyond both oceans, although World War I was not yet faded from memory. The radio commentators helped to clarify it all, letting others see matters as they saw matters, talking to their fellow

Americans, who digested dinners sometimes bought with relief checks and then, in the forties, paid for not only with cash earned in the war plant but with those damned little red points and blue points torn out of dog-eared ration books. The war came and the war finally went and we won it because we always won wars, but even though we won, it didn't turn out quite like we imagined because this new world was pretty confusing and it was a lucky thing, wasn't it, that our favorite radio commentator was there every evening to help us sort it all out. Americans smiled when commentator Quincy Howe called those in his craft "excess prophets."

In Washington, bills were passed, bills were killed, investigations were launched, and more than once or twice men left government service in despair or disgrace after a radio commentator, often doubling as a newspaper columnist, spoke out. Some officials went to jail and some seemingly died before their time. What else would you expect? Millions of dollars were spent by manufacturers each year in the belief that network radio could influence people to buy products. If radio could push soap, why not ideas? Why not scandal? A study at the University of Wisconsin of the influence of radio commentary on listeners' opinions supported what anyone with one good ear and three grains of common sense would have guessed. A voice amplified by radio had persuasive powers. Why, folks, if a single appeal by Father Coughlin could pile 100,000 telegrams on senators' desks, if "Doctor" John Brinkley, the goat gland man, could nearly get himself elected governor of Kansas by write-in votes on the basis of a three-week broadcast campaign and no political experience or any other support whatsoever, anything was possible. The sky—full of broadcast names—was the limit.

What force any journalist has on the policy decisions of a government is not always clear. Cause-effect relations are generally difficult to prove. Because a reporter wrote story *X* and a government soon after the story appeared followed policy *Y*, does that mean that story *X* led to policy *Y*? Floyd Gibbons' dramatic report of the sinking of the *Laconia* was widely read; shortly thereafter the United States entered upon war with Germany, but it would be presumptuous to say flatly that events would have been different without the story. Before Gibbons wrote about the Russian famine, American relief was being planned, but who could claim validly that the effort might have been less wholehearted if his reports had not been sent? What *can* be said is that dramatic and widely disseminated news reports and commentaries call attention to a condition, make some people care where they did not care before, make the already committed care very much, and mute a few who are opposed. One news report might be a mood creator, a mood enhancer, the last straw, just as another news report may throw a light on a corner which a few persons might wish to keep dark.

Inevitably, questions arise about journalists' influence. For example:

Might an older and wiser Baukhage have been able to prevent the sinking of the *Lusitania* with the loss of 1,198 lives?

If not for that story by Gibbons, would the United States have entered World War I when it did?

Is it remotely possible that World War I might have ended much sooner if the young Raymond Swing, who was sent on a diplomatic mission, had been replaced by the mature man he was when millions of listeners hung on his words?

Would anti-Hitler sentiment have developed so strongly so early in the United States had it not been for Walter Winchell and Dorothy Thompson?

Would support for England have been so great had it not been for Ed Murrow?

Had it not been for Fulton Lewis, Jr., would our Air Force have been less prepared for World War II?

If not for Winchell, would Roosevelt have won a third term?

How much confidence would Americans have had in their future allies, England and Russia, in the dark days of 1940, had it not been for Gabriel Heatter?

Would the Allied invasion of Europe have started later than it did if it were not for Drew Pearson?

Might our national rate of inflation be lower if not for the successful efforts of Fulton Lewis, Jr., to end price controls?

Would Social Security coverage be as broad as it is today without Gabriel Heatter's broadcasts?

If not for Murrow and Drew Pearson, would Senator Joseph McCarthy have remained a force in American political life?

To sum it up, if these journalists had not acted or written or spoken as they did, would the history of our century be the same?

The reader can do no more than guess at the answers to these questions and the dozens more that might be asked in reading the fifteen brief biographies of radio commentators that follow, questions about events in their lives before they began their radio careers or about the thrust of their commentary and its impact.

The first radio news commentary ever was probably delivered by H. V. Kaltenborn on April 14, 1922, over WVP, a station on Bedloe's Island, New York, operated by the Army Signal Corps. His commentary was on a coal strike. A year later he began a weekly series. (Just for the record, the first regular *newscast* was probably a nightly news summary the *Detroit News* began in 1920 over an experimental station. The first daily *network* newscasts were those by Floyd Gibbons in 1930.)

Will Rogers was paid \$1,000 for broadcasting commentary on the 1924 Coolidge-Davis election. Radio microphones made him nervous and he developed his usual case of mike fright, but he managed to get through it.

Commentary on the air built a following after the networks decided to identify the news broadcast by the name of the news reader. Adding a name to a disembodied but distinctive voice created a personality. By 1927, the newspaper listings identified H. V. Kaltenborn, David Lawrence, and Frederick Williams Wile. Within a few years, program titles tacked onto the names told listeners the *kind* of news and expertise they were getting. Wile gave us "The Political Situation." George R.

Holmes tipped in with "The Washington News." Edwin C. Hill offered "The Human Side of the News."

The number of network news commentators rose to 6 in 1931 and about 20 when World War II broke out. Someone estimated that in 1947, 600 or more local and national commentators reported the news and analyzed its significance. This included reporters and correspondents who only occasionally added opinion to bare facts, and also included Kate Smith and Fiorello La Guardia. Atlanta alone had 19 "commentators," the greater New York-New Jersey area, 58.

That estimate of 600-plus commentators includes Phillip Keyne-Gordon, who broadcast from WJW, Cleveland, over Mutual stations from August 1942 to January 1944. Keyne-Gordon ridiculed both the New Deal and Wendell Willkie. He announced that fathers would not be drafted. He told listeners, "We ought to get some things out of this war for us." He called the food subsidy program "the spore from which communism can develop." And so on. Trouble was, Phillip Keyne-Gordon never existed. Five Ohio radiomen joined to create the opinions, the personality, the voice. "It was a lot of fun while it lasted, but the party is over," one of the five sighed when the hoax was discovered.

As television sets pushed radio sets out of the parlors of American homes, the news commentators were pushed out, too. Somehow, the voice did not seem to have quite the impact when a face was attached to it. A few commentators remained on radio, and indeed a few continue today to give their views of the news. Some, like Eric Sevareid, established themselves as commentators in the new medium. But the golden years had passed—if that period so full of dross and iron pyrite may totally be termed golden.

Today in gatherings of journalists, arguments heat up about something that is supposed to be new, called "advocacy journalism." The practitioner of this art has an open, unashamed commitment to a set of social and political beliefs. His reports clothe, even embellish those beliefs, which the reporter shares with us. The old-timers, the traditionalists in the newsroom, express their outrage at these violations of objectivity, that most sacred of journalistic pledges. In reality, the young rebels offer this news-hungry nation nothing new. The grumblings of today's old-timers reach us nearly one-half century late. Radio commentators regularly picked over the day's events to find corroboration for their continually voiced beliefs long before the first hippie invaded a newsroom.

A 1938 survey by the Columbia University School of Journalism of 300 national and local radio commentators reported that 1 in 7 were plainly biased, with Boston the worst city for commentator prejudice.

In 1939, F.D.R. braintruster Raymond Moley complained in a *Newsweek* column that too many reporters were trying to be commentators, which confused listeners who could not sort out fact from opinion. Moley grumbled about "frequent snap judgments, sensational and unjustified deductions and, I regret to say, a good deal of raw propaganda favoring one side or the other in the European struggle."

Yet, taken all in all, radio commentary showed less partiality than did newspaper editorials or newspaper columnists. If we overlook such zealous partisans as Boake Carter, Fulton Lewis, Jr., and Cecil Brown, radio commentary was often rather mild, a dash of catsup compared to the tabasco sauce served up in the newspapers. President Roosevelt and the men he brought into government found in some of these commentators a way to bypass the often hostile and reactionary press lords to seek public support for their programs.

For whatever reason, Americans came to trust radio commentators more than they did the newspapers. The personal presence of a warm and thoughtful voice speaking directly to us really mattered. Newspaper printing just didn't measure up. Sportscaster Red Barber observed that people who weren't around in the twenties when radio exploded upon the scene have no concept of what it meant to those who were around: "Suddenly, with radio there was instant human communication." The present, communications-sated generation cannot know how much was conveyed in the announcer's phrase, "We take *you* now to London" or "We take *you* now to Washington."

What exactly is, or was, a commentator? Definitions tend to blur, because the distinctions between the newscaster and the news analyst and between the news analyst and the news commentator look clearer on paper than they did when applied to Gabriel Heatter or H. V. Kaltenborn or Fulton Lewis, Jr. (let alone Kate Smith), on this or that particular night. By definition, the newscaster simply reads an account of events. The analyst tries to put those events into perspective without offering solutions, taking positions, pointing with pride, or viewing with alarm. In theory, you shouldn't be able to guess the analyst's politics by what he says. With the commentator, anything goes, from a subtle suggestion about the best course of action to the angry demand that you wire your congressman today. A newscaster is regarded simply as a reporter by those who like what he says, but as a propagandist by those who don't. Perhaps a commentator can be defined in terms of the number of people who *don't* like what he says.

Hearing Walter Cronkite's radio commentaries, President Lyndon Johnson once remarked that Cronkite would be the most powerful person in the nation if he said in his television newscasts what he said in his radio commentaries. That may not be true, for Cronkite's considerable influence in television may exist because he does not use it for partisan statements. To a great extent, to use it is to lose it. The more vociferous the commentary, the less influential the commentator. That is one of the lessons of Father Coughlin's career. It is a lesson Edward Murrow seemed to understand instinctively during the London blitz. His attack upon Senator Joseph McCarthy would not have succeeded so well if he had not built a reputation as a temperate, usually objective, analyst. The power lies in the potential. It grows by understatement.

Commentators filled the same need on radio that columnists did in newspapers, offering a personal voice to explain a world that was daily

becoming more depersonalized, complicated, and dangerous. It was comforting to listen to someone who thought the way you did, understood your problems and your feelings, got the inside scoop, and explained it all so that it made sense. Another reason for the increasing numbers of commentators in the thirties and forties was that an agreement in 1933 between networks and press associations limited the number of daily newscasts but placed no limit on commentaries "devoted to a generalization and background of general news situations," so long as the commentators didn't report spot news. And they could be sponsored. The networks quickly decided to change Walter Winchell, Lowell Thomas, Boake Carter, H. V. Kaltenborn, and several others from "news broadcasters" to "commentators." That newspaper publishers swallowed this deal without an audible gulp was a surprise. Someone guessed that maybe the publishers themselves liked to listen to those fellows. However, the main reason for the flowering of radio commentary was that people wanted it. The times were out of joint. Commentary feasts on uncertainty. Normalcy starves it.

How well educated were the radio commentators? A study of twenty-eight popular commentators showed that fifteen were college graduates. Eight claimed to have been explorers and travelers, twelve had been foreign correspondents, one a railroad worker, one a salesman, and one a mapmaker.

From the later twenties to the early thirties, commentaries were usually offered by knowledgeable, well-traveled men like Lowell Thomas, Upton Close, and H. V. Kaltenborn. During the thirties, they were joined by men such as Boake Carter and Fulton Lewis, Jr., who had strong opinions about—and against—the New Deal, which they talked about night after night. The forties saw the popularity of experienced journalists like Edward Murrow and Raymond Gram Swing, as well as commentators who sounded as if they knew much more than they were telling. Walter Winchell and Gabriel Heatter fell into the latter category.

As the New Deal took hold, government became more centralized. People everywhere turned their eyes to Washington, D.C., and their ears to someone who could tell them what was going on. The radio commentator came sooner than the syndicated newspaper columnist and was usually easier to pay attention to. He could report on what had happened that day—what the President did, what the agencies and the officials did, what Congress did—and he could give his opinion of what it meant.

The radio dial carried World War II into the living room (as the channel selector would the Vietnam War) and war brought a measure of censorship to American news media. An Office of War Censorship was created under the command of AP executive news editor Byron Price. It concerned itself with information about planes, troops, fortifications, shipping, weather, and production. Radio stations were particularly cautioned about weather reports which the enemy could use. President Roosevelt also established the Office of War Information. As its head he chose a CBS news commentator of considerable reputation, Elmer Davis.



War also brought a sharper distinction between reporters and news analysts or commentators, as need grew for people with special knowledge. Network news staffs added military and political experts such as Major George Fielding Eliot (military), Colonel Charles Kerwood (aviation), and Paul Schubert (naval affairs). Kaltenborn, Raymond Gram Swing, and Quincy Howe became political specialists. The increasing public demand for news analysis and commentary, reflected in growing ratings, netted sponsors. It didn't hurt that production costs were low and prestige was high in sponsoring a news analyst or a commentator.

But the networks made an effort to keep comment out of commentary. In September 1939, after war broke out in Europe, NBC, CBS, and Mutual issued a joint declaration of news policy: "No news analyst or news broadcaster of any kind is to be allowed to express personal editorial judgment or to select or omit news with the purpose of creating any given effect, and no news analyst . . . is to be allowed to say anything in an effort to influence action or opinion of others one way or the other. . . . His basis for evaluation should, of course, be impersonal, sincere, and honest."

To protect themselves from charges of collusion and antitrust legal action, the networks first cleared the joint declaration with the Federal Communications Commission, which itself in January 1941 issued the so-called Mayflower decision opposing editorializing by broadcasters. (Commentary and editorializing are not the same thing, the former being the expression of an individual's views, the latter being the views of the station itself, meaning its licensee and management.) But the mood of the FCC was plain enough. Matters did not change until 1949, when the FCC totally reversed itself with the Fairness Doctrine, which urged licensees to take editorial stands on public issues.

The National Association of Broadcasters, the business organization of the radio (and now television) industry, added to its own code of ethics: "News shall not be selected for the purpose of furthering or hindering either side of any controversial public issue nor shall it be colored by the opinions or desires of the station or the network management, the editor or others engaged in its preparation, or the person actually delivering it over the air. or, in the case of sponsored news broadcasts, the advertiser. . . . News commentators as well as other newscasters shall be governed by those provisions."

Noble declarations like these were given lip service by those commentators who wanted to preach a point of view and who could get away with it. Mutual was the most lax of the three networks in enforcing its code. NBC News called for war coverage devoid of personal feeling, personal thought, personal opinions, and crystal balls. CBS was the toughest. CBS News boss Paul White declared, "The public interest cannot be served in radio by giving selected news analysts a preferred and one-sided position. . . ." The news analyst's job, said White, "is to marshal the facts on any specific subject and out of his common or special knowledge to present those facts so as to inform his listeners rather than to

persuade them. . . . Ideally, in the case of controversial issues, the audience should be left with no impression as to which side the analyst himself actually favors."

Kaltenborn's reply to the CBS directive was: "No news analyst worth his salt could or would be completely neutral or objective. He shows his editorial bias by every act of selection or rejection from the vast mass of news material placed before him. He often expresses his opinion by the mere matter of shading and emphasis. He selects from a speech, or interview, or public statement the particular sentences or paragraphs that appeal to him. Every exercise of his editorial judgment constitutes an expression of opinion."

Walter Winchell huffed, "Aren't we lucky that Patrick Henry's message didn't have to be reported by the Columbia Broadcasting System?" He added, "The air ain't as free as it used to be. It's subject to the whims of CBS and its highest mucky-mucks." By this time Winchell was so valuable that executives at his own NBC-Blue Network just grinned weakly.

In 1942, thirty-one New York commentators organized themselves under Kaltenborn's leadership into a craft guild, the Association of Radio News Analysts. Although the name they chose pointed to a willingness to go along with the networks on neutrality, most members opposed the policy. One of ARNA's first fights was for the right to offer comment in commentaries. Charter members included Elmer Davis, William Shirer, Waverly Root, John Vandercook, Charles Hodges, Johannes Steel, Raymond Swing, Linton Wells, Quincy Howe, Burnett Hershey, Denis McEvoy, George Fielding Eliot, George Hamilton Combs, Lowell Thomas, and Kaltenborn, organizer and first president. Davis and Swing were elected vice-presidents. Quincy Howe became secretary-treasurer. The list of members contained large holes and small ones, not unlike a Swiss cheese. Several colleagues were excluded from the select company because of doubts about what they were doing and how well they were doing it. The ARNA fought for such causes as Swing's efforts to eliminate the middle commercial, an interruption of the analysis of events to sell the product. On the other hand, some commentators read their own commercials, and did so with enthusiasm. Boake Carter peddled Huskies breakfast cereal and Gabriel Heatter resonantly switched from the war against Germany to "the great war against gingivitis—gingivitis, that creeps in like a saboteur."

Paul White of CBS got into a flap in 1943 with CBS commentator Cecil Brown, who had just returned from a quick national tour during which he interviewed a lot of people. Brown observed that the American people had lost interest in the war. According to White, he called Brown in to chide him for not qualifying the statement with something like: "From information I received in those interviews, I gathered the impression that Americans are losing interest in the war." However, rumors abounded that CBS was putting the screws to Brown, who was losing his sponsors.

Brown responded by resigning. He called a news conference to declare himself a victim of censorship.

Pressures on radio commentators came from within the broadcasting industry, which has always feared to rock the cash-laden boat; from advertisers, who parcel out the cash; from a sometimes clamorous but mostly ineffective public; and from the government, which has the power to bite broadcasters but usually prefers to use its tongue instead of its teeth.

Federal Communications Commission chairman, James L. Fly, growled one day: "I heard a so-called news program last night. Through the months it has been tending more and more to get away from the news of the day to the philosophies of the particular sponsor. . . . Only by careful listening do you discover that he is not giving you news or comment on the world news, but is peddling ideas to you from company headquarters." Commissioner Fly did not identify the offending program, but he wondered aloud if news and commentary should be unsponsored everywhere. He did not take any official position, to the relief of the networks and a few commentators making movie star salaries. The FCC sought no action on the complaint, its preferred practice being to regulate by raising an eyebrow.

By the late forties, the networks were trying to solve the problem of bias in various ways. CBS and NBC continued to try to ban political slanting. Mutual and ABC, which was formed in 1944 from the old NBC-Blue Network, tried to offset bias by balancing commentators on both the right and the left. They did not always try very hard.

Liberals in the forties claimed that conservative commentators were favored. "Sponsors," grumbled commentator Quincy Howe, "snap up the news programs with a conservative slant as they never snapped up the programs with a liberal slant." The president of the CIO Union, which sponsored Leland Stowe's weekly news analysis, said it was the union's desire "to counteract the growing imbalance in the ratio of liberal and conservative commentators on the air." But unions had problems being heard.

NBC-Blue Network president Mark Woods appeared before the FCC in 1943. This was the exchange:

*Question:* Now suppose the A.F. of L. wants . . . to come on with a general program to build up good will for the A.F. of L., would you sell them time?

*Woods:* We should not sell time to them.

*Question:* Suppose General Motors comes along and says "We want to put on a program and we will use Vandercook as a commentator and also that this program is brought to you by the courtesy of General Motors," would you sell time for that?

*Woods:* Yes, we would.

*Question:* Suppose the A.F. of L. came along and said that they wanted to put a program on and wanted to have Vandercook as the commentator too, how would you handle that?

*Woods:* No, we won't sell time to the A.F. of L.

*Question:* . . . You still would not sell the A.F. of L. time for a symphony program?

*Woods:* That is correct, Mr. Chairman.

Under pressure from FCC chairman James Fly, the Blue Network changed its policy.

As it is with politicians and ministers, the radio commentator preached mostly to the converted. Sponsors who would not or could not tell him what to say still could decide whether to sponsor this commentator or that commentator, a subtle and indirect kind of pressure, but pressure nonetheless.

An appraisal by *Variety* of thirty radio reporters, analysts, and commentators in 1945 judged six to be reactionary, five conservative, ten middle-of-the-road, four moderately liberal, none extremely liberal, and five who defied such classification. As an example of what was considered an imbalance to the right, the CIO's Political Action Committee sampled the commentaries of Morgan Beatty over a period of seven weeks and reported that antilabor opinion was quoted more than prolabor opinion in a ratio of 12 to 1. (This committee is regarded by some as an extreme left wing organization. Others think it's fair. Take your pick.)

A 1945 survey asked radio listeners if they preferred straight news or commentary. Straight news led, 46 percent to 37 percent, with 17 percent having no preference. And 33 percent said it was a good idea for commentators to take sides on public issues, while 46 percent said it was a bad idea, and 21 percent had no opinion. To other questions, 43 percent thought the commentator actually expressed his own opinions, while 63 percent thought he *should* do so. Astonishingly, 15 percent of the listeners polled thought that the commentator should express not his own opinions but the sponsor's opinions.

That sponsors had clout was never in question. In 1946, New York newscaster Don Hollenbeck began his early morning news, which followed a singing commercial, by saying, "The atrocity you have just heard is not part of this program." By noon, he was out of a job. Years later he lost another job after criticizing Senator Joseph McCarthy. In 1954, ailing and depressed by attacks from McCarthy supporters, especially the Hearst newspapers, Hollenbeck committed suicide.

On behalf of his fellow commentators, Kaltenborn responded to outside pressures. "Hire the best men you can get for the money you can pay," he advised radio station owners. "Tell them frankly what you expect, what you are trying to do with your station or network. And then give them their heads. If they get out of line, correct them. If they continually violate what you deem to be an essential policy, fire them. But don't pretend that you are going to be able to prevent a commentator worth his salt from expressing his personal opinion."

Kaltenborn's words may have sounded a little hollow to anyone familiar with the criticism heaped upon some of his colleagues: sensationalism, hearsay, petulance, tattling, emotionalism, super-nationalism, American fascism.

Yet for all the criticism, there was even more satisfaction with what the commentators were doing. Sometimes they evoked the best in us and reminded us of what America was really all about, or ought to be about.

Radio also responded to the public hunger for information with such popular programs as "Town Meeting on the Air" and "Information Please." And there was the documentary, which was radio commentary encased in drama. (Television documentary is pale by comparison.)

The end of the war did not diminish public interest in news and commentary. The Russian army was still out there. So was the atomic bomb. Networks even stepped up the amount of news and commentary for a short while. In 1946, no less than sixty reporters, commentators, and analysts were on the network rosters.

A 1945 survey reported 36 percent of the public critical of *local* newscasts. Listeners complained that the news was too brief and lacked detail and that local news was in short supply. This, of course, was the responsibility of radio stations, not the networks. A postwar survey of broadcasters noted that more than 40 percent of the stations across the country had added or planned to add more news shows to their schedules. A 1948 survey showed that Peoria, Ill., residents preferred a local newscaster 3 to 1 over H. V. Kaltenborn and Edward R. Murrow. Like the little girl who had a little curl right in the middle of her forehead, when local radio was good, it was very good, but when it was bad, it was . . .

Local radio stations tended (and still tend) to fall into one of three groups in regard to news. A small group of very good and very popular stations emulated the networks in hiring competent journalists and permitting them to report the news as they saw it. A much larger group of stations kept a tight rein on news budgets and got by with what they thought would avoid complaints to the FCC. A third group used the news departments as vehicles for either sales or, in a very few cases, propaganda. In the matter of sales, some stations ordered the news director to incorporate into newscasts publicity handouts from the sales department and to cover sales promotions as news events. Unethical as this practice was (and is), it did not compare with use of radio stations as an out-and-out tool for extremist political propaganda by the Richards group of stations: WJR, Detroit; WGAR, Cleveland; and KMPC, Los Angeles. These stations were no "coffeepots." Each was a 50,000-watt station in a major city. G. A. (Dick) Richards, who began as a car dealer and became owner of the Detroit Lions, gave Father Coughlin his start over WJR, "The Good Will Station." In innumerable memoranda to the news staff and in staff meetings Richards ordered the news slanted to reflect his political and social views. Henry Wallace was to be called "pig boy" or "tumbleweed." Harry Truman was "pipsqueak." Jews were to be driven out of government. Richards quickly fired any newsman who would not obey. Finally, all three of his licenses came up for FCC hearings. While they were going on, Richards died. With promises to change the news policy, his heirs and other shareholders were permitted to keep the valuable licenses. It was a reminder that the often smudged line between news and commentary does in fact exist and deserves respect.

Radio commentary had grown in the decade of the thirties from a

curiosity to a concatenation of voices with the power to influence political decisions and by the end of World War II to a vital, mature force in our democracy. Five years later, by 1950, its power had waned.

Despite the continued public interest in radio commentary immediately after the war, the commentator's days were numbered, victim to normalcy and television. With world crises diminishing, the American people began to pay more attention to their own backyards. The removal of several liberal commentators in the late forties led to cries that the reactionaries had driven them out, but closer to the truth may have been the American public's weariness with foreign entanglements, plus the fact that the most obvious threat now came from communism, not fascism. You tuned to a conservative for a fire-breathing attack on communism just as you used to tune to a liberal for the most ferocious attacks on the Nazis and Fascists.

As television spread from metropolitan areas to small cities to the countryside, listeners deserted radio and became viewers. Network radio news budgets were cut. Newscasters switched to the new medium. Bright young journalists coming out of college chose television, not radio, for their careers. There were still listeners out there, but they were riding in cars, lying on the beach, ironing clothes, taking a lunch break at the construction site, or just waking up. The day of the family sitting around the big RCA Victor in the parlor had gone the way of the WPA shovel and the sugar ration book. In came the deejay's canned music. Rock 'n' roll in radio station libraries was matched in radio newsrooms by rip 'n' read. The networks and a number of local stations continued (and still continue) to hold out against the trend. Later commentators, notably Paul Harvey and Edward P. Morgan, echoed an older tradition. But prime time was over.

The fifteen biographies comprising the bulk of this book by no means tell the story of radio commentary. That story is too diffuse for such easy telling. Besides, any attempt to be comprehensive, let alone definitive, would stumble against the question: who cares? There were hundreds of commentators, network and local. Each abode his hour or two and went his way, as Omar said of the sultans.

Why these fifteen? At least half of them would be on most lists of important radio commentators during the Golden Age of radio: Kaltenborn, Thomas, Davis, Swing, Murrow, Heatter, Lewis, and Winchell. While no journalist, Father Coughlin was a political commentator with a considerable punch. Baukhage was a veteran of radio commentary. Drew Pearson and Dorothy Thompson brought their reputations as newspaper columnists over to radio commentary, where they added to their distinguished careers. Boake Carter and Upton Close, both colorful and controversial, had their moments in the sun in the midthirties, before most commentators got started. The most colorful figure of all, Floyd Gibbons, had his moments of radio glory even earlier.









## H. V. Kaltenborn

BULLETS and artillery shells whined overhead as the 58-year-old man picked his way carefully from the farmhouse to a nearby haystack. It was an incongruous sight, for the man clearly was no farmer. On this summer's day he wore a dark business suit with a Phi Beta Kappa key strung across his ample stomach. Wire rim spectacles hugged his nose. A steel helmet covered his thinning hair. Across one arm the man held a coil of cable leading back to the house. As he walked to the haystack he played out the cable, at the end of which dangled a microphone.

Where are we? This is 1936. We are in a corner of France which by the accident of a sharp bend in a meandering little river jutted into Spain. The farm sat on a hillside, so when the man reached the haystack he was able to see the battle being waged on three sides of him, his view blocked only by a mortar wall which offered some protection from the bullets. The family living on the farm had evacuated it before the battle began. Inside the farmhouse now, an assistant of the 58-year-old man, a French radio engineer, had wired the other end of the cable to a telephone line, and this line led northeast to the city of Bayonne; from there the man's voice and

the other sounds picked up by the microphone would be transmitted to Bordeaux to Paris to London to Rugby and from there by shortwave to New York and all of America.

The man, H. V. Kaltenborn, was the first radio commentator in the United States. He remained one of America's leading commentators for thirty years, "the dean of radio commentators." The broadcast he was trying to send would be the first in history of a battle in progress. If he could get through, it would be the first time that people sitting in the safety of their homes thousands of miles away, an ocean away from Europe's wars, could hear a war actually happening. It took him 11 hours of trying before he succeeded in reporting the bloody battle for the city of Irun, the first decisive battle of the Spanish civil war. Its capture by the Rebels, supported by Hitler and Mussolini, gave an early hint of the long dark night about to descend upon Europe.

One problem after another beset Kaltenborn as he tried to reach CBS News in New York from his haystack. His transmission lines were shot up twice and had to be repaired under fire. Connections with Paris got fouled up. When everything else was ready, an engineer in Bordeaux who was supposed to relay the transmission to Paris decided to step out for an aperitif. Kaltenborn recalled: "When I finally got communications through to New York and told them I could give them a description of a battle in progress with the actual sounds of rifle and artillery fire, I received back this answer: 'Stand by. Too many commercial programs just now. Will call you later.'" New York eventually did give Kaltenborn the go-ahead. By this time it was 9 p.m., local time. Rifle and machine gun fire continued through the darkness, their sputter a counterpoint to Kaltenborn's calm and familiar voice for the next 15 minutes telling Americans listening in the United States in the afternoon about this battle.

Over the years, many important people would lionize H. V. Kaltenborn. Millions respected his intelligence. But he also received gifts of rat poison and a noose. One listener offered him "the curse of the thirteen lice." President Harry Truman, at the crowning moment of his own career, got lots of laughs by mimicking him. Much achievement fills his long—and not unflawed—career.

Hans von Kaltenborn, the personification of the American radio commentator, was born July 9, 1878, in Milwaukee, the son of a rigid, alcoholic former Hessian lieutenant who wanted to be addressed as Baron Kaltenborn, a failure who used to swagger down the street with a gold-tipped cane and, as a contemporary recalled, "pretty near swept people off the street." Hans's mother died after giving birth to him, leaving Rudolph von Kaltenborn with a daughter, Bertha, and the infant Hans. Within two years Rudolph remarried. Soon, two sons and a daughter were added to the family. Young Hans hawked newspapers in downtown Milwaukee. When he was 13 the family moved to the sawmill town of Merrill in north central Wisconsin, where his father scratched out a living selling building materials. As a high school freshman Hans proved to be a so-so student. Geography was one of his worst subjects. After school he

helped his father, repairing broken windows and unloading bricks. At the end of his freshman year, at age 14, Hans dropped out to work full time for his father at \$3 a week. Life at home was not too pleasant. The Baron favored Bertha, his daughter by his first wife, which made his second wife jealous, and there were quarrels. Home comforts were meager. Lighting came from kerosene lamps. Each winter the water pipe leading to a kitchen tap froze, which meant somebody had to pump water from their private well in the backyard. However, the water company always sent a bill anyway, even though the company's water didn't reach the kitchen tap. Hans thought this unfair and wrote a letter to the weekly *Merrill Advocate*. The editor printed it and encouraged Hans to do a little reporting in his spare time. No pay involved. Hans tried it and liked it. After a while he was hired as a reporter for the *Advocate* at \$5 a week. Editor Christian Johnson not only taught him the newspaper business but became an influence in the boy's life. It was here that Hans saw a copy of the *New York Sun* and was first made aware of the great world outside.

Hans grew into a lean, athletic young man, just under six feet tall. He learned juggling and became a keen bicyclist. His pals called him "Spiderlegs." When a city ordinance to get bicycles off the sidewalks was proposed, Hans protested in a newspaper article. He also racked up some "century" runs—100 miles in 10 hours. All the while, encouraged by Johnson, Hans von Kaltenborn read books.

Upon the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, Hans tried to join the army but was too skinny to pass the physical. He went home and forced himself bananas and milk, returned to the weighing scale, and passed. When his volunteer company was formed, the recruits elected their sergeants. Hans, who may have been the youngest and lightest man in the company, was one of four sergeants elected, which meant an extra 20¢ on top of the 52¢ a day privates earned. He picked up a little more money for news dispatches sent to the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Merrill Advocate* about the company, which was comprised of Merrill boys. Bilingual, he also sent reports to the *Lincoln County Anzeiger* in German. Hans served for eight months, mostly in Alabama. (In 1941, when draftees were conscripted for a later war, Kaltenborn would inform his radio audience that "as an ex-drill sergeant I know that it takes pretty close to a year to perfect a man in the routine requirements of military service.")

When his company was discharged, he sold most of his buddies on the idea of going home on the Louisville, Nashville and Evansville Railroad, a sales effort netting Hans a railroad pass. He made his own way home via Montgomery, Mobile, Pensacola, and New Orleans, where he boarded a Mississippi packet boat for the long trip north. Upon arrival he was promoted to city editor of the *Advocate*, but he grew restless, his appetite for distant places having been whetted. He quit his newspaper job to work in a logging camp during the winter that ushered in a new century. In the spring of 1900 he returned to Merrill to take a job in a paint and oil store, but that lasted only a few months. The appetite was unslaked. This time he was off to France! He wanted to see the Paris Ex-

position being reported in the papers and to bicycle from there to Germany to visit some of his well-placed relatives, for he was still a baron's son. Editor Johnson, using his best linen writing paper, authorized him as a foreign correspondent for the *Merrill Advocate*. He told Hans the newspaper would print his dispatches for \$1 each. Hans, who already spoke German, began to learn French. He was 22, ready to taste the world. Taking his bicycle, he secured a railroad pass to get to New York. Of all the cities he would visit in his lifetime, New York would be his favorite, although his financial state during that first visit meant a hotel for 10¢ a night and sometimes, instead of lunch, two or three bananas for a penny. Recalling the old saloons with their free lunch counters, Kaltenborn wrote, "I became skilled in the art of patronizing the free lunch without patronizing the bar. My entrance through the swinging doors had to be carefully timed to coincide with occasions when the saloon was well filled and the proprietor busy filling up the schooners of beer."

After visiting Coney Island, he sent a news report back to the *Advocate*, observing, "Throughout the afternoon the sands along the beach are lined with scantily attired men and women who lounge about in various unconventional attitudes and get tanned OTHER PLACES besides their faces."

Kaltenborn worked his way to Europe on a cattle boat, docking at Liverpool. By bicycle he traveled to London, then went on to Paris and the World's Fair of 1900. "The World's Fair had apparently attracted an enormous number of 'ladies of the evening,' " he recalled. "I had many occasions to improve my French explaining that I was not a rich American, and therefore hardly worthy of their solicitations."

He went on to Germany, from where his parents had emigrated. Kaltenborn's fluent German had almost no trace of an American accent. Staying with socially conscious relations in Berlin, he was addressed as Baron von Kaltenborn, though things became a bit strained when he decided to munch a hot dog while strolling down a boulevard with one of his stiff-lipped cousins.

"Spiderlegs" Kaltenborn bicycled back to Paris almost broke. To support himself he sold stereoscopes on commission. These optical devices, which transformed two side-by-side photographs into a three-dimensional view, proved a popular enough novelty that Hans could extend his journey.

"It took me a little time to get up enough courage to make my first call," he recalled in his book, *Fifty Fabulous Years*. "In selecting a prospective customer, I chose badly. He was a busy little Frenchman behind the counter of a tobacco shop. Ignoring the cold light in his eye, I launched into my memorized sales talk about 'la petite invention Americaine.' He soon made it clear to me even with my limited knowledge of French that he definitely was not interested in 'la petite invention.' Nevertheless, I persisted. But, when he said something about *gendarmes* and came out from behind the counter, I left!"

Hans managed to sell three stereoscopes that day. In the ensuing

months the young American managed to peddle enough stereoscopes and pictures to French men and women to survive and to develop a working knowledge of their language. Often his customers were amused at getting a sales pitch from an American, since everyone knew that all Americans were millionaires. N'est-ce pas?

Meanwhile, he continued to send dispatches to the *Advocate*. One of them, commenting about the increasing number of horseless carriages he saw in European cities, complained:

They are a nuisance, these automobiles in more ways than one, they are always run at an awful rate of speed, their gasoline motors leave behind a disagreeable odor, they stir up an awful dust, they make more noise than a steam engine and seem to take so much of the romance away from the environments in which they are found.

By the time Kaltenborn returned home, at age 24, his father had died. Now the eldest son in a fatherless family, he prepared seriously for a journalistic career. He bought a typewriter, learned shorthand, and sought a job on a major newspaper. A poem he had written about the Brooklyn Bridge helped to land him a job at the Brooklyn *Eagle*, where he rose slowly and steadily from stock table clerk to city hall reporter. But Kaltenborn was sensitive to his lack of education and in 1905, taking leave from the *Eagle*, he entered Harvard for one year as a special student in economics and politics. He wrote articles as the Harvard stringer for the *Eagle*, the *New York Post*, and the *Boston Transcript* to pay for this first formal education since his freshman high school year. He was 27 years old. His first year brought him one A, four Bs and one C, plus a desire for more education. He enrolled as a regular student. His grades improved and in his senior year he won a \$250 scholarship to help him scratch along. One summer a professor took Kaltenborn to Berlin as his secretary. Hans also developed an interest in public speaking and debate. Trying out for one of two Boylston Prizes for elocution, worth \$60, Kaltenborn's memory went blank on stage. He kept cool, however, and extemporized. He was convinced he had lost until a copy of the *Crimson*, slipped under his door the next morning, informed him he had won one of the prizes. During his undergraduate years at Harvard, Kaltenborn ran with the cross-country team, helped to organize the Harvard Dramatic Club, and served as its first manager. He finally managed to pass his algebra entrance exam one week before graduation, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, spoke before civic groups in the Boston area, and, at commencement, read a paper on journalism. He received his B.A. in political science, *cum laude*, in 1909. Among his undergraduate contemporaries were Heywood Brown, Walter Lippmann, future Hitler aide Ernst Hanfstaengel, and the future Communist, John Reed. As editor of the *Harvard Illustrated Magazine*, Kaltenborn once rejected an article on woman suffrage submitted by Lippmann. Lippmann told Kaltenborn he was a pretty poor editor not to realize the importance of that article.

newspaper reporter who would later achieve fame for his humorous writing about Archie and Mehitabel. One summer day Kaltenborn and Marquis were swimming off a Long Island beach. Wearing a borrowed pair of trunks, Marquis got into trouble when the trunks slipped down and tangled around his legs. He began thrashing about and calling for help. At first Kaltenborn thought he was joking. When he realized Marquis was really in trouble, the athletic Kaltenborn pulled him ashore. Marquis had swallowed a lot of water, but recovered to declaim on the humiliation of nearly being drowned by a pair of swimming trunks. Probably thanks to Kaltenborn, we can enjoy reading the adventures of the cockroach who types and the cat who was once Cleopatra.

The year 1921 saw his promotion to associate editor and heard something too. The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce held what they called a special radio night to demonstrate the new device. Kaltenborn, an enthusiast who had bought a crystal set, was a guest speaker. After his regular speech, he was whisked to Newark, New Jersey, where Westinghouse had built an experimental station, WJZ. The banquet guests in Brooklyn heard Kaltenborn's voice over a loudspeaker, the same voice they had heard in person earlier in the evening. Quite a stunt. To cap it, he returned to the banquet room and was greeted by thunderous applause.

A year went by before he got another chance to broadcast, this time over WVP, an Army Signal Corps station on Bedloe's Island. Listeners heard the first analysis of current news ever broadcast on radio. Kaltenborn examined a coal strike from the points of view of a miner, a mine owner, and an average citizen.

A year later, after a tour to Alaska and another trip to Europe, Kaltenborn began a weekly half-hour commentary for the *Eagle* over WEAJ, a New York station owned by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. He could now be heard a thousand miles away on topics both serious and light, including reading poetry occasionally. Reception in those crystal and cat's whisker days was not always good. One listener wrote that he heard Kaltenborn more clearly by using his own body as part of the radio. With one hand on the antenna post and the other manipulating the dials, he could bring Kaltenborn's voice in clearly, he wrote.

Over WEAJ Kaltenborn criticized a decision by a judge who was about to preside at an important AT & T rates case. The company warned him to be careful. Next, he criticized a strike which he felt was against the public interest. AT & T's vice-president for labor relations demanded that Kaltenborn be fired. Instead, he was more forcefully told to be careful. Next, the brash commentator criticized Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes for curtly rejecting the Soviet Union's request for diplomatic recognition. Kaltenborn thought Hughes could at the least have been more courteous, and that the United States could recognize the Communist government without approving its goals or methods. When the Hughes broadcast was aired, the listeners included Hughes and a group of

months the young American managed to peddle enough stereoscopes and pictures to French men and women to survive and to develop a working knowledge of their language. Often his customers were amused at getting a sales pitch from an American, since everyone knew that all Americans were millionaires. *N'est-ce pas?*

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They are a nuisance, these automobiles in more ways than one, they are always run at an awful rate of speed, their gasoline motors leave behind a disagreeable odor, they stir up an awful dust, they make more noise than a steam engine and seem to take so much of the romance away from the environments in which they are found.

By the time Kaltenborn returned home, at age 24, his father had died. Now the eldest son in a fatherless family, he prepared seriously for a journalistic career. He bought a typewriter, learned shorthand, and sought a job on a major newspaper. A poem he had written about the Brooklyn Bridge helped to land him a job at the Brooklyn *Eagle*, where he rose slowly and steadily from stock table clerk to city hall reporter. But Kaltenborn was sensitive to his lack of education and in 1905, taking leave from the *Eagle*, he entered Harvard for one year as a special student in economics and politics. He wrote articles as the Harvard stringer for the *Eagle*, the *New York Post*, and the *Boston Transcript* to pay for this first formal education since his freshman high school year. He was 27 years old. His first year brought him one A, four Bs and one C, plus a desire for more education. He enrolled as a regular student. His grades improved and in his senior year he won a \$250 scholarship to help him scratch along. One summer a professor took Kaltenborn to Berlin as his secretary. Hans also developed an interest in public speaking and debate. Trying out for one of two Boylston Prizes for elocution, worth \$60, Kaltenborn's memory went blank on stage. He kept cool, however, and extemporized. He was convinced he had lost until a copy of the *Crimson*, slipped under his door the next morning, informed him he had won one of the prizes. During his undergraduate years at Harvard, Kaltenborn ran with the cross-country team, helped to organize the Harvard Dramatic Club, and served as its first manager. He finally managed to pass his algebra entrance exam one week before graduation, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, spoke before civic groups in the Boston area, and, at commencement, read a paper on journalism. He received his B.A. in political science, *cum laude*, in 1909. Among his undergraduate contemporaries were Heywood Brown, Walter Lippmann, future Hitler aide Ernst Hanfstaengel, and the future Communist, John Reed. As editor of the *Harvard Illustrated Magazine*, Kaltenborn once rejected an article on woman suffrage submitted by Lippmann. Lippmann told Kaltenborn he was a pretty poor editor not to realize the importance of that article.

John Jacob Astor applied to Harvard for a tutor for his son, Vincent, who wanted to get into the university. Kaltenborn was recommended, and he joined the family for a trip to Europe. Meanwhile, he had fallen in love. On that summer trip to Europe as a Harvard professor's secretary, Hans von Kaltenborn, the son of a Hessian baron, had been introduced to a young German baroness, Olga von Nordenflycht. By the time he went to work for Astor she was living in Rio de Janeiro, where her father was German consul general. He cabled a proposal of marriage, then without waiting for her reply, headed for Rio. Astor, who was ready to sail for the West Indies, offered to take Kaltenborn along. A hurricane drove the yacht to safe anchorage in San Juan, Puerto Rico, but there was no way to get a message out. A report was published in the United States that the Astor yacht had been lost at sea and the *Eagle* ran what amounted to an obituary on Kaltenborn. Kaltenborn was finally able to make his way to Rio. Meanwhile, Olga had cabled her acceptance of his marriage proposal. Kaltenborn did not know this when he was met in Rio by her father. Kaltenborn recounted what followed:

His reserved attitude made me wonder whether his daughter had even told him about my marriage proposal and he gave me no hint on how matters stood. He said that his wife and daughter were at the German Consulate and asked me to accompany him there.

That walk over to the Consulate was a harrowing experience. The Baron gave absolutely no indication whether I would ever become his son-in-law. In turn, I was noncommittal since I had no idea how much or how little he knew about my intentions. As we walked along we discussed the beauties of Rio de Janeiro and he pointed out the various points of interest. We never deviated from this casual conversation and entered the German Consulate fifteen minutes later. There in the office were Olga and her mother. Our greetings were friendly but formal. Nobody made a decisive move. Finally Olga's mother could stand it no longer.

"Aren't you going to kiss the poor girl?"

Noting my hesitation she asked in amazement, "For heaven's sake, didn't you get the cable with Olga's answer?"

I shook my head—"What did it say?"

"She said 'yes,' " they all shouted together.

The marriage plans were made and Hans von Kaltenborn returned to his job in Brooklyn; later he went to Berlin for his wedding. After a honeymoon in Switzerland and Italy, the couple settled in Brooklyn—but not for long. Kaltenborn's desire to try new things was happily matched by the *Eagle's* willingness to let him do so. He spent several months in Washington, D.C., as its correspondent. When the former correspondent came back, Kaltenborn returned to Brooklyn as the drama editor. In 1914 he was reassigned to Paris to reorganize the *Eagle* bureau there on the eve of war. Back in Brooklyn a few months later, Kaltenborn became the *Eagle's* war editor.



Instead of merely relying on wire service news, Kaltenborn kept a map of the war zone, using pins to mark the positions. This enabled him to discount claims of magnificent advances. "Both sides lied by suppressing essential parts of the truth and there was little to choose between them," he noted. "Both sides were most truthful when they were winning and did most of the lying when they were losing." The map convinced him that the armistice widely reported on November 7, 1918, was false. He was sure that the German negotiators could not have traveled from the negotiating site to their headquarters and back in the time claimed by United Press. With reports of armistice all around, the *Eagle* held, despite a public clamor outside to admit the "truth." And Kaltenborn was right.

He also began a weekly series of "Talks on Current Topics" in the *Eagle* building auditorium. In those days before radio or television, Kaltenborn could fill the auditorium to overflowing as he explained the meaning of the latest dispatches from Europe. Most of his listeners were women because the talks were given on Tuesday mornings. About 1,600 people came to the first talk.

During the early years of World War I, Kaltenborn favored American neutrality. He held a high regard for German culture and felt that British provocation incited the march to war, yet he was dismayed by Germany's policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. He soon began denouncing the Kaiser and calling for a strong defense program. Anti-German sentiment was in the air, including the air in Brooklyn, and some of it was directed against the *Eagle's* war editor, that fellow with the Hun name. Under pressure from anti-German jingoists, the *Eagle* assigned a strongly pro-Allies copyreader to work with him. And Hans von Kaltenborn decided that he would make his name sound less German, or at least less Prussian. Henceforth he would be simply H. V. Kaltenborn.

In 1918, now 40 years old, he was promoted to assistant managing editor. A daughter, Anais, and a son, Rolf, had been born to the Kaltenborns. H. V. Kaltenborn was an established, respected, successful journalist. Groups called upon him to speak about the world situation, and he developed a style described as "a machine gun sputter." He did not use a prepared text. Under *Eagle* sponsorship, Kaltenborn began to lead tours to places of interest in the United States and abroad. During one tour of the West, Kaltenborn raised a collection from members of the tour enabling Indians on the Blackfoot Reservation near Glacier Park to complete a road linking them to an Indian reservation in Canada. For this the Indians held a ceremony making Kaltenborn a member of the tribe, naming him Mountain Chief. Kaltenborn claimed that an Indian chief presiding at the ceremony was Two Guns White Calf, whose head is on the buffalo nickel.

With all of this activity, Kaltenborn also managed to find the time to teach an evening journalism course to City College (N.Y.) students meeting in a Brooklyn high school.

He and his wife also plunged into the literary world of Greenwich Village. Kaltenborn developed a close friendship with Don Marquis, a

newspaper reporter who would later achieve fame for his humorous writing about Archie and Mehitabel. One summer day Kaltenborn and Marquis were swimming off a Long Island beach. Wearing a borrowed pair of trunks, Marquis got into trouble when the trunks slipped down and tangled around his legs. He began thrashing about and calling for help. At first Kaltenborn thought he was joking. When he realized Marquis was really in trouble, the athletic Kaltenborn pulled him ashore. Marquis had swallowed a lot of water, but recovered to declaim on the humiliation of nearly being drowned by a pair of swimming trunks. Probably thanks to Kaltenborn, we can enjoy reading the adventures of the cockroach who types and the cat who was once Cleopatra.

The year 1921 saw his promotion to associate editor and heard something too. The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce held what they called a special radio night to demonstrate the new device. Kaltenborn, an enthusiast who had bought a crystal set, was a guest speaker. After his regular speech, he was whisked to Newark, New Jersey, where Westinghouse had built an experimental station, WJZ. The banquet guests in Brooklyn heard Kaltenborn's voice over a loudspeaker, the same voice they had heard in person earlier in the evening. Quite a stunt. To cap it, he returned to the banquet room and was greeted by thunderous applause.

A year went by before he got another chance to broadcast, this time over WVP, an Army Signal Corps station on Bedloe's Island. Listeners heard the first analysis of current news ever broadcast on radio. Kaltenborn examined a coal strike from the points of view of a miner, a mine owner, and an average citizen.

A year later, after a tour to Alaska and another trip to Europe, Kaltenborn began a weekly half-hour commentary for the *Eagle* over WEA, a New York station owned by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. He could now be heard a thousand miles away on topics both serious and light, including reading poetry occasionally. Reception in those crystal and cat's whisker days was not always good. One listener wrote that he heard Kaltenborn more clearly by using his own body as part of the radio. With one hand on the antenna post and the other manipulating the dials, he could bring Kaltenborn's voice in clearly, he wrote.

Over WEA Kaltenborn criticized a decision by a judge who was about to preside at an important AT & T rates case. The company warned him to be careful. Next, he criticized a strike which he felt was against the public interest. AT & T's vice-president for labor relations demanded that Kaltenborn be fired. Instead, he was more forcefully told to be careful. Next, the brash commentator criticized Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes for curtly rejecting the Soviet Union's request for diplomatic recognition. Kaltenborn thought Hughes could at the least have been more courteous, and that the United States could recognize the Communist government without approving its goals or methods. When the Hughes broadcast was aired, the listeners included Hughes and a group of

distinguished guests at the Hughes home in Washington, D.C. Embarrassed and furious, the secretary of state, who had been the Republican candidate for president in 1916, called the president of AT & T and demanded that Kaltenborn be shut up. This time, H. V. Kaltenborn was notified that he must cease all editorial commentary in his news analyses or his talks would be discontinued. Kaltenborn refused and the telephone company notified the *Eagle* that the program was cancelled. The *Eagle* replied that it would have to publish the reason on its front page. AT & T backed down until Kaltenborn's contract expired, although it cut the feed to Washington. WEAF also decided to charge for its time at the rate of \$10 a minute. Finally the *Eagle* announced it would discontinue the Kaltenborn talks, prompting anguished letters from far and near. Actually, the *Eagle* was willing to pay the higher rate, but WEAF did not want Kaltenborn at any price.

After Kaltenborn left WEAF he led another tour around the country and created another "first," becoming the first radio lecturer to go from station to station like a Chatauqua circuit speaker. He gave talks over stations in Kansas City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, and Chicago. He returned to another commentary series over a Long Island station, followed by a tour through Europe and the Middle East, followed by still another series, this time over a station that would not be intimidated by pressure, New York's WOR, Mondays at 8 p.m. The program became known as "The Kaltenborn Digest" and Kaltenborn was called "The Wandering Voice of Radio." Always the showman, Kaltenborn may have given himself the title. He also produced a radio double-header "first," the first audience participation show and the first quiz show, when he moderated a current events bee over New York's WJZ. Fifteen high school student competitors were summoned to the mike by Kaltenborn to introduce themselves. The program was a small hit.

He continued to travel and to absorb cultures, places, politics. His mind was a sponge, and the whole world was there to be soaked up, the world that his Harvard philosophy professor, William James, had called a "blooming, buzzing confusion." In Geneva he witnessed the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, which outlawed war. Another tour took Kaltenborn to the Philippines, Japan, China, Manchuria, and Korea. In Canton, China, Kaltenborn was briefly captured by a band hunting down Communists. To keep their fingers away from the triggers of their guns, he juggled three oranges he had in his pocket, balanced a straw on his nose, and balanced a stick on his big toe until his captors were roaring with laughter and put down their guns. Someone soon arrived with identification, and Kaltenborn continued his tour of the Far East. Then to the Scandinavian countries, Germany, Russia, and Switzerland. A fellow passenger on one voyage was Andrew Volstead, author of the prohibition law. So persuasive was Kaltenborn that he got Volstead to taste a particularly fine wine, but only a thimbleful.

When he was not traveling he was commenting on world affairs. In 1929 he was networked over nineteen CBS stations, first for the Cunard

White Star Lines and then, to his embarrassment, for a business firm that went bankrupt in the middle of the sponsorship. This experience led him to reevaluate his career. When the *Eagle* asked him to take a pay cut in 1930, he decided to quit the newspaper business and go into radio full time. CBS hired him at \$100 a week. Kaltenborn was 52.

The next year saw publication of his first book, *We Look at the World*, which combined observations about travel and politics. Its tone was upbeat and it was well received.

On a trip to Europe in 1932 Kaltenborn interviewed Adolf Hitler, who was reaching for power but had not quite secured it. Unlike Dorothy Thompson, who interviewed Hitler about the same time and found him to be insignificant, H. V. Kaltenborn was taken in by Adolf Hitler's "simple, winning sincerity." Both commentators would regret their early judgments. Said Kaltenborn, "He is far more capable than people abroad give him credit for. . . . It's a mistake to think that simply because a man wears a moustache he has no brains."

Hitler was "a man dominated by ideas, and not by the desire for action or the will to power." Added Kaltenborn, "He lacks the power of decisive action." More perceptively, Kaltenborn noted, "His total lack of humor, the tenseness of his speech, his self-centered absorption in his own ideas and a certain sense of melancholy, make one feel that there is a man destined by fate to fill a tragic hour. He suggests failure rather than success." Kaltenborn also said: "Hitler's mind is resourceful, but not flexible. Its operations are not under complete control. For some minutes his statements may be logical, then suddenly he runs off on a tangent and gets away from the matter in hand. He speaks with such force and torrential speed that it is difficult for an interviewer to interject questions. Sometimes his logic is hard to follow." Kaltenborn also predicted that an upcoming Reichstag election would not give Hitler the chance to establish his Third Reich. In fact, the election gave the Nazis and their allies more than half the seats. Hitler had his Third Reich.

The Kaltenborns and their two children visited Germany during the summer of 1933, after Hitler became chancellor. One day, while they were watching a column of marching storm troopers, a German youth slapped young Rolf in the face for failing to salute the passing swastika. Kaltenborn grabbed the youth and marched him up the street looking for a policeman. A storm trooper came up and defended the youth. A crowd gathered. When Kaltenborn showed his American passport, the crowd turned nasty. In self-protection, Kaltenborn freed the youth. Later, the Nazi government sent Kaltenborn an official apology, which he accepted, but the incident made the American newspapers and there was a general feeling that Kaltenborn was strongly anti-Nazi. At that time he was not, nor was he pro-Nazi. He was, however, sympathetic to Germany's desire to improve itself and he sympathized with Hitler's demand for the return of German colonies. "The marching and parade spirit in Germany means nothing," he said. By 1935 he had become somewhat aware of the plight of German Jews and in 1938 commented on the "stench" caused by the "Nazi Jew baiters."

On a later trip to Germany in August 1939, one month before Germany invaded Poland, the Gestapo met Kaltenborn at the Berlin airport and forced him to take the next plane to London, even bumping someone to get him a seat. They no longer wanted him on German soil.

Kaltenborn's love of the German people and German culture still fogged his observations. He could not believe that the German populace would continue to accept such a leader as Adolf Hitler. As late as 1939, after a resurgent Germany had swallowed Austria and Czechoslovakia and was preparing to make Poland its "last territorial demand," Kaltenborn was encouraged by what he regarded as signs that the German people were preparing to overthrow their fuehrer. He said that underground shortwave reports from Germany "prove that a revolution within the country is to come; that the German people are unhappy about the Jewish pogroms, the steady decline in the standard of living, the lengthening of the working week, the reduction in pay, the increasing loss of personal liberty, and the constant dread of war. The only question is, when will the revolution come?"

Yet, within a week he was saying, "Only superior force can check Adolf Hitler's onward march." Years later Kaltenborn confessed that he had underestimated Hitler's fanatical drive and his magnetic power over the German people.

Kaltenborn managed to interview many of the world leaders of the thirties and forties during his global travels. As a person, Mussolini impressed him more than Hitler did. "He has a keen historic sense, together with a gift for realistic appraisal of the men and events of his own time," Kaltenborn wrote in 1937. "There is a hardboiled self-assurance about Mussolini that makes one feel he has both feet firmly planted on the solid ground of reality. Most other dictators, with the possible exception of Stalin, have a more dreamy quality, an imagination that sometimes runs away with them. Not so Mussolini. To find the real key to Mussolini's character, read Machiavelli's *The Prince*, which he used for his doctor's thesis."

He opposed what Germany and Italy were doing to Spain by their massive support of the rebels under Franco against the elected government. He told his radio audience, "I know of my own observation that German planes, Italian planes, Italian airmen, Portuguese supplies have come into the rebel armies of Spain and that would seem to be on the face of it a definite violation of the non-intervention agreement signed by those powers." Kaltenborn hoped Britain and France would aid the democratic government of Spain and protested when Congress prohibited any aid to Spain: "We have, in effect, given a decisive advantage to the rebels in Spain . . . [who] get all they want from Germany and Italy."

Kaltenborn's broadcasts told Americans a different tale than they got from the Hearst press and some other newspapers which referred to the rebels as "insurgents" or "the Franco regime" and to the loyalists, the actual legitimate government of Spain, as the "reds," giving the impression that Franco represented the real government.

Even when commenting upon strictly national affairs, Kaltenborn

could not always forget what he knew about the world outside. Discussing the Scottsboro trial, in which nine black boys were accused of raping two white girls, Kaltenborn made some observations about the Nazi trials of German Communists accused of setting fire to the Reichstag. Furious, the attorney general of Alabama complained to the Federal Radio Commission (forerunner of the FCC), which reprimanded CBS, which, in turn, flatly ordered Kaltenborn not to do that again.

Meanwhile, CBS was shifting his program around its nighttime schedule whenever a sponsor came along for another program. Un-sponsored, Kaltenborn had to accept what the CBS brass handed out. In 1935 his commentaries were heard on Friday evenings in a series called "Kaltenborn Edits the News," opening with this handsome announcement:

What news means is even more important than the news itself. H. V. Kaltenborn, editor, author, dean of radio commentators, tells you what's back of the headlines. Throughout his brilliant newspaper and radio career, he has had first hand contact with the outstanding men and events of our time. You hear the voice of authority when *Kaltenborn Edits the News*.

In a career that spanned the history of radio from its commercial beginnings to its collapse under the video onslaught, Kaltenborn is best known for that live battlefield broadcast in 1936, the twenty days of commentary in 1938, plus Harry Truman's imitation of him.

The summer of 1936 saw him covering the Spanish civil war, un-sponsored and paying his own way, which cost him more than his CBS salary of \$100 per week. Kaltenborn's voice was transmitted across the Atlantic to the CBS network audience. He went to the village of Hendaye, France, where France, Spain, and the Atlantic Ocean converge. From the roof of a hotel he could see across the frontier to a battle between the Loyalists and the Rebels. He broadcast again from a cafe terrace, saying, "We who report the battle sit in plain view of both forces on the terrace of a little village cafe some 100 yards across the valley from the combatants. It is so real and so fantastic that it seems like a battle set up for the moving pictures." Kaltenborn and a French engineer accompanying him wanted to get closer to the fighting, hoping to pick up the sounds of gunfire. They found that abandoned farm on French soil, on a hill protruding into Spain, where they could observe a furious battle being waged for the Spanish harbor city of Irun. A French patrol plane droned overhead, but both sides carefully respected the neutrality of French soil. On the evening of September 3, H. V. Kaltenborn transmitted the world's first broadcast of a battle:

(Sound of machine guns) Those are the isolated shots which are being exchanged by the front line sentinels on both sides of this Civil War. It is part of the battle of Irun.

(Sound of dog barking) Directly in front of me as I look through the dark of this midsummer night is a bright line of fire

rising from the most important single factory in the city of Irun. Late this afternoon, we watched a Rebel airplane circling overhead and dropping bombs. One struck directly into the center of the match factory which began to burn and which has since been blazing brightly so that the evening sky is lit up for a great distance all around. To the left, along the road that leads away from the city of Irun, the road over which the Government forces have been maintaining their communications, I see two flaming automobiles, both struck by some sort of fire that set them alight. They have been taken off to one side of the road where they are now blazing away . . .

We happen to be straight in the line of fire. Fortunately for us, the bullets are all going high. Twice this afternoon while we were waiting for an opportunity to link up with New York, our wires were cut. And now finally we have put the radio machinery, the modulating devices and so on, inside of a house and I'm standing around one corner of the house with the microphone in the open but with a good thick mortar wall between me and the bullets that are constantly whizzing past. We can't understand why it is that the Rebels have arranged their fire in such a way that most of their bullets seem to go wild and pass over this farm and reach as far as the city and the streets of Hendaye. We have been cut off all day. While I have been talking we have just had word that perhaps if the fire continues to be quieted down, someone can come and call for us after this talk is done; but our endeavor to get away from here in the course of the day has been entirely in vain, because the Hendaye police declared that no one would be permitted to go out on the streets on account of this hail of bullets. They cleared all the streets of people, after several were killed and a number of others injured.

(Sound of firing)

The broadcast won him an award and an increased reputation but still no sponsor and, therefore, no daily news program. Back in New York Kaltenborn wrote a second book, *Kaltenborn Edits the News*, and helped to produce a new monthly magazine, the *Commentator*, which featured articles by radio commentators and others who had made their mark. CBS switched his time period to 10:45 p.m. Sundays. He was still on sustaining time. When Boake Carter, sponsored by Philco, took a vacation, Kaltenborn substituted for him. He ended his final vacation broadcast by saying, "I hope that Boake Carter enjoyed his vacation as much as I have enjoyed substituting for him, and I've enjoyed doing it for Philco because Philco makes a good radio. I know that because I own one." Carter regularly gave the commercials, so it was not unusual to throw in that plug. Later, when General Mills sponsored his commentaries for a thirteen-week contract, Kaltenborn was required to read a middle commercial. He insisted on writing it himself and softened the sell so that it was more an institutional advertisement than an effort to sell a product. Kaltenborn developed a reputation as a commentator who disliked reading commercials.

Boake Carter could be referred to on the air as H. V. Kaltenborn's "good friend and colleague," but it is doubtful that anything beyond cordiality existed between the two CBS commentators. Certainly Kaltenborn had little use for Carter's avowed friend, Father Charles E. Coughlin. In one broadcast, Kaltenborn dripped acid: "Our good friend, Father Coughlin, went back on the air today and he said communism is sweeping the auto industry. Well, that's the kind of sensational nonsense for which the good father is notorious. It's an unhappy effort on the part of a discredited demagogue to get back into the headlines."

He returned from another European trip in the summer of 1937 to find even his 10:45 p.m. Sunday time taken from him. Instead, CBS added Kaltenborn to its roster of analysts on a Sunday half-hour program called "Headlines and Bylines." Kaltenborn averaged about 10 minutes a week on the program, plus other work as a staff commentator.

He was one of the fastest speakers on the staff. Taking into account the fact that he used no script except a batch of cards filled with notes, quotes, and figures, Kaltenborn spoke at an astonishing rate of speed. After a slow and pleasant "Good evening," he was clocked at 150 words per minute for the first 10 minutes of a half-hour commentary, then rising to 175 words, with gusts of 200 words per minute toward his conclusion. He ended with a forceful "Good night." His enunciation was quite precise, thanks to self-discipline during the early years of radio when sloppy speech would not transmit clearly through poor microphones and equally poor radios. For a while in his early WEAf days, he even had to use a neck clamp to keep him in front of the mike and fourteen inches away. Kaltenborn's voice was a victory over static. However, not all listeners liked it, for it was somewhat artificial. He pronounced "acreage" as AKE-ree-idge. "Russia" came out RUSH-she-uh. "Iron" was I-run. Listeners grew accustomed to hearing words and phrases he used again and again: "happy," "unhappy," "of course," "obviously," "one wonders," "I am convinced," "after all," "you remember," "alas," "eye-to-eye," "I venture to predict," "wait a minute," and "maybe."

In Europe another crisis was bubbling up in 1938, this one hotter than the Anschluss or any of the other crises of the past few years. The fuhrer was demanding that Czechoslovakia cede the largely German-speaking Sudetenland. In effect, Czechoslovakia was asked to dismember itself. Understandably, the Czechs refused and bravely prepared for war. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, anxious to keep peace at all costs, offered to go to Germany to negotiate the matter personally with Herr Hitler. From Edward R. Murrow and the staff of correspondents he had assembled in European capitals came frequent reports of moves in a diplomatic situation that threatened to send Europe into another multination war. These reports arriving at CBS in New York along with news from the wire services needed to be put in perspective for a network audience beginning to pay serious attention to events across the Atlantic. The news commentator selected to provide that perspective was H. V.



Kaltenborn. For twenty days of the Munich crisis, he hardly left CBS Studio 9. He slept near the microphone on an old army cot which a custodian had dug up along with an old army blanket for cover. News director Paul White would wake him with wire service bulletins. "A flash, Hans," White would say, punching a special button that connected Studio 9 with all 115 stations of the CBS network, interrupting different regional feeds for different parts of the country. Kaltenborn made 102 broadcasts, certainly a record of sorts for twenty days. All were impromptu, as he intermingled the latest wire service news, reports from CBS correspondents, and speeches by European leaders with his seemingly bottomless fund of knowledge of European affairs. Sponsored programs were cancelled left and right to bring reports in from Europe and to give H. V. Kaltenborn the scope to interpret the news.

A lengthy program interruption for overseas correspondent pickups and a Kaltenborn analysis would be followed by an announcer saying something like: "We should like to express our appreciation again at this time to the makers of Oxydol, sponsors of 'The Goldbergs'; the makers of Ivory Soap, sponsors of 'Life Can Be Beautiful'; the makers of Chipso, sponsors of 'The Road of Life'; and the makers of Crisco, sponsors of 'This Day Is Ours.' "

A *Time* reporter peeked into Studio 9, then filed a report saying:

As Hitler's Berlin speech was relayed through CBS's Studio 9 last week, a man who looks like a prosperous professor sat at a desk, listening through earphones. Before the hysterical roar at the end of the speech died away, he began to talk into a microphone with clipped, slightly pompous inflections, using facial expressions and gestures as if he were addressing a visible audience. Without pause Hans von Kaltenborn has translated and distilled a 73 minute speech, and for 15 minutes proceeded extempore to explain its significance and predict (correctly) its consequences. This incident and many another like it led even rival networks to pay tribute to "H. V." Kaltenborn last week. That he offered better comment on the crisis than anyone else was because he also offered a better combination of talents.

Clearly, here was a man suited to this time and place. It was Kaltenborn's finest hour. Portable radios were just coming on the market. Many were sold during that September 1938. People in offices and on city streets huddled around them to listen when Kaltenborn came on.

Kaltenborn later recalled the pressure he worked under:

Every one of these talks was entirely unprepared, being an analysis of the news as it was occurring. The talks were made under a pressure I have not experienced in seventeen years of broadcasting. . . . Night and day through Studio Nine milled engineers and announcers. Even as I talked I was under constant bombardment by fresh news dispatches carried to my desk from the ticker room. I read and digested them as I talked. Despite the crisis, the network still observed split-second timing, even of special programs. I had to watch

the control-room engineer for my cues. Earphones clamped over my head as I broadcast brought me the voice of the speakers abroad whose words I followed with my commentary. At times, while I talked, my attention had to focus on four things at once in addition to the words I was speaking. Between talks there was still no time for rest. Four tickers just outside Studio Nine ground out cable dispatches on continuous sheets, hundreds of feet of them every hour, miles of them by the time the crisis was well advanced. Every word had to be reviewed in order to get the complete picture in my mind.

Fluent in both French and German, Kaltenborn could directly translate and immediately comment on the speeches of European leaders, interspersing observations of his personal interviews with Hitler, Mussolini, and other actors on the European stage.

Fascinated listeners also heard Kaltenborn tell correspondent Maurice Hindus in Czechoslovakia what was going on in the rest of the world, for Prague was largely dependent upon cable and telephone service routed through Berlin. During the Munich crisis, that service had totally failed. That Hindus could communicate at all was due to the foresight of Czech radio authorities who, figuring their country was next on the Nazi menu after Austria, built a transmitter powerful enough to beam a signal directly to North America. Without it, censorship in Berlin would almost have sealed Czechoslovakia off from direct communication with the outside world.

Here is one of the Kaltenborn broadcasts, not untypical of the rest. It was given at 2:30 p.m., Thursday, September 15:

There are one or two factors that are worth consideration in the development of Mr. Chamberlain's visit to Herr Hitler. The first is that Adolf Hitler did not take the trouble to come to Munich to meet the British Prime Minister. He didn't need to do that because he had extended the invitation to come to Berchtesgaden. Nevertheless, it would have been much easier for Mr. Hitler to have made the short journey from Berchtesgaden to Munich than it was for the British Prime Minister to go all the way from London to Berchtesgaden. In other words, if Adolf Hitler had been in a conciliatory mood, and had intended to show that he was ready to meet the British Chancellor half way in this negotiation, I believe he would have made that short journey to Munich.

The Grand Hotel in Berchtesgaden is not as grand as its name implies and has the disadvantage of being quite a number of miles away from Mr. Hitler's chalet. And after all, Mr. Chamberlain is seventy years old. Recently he has suffered from gout.

This meeting comes at a crucial time. It comes at the height of the crisis. The situation in Czechoslovakia is steadily becoming worse and it has become worse since Chamberlain started on his journey. The news that we have had about the proclamation of martial law in additional districts, the news with reference to the mobilization of hundreds of thousands of additional Czech soldiers — all that indicates the Czech-German relations are at the boiling point.

On the part of the Sudetens, we have a definite proclamation now that they don't want compromise, or any further negotiation. They want union with the Reich. They have broken off negotiations; they have issued a defiant ultimatum. So we are confronted with a situation which might make German intervention extremely probable. It was the anticipation of the development of that crisis that brought Mr. Chamberlain to Berchtesgaden to confer with Hitler.

Here's another interesting point—he's met there by Dr. Otto Meissner. Meissner, whom I've met several times in the Hindenburg days, was President Hindenburg's right-hand man. He's the chief of the German Chancellery, one of the most experienced of the old-line German statesmen and diplomats. This is the first time that he has appeared prominently in the diplomatic picture in recent years. But Meissner is the sort of man who would appeal to Chamberlain. He can speak some English and he can help direct communication with Chamberlain which Hitler himself cannot, because he doesn't speak a word of English. Ribbentrop, before he became Prime Minister, was the German Ambassador in London and he knows Mr. Chamberlain well. So in the presence of these two men, we have two mediators between Chamberlain and Hitler. That may help, because I can assure you that Mr. Hitler needs mediators. He gets very excited in conference. He's apt to start on a speech. He has been accumulating his material to present to Mr. Chamberlain and I know just how that will go. He'll start to relate what he calls the "atrocities" that have been committed by the Czechs against the Sudetens and he'll get into a fever of excitement; likely as not, he will continue to harangue Mr. Chamberlain for thirty minutes before anybody can get in a word edgewise. The presence of two mediators should be helpful, as will the presence of the two men whom Mr. Chamberlain has taken with him. One of them is Sir Horace John Wilson. He is the brain trust of the Chamberlain regime. He's one of Britain's first ranking civil servants and had a great deal to do with breaking that General Strike which was England's greatest crisis in 1926. The other man whom Mr. Chamberlain took along on his historic mission—and he only took two—is William Strang. Strang is the head of the British Foreign Office's Central European Department and he knows German and the German situation thoroughly.

What is most notable about the developments since we've had the first announcement of Mr. Chamberlain's visit is that this is to be not merely a quick negotiation to eliminate a crisis; later it is likely to develop into a general conference to settle Europe's problems.

My own feeling is that it is quite possible that Prime Minister Daladier and Premier Mussolini will be summoned to take some part in this conference before it ends. In other words, we'll be going back to the four-power idea which was launched by Mussolini some years ago and which at that time failed to meet with warm response. We may yet see, as a result of this striking development, a definite movement by the leading Powers of Europe for the pacification of Europe.

All in all, it was an exhausting performance for a 60-year-old man, even one who kept as fit as Kaltenborn. At one point he was so groggy

because of broken sleep that when a prayer for peace was delivered by the Archbishop of Canterbury, he analyzed that, too.

Praise for his virtuoso performance poured in. *Radio Daily* voted him the nation's outstanding commentator. Radio station managers presented him with a silver cup for work "beyond the sphere of duty." The University of Wisconsin and Hamilton College awarded him honorary doctorates. Northwestern University gave him an award of merit. Hollywood offered him a movie role, playing H. V. Kaltenborn in "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" with James Stewart. He became the voice of the "World of Tomorrow" in the New York World's Fair Perisphere (located next to the Trylon). His name popped up in *New Yorker* cartoons (Captain to men leaving sinking ship: "*Hold on, men. I've got H. V. Kaltenborn on the radio. He's analyzing our predicament.*" Also, Helen Hokinson, club president to the club ladies: "*The question is, shall we carry our surplus over to next season, or shall we squander it all on H. V. Kaltenborn.*"). Where he used to get \$15 for a lecture, Kaltenborn could now ask for, and get, \$1,000. But given a chance to speak to a group about the shame and indecency the Nazis had brought to Germany, he sometimes took no fee at all.

When Orson Welles's "The War of the Worlds," broadcast on October 30, one month after Munich, terrorized Americans with its phony news reports of a Martian invasion, Mrs. Kaltenborn scoffed at the national panic. "Why, how ridiculous," she said. "Anybody should have known it was not a real war. If it had been, the broadcaster would have been Hans."

He appeared on Eddie Cantor's comedy half hour. Kaltenborn's known dislike for mentioning sponsors provoked this dialogue with Cantor, who was sponsored by Camels:

*Cantor:* Mr. Kaltenborn, in those hectic days from September 12th to 29th, when you were broadcasting day and night, you were under great tension. What did you do to ease that tension? You know, to relax.

*Kaltenborn:* Oh, I drank coffee.

*Cantor:* Yes, but you just can't keep drinking coffee.

*Kaltenborn:* Oh, no, no. Sometimes I drank soup. Then when I'd get really nervous, I'd . . .

*Cantor:* You'd let up, huh?

*Kaltenborn:* No. I'd lie down and rest awhile.

*Cantor:* But Mr. Kaltenborn, what did you do when you got jangled nerves?

*Kaltenborn:* Oh, I turned off your program.

*Cantor:* Look, when you felt your nerves were on edge, didn't you . . .

*Kaltenborn:* No, I didn't.

After the Munich crisis was over, the Kaltenborns decided to give a party for the people at CBS who had worked with him. The dignified commentator did the Suzy-Q and the Lambeth Walk with the prettiest girls. Nobody could imagine where he had found the time to learn how.

Despite a growing waistline, he was athletic most of his life. At the age of 45 he first took up tennis and became so good at it that he won a number of cups. In every sense the well-rounded, civilized man, he also fermented a few casks of homemade wine in his cellar.

General Mills signed on as sponsor, but quit after the first thirteen-week contract expired. Kaltenborn claimed that one or two Catholics on the General Mills board of directors objected to his views on the Spanish civil war and that some bakers in Buffalo objected to his remarks on Germany. When General Mills backed down, a laxative company offered to sponsor the commentaries, but Kaltenborn demurred. He preferred to go back to a sustaining basis, even though it meant less income, than to be sponsored by a laxative. Finally, six months after the Munich crisis broadcasts, a dream sponsor appeared. The Pure Oil Company gave him a lucrative contract, including travel and absolute freedom to say anything he wanted about any subject he chose. Pure Oil put Kaltenborn on the air two evenings a week, Tuesdays and Sundays. As Hitler's invasion of Poland loomed, a poll revealed that more than half the radios in the United States were tuned to Kaltenborn, topping not only all other newscasters, but every 15-minute program on the air! Starting late September 1939, Pure Oil sponsored Kaltenborn over the CBS network five nights a week at 6:30 p.m. EST.

However, Pure Oil was unhappy with the time slot. CBS had no later hour open, so Pure Oil turned to NBC, which wanted Kaltenborn, although NBC lawyers were nervous about letting Kaltenborn say anything he wanted. Until wartime censorship made it necessary, Kaltenborn seldom used a script, so there was nothing to submit in advance, which made the NBC lawyers even more nervous. It was finally agreed that H. V. Kaltenborn would move to NBC, that he would be legally liable for his own commentaries, that he would be heard Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at 7:45 p.m. EST, that Pure Oil would be the sponsor only in those areas where Pure Oil was sold (a "split" network), and that Kaltenborn was free to find local sponsors in those areas where Pure Oil was not sold. Kaltenborn left CBS in April 1940, took another European trip, then began broadcasting over rival NBC. He also did a series of Sunday afternoon commentaries for listeners in New York and New England. In May of 1942 he began doing daily commentaries for NBC, interrupted by trips to North Africa, Central and South America, and, as war conditions permitted, to Europe. Wartime censors exempted Kaltenborn from the general requirement that commentators not deviate from the script submitted in advance of the broadcast. His reputation and his long experience won him the concession that he could ad-lib an idea here or there as fresh thoughts struck him in the middle of a commentary. After the war he continued the practice of preparing scripts in advance, but also continued to add material on the spur of the moment. An incredulous interviewer who followed him around one day reported: "Once during the broadcast he discarded the script and addressed the microphone as though it were a friend sitting on his desk. Twice news bulletins that had just come over the wire were placed before him. He read

them—still talking about something else—and included them in the broadcast.”

Inevitably, he made mistakes. He indicated agreement with military experts who felt France’s Maginot Line was impregnable. He thought the unexpected pact between Germany and Russia in 1939 “diminished the immediate possibility of war.” He predicted that England would not fight for Poland. And, until the hour the Panzer divisions rolled, he was convinced that Germany would not invade Poland.

Yet he was much more often right than wrong. From the time Germany invaded Russia, H. V. Kaltenborn, the geopolitician, foresaw a Japanese attack upon the United States. He urged a beefing up of the Pacific Fleet and the Air Force contingents in the Far East. “Whenever Japan decides to move, she will move without previous notice,” he warned six months before Pearl Harbor. Two weeks later he repeated the warning. “Japan is now ready to strike. . . . All indications point to early military action.”

On the evening of December 6, 1941, a few hours before the Japanese attack, his NBC audience heard Kaltenborn say:

If we were a totalitarian government we would long ago have issued orders for a sudden surprise attack on Japan. Our navy would cut communications between Japan and her forces in Indochina. Our air force would send a fleet of bombers to destroy Japan’s industrial cities. At the same time China would launch a vigorous offensive into Indochina, while the Dutch and British fleets would join ours in sweeping up Japan’s merchant marine. With that kind of a start it might not take long to finish the war. It was a surprise attack on the Russian fleet before war was declared that gave Japan a good start in 1905. But we are a democratic power which waits to be attacked. Which means that we must leave to Japan the great advantage of choosing her own time.

Kaltenborn’s curiosity, his spirit, and his desire to be *there*, wherever *there* happened to be, took him to the Pacific during the war. He broadcast from Guadalcanal, New Caledonia, and Australia. Once, flying with a general from Guadalcanal to Bougainville, he had a narrow escape. The plane flew into a tropical storm, losing both its fighter escort and its direction. The pilot, asking the general what he should do, got back the reply: “How in\_\_\_\_\_ should I know which of these \_\_\_\_\_ islands are held by Japs? Use your compass, use your map, use your head! Land somewhere! But don’t ask me what to do! I can’t fly a plane!” A few minutes later the clouds parted and the pilot discovered they were over an American-held island.

On a later trip to Europe, he commented on a far different matter concerning the Japanese. Visiting the Italian front he heard praise of the Nisei battalion, which had covered itself with more glory than any other fighting force during World War II. Said Kaltenborn: “I wish that those bigoted Americans who are trying to deny to Americans of Japanese ancestry their constitutional rights could talk to the generals under whom

these valiant young Americans have fought. Their contribution to our victory in this war, both in Europe and the Pacific areas, certainly entitles them to fair treatment not only for themselves but for their parents and relatives. It is the very negation of the American spirit to deny any man his legal rights because of his parentage or the place where he happened to be born." Kaltenborn had not forgotten the problems he himself had had during World War I.

Kaltenborn did not concentrate on foreign affairs to the exclusion of domestic affairs. Politically he could be described as moderate, rather than conservative or liberal, and definitely an independent thinker.

He opposed Roosevelt's bid for a third term. In fact, he was convinced Roosevelt would not seek a third term and said so in the address he gave when the University of Wisconsin awarded him an honorary doctorate. He predicted that the Democratic candidate might be Governor Stark of Missouri and the Republican candidate at various times as Thomas Dewey, Federal Security Agency Administrator Paul McNutt, and Secretary of State Cordell Hull. (The GOP choice was, of course, Wendell Willkie.)

Kaltenborn felt it was immoral for some men to profit from war while other men died in battle. He did not, however, include in this a certain mature commentator whose income had skyrocketed because of his unique knowledge of world politics. H. V. Kaltenborn was particularly incensed that factory workers were getting such fat paychecks. "Should the custom of paying men time and one-half and double time for certain additional hours of work be adhered to in wartime? Soldiers and sailors are not paid double time because they happen to fight or do patrol duty on Sunday." Looking at swollen wartime profits, he remarked, "The same kind of question arises with respect to profits on war contracts. The new tax bill should certainly devise ways and means of siphoning off the unreasonable profits now being made by some companies."

When Kaltenborn heard that New Jersey factories were running at less than half capacity, he lashed out at F.D.R. for permitting it:

When the President of the United States, who is our commander-in-chief, says something, you and I have the right to suppose that it means something. Yet on the very day on which the Commander-in-Chief said with a ring in his voice, "We shall not stop work for a single day," 17,000 workers stopped work on that very day. And nothing was done about it.

Kaltenborn went on to explain the reason for the work stoppage and laid the blame at the White House door. Newspapers quick to criticize Roosevelt reported Kaltenborn's commentary, and letters poured in to Congress. Kaltenborn continued his attacks. On this issue, *Time*, which was itself considered conservative on labor matters, said that congressmen "found that Kaltenborn was being more than a commentator. In mid-March [1942] he took labor on as an issue and, going beyond criticism, became virtually a stump speaker." *Time* continued:

"Kaltenborn's principal, pontifical broadcasts on the labor topic were tendentious, shallow in perspective. From his treatment of isolated cases of bumptiousness in labor, listeners might easily have become inflamed against labor in general. . . . The misconceptions he had helped spread abroad were corrected, chiefly by Franklin Roosevelt and Donald Nelson (head of the War Production Board) but also by careful newscasters including Davis and Swing."

Kaltenborn opposed Roosevelt's proposal to limit salaries to a maximum \$25,000 per year. However, he campaigned in his commentaries for a ceiling on wages, placing the responsibility on President Roosevelt to see it through.

Kaltenborn biographer Giraud Chester observed: "His interest focuses on personalities, rather than on ideas. He sees no issue or principle wholly separated from the psychology (imagined or real) of the individuals he associates with it. His mind does not probe, but prefers to speculate. In no way a scholar, he has concerned himself with the journalistic pursuit of reporting the truths others have found, rather than finding them himself. . . . Kaltenborn is preeminently the popularizer. The skill of his rhetoric is demonstrated by his ability to wrap the tissues of his thought in attractive twelve-minute packages for mass sale."

Chester contended that Kaltenborn had one hero, one person he never derided, whose speeches he reported as sober words of wisdom. That was Herbert Hoover. Although he voted for Al Smith in 1928, Kaltenborn reportedly boosted Hoover for the presidency as early as 1920, joined Hoover in 1930 in ridiculing talk of a depression, and endorsed him for president in 1940. Herbert Hoover was also a friend of Kaltenborn and a popular dinner guest in the Kaltenborn home.

On the other hand, he never became friendly with Franklin Roosevelt, admitting he was afraid to "subject himself to Roosevelt's charm." He added, "It's not likely that you will attack an official after you have had a pleasant dinner with him." That he did not apply the same logic to dinner guest Herbert Hoover did not seem to cross Kaltenborn's mind.

Curiously, Kaltenborn regarded himself as a liberal Democrat. He did so although admitting that in at least one election, 1946, he voted straight Republican.

Among Kaltenborn's pet projects, besides abolishing time-and-a-half overtime pay, were universal military conscription and increased production of air cargo planes. He pushed the cargo plane idea in commentaries through the summer and fall of 1942, but after a flight to North Africa in 1943, his enthusiasm waned. "Transportation is the key problem of the war," he said, "but it cannot be solved by the airplane, not in this war."

NBC officials wanted Kaltenborn to sound less opinionated on the air. Kaltenborn recalled:

Vice President Edward Klauber would call me up to his office for a friendly heart-to-heart talk. He would explain how a smart news analyst could put his personal opinions over to the public without



being too blatant about it. "Just don't be so personal," he'd say to me. "Use such phrases as 'It is said . . .,' 'There are those who believe . . .,' 'The opinion is held in well-informed quarters . . .,' 'Some experts have come to the conclusion. . . .'"

"Why keep on saying 'I think' and 'I believe' when you can put over the same idea much more persuasively by quoting someone else?"

Kaltenborn tried. What came out was absurd, even if NBC officials were satisfied. For example, one script went through the following contortions:

1. "I listened to Wendell Willkie's speech last night. It was wholly admirable."

2. "I hope you listened to Wendell Willkie's speech last night. It was wholly admirable."

3. "Millions of Americans of both parties listened to Wendell Willkie's speech last night. Most of them agreed that it was a wholly admirable speech."

Kaltenborn founded an organization called Radio Pioneers. He was the leading spirit behind the Association of Radio News Analysts, founded in 1942, and its first president, arguing for the right of a news analyst to state his opinions openly.

"The radio news analyst, as I see it, has two jobs," Kaltenborn wrote. "His first is to give background information on news bulletins as they occur. His second is to co-ordinate events into some kind of pattern so that listeners get a better idea of what is going on. He is a map-maker, an encyclopedist, a fact-elucidator, and an anti-propagandist. His job is not to edit, but to write footnotes to history in the making."

A letter to a California radio station signed by five listeners was forwarded to Kaltenborn:

We are five friends who have been listening to the radio and have decided to write you about Mr. Kaltenborn. We are tired of his voice, his distorted emphasis, his nasty attitude toward organized labor, and his sniping at all proposed war offensives. Please remove him from your hook-up.

Kaltenborn replied to them directly:

I congratulate you on acting to tell station KGO in San Francisco what you like and what you do not like. I have often told radio listeners to write their station in praise or criticism concerning radio programs.

It happens that for the moment I am the most popular commentator on the air. This is because I happen to have a good radio voice, I emphasize the right things, I have a fair and intelligent attitude towards organized labor and I am sniping at everything that interferes with the production for the war. That explains why I now have the highest rating of any commentator.

It also explains why a single negative letter will not remove me from the NBC hook-up. But just the same, you have a right to your opinion and I am glad that you have taken the trouble to express it.

With all good wishes to the Anti-Kaltenborn Quintet.

Sincerely yours,  
H. V. Kaltenborn

Whatever Kaltenborn lacked, it was not self-confidence. Bouquets in the mail exceeded brickbats, although some listeners of more nasty disposition sent him such items as a hemp noose and a sufficiency of rat poison. At the same time, if H. V. Kaltenborn attacked a specific government policy, sometimes thousands of letters and telegrams would be sent to the president and members of Congress.

His on-air delivery was formal to the point of pomposity. Like many commentators he puffed up his own importance in the affairs of the world. However, he could laugh at himself.

When NBC News director Abe Schecter sent questionnaires to Lowell Thomas, Gabriel Heatter, Raymond Gram Swing, H. V. Kaltenborn, and several other commentators asking, "Why do you consider yourself America's best?" each commentator, with tongue firmly in cheek, replied at some length. Kaltenborn, sometimes regarded as rather humorless, answered as follows:

It's a great idea, as it gives me an opportunity to say something I have always wanted to say about Kaltenborn, whose native modesty would never permit him to discuss, unless invited to do so, his pre-eminence among American commentators. Even though 98% of the American people are aware that Kaltenborn is in a class by himself, it would be in bad taste for this great news analyst to volunteer comment. The fact that now NBC, through its director of news and special events, seeks my opinion of Kaltenborn, makes it possible for me to forget the ordinary restraints and say what must be obvious to all except the prejudiced. Kaltenborn is tops.

Eighteen years ago when Kaltenborn began his news interpretations the commentator was an unknown species. Kaltenborn was the first and remains the first. He is the George Washington of commentators. The best that a man like Lowell Thomas could claim is that he is the Franklin D. Roosevelt. Lesser lights like Gabriel Heatter, John B. Kennedy, Edwin C. Hill, Raymond Gram Swing, Elmer Davis and Earl Godwin might be termed the Martin Van Buren, the Zachary Taylor, the Millard Fillmore, the James K. Polk, the Chester A. Arthur and the Franklin Pierce, respectively.

Kaltenborn has been widely imitated,—his writing style, his delivery, his interpretive method, his mode of dress and the special brand of eloquence he uses in captivating women's clubs.

For eight years Kaltenborn was the only commentator who said "Good evening, everybody." And for ten years, Lowell Thomas hasn't found anything better with which to open his program. Imitation, as the fellow said, is the sincerest flattery.

*Fortune Magazine* recently took a poll to determine the popularity of commentators among different groups. Practically everybody with

an income exceeding \$10,000 a year voted for me. A big percentage of the votes cast for other commentators came from those on relief.

Don't be deceived by mere numerical superiority or Crossley ratings. What counts is quality, not quantity. That holds for listeners as well as for clothing, ketchup, gasoline, hairnets and toothpicks.

The other day Kaltenborn got a letter which read: "On the radio you are my first man; Dorothy Thompson is my second man; Lowell Thomas is my third man." I cite this to show the distance that separates Lowell Thomas, who thinks he's best, from Kaltenborn. The letter is remarkable in that it is the only piece of fan mail Kaltenborn has received in years that even mentions another commentator.

Under the code of the National Association of Broadcasters, neither Kaltenborn nor any other commentator is supposed to express opinions. But when Kaltenborn does not express them, his listeners get mad, and when any of the other commentators follow suit their listeners are glad.

The other day a man sent Kaltenborn a postcard on which he had printed two short words in big capital letters. It said, "You stink." Kaltenborn challenges any of the other commentators to prove they have ever inspired such heartfelt comment. Commentators, like cheese, have to be well-seasoned before they are appreciated.

You have to be on the air for at least fifteen years before people smell you as well as hear you. Even with television they only see you and hear you. When that new miracle of the laboratories—smellelevision—goes into mass production and achieves the success it deserves Kaltenborn will have still another "first" to his credit.

It is a bit strange and sad to note that many Americans who were too young to have heard Kaltenborn on radio yet know of him because they have seen a film of President Harry Truman drawing a huge laugh from fellow Democrats by mimicking Kaltenborn's delivery. It was at an Electoral College banquet in Kansas City, after Truman had upset the polls by defeating Thomas Dewey in 1948. As the motion picture cameras ground away to capture this marvelous bit of Americana, a jubilant Truman explained that on election night he was quite exhausted. He took a Turkish bath and, after a ham sandwich and a glass of milk, went to sleep. He awoke at midnight, turned on the radio and heard H. V. Kaltenborn comment—and here Truman used a high-pitched staccato imitation—*that Mr. Truman was ahead by 1,200,000 votes but that it did not mean anything*. Truman went back to sleep until 4 a.m., and again listened to Kaltenborn, who said—again the high-pitched staccato—*that Mr. Truman was ahead by 2 million votes, but that it did not mean anything*. The audience roared.

The "dean of commentators," as he was sometimes called, took the ribbing in good grace. "I don't mind being imitated," he said. "After all, they don't make fun of nonentities." The two men later exchanged quips over the broadcast.

Kaltenborn personally established a scholarship at Harvard for students interested in news analysis and a scholarship in radio studies at the University of Wisconsin.

Besides uncounted commentaries and lectures, Kaltenborn wrote many articles. Seven books, including collections of radio commentaries, bear his name: *We Look at the World*, *Kaltenborn Edits the News*, *I Broadcast the Crisis*, *Kaltenborn Edits the War News*, *Europe Now*, *Fifty Fabulous Years*, and *It Seems Like Yesterday*. In characteristic style, when he felt it was time to write his autobiography, he spoke it extemporaneously into a recorder.

He won first place in many commentator popularity polls after the Munich broadcasts. In 1945 he won the annual citation of the Du Pont Radio Awards Foundation. He won nine more awards in 1946. He was named Radio Father of the Year in 1952. The following year he stopped regular broadcasting. He would occasionally offer commentaries on radio and television, although he didn't much care for television. "It's a bastard art," he claimed. "It requires you to do things which are utterly unrelated to what you're saying. You have to keep your heel on a chalk mark on the floor. Then, if you're using charts, you have to remember to keep the stick in your right hand or your left. Then you have to look at camera one for two minutes, on to camera three, back to camera two. It makes me sick."

When he told this to a reporter, Hans von Kaltenborn was already 80 years old. If he did not choose to belong to television, that was all right, for he had belonged to radio, and a history of radio without Kaltenborn would not be history at all. The old lion lived on until he was nearly 87. He died June 14, 1965. He was buried in Milwaukee, next to his parents. In a brief, moving eulogy, the minister said that H. V. Kaltenborn's life did not end. It was completed.

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## Floyd Gibbons

HE was the first daily network newscaster. A reporter out of *The Front Page*, a swashbuckling war correspondent, an adventurer in the tradition of Richard Harding Davis, all these were Floyd Gibbons. Radio newscasting—craft, art, profession—began with a whoop!

Raphael Floyd Phillips Gibbons was born into an Irish Catholic family in Washington, D.C., July 16, 1887, the oldest of five children. Father Edward Gibbons was a flamboyant and successful grocer, trading stamp merchant, sometime weekly newspaper publisher, and unsuccessful oil speculator. He also talked so fast that people asked him to slow down, a characteristic Floyd would inherit. The family moved first to Des Moines and then to Minneapolis, pursuing one business venture or another. It was a rollicking household, complete with two dogs and a horse. One day Floyd got into a fistfight with a neighborhood bully. The other boy connected, leaving Floyd with a pug nose for life.

Floyd returned to Washington to enter Georgetown University, where he promptly flunked English, Latin, and Greek. He preferred pranks. As a hazing stunt, he streaked (in the modern way) three times around the

chapel. Another time, his father was billed \$250 for Floyd's part in a dormitory demonstration that sent a lot of china wash basins crashing to the cobbled street below and turned a fire hose loose in the dormitory. One day Floyd and some other boys covered the dining room floor with fly paper, then made a noise to attract two Jesuit fathers. The priests got stuck, but the boys got caught. When Floyd was discovered shooting craps on university grounds, the priests' patience wore out. Floyd was expelled.

The 17-year-old failure went west. He tried shoveling coal and piling lumber in Lucca, North Dakota. That was during the day. At night he helped the town's printer assemble the weekly newspaper. The smell of printer's ink proved strong and enduring. Floyd returned to Minneapolis and found a job as police reporter on the *Daily News* at \$7 a week. His father, who advertised in the *Daily News*, pulled strings to get Floyd the job, but later regretted his decision on the ground that newspaper reporting was not an honorable career and tried to convince the editor to fire Floyd. The editor refused, although later after Floyd muffed a story he yelled, "You ought to go to Timbuktu and learn how to be a reporter. You're fired." He cooled down a few minutes later and rehired Floyd. In those days no one actually went to Timbuktu. It was just a place you mentioned because it was at the end of the world. Yet the time would come when Floyd Gibbons would go to Timbuktu on what must be the wackiest assignment ever given to a reporter before or since.

After two years he left Minneapolis briefly for a job on the *Milwaukee Free Press*, but returned at his father's urging and became a police reporter on the *Minneapolis Tribune*. He was learning the newspaperman's trade in police stations, courthouses, and on the street, covering fires and murders. Once he delivered a baby in a tenement. Another time he was arrested for cutting a telephone wire so that he could scoop a rival. Floyd filed his story from jail. To cover an auto race at the State Fair, he talked the favorite driver into taking him along. Despite the added weight, for Floyd was now a hulking six-footer, the man won the five-mile race at a speed of better than a mile a minute, a breathtaking sixty-plus miles per hour. The year was 1911, one year before Floyd Gibbons decided that the world had even more thrills to offer and he'd better move on to find them.

He worked on the *Chicago World* until it folded a few months later, then landed in the hard-hitting newsroom of the *Chicago Tribune*. Floyd Gibbons was flat broke when he was hired, and he looked it. He was unshaved. His clothes were dirty and unpressed. Wangling a salary advance, he got a haircut, shave, Turkish bath, and a suit bought from one of those clothing stores where the salesmen stand outside and grab pedestrians by the arm to get them into the store. A fellow reporter called it "the gosh-awfullest suit I ever saw on a human being outside of a burlesque house. He looked as though he were made up for a straight part in a low comedy duo. His suit was a gray one with checks. They were the largest checks you can imagine. They were about the size of windowpanes. How he got the trousers on has always been a mystery to me. They fitted him so tight that they looked as though they had been pasted on him.



Nevertheless, he wore this preposterous suit with an air." Gibbons would always wear outlandish clothes and he would always wear them with that air.

Some months later, turned down when he asked for a \$5 raise, Gibbons switched over to the rival *American*, but after two weeks of reading his stories in the competition, the city editor of the *Tribune* hired him back with a \$15 raise, swallowing hard. Gibbons may have been one of the models for *The Front Page* reporter Hildy Johnson. He certainly was the model for the hero of a less memorable Broadway comedy, *Clear All Wires*, about an American foreign correspondent in Moscow.

Like Hildy Johnson, Gibbons quit his job one day and got married. He had 10¢ in his pocket. The marriage to Isabelle Pherrman of Minneapolis ended in divorce ten years later.

Having rehired Gibbons, the *Tribune* sent him down to the Mexican border, where Pancho Villa was making things hotter than usual. Just south of the border, Gibbons covered his first battle, a skirmish between two Mexican forces during the revolution. For a while he traveled with American troops under "Black Jack" Pershing. He reportedly wore a cowboy hat and two pistols stuck in his belt. Gibbons set out to join Pancho Villa, although the guerrilla chieftain, angered by some newspaper articles, threatened to shoot the first American journalist he met. Along the way Gibbons rode his horse into an ambush by Villa's enemies. The Gibbons luck held and he escaped the bullets. When he finally caught up with Pancho Villa's troops, the general was astonished that an American newspaperman would have the nerve to defy his threat. He took a liking to Gibbons, which in time meant plenty of exclusives for the *Tribune*. When Villa captured the city of Chihuahua he seized a railroad train for his travels and gave one boxcar to Gibbons. On it Gibbons painted, in Spanish, "The Chicago Tribune—Special Correspondent."

The next few years saw him chasing around the United States as one of the *Tribune's* top reporters. In 1917, with war fever in the air, he was appointed London correspondent. Told to sail for safety's sake aboard a liner carrying the German ambassador to the United States, Gibbons rebelled and booked passage instead on the *S. S. Laconia*, arguing that an American citizen had a right to sail the seas without hiding behind the German ambassador. "There arose in me a feeling of challenge against Germany's order which forbade American ships to sail the ocean." Later reports had it that Gibbons had hoped to be aboard a torpedoed ship so that he could be the first reporter to write an eyewitness account of what followed, but this cold-blooded motive doesn't appear in his own version of the event, although he went equipped with a special life preserver, a large bottle of fresh water, a fountain pen-size flashlight, and a flask of brandy. In any case, a German U-boat torpedoed the *Laconia*, sending it to the bottom with the loss of thirteen lives. Gibbons survived to write a story that made front pages all over the country, was read on the floors of both the Senate and the House of Representatives, and helped to raise American war fever to an even higher pitch. He had written it while

exhausted, after being tossed about all night in a lifeboat on the cold, dark North Atlantic. His first act upon reaching shore was to cable that 4,000-word story to his newspaper. Only then would he accept food, a change of clothing, and rest. The story itself is today considered one of the classics of reporting.

Here are two passages from his dispatch:

The first cabin passengers were gathered in the lounge Sunday evening, with the exception of the bridge fiends in the smoke-room.

"Poor Butterfly" was dying wearily on the talking machine and several couples were dancing.

About the tables in the smoke-room the conversation was limited to the announcement of bids and orders to the stewards. Before the fireplace was a little gathering which had been dubbed as the Hyde Park corner—an allusion I don't quite fully understand. This group had about exhausted available discussion when I projected a new bone of contention.

"What do you say are our chances of being torpedoed?" I asked.

"Well," drawled the deliberative Mr. Henry Chetham, a London solicitor, "I should say four thousand to one."

Lucien J. Jerome, of the British diplomatic service, returning with an Ecuadorian valet from South America, interjected: "Considering the zone and the class of this ship, I should put it down at two hundred and fifty to one that we don't meet a sub."

At this moment the ship gave a sudden lurch sideways and forward. There was a muffled noise like a slamming of some large door at a good distance away. The slightness of the shock and the meekness of the report compared with my imagination were disappointing. Every man in the room was on his feet in an instant.

"We're hit!" shouted Mr. Chetham.

And later in the lifeboats:

A mean, cheese-colored crescent of a moon revealed one horn above a rag bundle of clouds low in the distance. A rim of blackness settled around our little world, relieved only by general leering stars in the zenith, and where the *Laconia* lights had shone there remained only the dim outline of a blacker hulk standing out above the water like a jagged headland, silhouetted against the overcast sky.

The ship sank rapidly at the stern until at last its nose stood straight in the air. Then it slid silently down and out of sight like a piece of disappearing scenery in a panorama spectacle.

Boat No. 3 stood closest to the ship and rocked about in a perilous sea of clashing spars and wreckage. As the boat's crew steadied its head into the wind, a black hulk, glistening wet and standing about eight feet above the surface of the water, approached slowly and came to a stop opposite the boat not six feet from the side of it.

"What ship was dot?" the correct words in throaty English with the German accent came from the dark hulk, according to Chief Steward Ballyn's statement to me later.

"The *Laconia*," Ballyn answered.

"Vot?"

"The *Laconia*, Cunard Line," responded the steward.

"Vot did she weigh?" was the next question from the submarine.

"Eighteen thousand tons."

"Any passengers?"

"Seventy-three," replied Ballyn, "men, women, and children, some of them in this boat. She had over 200 in the crew."

"Did she carry cargo?"

"Yes."

"Vell, you'll be all right. The patrol will pick you up soon," and without further sound, save for the almost silent fixing of the conning tower lid, the submarine moved off.

The sinking of the *Laconia* on February 26, 1917, killing thirteen persons, was not of the dimensions of the sinking of the *Lusitania* two years earlier, with the loss of 1,198 lives, but it was just about the last straw for Congress, which declared war on April 6. Did Floyd Gibbons' story give Congress that extra small shove? We'll never know, but an article in *American Mercury* opined, "No doubt it hastened the entrance of the United States into the war."

For covering a war, Floyd Gibbons was the right man in the right place at the right time—if ever there was a right time for war. Hemmed in by restrictions and censorship, he got his stories out. When the British censors forbade correspondents to mention the port at which General Pershing arrived in England, Gibbons got their approval to cable back: **MAJOR GENERAL JOHN J. PERSHING LANDED AT A BRITISH PORT TODAY AND WAS GREETED BY THE LORD MAYOR OF LIVERPOOL.**

He had met Pershing during the Mexican campaign and now renewed the acquaintance. Pershing let the war correspondent join him in crossing the English Channel to France. Story followed story. Wherever the news was, there Floyd Gibbons was . . . until the day he disappeared. His fellow correspondents learned they were going up to the front to cover the arrival of the first American contingent in the trenches. They felt a bit sorry that good old "Gib" was going to miss it. It wasn't like him to be gone when exciting things were about to happen. On the road to the front, a company of artillery passed the correspondents. And one of the men sitting alongside one of the cannons was . . . guess who? Floyd Gibbons had joined the Sixth Field Artillery as a soldier without actually joining the army. He was a member of the gun crew. That was his cannon!

This exploit led to his being arrested for 48 hours and to his getting another scoop. His was the first American company to fire a shot in World War I. He even got the casing of that first shell, holding it in trust for the sergeant who fired it. He finally located the sergeant fourteen years later and returned the casing to him at a Chicago Press Club ceremony.

Luck ran out at Belleau Wood. Crawling to aid a wounded marine battalion commander, Gibbons was hit by three machine gun bullets. The first tore into his left arm. The second hit his left shoulder. The third tore out his left eye.

From that time on, Floyd Gibbons' trademark would be a white linen eye patch. And like his loud suits, he wore it with a definite air. He couldn't wear a glass eye because there wasn't enough eyelid left to hold it in place. He bought eye patches by the dozens, custom made, and changed them three or four times a day.

The French government awarded him the Croix de Guerre with Palm for valor on the field of battle. Back home he was invited to meet former President Theodore Roosevelt and President Woodrow Wilson. He went on a lecture tour, talking about American troops at the front. Audiences loved to hear the big, handsome American correspondent with one sparkling blue eye, a white eye patch, a mashed nose, and a gift of gab. Young women melted. He still wore those loud checked suits. He wrote a book, *And They Thought We Wouldn't Fight*.

When war broke out in 1920 between Russia and Poland, Gibbons returned to Europe. After an airplane he chartered in France crashed, Gibbons pulled himself from the wreckage and continued to Warsaw. Correspondents were barred from the front lines, but Gibbons bluffed his way through. He put on his war correspondent's uniform plus every medal he could lay his hands on and sauntered in to see the Polish army chief of staff, who saluted him. Gibbons returned the salute and said, "I would like a military escort to the front right away."

The chief of staff, without further question, provided a car and an escort of an officer and two privates. Other newsmen stayed behind, their heels cooling and their tempers heating.

A year later the other correspondents again saw Floyd Gibbons scoop them badly on a major news story, the mass famine in the Soviet Union. The Russians would not let western journalists see how wretched conditions were in the countryside, but Gibbons convinced Ambassador Maxim Litvinoff to let him through. Indeed, they traveled to Moscow together. What followed is best summarized by New York *Times* reporter Walter Duranty:

The Volga famine was the biggest story of the year, but we sat there in Moscow fighting vermin and Soviet inertia, whilst Floyd Gibbons of the *Chicago Tribune* was cabling thousands of words a day from the Volga cities, beating our heads off and scoring one of the biggest newspaper triumphs in postwar history. Every day we received anguished and peremptory cables from our home offices about the Gibbons exploits, and all we could do was to run bleating with them to the Press Department and be told, "We are making arrangements; there will doubtless be a train for you tomorrow." It was an agonizing experience, but there was nothing we could do about it but gnash our teeth and wait.

Here is a portion of what Floyd Gibbons reported:

Forty hours on slow trains in a car with some unequipped doctors brought me to the city of Samara on the Volga River—Samara, the

heart of the famine and the center of the typhus and cholera epidemic. With my mouth and nose covered with a Turkish towel soaked in strong disinfectant, I left the train in the railroad yards where woe, sickness, hunger, misery and death were rampant.

The stations, rooms, platforms, the ground between the tracks, the streets leading to the depot, the wastelands and the dumps reaching a half mile down to the sloping mudbanks of the shrunken river—all was one uneven expanse composed of mounds of rags upon which were lying more bundles of rags and from which gaunt, dirty faces and hungry eyes peered forth under unkempt, matted hair.

Weak, hungry dogs dragged themselves between the living rag piles. The stench was stupefying. The air was black with flies and heavy with pestilence. Flocks of hungry crows and vultures hovered above. The weather was hot and dry with a wind that swirled the dust and odors and spread the plague.

By boat, train and caravan, this pilgrimage of starving hordes had arrived from all points at this crossroads of eastern Europe. Some had come down the Volga from Kazan; thousands had come from the south, from the famine regions of Saratov and Tsaritsin, on the Volga, and some even from Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea. They had come northward from Persia and India and westward from the Urals and Turkestan.

They represented all breeds of human animals from the light-haired Finns of the Siberian steppes to swarthy Turks and slant-eyed Mongolians. They spoke a babel of tongues and wore all kinds of rags, patches, robes, hats, turbans and boots. There were Bashkirs, Kurds, Tartars, Kalmucks, Poles, Germans, Ukrainians, Austrians, Roumanians and plain Russians. . . .

A boy of twelve, with a face of sixty, was carrying a six-months-old infant wrapped in a filthy bundle of furs. He deposited the baby under a freight car, crawled after him and drew from a pocket some dried fish heads, which he chewed ravenously and then, bringing the baby's lips to his, he transferred the sticky white paste of half-masticated fish scales and bones to the infant's mouth as the mother bird feeds her young. . . .

These visions and others equally horrible were cabled back to the United States, where support was growing for a massive relief effort.

Would that effort have been less enthusiastic without those news stories? Would a lesser American relief program have altered the course of Soviet history? Of course, we'll never know.

Two years after covering the Russian famine, Gibbons crossed the Sahara in pursuit of the silliest story an editor ever dreamed up. At home, Rudolph Valentino was fluttering hearts as "The Sheik." What are sheiks really like, wondered the editor. He sent a cable:

GIBBONS  
CHITRIB, PARIS  
ORGANIZE AND EQUIP CAMEL CARAVAN CROSS SAHARA  
DESERT OBTAIN TRUE PICTURE SHEIKS AND THEIR APPEAL

ANGLO-SAXON AND AMERICAN WOMEN. MRS. HULLS BOOK  
THE SHEIK CREATING WIDE INTEREST HERE AMONG  
WOMEN-FOLK WELL AS RUDOLPH VALENTINO'S CHARAC-  
TERIZATION IN MOVIES. CABLE WHEN YOU LEAVE.

EDITOR

Equipped with six lipsticks which his mother had pressed upon her most reluctant son to keep his lips from chapping, Gibbons and a photographer carried the first American flag across the Sahara, and did so in the middle of summer. He was later to claim that the 145-degree heat permanently rid him of rheumatism. He also performed a bit of surgery on the journey, amputating the infected toe of their Arab cook.

It took three miserable months to reach Timbuktu, where an editor had once angrily told him to go so that he could learn to be a reporter. Floyd Gibbons by now may have been the most famous reporter in the world!

He had been sent to report on the romantic qualities of real sheiks. He cabled back that they weren't romantic at all, nor were they handsome or dashing. Gibbons thought they were as inspiring as fish peddlers, only dirtier. The Mrs. Hull who wrote the book had never been out of England!

For crossing the Sahara by camel, carrying both the Stars and Stripes and the Tricolor, Floyd Gibbons was awarded the Legion of Honor by the French government. Before learning of this award he and his photographer set off on their next adventure. Gibbons hired a native crew so that he could sail and pole up the River Niger to its source through 800 miles of steamy jungle. That done, he went on to cover other stories from one end of Africa to the other, spending a year on the continent before returning to Europe. He investigated international political stories and hunted hippopotami, describing all his adventures and discoveries to the readers of the Chicago *Tribune* and its syndicated newspapers.

Assignments sent him scurrying across Asia, to Australia and New Zealand, back across Siberia, and on to North Africa to cover the Rif War in Morocco, where, on a lonely road, his car was ambushed by rebel riflemen. Gibbons and a French lieutenant dove for cover as the rebels started shooting from three sides. Luckily, some French planes flew overhead; the rebels did not want to give their positions away, so the pair were able to dash back to their car and escape. For this and other exploits in Morocco, where French and Spanish troops were putting down the Rif uprising, the French government awarded Gibbons a second Legion of Honor. The Sultan of Morocco presented him with another medal and a decree entitling him to a harem of up to eighteen wives. He did not take advantage of this offer or even one-eighteenth of it. By this time, Gibbons was divorced. He never remarried.

In January 1925, he participated in a radio broadcast in the Philip-pines. On Christmas he did his second broadcast, this time over the *Tribune's* own radio station, WGN in Chicago, in which he talked about some of the exotic places he had spent previous Christmases. The ad-lib broadcast was quite a success because Floyd Gibbons had a way with a

story, whether he wrote it down or told it orally. Hundreds of fan letters poured in. People wanted to hear more yarns. The single program became a series. The *Tribune* asked readers who were also radio listeners to write in saying whether they would rather read about Floyd Gibbons' exploits or listen to him relate them. Letters came in by the barrelful, and the spoken word won. Nevertheless, the series lasted only a month; then Gibbons returned to Europe.

This roving assignment brought him to Warsaw to cover a military takeover. Dorothy Thompson came up from Vienna to cover the story for the Philadelphia *Evening Ledger*. Gibbons had heard a rumor that she had been killed, but she turned up in Warsaw alive, lively, rather mud-splattered, and ready to cover the news. Later, another rumor floated of a brief affair between them. The dashing looking Floyd Gibbons was certainly attractive to women, while the young Dorothy Thompson turned many a head, including that of Sinclair Lewis, whom she met and married soon afterward.

In 1926 Gibbons quit the Chicago *Tribune* in Europe to write, on assignment for New York *Daily News* publisher Joseph Medill Patterson, a biography of the World War I German war ace Baron Manfred von Richtofen, credited with shooting down eighty Allied warplanes. The biography ran serially in *Liberty Magazine*, then was published as a book, *The Red Knight of Germany*. Of von Richtofen, Gibbons wrote:

His mother had not raised him to be a soldier.

She had made him wear curls and dressed him in white pretties.  
He had looked like a girl, and hated it.

Then came killing time—war.

He killed a hundred men in individual combat; shot them, burned them, crushed them, hurled their bodies down to earth.

He became the terror of the battle fronts. He grinned at grim death in a hundred duels above the clouds. He fought fair, hard, and to kill, and the better his foeman fought to kill him, the better he liked him for it.

He shot down eighty fighting planes. He matched his life against that of any man. He fought, not with hate, but with love for fighting. It was his joy, his sport, his passion. To him, to dare and to die was to live. He had the courage to kill and be killed, and war was his hunting license. On home leave from man-killing at the front, he hunted and killed deer, elk, boar, bison, and birds, and brought their heads to his mother's home.

This book was followed by a try at fiction, another *Liberty Magazine* serial which was published as a book, a pot-boiler science fiction novel called *The Red Napoleon*, about a Communist effort to conquer the world by battle and breeding. The chief villain, a half-Tartar, half-Mongolian dictator, orders the men of his armies to breed with captive women everywhere in order to create a mixture of all races. He nearly succeeds in capturing the entire planet, but the United States defeats him in a furious

six nights a week over the NBC-Blue Network, 6:45 to 7 p.m. EST, repeated for the West Coast at 11:45 to midnight, reporting the results of the *Digest's* "wet and dry" poll plus the news of the day. This made Floyd Gibbons in 1930 the first daily nationwide newscaster, a distinction that went unnoticed at the time.

He liked to conclude the midnight repeat with something jazzy like ". . . and I'll buzz around this old town for a handful of hot bullets for you folks west of the river . . . It's a sleepy time now . . . My mattress is calling . . . So, until tomorrow, hay, hay." Folks west of the river loved it, although the "mattress" that was calling was likely to be a round of drinks with some pals or a stack of late editions of the morning newspapers just dropped off to the newsboy on the corner.

The *Digest* poll ran for six months during the spring and summer of 1930. Gibbons had to cancel "The Headline Hunter" for a while to meet the new demands on his time.

Weekends were sometimes spent relaxing with friends at his brother Edward's lodge near Peekskill in upstate New York. With no wife or children, Floyd Gibbons developed a close relationship with Edward, who later wrote a biography of his famous brother.

Although the Depression was making itself felt, Floyd Gibbons was now earning \$10,000 a week. He worked from morning till night, helped by a staff who clipped news items, took his dictation, answered his fan mail, and saw him grab a taxi for a last-minute dash to the radio studio, where he shucked his coat, pulled his gray felt hat down to shade his good eye from the glare of overhead lights, loosened his necktie in the familiar newspaperman's manner, leaned into the microphone, and bawled, "Hello, everybody!" His staff had typed his copy in large type, triple spaced, a few words to a line, to lessen eye strain. He chain-smoked through the broadcast.

A New York *Evening Telegram* reporter, Douglas Gilbert, filed this report in the days when a radio reporter was something brand new and wonderful:

6:44 P.M. WJZ—One minute to go.

Heavy, insulated, a doodad for a doorknob, the "ice-box" door of studio "G" of the NBC greets you with an ominous "ON THE AIR" at the end of a tortuous, cork-floored corridor.

A uniformed page swings open the portal at the tread of hastening steps. His face lights up.

"Mr. Gibbons." The lad chokes it out—blushes betray an hour's futile practice.

"H'lo, kid," a smile, a wave, and Gibbons breezes in, his huge bulk a mountain of overcoat, his soft hat pegged at its customary cocksure angle. The linen oval patch shielding his left eye-socket glistens whiter against a ruddy face.

He pushes on, his coat brushing the ivories of a grand piano impeding the fairway that leads to the microphone table. Studio drapes rustle in the wake of his progress.



Nervous jerks help shed his overcoat. It is tossed on a chair as he lunges into another chair before the table. He sucks deeply on a cigaret, chest muscles tautening his vest, and exhales. The gray cloud blurs a framed sign whose letters hide impotently, "No Smoking."

He leans toward the "mike", his torso outspanning the back of his chair by six inches on either side. He shoots a quick glance over his shoulder at a studio visitor. The full lips of a rugged "ringside" face curl into a friendly smile, foiling the glint of his one blue eye.

Ed Thorgersen, announcer, fidgets with the gadgets of an indicator whose tiny red and green lights signal, in radio technique, the imminent broadcast through to the Mississippi.

At one end of the table, to Gibbons's right, Kenneth MacGregor, production man, fingers his copy of the 3,000-word script.

MacGregor saws through a sentence with a pencil.

"You Scotch chiseler, what are you cutting that out for?" booms Floyd.

"Have to watch it, Floyd. It looks overtime to me."

"But what in thunder—that's color, man. I can pack it in," and then—"O.K., it's out."

His hamlike hand moves beyond his reading script for the glorified cigar-box that is the table "mike." Draws it forward, a foot and a half from his face. He looks up toward "Thorgy." Like a rector intoning a service, Thorgersen's ecclesiastical basso booms the introduction, and then—"Floyd Gibbons. . . ." Thorgy's eyes flash a "shoot!" at the man in the chair, and . . .

"Hello, everybody! Prepare for the hottest news of this hottest national issue—Prohibition! I just breezed up from the *LITERARY DIGEST* counting-rooms, and, boy, it's almost too hot for me to handle. Get a load o' these latest returns from the capital of our national Sahara, Birmingham. . . ."

Weaned in the tough school of Chicago journalism, Gibbons summed up his attitude toward news:

Excitement is news. I find out what interests me in the news. I take an incident and try to dramatize it into a human story, sticking to the facts, and with one rule above all others—simplicity.

My attitude on the air is that of one who has information that is so important that I've got to get it right off to you. This is the feeling I have. I'm something like a reporter telling his city editor about a story.

You know how you shoot it in, the high spots; that's all a city editor wants to know—"two dead, gas on, a note." He wants a vivid, realistic description, the important facts, and wants it quick. That's the way I try to put my stuff out over the air.

Several changes took place in the fall of 1930. His *Literary Digest* contract for the "wet and dry" poll ran out. It was not renewed. One report was that Gibbons was asking for too much money. Another was that he and some pals got drunk one night and decided to serenade his sponsor, the head of the Funk family, publisher of *The Literary Digest* and

a leader of the temperance movement. After a few cat calls, rude noises, and choruses of "Sweet Adeline," that dignified, sober, and irritable old gentleman appeared at his bedroom window. Down below amid the revelers he recognized his highly paid star.

"Mr. Gibbons," he called down, "I think you'd better go home."

Next day the word went around that *The Literary Digest* was in the market for a new on-air personality. It found him in Lowell Thomas.

But General Electric remained delighted with their "House of Magic" star and, after the program had run a year, doubled its length to one hour. He also continued "The Headline Hunter" format with a new series of weekly broadcasts, sponsored by Libby-Owens-Ford glass, called "World Adventures with Floyd Gibbons" and he began a daily newspaper column, "Floyd Gibbons Speaking," in the New York *Evening World* and two dozen other newspapers.

Here, in the newspaper column, was a vehicle for political analysis and Floyd Gibbons used it, couching his comments in the usual flippant style:

Hello Everybody: Wonder what's doing in Russia? With Leningrad isolated, phone communication with Moscow halted and a heavy hand of censorship on telegraph, there might be something stirring behind that dropped curtain. Got a hunch the Bear is going to claim the spotlight in the new week's news. The Soviet government has trouble on its hands. Good evidence of that lies in loud reiteration that capitalistic neighbors plan armed invasion of Soviet territory. Is that just a smoke screen? You know, the historic strategy for heading off threatened revolt within a state is to set up a hullabaloo about enemies at the gates. My advice: Watch Russia this week.

(November 24, 1930)

Floyd Gibbons loved to play practical jokes, but he was also a sentimentalist. Among his close friends were Amos 'n' Andy (Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll), whom he had known since the days they were billed as Sam 'n' Henry. Gibbons and Gosden were on the same emotional wavelength. The tough war correspondent sometimes wept listening to Amos talking about Ruby during a radio program. And at a party Gibbons threw, someone came upon Gosden in the kitchen, tears in his eyes over a story he had just heard Gibbons tell.

As his popularity grew he ventured into new fields. The Floyd Gibbons School of Broadcasting in Washington trained announcers and crooners. A series of ads and totally commercial radio broadcasts touted Standard Oil's high-test gasoline. A series of one-reel films had Gibbons narrating his own adventures and historical news events.

The Libby-Owens-Ford contract was terminated after a year, ending "The Headline Hunter." It was said that Gibbons talked himself out of a job because a car manufacturer who listened to his weekly horror stories about drivers and passengers killed and maimed by flying glass bought up the entire output of Libby-Owens-Ford safety glass. The end of the

"House of Magic" science broadcasts for General Electric released the war correspondent to cover another war. Japanese troops had entered Manchuria and China was resisting, so it was off to Manchuria for intrepid reporter Floyd Gibbons.

In Mukden a Japanese general took time out from battle to be interviewed. That broadcast, live, from a pawnshop being used as army headquarters, was the first ever from mainland Asia to the United States. It went by shortwave from Mukden to Tokyo, was relayed to San Francisco, and broadcast by NBC on its network. Simultaneously from points in Oakland, California, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, it was shortwaved to Europe, South America, and Australia. Much of the world could have heard Gibbons' eyewitness view of the war if radios had been as common as they are today.

An article in *Vanity Fair* nominated him for oblivion for chasing after wars and glorifying them for the American public:

. . . because in twenty-five years of public battering on war he has always foregone the opportunity to mold public opinion toward peace, preferring to see war as a "show"; because he is a professional hero, patriot and jingoist; because he recently continued his headline hunting at Shanghai, where he again exploited human tragedy.

To such criticism Gibbons replied that he preferred peace to war and that he did not enjoy seeing suffering. He said he could not count the hundreds of men he had seen killed—shot, burned, or blown to bits—and he said he was sick of the spectacle. What Gibbons omitted was that he was first and foremost a reporter who loved a story filled with drama and excitement. War provides these. Floyd Gibbons may have preferred peace, but at the first distant sound of cannon fire, no matter where in the world it came from, he was ready and anxious to go.

He returned to the United States from China and plunged into a different kind of war. American veterans of World War I suffering from the Depression converged on Washington in the summer of 1932 to demand that the government of President Hoover pay them the bonus Congress had voted them in 1925. The "Bonus Army" swelled to 15,000, then to 20,000, some bringing wives and children. Most were ordinary Americans down on their luck. The Hoover administration was later to contend that many members of the Bonus Army, which encamped at the Anacostia River flats, were men with criminal records or were Communists, a charge heatedly denied by the veterans, although in a gathering as large as this there were certainly some political agitators and ex-convicts. Floyd Gibbons was to get cheers and laughs when he claimed that the Harding administration had a higher percentage of convicted crooks than was alleged to be in the Bonus Army. Anyhow, the troublemakers were shunned by the majority of the "Army," which lived under at least an attempt at military discipline. As the weeks went by, the camps took on a scruffily domestic appearance, with pots over fires and washing on the line.

In Floyd Gibbons the bonus marchers found a champion. He visited their camps and he saw them as the same men he had known in the trenches. He said:

First of all, they are not bums. Second, they are not agitators, although I can't think of anything more agitating to a fellow than sore feet and an empty stomach, and no job and a wife and kids, and the rent unpaid and . . .

There's plenty of old and worn-out clothing and shoes in this army of men who represent a cross section of American life of today.

We called them heroes when they sailed for France. Called them that again when they limped back with the bacon after the armistice and found the country dry and some other fellow with their girl and somebody else in their old job.

They were also voters.

They are also workmen—just like you and me, and by golly, they are just as puzzled as we are about what has happened to the good old U.S.A.

The Bonus bill came up before the Senate, and the Senate defeated it. Many thousands of the Bonus Army left Washington sadly. A few thousand stayed on in the faint hope that something would be done for them. What was done was one of the more shameful acts in American history. The U.S. Army under General Douglas MacArthur was sent to rout out the veterans. Armed soldiers against unarmed ex-soldiers. Bayonets and tear gas cleared the veterans and their families out. Torches finished the campsites of shacks and tents. Some of the veterans helped set the fires. No one was killed (although two veterans had been killed earlier in a scuffle with police) but many were injured that day of July 28, 1932, and on into the night as the Washington sky was lit up by the flames.

Gibbons canceled a speaking engagement and flew in from Cleveland in time to see soldiers putting the torch to the shacks. Furious, he wrote articles and spoke against what he saw as the setting of brother against brother. Shortly afterward, one of his special NBC broadcasts, coverage of the American Legion convention in Portland, Oregon, was canceled. No reason was given by the nervous NBC hierarchy. Gibbons attended the convention anyway, as an honored guest speaker.

At a Legion dinner, Secretary of War Patrick J. Hurley declared, "My friend, Mr. Gibbons, told you that the soldiers set fire to the humble homes of these men. That is not the fact. The fires were set by the men themselves. No members of the army would do that. . . . On my sacred word of honor, no soldier set fire to a house in Washington."

Gibbons replied by saying that photographers took pictures of the burning, and concluded, "A camera doesn't have a word of honor either."

Later he spoke to the entire convention on what he had seen at the Anacostia River flats. He received a tremendous ovation. A chaplain rushed to the platform and shouted, "Thank God for such men as this correspondent who tells the truth."

Some days later the army officially admitted that soldiers had been ordered to burn the shacks.

As a result of all this, Gibbons became politically active, making campaign speeches for Franklin Roosevelt. Sometimes at night, his felt hat pulled low, he would walk along the city streets with hundreds of \$1 bills stuffed in his pocket, handing out money to people wandering the city, the derelicts and others who were going a long time between square meals.

The NBC cancellation was a single shot. Gibbons returned to the air the next summer as "The World's Fair Reporter," covering Chicago's Century of Progress Exposition for an eighteen-station hookup. In the fall he began a new weekly program, sponsored by Johns Manville, to support efforts of the NRA (National Recovery Administration) to pull out of the Depression.

At the age of 46 Floyd Gibbons suffered a heart attack, not severe enough to kill him but enough to slow down his mad dash through life. His rapid on-air speech, a broadcasting trademark which was not his normal way of speaking, was implicated in the heart attack because it was, someone said, like "forcing the draft on a boiler." He slowed down somewhat, bought a home in Miami Beach, fished and sailed, but it wasn't enough. The pull of his exciting work remained too strong. Floyd Gibbons still spent most of his time in New York City, shuttling between office, broadcasting studio, and wherever else his profession led him.

Italy's invasion of Ethiopia gave him another war to cover. He sailed to Italy, then flew to Ethiopia, courtesy of the Italian air force. His CBS competition, John T. Whitaker, a correspondent for the New York *Herald Tribune*, reached the war zone by mule, camel, car, and a lift from Count Galeasso Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law. Gibbons, too, saw hundreds of square miles of Ethiopia from a bomber piloted by the obliging Count Ciano. From Asmara, Eritrea, across the border, Gibbons and Whitaker shortwaved broadcasts to the United States via Rome, although static made them hard to understand. In his first broadcast Gibbons graphically described Italian road-building operations. Midway through the second broadcast he collapsed because of the thin air at that altitude. He was moved by plane and train to Cairo to recover. After convalescing for a few weeks he visited Jerusalem and Rome, where he had an audience with Pope Pius XI and an interview with Mussolini, who peppered him with questions about how Italian troops were doing in Ethiopia.

One more war remained for Floyd Gibbons to report. Several months after returning to the United States in 1936, he set sail again for Europe, this time to cover the Spanish civil war. It was to be "the bloodiest and costliest war in men and money that I have ever seen. It is horrifying to see how inhumane . . . men can be to each other. At one time I saw eight hundred rebel soldiers lined up against a wall and executed without even the formality of a trial. . . . In all my travels with the armies I did not see a single Spanish aviator. On one side I saw German, Italian and Portuguese fliers, and on the other French, Russian and Czechoslovakian."

A broadcast from Madrid was censored after Gibbons' opening sentence: "I just arrived from the battlefield outside Madrid, and in order to get to this studio I had to step across the bodies of twenty dead Spanish students lying out on the square." The mike went dead. NBC switched to other programming. Nearly an hour later Gibbons came back on. His brother Edward later recounted what had happened:

As he walked into the studio there were twelve Spanish Loyalist soldiers standing in the small room with full military equipment and fixed bayonets. Their instructions were that if Floyd said anything against the Spanish republic, they were to shoot him down in cold blood. *They did not understand a word of English.* The station manager was rushing around the studio with cold sweat on his brow, knowing that if anything went out against the Spanish republic over that station he would be executed. With that remark of ". . . had to step across the bodies of twenty dead Spanish students lying out on the square," somebody pulled the switch. Fortunately the Loyalist soldiers didn't take that as an order to fire. A Spanish officer then took over Floyd's script and, after heavily blue-penciling various remarks in his description of the "Battle for Madrid," let him finish his broadcast without lead poisoning.

As usual, Gibbons did not remain for the entire war. He watched the slaughter for one month, then returned to the United States on the *Normandie*, learning on his arrival that the Italian government had decided to award him the War Cross for military valor. The Polish government also gave him a decoration for covering their war with Russia. The year 1937 heard Gibbons make several more of the short series of network broadcasts now familiar to Americans, including reporting the Nash Motors "speedshow" and moderating an adventure series sponsored by Colgate-Palmolive. To his possessions he added a 75-foot yacht which he christened *The Adventurer*, a speedboat to get him back and forth to the yacht, and two farms in Pennsylvania Dutch country.

But the end of his life was near. His frenetic pace at work and play had taken a toll on his heart and he grew increasingly ill. Shortly after his fifty-second birthday another war broke out. Germany had invaded Poland and the British, the French, and the Russians were getting into it. This was the big one, but Floyd Gibbons was too sick to cover it. On September 24, 1939, a heart attack killed him at the farmhouse where he was living and where he had transported some of his old family possessions. Curiously, the foreign correspondent who had risked his life in so many strange places died in the very bed in which he had been born.

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*When I look over there and see  
Lowell Thomas, I have to believe  
in eternity.*

—AL CAPP

# Lowell Thomas

IT was 1930. If the fast spreading word was to be believed, the networks' only daily radio news commentator, Floyd Gibbons, had been given notice by his sponsor, *The Literary Digest*. At CBS, William Paley heard the rumors and spied an opportunity to lure *The Literary Digest* to his young network. All he needed was someone to read the news. A 39-year-old platform speaker, author, and former newspaper reporter and war correspondent named Lowell Thomas was suggested. Paley was willing to listen to an audition.

So Lowell Thomas was hurried into a CBS studio and was told to talk. "What about?" he asked.

"Anything," he was told. "Talk 15 minutes. Then stop."

Thomas looked around. Three musicians sat in the studio on a standby basis. If anything happened to a scheduled performer, they were ready with some tunes. Thinking fast, Thomas told them, "When I start talking, I wish you would start playing, something oriental, 'Pale Hands Beside the Shalimar' or 'In a Persian Garden.'"

He started. They started. For 15 minutes some twenty executives in another room heard a rich baritone voice full of shadings and nuances describe the wonders of the mysterious East with soft Oriental music in the background. By the time Thomas finished, they were impressed, but they wanted him to return in a few days so they could hear how he would treat a regular newscast a few minutes before hearing Floyd Gibbons at his usual hour. Paley told Thomas, "We must not fail. This tryout news broadcast must be a masterpiece. Columbia will loan you its best brains to prepare it."

Thomas, who had been both a journalist and a public speaker of world renown for years, didn't understand how Columbia's "best brains" would help him prepare a 15-minute newscast, but he decided to get into the spirit of things. He replied, "Okay, if you are going to loan me your finest brains, why I'll round up all the best brains I can think of and we'll really make it an event."

To collect brains, Thomas phoned his publisher. "Mr. Doubleday, have you any brains out there at Garden City?" After hearing the explanation, Russell Doubleday sent two of his people, one of them a young manuscript reader who spent his spare time writing verses. His name, Ogden Nash. Thomas also asked two of his own pals to join him. One was Prosper Buranelli, an ex-newspaperman who was helping Thomas write books. The other was Dale Carnegie, a public speaking coach who changed the spelling of his last name to Carnegie when he rented a studio at Carnegie Hall. CBS sent three brainy men, and Thomas brought along a jug of homemade hard apple cider to lubricate the discussion on this late summer's day in 1930, when Prohibition was in full flower.

After a lot of cider and a lot of heated debate that went nowhere, Thomas slipped away, checked the evening papers, and made a few notes. At six o'clock Lowell Thomas stepped up to the microphone and said, with his precise diction and clear voice that carried over the static, "Good evening everybody." But when he was done, he didn't add, "So long until tomorrow." That emerged a month or so later.

Thus began the longest continuous daily program in the history of broadcasting. The first newscast, on September 19, 1930, included this item:

Adolf Hitler, the German Fascist chief, is snorting fire. There are now two Mussolinis in the world, which seems to promise a rousing time. He has written a book called the German Fascist Bible. In it, this belligerent gent states that a cardinal policy of his now powerful German party is the conquest of Russia. That's a tall assignment, Adolf. You just ask Napoleon.

It is impossible to look at radio commentary without considering Lowell Thomas, yet in the strictest sense he has not been a commentator, for he has tried to avoid either injecting his political views into his newscasts or assessing the political implications of a situation. He is a reporter, although there have been many times, such as the item about Hitler, above, when his opinion is plain. He has often said that by inflection alone you color your words.

Lowell Jackson Thomas has broadcast the news longer than any reporter, living or dead—indeed, almost twice as long—and his voice is probably more widely familiar in the United States than the voice of any other reporter. His long-held refusal to analyze the news behind the news is a kind of commentary itself. What Lowell Thomas preferred to dwell on was the adventure of events. In reporting this human adventure, he had no peer.

His taste for adventure came early. Born on April 6, 1892, in Woodington, Ohio (around the corner from where Annie Oakley was born), he was raised in the Cripple Creek goldfields high in the Colorado Rockies, a child of a rough and tumble mining camp in the midst of a gold boom. Both his parents had been school teachers in Ohio, but his father

went on to medical school and then set up a surgery in Cripple Creek. The parents saw to it that Lowell's formal education was not neglected and Dr. Thomas made his son practice elocution, although Lowell disliked the exercises. "You'll thank me one day," said his father.

An adventurous man who later served with both the British and American armies in World War I, Dr. Harry Thomas was still taking college courses at the age of 83, when he enrolled at Oxford. That occurred some years after his son, who had grown wealthy, endowed a lecture chair at the American University in Beirut provided that the donor should remain anonymous and that Dr. H. G. Thomas should be its first recipient. The professor of medicine never found out who was responsible for those enriching years he spent in the Middle East.

The boy's informal education around the saloons, gambling halls, and brothels of Cripple Creek gave him a still wider outlook on life, for most of them were on his newspaper route. To walk to school, he had to go through the red-light district, so the Sunday school teacher escorted him, holding him by the hand. She later went to New York City, where she became famous as the speakeasy owner who greeted her customers with "Hello, sucker." Her name, Texas Guinan. He grew up on horseback and learned to handle a gun before he was 10. Later he collected ore samples for an assay office, riding a horse from mine to mine.

When Lowell was 15, the Cripple Creek gold veins appeared to be playing out. While Dr. Thomas looked for a new town to establish his surgery, Lowell and his mother returned to Ohio. The boy enrolled in high school, where he won a public speaking contest and was rewarded, strangely enough, by being made captain of the football team, on which he played quarterback. He went on to the University of Northern Indiana (now Valparaiso), where he worked his way through at a succession of jobs—like feeding both a cow and a furnace and running a laundry. He graduated in two years with both a B.S. and an M.A.! Returning to Cripple Creek, and after briefly trying pick-and-shovel mining, he took a job as a reporter on the Cripple Creek *Times*. He moved on to become editor of both the Victor, Colorado, *Daily Record* and the *Daily News*. A year later he enrolled at the University of Denver, where in a short time he picked up two more degrees while he worked on Denver newspapers.

Next stop, Chicago, where he worked during the day on the Chicago *Journal* and attended Kent College of Law at night. Fellow Chicago reporters included Carl Sandburg, Ring Lardner, Floyd Gibbons, Charles MacArthur, and Ben Hecht. "I even chased fires with Carl Sandburg," Thomas recalled. MacArthur and Hecht would one day immortalize these tossed salad days in the play *The Front Page*. Thomas remembers Hecht as the reporter who had the desk next to his, who was always broke before payday, and who would tap the more prudent Thomas for small loans. Thomas scored some success at both college and the newspaper. At the law college, almost as soon as he opened his mouth, he was hired to teach public speaking. As a reporter he exposed a blackmailer who was trying to shake down the big meat packers of Chicago for several million dollars. One day Armour, Swift, and Wilson would prove grateful.

Meanwhile, young Lowell Thomas realized he had fallen in love with a girl he had known slightly at the University of Denver. To pay his train fare west so that he could propose marriage, the doughty Thomas persuaded executives of two railroads (one to get there, one to get back) that he could write about the West and about the planned San Francisco International Exposition, wooing midwesterners to take the train as paying passengers. The railroad executives said yes, but the girl, Frances Ryan, said, "No! Why at college you never even asked me for a date. Besides, I think you're stuck up."

The spurned suitor continued westward and north to Alaska, where he shot the White Horse rapids in a small boat, lived with Eskimos, and, from a Klondike miner who befriended him, acquired a collection of photographs which he used on the lecture platform.

When Lowell Thomas returned East, these lectures supported him while he studied constitutional law at Princeton. He was soon added to the Princeton faculty to teach public speaking. In 1916 he met one Dale Carnegie, from Missouri, who had launched a career as a public speaking teacher in the YMCAs of New York. That began a friendship which later was to become a business partnership; Carnegie—who changed his last name to match that of steel magnate Andrew Carnegie—organized and managed several touring companies that used Lowell Thomas's World War I material, while Thomas did a personal round-the-world tour. Carnegie went on to fame as the founder of a school for public speaking and as the author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

The summer after he enrolled in Princeton, Thomas went west for further adventures. At the Grand Canyon he and a cowboy from Utah found a rusty cable slung across the Colorado River. They suspended a board from the cable and pulled themselves across, hand over hand, 200 feet in the air. He also returned to Alaska, this time with a movie camera, bringing back material for more lectures. The enterprising instructor by now thought of these as shows, not lectures.

His skill as a showman led one member of his audience, Secretary of the Interior Franklin Lane, to suggest that he go to Europe, where World War I was raging, and report what he saw to the American people. The secretary could provide letters to Allied commanders, but no cash. To raise the estimated \$100,000 he would need, Thomas went to Chicago meat packers. They hadn't forgotten his blackmail exposé, which had saved them millions.

Meanwhile, Thomas had been peppering Fran Ryan with letters. She finally said yes. They were married in Denver. She went with him to World War I. That was their honeymoon. He to cover the war. She with the Red Cross.

Learning that one of Britain's ablest generals, Sir Edmund Allenby, had been sent to command their forces in Egypt, which was a backwater of this war, Thomas sniffed news in the air. Leaving Fran with the Red Cross in Italy, he and cameraman Harry Chase sailed for Cairo. There they joined Allenby's brilliant campaign which captured Jerusalem from the

Turks. For months Thomas—one of three reporters covering this campaign—wrote and Chase photographed. Once, a crowd of Moslems nearly tore them apart for photographing the Hebron mosque with its tomb of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But Thomas remained, as one admiring writer put it, "fate's pet child."

In Jerusalem, the 23-year-old Lowell Thomas caught sight of a young man in Arab garb, but this was no swarthy, hawk-nosed son of Ishmael. He was blond, beardless, and blue-eyed. Again the reporter's nose sniffed news. He went to the new British governor of Jerusalem, Sir Roland Storrs.

"Who is this blue-eyed, fair-haired fellow wandering about the bazaars wearing the curved sword of a prince of . . .," Thomas began. But before he finished the question, Storrs opened the door of an adjoining room, where the man was sitting reading a book on archaeology.

"I want you to meet Colonel Lawrence, the uncrowned king of Arabia," said Storrs. Thus they met, the shy, almost mystical military genius and the American reporter who would make him famous, and make himself famous in the process.

T. E. Lawrence, incidentally, stood five feet three inches, about a foot shorter than Peter O'Toole, who many years later played him in the Hollywood *Lawrence of Arabia*. That was just one of many liberties with history the film makers took. Another was that the American reporter, who was supposed to be Lowell Thomas, was shown taking his own photographs. Actually, Harry Chase took the pictures. The reporter and the photographer covered Lawrence's further exploits together. Donning Arab garb, Thomas joined Lawrence in Arabia, the only reporter with this guerrilla campaign which saw the young English officer weld the often quarreling desert tribes into a fighting force that helped Allenby overthrow the centuries-old Ottoman Empire. The shy archaeologist-military leader and the confident adventurer-journalist were a study in contrasts, but they got along well. The words and pictures Thomas and Chase put together provided the material for two shows, "With Allenby in Palestine" and "With Lawrence in Arabia," which Thomas later combined and presented all over the world. His first book, *With Lawrence in Arabia*, in 1924, became a best-seller, went through more than one hundred editions, and is still in print. All in all, Thomas had pulled off one of the great journalistic scoops of all times.

But before the platform shows and the best-seller, Thomas returned to Europe. The Armistice had just been signed and the French military leader, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, forbade journalists to enter Germany. Thomas and a *Collier's* editor, Webb Waldron, smuggled themselves through the lines by ambulance, hiding under blankets and stretchers. They arrived in time to watch street fighting between left and right wing factions. A machine gun chattered at them and a stray bullet went through Thomas's hat.

The two journalists returned to Paris. At a peace conference they gave President Woodrow Wilson firsthand news about what was going on inside

Germany. As his way of saying thanks, Wilson sent them home aboard the captured German liner *Leviathan*, occupying the kaiser's imperial suite! Things like that seemed to happen to Lowell Thomas.

Back in the United States, Thomas presented his shows on Allenby's "last crusade" and on Lawrence of Arabia to filled houses. He had other illustrated productions, on Americans in France and the postwar revolution in Germany, but his Allenby and Lawrence shows really packed them in. After a record twelve-week run in Madison Square Garden, Thomas combined Allenby and Lawrence into one show, which he took to London's Covent Garden. English audiences applauded this young American's illustrated tales of the British Near East campaigns. England had not even known of its desert hero, Lawrence of Arabia, until an American told them. The show was such a smash hit that the opera season at Covent Garden was postponed. As a prologue to his motion picture, Thomas gave them a moonlight-on-the-Nile stage set, the dance of the seven veils, and the Welsh Guards band. Of the Lawrence part of the show, one spectator commented:

And then, the American speaker's illustrated story of the modern Arabian nights, a fantastic and unbelievably romantic tale that was kept secret during the war, and even now would never have been told but for Lowell Thomas, the only person who went into the desert of holy Arabia and ate dates and drank camels milk with mystery man Lawrence, who by personal bravery and by brilliant diplomacy accomplished in a few months what Sultans and statesmen of the Near East failed to do in the past eight hundred years.

People came not only from all over the British Isles, but from other countries of Europe and from all parts of the British Empire. Thousands queued for hours to buy tickets. Spectators included King George and Queen Mary, who later invited Thomas to Balmoral Castle, Winston Churchill, Lloyd George, Bernard Shaw, French Premier Georges Clemenceau, King Feisal of Syria, Field Marshal (Lord) Allenby, and on several nights the slight figure of T. E. Lawrence, who sent this note:

My Dear Lowell Thomas:

I saw your show last night. Thank God the lights were out!

T. E. Lawrence

They met again. Lawrence urged Thomas to return to America. The shows were bringing Lawrence unwanted publicity. He was being hounded by reporters, editors, autograph hunters, and, as Thomas later recalled, "representatives of the gentler sex whom he feared more than a Turkish army corps. He said that as a result of the weeks I already had been speaking in London he had received some twenty-eight proposals of marriage, and they were arriving on every mail. When Lawrence found out that there was little immediate prospect of my sailing for America, and

when he discovered that he was being followed by an Italian countess who wore a wristwatch on her ankle, he fled from London.''

After moving the show to the vast Royal Albert Hall, he again broke records, addressing as many as 10,000 people in a day; later, at Queen's Hall, a total of more than a million saw and heard him. Then Thomas toured the English-speaking world. As he traveled he gathered material for future shows, spending his earnings freely to encounter new sights and adventures. Two years were spent in India, Burma, Malaya, and the then closed country of Afghanistan. The Indian Army assigned an officer who was a linguist to accompany him, after which this Englishman, Major Francis Yeats-Brown, wrote a best-seller himself, *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, later filmed by Hollywood.

The love of adventure never stopped. Neither did the close calls. Thomas was often injured. He walked or hobbled away from many accidents, including a plane crash in 1922 in the Spanish desert, a nearly fatal fall from a horse in Tibet, many broken bones in mountaineering, and a close call in a fire in a Juneau, Alaska, hotel.

Here is his description of the plane crash, shortly after takeoff, reported in one of his books, *European Skyways*:

But we were turning flat and we were losing flying speed. We got around and were facing in the opposite direction, when in what seemed like less than a split second she nosed down. The eyes of the French mechanic sitting facing me were wide with terror. He screamed. Then the crash came. There was a terrific shock and roar. From blazing sunlight we had suddenly dived into a world of blackness. But this was not caused by my being knocked unconscious. It was merely that the plane, diving into the desert, had thrown up the earth like the eruption of a volcano. The moment we struck, the pilot yelled, the mechanic yelled, and for all I know, I yelled too. At any rate, the same thought flashed into the minds of all three of us—that the plane was in flames and that we'd be cooked alive.

We all three jumped from the wreck at the same time. Dived, instead of jumped, would be a better word, but the accurate word isn't in any language. We each gave a wild leap and went over the fuselage head first. Never in my life, except that midnight in Berlin when the machine gun started spitting at us, had I moved with such speed. Scrambling to my feet I staggered a few yards to get clear of the plane, expecting the gasoline tanks to explode. But the pilot and mechanic stayed where they fell. Judging from the groans and cries both were considerably injured. . . .

I ran to Noailhat first because he had been sitting in front of the cockpit, the "golden chair," right behind the engine, and I imagined that he might be in far worse shape. He was holding his head. I pulled the mask off his face and saw a tremendous bulge in his forehead. He was also clutching his chest as though he might be injured internally. After hauling him out of range of the gasoline tanks in case they might explode, I picked up the mechanic, who seemed to be in equally great pain and had blood streaming down his face.

The years abroad were followed by new tours in the United States. Finally, "Tommy" and Fran Thomas had had enough. They had quit counting after 100 voyages. They bought a farm near Pawling, New York. Lowell Thomas settled down to write books. And, over the years, with his incredible drive and energy and with the help of another writer, he wrote some fifty-five books!

Buying the farm wiped out the Thomas savings account. To replenish it, he scheduled another speaking tour and at the same time contracted with the Doubleday publishing house for the fattest advance ever given an author up to that time, in return for the promise of six books. To help him, Thomas hired a New York *World* feature writer and puzzle editor, Prosper Buranelli. It was the start of a lifetime alliance. They began turning out best-sellers, biographies of adventurous men, usually in the first person, "as told to Lowell Thomas," to make them more vivid. Later Buranelli helped write many of Thomas's newscasts and several thousand newsreels for 20th Century Fox. Their first best-seller was the story of Count Luckner, "The Sea Devil," World War I German sea captain who commanded a clipper ship, complete with sails, and successfully raided Allied shipping.

Thomas first encountered radio in 1923 in London when he visited his wife and their new baby, Lowell, Jr., in a nursing home. Cameraman Harry Chase had rigged a crystal radio set with which to entertain Fran.

From time to time a report of his adventures would be broadcast. In 1924, for example, he and China adventurer Upton Close shared a microphone. Both would one day be commentators, but would approach their work quite differently: Close as a strong, even extreme, political partisan, Thomas as neutral as he could manage to be. In 1925 over KDKA, Pittsburgh, Lowell Thomas in a one-hour ad-lib broadcast told the story of man's first flight around the world, in which he had taken part. In 1930 came that request from CBS to audition as a replacement for the colorful Floyd Gibbons. That launched the radio news career which has spanned nearly half a century.

At first, NBC and CBS carried the newscast jointly, NBC the eastern part of the country, CBS the west. A year later, Sun Oil replaced *The Literary Digest* as the sponsor and NBC became the sole carrier for sixteen years. In 1947 a new sponsor, Proctor & Gamble, switched him to CBS. Also, for twenty years General Motors was his sponsor. Year after year his twice nightly newscasts either led all other newscasts in audience ratings or were close behind the leader. No program of any kind was on the air nearly as long, and the total of tune-ins all those years must compare with the number of stars in the universe or the grains of sand on the beach.

Western Union once in the early thirties decided as a promotional stunt to see how many people listened to Lowell Thomas and offered to accept free all the telegrams listeners would send. The NBC announcer made the offer over the air. Within a few hours Western Union had 265,654 telegrams, including several thousand sent by rival Postal Telegraph. In 1936, at the peak of his popularity, his audience was estimated at 20 million. The 1940 estimate was 10 million listeners. In a



1939 poll 24.8 percent of the respondents chose him as their favorite radio news commentator. H. V. Kaltenborn was chosen by 20.8 percent. Other choices were: Edwin C. Hill, 9.8 percent; Walter Winchell, 6.8 percent; Boake Carter, 6.0 percent; Raymond Gram Swing, 3.8 percent; and Elmer Davis, 3.5 percent. In 1947, when Thomas changed networks, his estimated audience was 8 million listeners nightly.

An example of his reach occurred the December evening he led his newscast with an appeal on behalf of a 14-year-old boy ailing in a New Jersey hospital bed with acute nephritis, for which watermelon juice was prescribed. Did anyone, Thomas asked, have a ripe watermelon anywhere near New Jersey? Within minutes NBC had received dozens of calls offering watermelons. And as offers poured in from hundreds of miles away, a truckload of watermelons escorted by two motorcycle cops was on its way to the hospital from Philadelphia.

Thomas wrote and edited his newscasts with the help of Prosper Buranelli and Louis Sherwin, a veteran drama critic and columnist. Once Thomas insisted that an honorary degree offered to him be given to Buranelli. "The man who has been with me for so many years deserves this." Buranelli modestly declined, so Thomas sent someone to the college to accept the degree on Buranelli's behalf. Lowell Thomas himself has been awarded some thirty honorary doctorates plus many other honors, including broadcasting's Peabody Award. A mountain range in Antarctica has been named for him, as well as an island in the Arctic, a school in the Himalayas, and a school on Long Island. There are museums devoted to him in Ohio and Colorado. He has been elected to five halls of fame and the University of Denver is building a law school-communications center to be named for him.

Another writer during the early days was Abe Schecter, the first news director at NBC. When the Press-Radio War dried up NBC's access to wire service news, Schecter turned to the telephone to develop stories for Thomas, who, as Schecter put it, "had a million dollar voice but not a nickel's worth of news." Schecter soon learned that he could reach governors, senators, cabinet secretaries, and generals by identifying himself as being with "the Lowell Thomas office." Sometimes as a sweetener he threw in a couple of passes to a Rudy Vallee broadcast. Thomas, Buranelli, and Schecter frequently scooped the newspapers, which were trying to starve radio into submission.

Several distinctive features marked the radio style Thomas developed. His writing was conversational, making frequent use of incomplete sentences, just as people may speak in sentence fragments, and as Thomas had done for years on the platform. He often reported news in anecdote form, telling stories in terms of the people involved and using direct quotations. Here's an example, October 5, 1932:

The Democrats are all excited over that reunion last night between Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt and ex-Governor Alfred E. Smith. Al walked across the platform in Albany, grabbed Mr. Roosevelt's hand, and exclaimed, "How are you, you old potato?" This is the greeting that Al reserves for his real old friends.

The following report, February 16, 1933, typifies Thomas's anecdotal style:

The principal thing the whole world is talking about today is the attempted assassination of Mr. Roosevelt. Mayor Cermak of Chicago was struck by one of the bullets intended for our next president.

Mrs. W. L. Cross of Miami grabbed the would-be assassin's wrist while he was firing. She it was who deflected the bullets from our President-elect. The gunman is a bricklayer known in Paterson and Hackensack, New Jersey, as a hater of the rich and powerful, a lone-wolf soapbox orator.

The Miami police and Mr. Roosevelt's bodyguard had a hard time rescuing Zangara from the mob.

He employed a lot of what newsmen call "color" and "human interest." An example, May 23, 1934:

It was doom for a desperado who might be called Public Enemy Number 2. A party of officers outshot Clyde Barrow, the notorious Texas rattlesnake, and his flaunting girl friend, the cigar-smoking Bonnie Parker.

Here's another, personalized and conversational, on June 15, 1934:

Over in Europe they call us not Uncle Sam but Uncle Shylock. But I should say that as a debt collector Uncle Shylock is a failure. Of all the millions that were due us today, 477 of them, how much do you suppose we got? One hundred and sixty-six thousand dollars from the little fellow who pays—Finland.

He was criticized for using too many adjectives, but Thomas replied that he deletes adjectives and uses the fewest possible words. He once explained his writing style this way:

Although it all goes down in type, I never consider that it is written. This is because I feel there is a wide gulf between spoken and written language. I put my material in what I consider conversational form; that is, I talk it onto paper.

As far as possible I avoid taking sides, and treat the news as the day-to-day adventures of mankind. To me almost everything people do is thrilling and dramatic. From the potpourri that comes in from far and near I select the stories that are important, the stories that interest me, and each evening I end with those that amuse me.

With fellow newscasters H. V. Kaltenborn and John B. Kennedy, Thomas started *The Commentator*, a monthly magazine. During the five years it survived it carried many thoughtful articles by working journalists. Thomas served as its editor-in-chief. His backer was financier Charles Payson, who later brought the New York Mets.

As if all of this wasn't enough, Thomas also narrated Fox Movietone newsreels for seventeen years. His was the voice of Fox Movietone to 80 million moviegoers a week. He was even involved in the making of thirty or forty feature-length nonfiction pictures, many of which, as he put it, "turned up to haunt me on TV." Among them, *The Blonde Captive* and *Mussolini Speaks*.

In 1957 he embarked on a series of "High Adventure with Lowell Thomas" expeditions, starting in New Guinea, where he joined a tribe of cannibals for dinner. The tribe had just digested the last of thirty-five members of a neighboring tribe, but the meal Thomas shared with them was a bit less exotic. At least the tribe didn't sample a pot roast of newscaster! His next "High Adventure" took him to an ice island in the Arctic and a visit to the North Pole. The series also showed a film shot in 1949, a high adventure that was nearly his last. Accompanied by Lowell, Jr., now a man, Thomas at the age of 57 entered Tibet. Father and son were the seventh and eighth Americans to reach Lhasa, the capital. In his book, *Out of This World*, Lowell Thomas, Jr., described what happened on the cross-Himalayan horseback journey out of Tibet:

We were on our fifth day homeward bound from the Holy City, and two days from Gyantse, when the gods frowned.

I was in the lead when Dad, a few yards behind, decided to remount. Suddenly there was a commotion and a scuffle. I turned around in time to see him sail through the air and land on a pile of sharp rocks. His horse had whirled and bolted, throwing him violently to the ground, while he had one foot in the stirrup and the other halfway over the saddle.

Dad was unable to get up — completely out of breath, and white as the mountain snows above us. He struggled to keep consciousness. Such a mishap at an altitude where there's a lean mixture of oxygen can spell the end quickly. A weaker heart might not have withstood the shock. Not until he reached the hospital in New York more than a month later did we learn that he had broken his right leg in eight places, just below the hip.

This turn of fate caught us pretty much off guard. We had no doctor, and our first-aid kit was some miles behind with our slow-moving caravan. It was getting late — only another hour till dark — and it was cold. Ralung, the closest village and our immediate destination, lay more than four miles across the plain. What to do? The nearest medical help, we believed, was in Gyantse, more than two stages away, but even that was doubtful. We could do nothing but wait on the trail, hoping our caravan would catch up with us before dark and that interpreter Tsewong, whom I sent galloping on to Ralung, could round up some villagers to come out to help carry Dad in.

Fortunately, we didn't have to wait too long for our sirdar and his yaks and donkeys. Unloading our bedding, we wrapped Dad in a sleeping bag and lifted him onto an army cot. But our first-aid kit contained no morphine. I had nothing to relieve his agony, to ease the effects of shock.

Four hours later, after a painful ride through the darkness and the cold that goes with the nights at those altitudes, my father at last reached shelter. It was only with the utmost difficulty that the six peasants who had helped me carry him across the plain were able to hoist his folding bed up the rickety ladder that led to the sleeping quarters of the house in which we stayed.

That first night was one of the worst Dad has ever experienced. The shock and exposure brought on high fever and frequent fainting. His shattered hip gave him the very devil. No position was comfortable. Sleep was impossible. It was a long gasping night of agony and worry in just about the most out-of-the-way spot you can find on this planet. Imagine being stricken in a land where the people don't believe in doctors, relying on the lamas to cure their ills through herbs, incantations and ceremony.

What followed were twenty painful days of being carried along mountain trails by stretcher over the main range of the world's loftiest mountains to reach a city with an airport. The American air attaché to India was waiting there with a C-47. Thomas eventually reached New York, where a leading orthopedic surgeon operated on the leg and rebroke all the breaks. Nine months later the newscaster-explorer threw his crutches away, was best man at his son's wedding, got out his skis, and took off on an expedition to Alaska.

"High Adventure" was followed by another long television adventure series, "The World of Lowell Thomas," this one with the BBC of London.

Cinerama, the process of filming and projecting three adjoining images to create an extremely wide picture, was a perfect vehicle for him. Thomas narrated and helped finance *This Is Cinerama* and two later Cinerama films, *The Seven Wonders of the World* and *Search for Paradise*. A television series, "Lowell Thomas Remembers," used old newsreel footage to recall events of earlier years. His business interests include Capital Cities Corporation, which owns television and radio stations, Fairchild Publications, and a number of newspapers, including the *Kansas City Star* and the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

According to one admiring writer:

Among other things, he has been miner, editor, cook, janitor, reporter, athlete, cowboy, professor, soldier, flyer, explorer, radio-TV personality. He has written some fifty books. He has traveled by every known means of locomotion, from perambulator to pinto pony, from horseless carriage to helicopter, from rickshaw to roller coaster, from jitney to jet pursuit plane. He has rubbed elbows with presidents and kings, with knights of the road and Knights of the Garter, with soldiers of fortune and misfortune. It is quite probable that he is on first-name terms with more people, famous and otherwise, than anyone alive, and he treats them all alike.

His friend Dale Carnegie said, "I have never heard anyone criticize Lowell Thomas for anything. If he has even one enemy in this world, I don't know who it is."

One reason why Lowell Thomas has so many personal friends is that he is as good a listener as he is a speaker. "Here's a man who really *listens* to you," an interviewer wrote. "More, a man who remembers what he has heard."

His fifty-room mansion, Hammersley Hill, a 90-minute drive from New York City, was built as the home of one of the builders of New York skyscrapers. It included 3,000 acres, a downhill ski area with chalet and 1,000-foot ski slope, a softball field with bleachers, a stable and horse corral, two lakes stocked with fish, a swimming pool, a tower from which five states can be seen on a clear day, and the thirteen-room broadcasting studio from which Thomas delivered many of his broadcasts and did television shows and recording work. There were also film-editing facilities and a small theater.

The living was easy after he became established as a newscaster and organized his life at Hammersley Hill. With Buranelli and several others on Thomas's private staff working out of an office in Rockefeller Center, Thomas could, if he chose, spend much of each working day skiing on his private ski run, golfing on his private golf course, and otherwise enjoying life's bounties. However, more likely than not, he would be hard at work at some project or other. After lunch he and Buranelli would confer by telephone about the day's news. Items were teletyped to Hammersley Hill, where Thomas would give the script a final editing and then, on cue from New York, would read the news of the day to millions of listeners.

During the days when he broadcast from a CBS studio in New York, he usually reached the microphone with just moments to spare. Writer Eleanor Harris noted:

. . . people always enjoy watching him arrive at the CBS building. Followed by his panting secretary, he invariably pounds up the street at a dead run. He skids into the building, jumps in and out of the elevator, gallops down the hall to the studio—and comes to a dead stop on the threshold. There he clears his throat, adjusts his tie, and strolls calmly up to the microphone. A second later he's on the air.

Thomas never stopped traveling, but with a radio studio complete with an engineer at home, there was no need to commute. He did more than live and work at Hammersley Hill. He turned some of his colleagues and friends into his neighbors, Edward R. Murrow, Norman Vincent Peale, and Thomas E. Dewey among them. Dewey, then a New York City district attorney, was planning on a summer in Connecticut when Lowell Thomas phoned to ask if he had seen the Pawling countryside and if his political future really lay in Connecticut. After that, Dewey needed little persuading; Thomas helped him acquire the dairy farm estate that became his home.

Thomas built many of the homes around Hammersley Hill. He built a country club which he donated to the community. The large stones

surrounding its fireplace Thomas had collected around the world: from an Egyptian pyramid, a Carthage ruin, the great wall of China, the Taj Mahal, St. Peter's, the Coliseum, Westminster Abbey, Hitler's bunker, and even the Washington Monument, Rockefeller Center, and the Empire State Building.

Lowell Thomas was the first reporter to broadcast from a ship at sea, a mountaintop, a jungle, a plane, and a helicopter. Several hundred of his broadcasts have been from ski resorts, for Thomas is an avid skier who has tried the mountains on every continent, including Antarctica. He skis anywhere there is snow, has helped raise money for the volunteer National Ski Patrol, is a part owner of half a dozen ski resorts including the famous resort at Stowe, Vermont, and has fractured legs, ribs, and shoulder bones. Often he has flown by ski plane or helicopter to a mountaintop so that he could zoom down where no one else had ever skied. On his fiftieth birthday he went over one of the most dangerous ski runs in the world, at the head of the Tuckerman ravine in New Hampshire, nearly straight down a 1,000-foot precipice. "For the first two hundred feet, no trouble," Thomas remembered. "Then, a crevasse. I don't quite know what happened. But in a flash I was going end over end. A fall that continued for the remaining eight hundred feet. Once you lose your balance on the Tuckerman Headwall there isn't a thing you can do about it. Anyhow, I had proved a point, whatever it was." Thomas landed at the bottom, bruised, but with no broken bones this time.

Five feet ten inches tall, with a wiry build, Thomas has enjoyed excellent health well into his advanced years despite more than his share of broken bones from skiing and that accident in Tibet. A student asked him for an interview after a dinner speech. He declined, saying he had to be up early to go skiing. That was the winter of 1974 in Minnesota. Thomas was 82! Handsome in a rather stiff way, it has been said that "when he smiles, only the lower part of his face shifts." His distinguishing features are icy blue eyes and a mustache which he has occasionally shaved half-off absentmindedly. His energy comes from a body conditioned by continual exercise. He drinks sparingly and eats little.

Despite his usually controlled and deadpan appearance, Lowell Thomas certainly knows how to laugh, as can be attested by anyone who has heard several now famous recordings of newscasts during which he was attacked by fits of the giggles. Try as he would to regain his composure, he kept laughing. The newscasts became a shambles.

One associate said Lowell Thomas makes the listener feel he is hearing an average guy who happens to be near a news ticker.

According to writer Buranelli, Thomas really has few absolute opinions—or at any rate is reluctant to air them. "His only enemies are rattlesnakes, cannibals, Fascists and Communists." In *Magic Dials*, an early layman's guide to radio and television, published in 1939, Thomas did not include himself when he spoke of "Radio columnists—who specialize in a highly personal 'slant' on the news, or who editorialize." But he did include Gabriel Heatter, Boake Carter, and Walter ("Flash") Winchell.

"I have a suspicion," he once noted, "that there is little crusader blood in my veins. . . . I find that it is easier for me to play the role of observer, just a fellow who is vastly interested in this earthly shadow show."

Son Lowell Thomas, Jr., credited by his father with saving his life in Tibet, has been prominent in Republican politics in Alaska, achieving the office of lieutenant governor. He is a well-known explorer in his own right. Father and son have always been close. One favorite story recalls the time at Mt. Tremblant in Quebec after a full day of skiing in minus 40°F, the senior Thomas lost his voice in the middle of his broadcast. Lowell, Jr., seated at the table with a stopwatch to time the broadcast, suddenly had the script and microphone pushed in front of him. The son proved more than equal to the broadcast emergency. He picked up the newscast where the father had stopped. His voice and pacing were so like his father's that most listeners were not aware of the switch.

The only time anyone can recall Lowell Thomas losing his temper on the air and presenting angry commentary was on the day in 1945 that he inspected the Buchenwald concentration camp. Listeners, deeply moved, recognized the force in him, a force he usually held back.

Here is a portion of his broadcast of April 18, 1945:

There was justice indeed in General Patton's order compelling German civilians to make a sightseeing tour of the Nazi prison camp near the city of Weimar. There have been endless rumors about the horrors of Hitler prison camps, rumors that now become a reality as those places of Nazi ferocity are captured by American forces. One of the worst was at Weimar, the city so famous in the annals of German liberalism and enlightenment—Weimar, with its shrines dedicated to the poets Goethe and Schiller. There is no need of trying to describe the ghastly scenes, but there was justice in compelling the citizens of Weimar to behold them.

He also told how the mayor of Weimar and his wife were taken to Buchenwald and were so shocked they went home and committed suicide.

Russell Crouse, coauthor of *Life with Father* and *The Sound of Music*, said of Lowell Thomas: "When it comes to the expression of opinion he is as noncommittal as the microphone itself. He takes no sides. He never analyzes, never makes profound pronouncements, delivers no messages, sounds no alarms. Even his best friends do not always know where he stands politically." A registered Republican who cast his first vote for Democrat Woodrow Wilson, Thomas might best be characterized as a moderate who feels his views should not intrude in his reports. Like H. V. Kaltenborn, Lowell Thomas was a friend and admirer of Herbert Hoover, saying, "He was the wisest man I ever knew, with a vast knowledge and understanding of the world, its inhabitants, and its problems." Hoover was often a guest at Hammersley Hill. He once wrote to Thomas, "If I have to have a reincarnation I would prefer it to be Lowell Thomas above all others. It would be an eternal life of adventure, of courage and of public service."

A 1943 editorial in the Cincinnati *Times Star* proposed the native Ohioan as a possible GOP candidate for national office, calling him "a simon-pure Republican and a New Deal foe." Although Thomas *was* a New Deal foe, he was at pains to hide it on the air and for many years maintained cordial relations with his neighbor in nearby Hyde Park, along with a softball team rivalry. Each year "The Roosevelt Packers," managed by the president in person, faced Thomas's "Nine Old Men." Both team names referred to President Roosevelt's unsuccessful effort to pack the Supreme Court with additional members to dilute its conservatism. The players who at one time or another sauntered up to bat for these two teams or others of equal caliber read like a celebrity roster of the thirties. They included F.D.R.'s original "Brains Trust," his sons, White House correspondents, comic Colonel Lemuel Q. Stoopnagle, actor Robert Montgomery, comic Lew Lehr, "Believe It or Not" Robert Ripley, Congressman Hamilton Fish, columnist Westbrook Pegler, former boxing champ Gene Tunney, singer Lanny Ross, critic Heywood Broun, cartoonist Rube Goldberg, composer Deems Taylor, the Amateur Hour's Major Bowes, correspondent Quentin Reynolds, and Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau. Actress Anna Mae Wong once umpired one inning and was knocked cold by a "liner" from the bat of novelist Homer Croy. Babe Ruth went up to the plate and struck out after swatting at three fastballs, unaware that Thomas had sent a ringer to the mound, "Cannonball" Baker, the fastest softball pitcher in the country.

Manager Franklin D. Roosevelt once asked manager Lowell Thomas what he'd sell his first baseman for, looking over at Hamilton Fish with whom Roosevelt frequently engaged in political battle ("Batton, Barton and Fish"). Roosevelt offered him 30¢. True to tradition, both managers groaned before each game that this year their teams could not possibly win. One letter from the president began:

Dear Lowell:

If you describe your team as a team of invalids, I can only tell you that my team came directly from the emergency ward of the hospital.

When his two neighbors, Roosevelt and Dewey, faced each other in the 1944 presidential race, Thomas was supporting Dewey publicly. An article, "Meet the Deweys," under the Lowell Thomas byline appeared in *The Ladies Home Journal* just before the election, along with someone else on "Meet the Roosevelts."

Before World War II, for one year he had the only television news program in the world; the first newscast was on October 19, 1943. Then Washington blanked out TV during the war. Later he did not resume because he didn't want to be tied down to New York City or Washington, as the medium then demanded. Years later he said:

A disembodied voice carries with it some of the mystery of space.  
But if you attach a face to it, and put that face within five feet of you on



the television screen—you may say, “Why he looks just like Joe Doakes down the street. I wonder if he knows any more than I know.” Whereas, with radio, a voice from out in space carries with it some of the majesty and authority of the Almighty.

When asked what in retrospect he regarded as the outstanding moments or events in his life, here was his reply:

First, those years as a youngster in a booming, boisterous, wide open gold mining camp where there was always excitement in the air—shootings, mine accidents, rodeos and so on. Next, I would list my Chicago years as a newspaper reporter where almost every day had its thrill, such as the morning when I was sent out to cover the Eastland disaster, the cruise ship that rolled over in the Chicago River with a loss of over a thousand lives.

Also during this same period were the journeys I made in vain, to Denver, to try and win Fran. This also included my first two expeditions to Alaska and the Yukon.

Looking back it seems as though I lived a lifetime during World War One when I was with the Allied armies on the Western Front, in Italy, the Balkans, with Allenby and Lawrence in the Near East, and finally the German Revolution.

This was followed by a tour of many of the cities of the world, showing the pictures and story of the fall of Jerusalem, of driving the Turks from the Holy Land, and the desert war with Lawrence, all of which was an unparalleled experience.

After that came the part I played in the first flight around the world; nearly 20 years with Fox Movietone; and my 45 radio and television years. This period was interrupted by some twenty expeditions. For example, in 1963, I was lucky enough to be involved in the first flight ever made across the “bottom of the world,” from South Africa over the entire Antarctic, via the South Pole, to New Zealand. From there I flew alone to Australia, where my giant Australian friend Hercules McIntyre when he met me at Sydney said: “Lowell, you are the first ever to make the journey from Africa via the entire Antarctic and the Pole to Australia.”

The journey Lowell, Jr., and I made across the Himalayas to the Dalai Lama’s capital in 1949, the expedition he so graphically described in his book *Out of this World*, would have to be near the top of my list.

Then—one of the most satisfying, exciting, and frustrating of all my adventures, was the discovery of Cinerama, producing three shows in this medium before it fell into the hands of people who ruined it. In 1950 I had been lucky enough to bring Cinerama out of the laboratory where it had been for some fourteen years. Along with two earlier colleagues, Hazard “Buzz” Reeves and Fred Waller, and with the help of many talented people such as General Merian Cooper of King Kong fame, I had played a key role in what was a world-wide revolution. It was what we did with Cinerama that brought on the wide screen motion picture era. So, it is hard to say how anything could have been more exciting than what we did in producing “This is

Cinerama," "The Seven Wonders of the World," and "Search for Paradise." These three, presented in some twenty-four cities, yielded a greater gross than any entertainment in history. Then, alas, the process fell into the hands of people who didn't know what to do with it, and since then there has been no Cinerama.

Lowell Thomas continued his radio broadcasts until he was 84, his rich voice losing a little of its vibrancy over the years, but retaining qualities most people of any age might envy. In the spring of 1976 he called it quits, but he refused to admit to anything more than that he was giving up his news broadcasts. "I'll be off radio for a while, but there is nothing in the rumor that I am retiring. Nothing." Since then his television series, "Lowell Thomas Remembers," has kept his face and voice before the public. At the present writing, he is involved in other projects, including a two-volume autobiography.

In 1977, two years after his wife Fran died, Thomas wed 49-year-old Marianna Munn, executive director of an organization operating a clinic in Jerusalem for mothers and children. Thomas had been on its board of directors. The week he was married, he was also called to the White House to receive the Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian award.

For millions upon millions of Americans across a span of three generations, Lowell Thomas will be remembered for his warm nightly greeting, "Good evening, everybody," and that famous closing, "So long until tomorrow."

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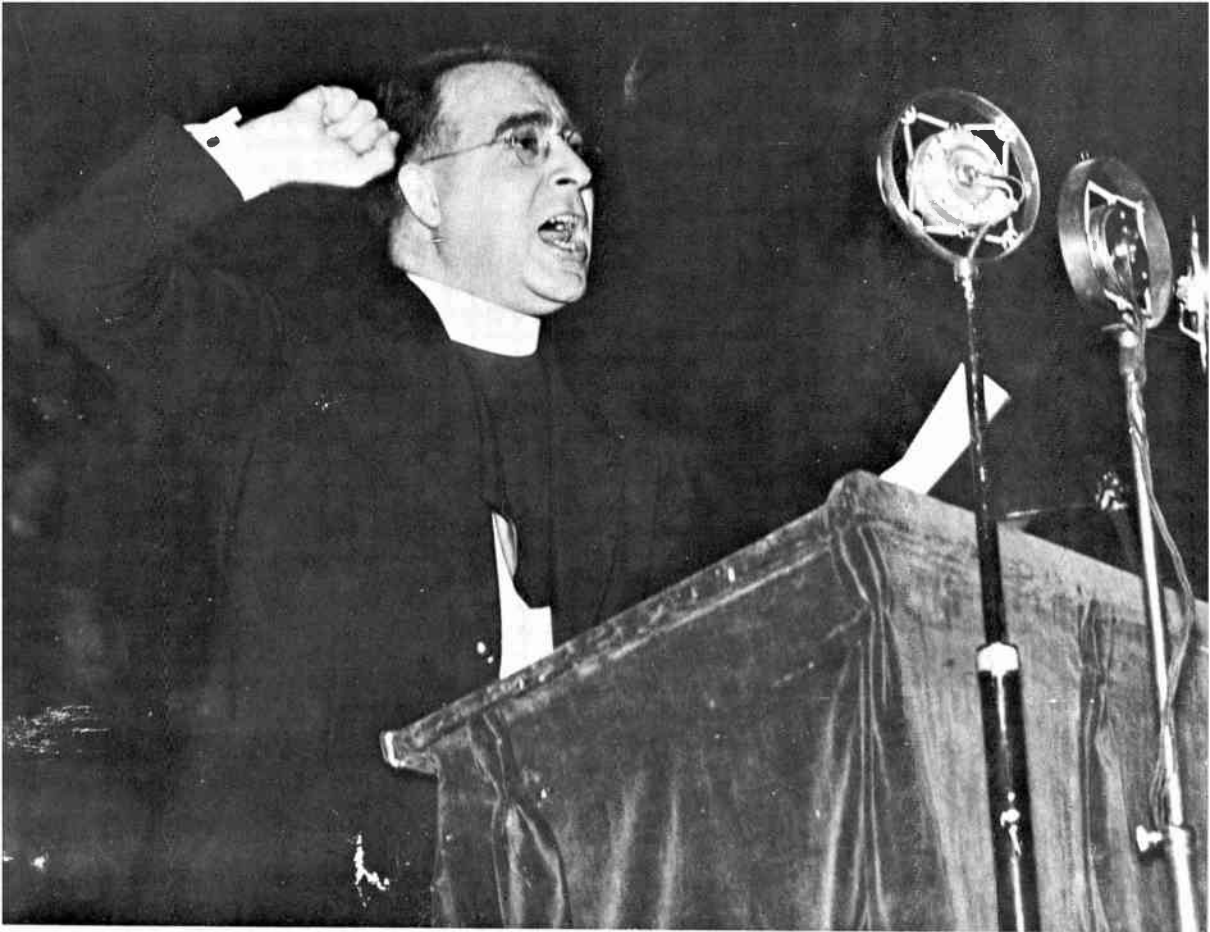
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courtesy Wide World Photos

*"Who will free me from this turbulent priest?"*

—HENRY II

# Father Coughlin

MILLIONS of Americans might have wished they could overhear the conversation between the priest and the president, each a dynamic speaker who could sway millions with his voice. Father Charles Coughlin had supported Franklin Delano Roosevelt during his first campaign in 1932, but as the reelection campaign neared, relations between priest and president had grown so strained that hardly anything was left to say. The conversation lagged. And then, desperately, this:

*Roosevelt:* "How's your Great Dane, Pal, feeling?"

*Coughlin:* "Fine. How's Fala?"

*Roosevelt:* "Fine."

It was no use. Within a short time there would be only hostility. The gulf between the "Squire of Hyde Park" and the "Radio Priest" was too great to bridge.

How did a parish priest acquire such importance? How did he acquire fame and a small fortune? The priesthood is hardly the ordinary path to national power, fame, and fortune. But then Charles Edward Coughlin (pronounced KOG-lin) was no ordinary priest, and he had taken no vow of poverty.

No one ever called Father Coughlin a journalist, unlike the other radio commentators in this book. But an examination of radio commentary would be incomplete without him because of the immense audience that regularly listened to his political comments and because of the impact of those comments upon the political life of the nation.

He was born on October 25, 1891, the year Pope Leo XIII issued his famous *Rerum Novarum*, a manifesto that was the Roman Catholic answer to Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. It proposed solutions to the evils of the Industrial Revolution, rejecting the solutions of socialism and communism. *Rerum Novarum* codified many of the ideas of social Catholicism, which called for trade unions that did not create class dissension, an end to child labor, limits on the labor asked of women, reasonable working hours, and other social legislation. Coughlin was imbued with the concepts of *Rerum Novarum* and nineteenth-century

social Catholicism, as well as fundamental Catholic doctrine. But he was to add some less appetizing notions.

Charles Coughlin's parents were lower middle-class Irish people who lived in Hamilton, Ontario. His father, a native of Indiana, had been a seaman on the St. Lawrence River as a young man and later became a bakery foreman. Charles was raised an only child. A younger sister died at the age of three months. He attended Catholic schools and graduated from St. Michael's College in Toronto. He was fullback on the rugby team and took part in the dramatic society. His grades were generally good, but he had problems with economics, the subject upon which he would later build his early reputation. He was a sturdy, blue-eyed youth, five feet ten inches tall. When he grew older he would be inclined to heaviness, but as a youth he was a fine broth of a boy. On the rugby field he was "Chuck."

After graduation he entered Toronto's St. Basil's Seminary, run by the Basilian order, to train for the priesthood. When he was 22 Charles and two other seminarians were sent to St. Basil's College in Waco, Texas, to study and to teach. All three were athletes and looked young enough to get away with joining the college baseball team. The big game of the season was against Baylor, a much larger university in Waco—and Baptist. Playing illegally for Baylor was Tris Speaker. Coughlin played second base for St. Basil's, which had never beaten Baylor, but on this day upset it. Most of the fifty spectators, Baylor rooters, thereupon ran onto the field and, aided by some of the Baylor players, beat up as many St. Basil's players as they could lay their hands on, including Charles Coughlin, who would recall that day with relish. "It was worth it," he said.

The young Canadians returned to Toronto after a year in Texas. Coughlin was already showing considerable skill as a speaker. He was still a novice when he was chosen to deliver the Easter Sunday sermon at St. Basil's. After he was ordained, at age 25, Coughlin was assigned to Assumption College in Sandwich, Ontario. He taught English, logic, and psychology. He also directed the dramatic society. On weekends he was sent to nearby Detroit to assist at St. Agnes' Church, where he heard confessions, performed minor clerical duties, and, best of all for him, preached. Always close to his parents, Coughlin convinced them to leave Hamilton and move to Sandwich so he could live near them again. His father got work as a steel construction foreman.

When a change in the structure of the Basilian order required priests to take the vow of poverty, Father Coughlin and a few other priests chose to leave the order. He would be a secular priest under the bishop of the Detroit diocese.

After three years of parish duties in the Detroit area, Coughlin was assigned to build a Catholic church in the predominantly Protestant suburb of Royal Oak, thirteen miles north of Detroit. Only thirty-two Catholic families lived there, but Coughlin optimistically built a wooden church that could seat 600 souls. As before, Mr. and Mrs. Coughlin resettled nearby.

The new church was barely two weeks old when the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross on its lawn. Not only was Father Coughlin not intimidated, but he later actually joined a Klan funeral procession and helped conduct the service. "After that, we got along just fine," he recalled. To boost attendance, the former second baseman at St. Basil's College managed through contacts to get some professional baseball players to attend. When the Yankees came to town, Babe Ruth showed up, along with thousands of goggle-eyed fans alerted by Coughlin's publicity campaign. Over the priest's protest, Ruth decided to take up a collection at the entrance. He stationed a ballplayer at each door and shouted over the din, "You can't get in without your money." As the crowd surged in, Babe Ruth could also be heard shouting, "No change today! No change today! Keep moving! Don't block the door!" The collection was \$10,000 in a parish of thirty-two families. The young Father Coughlin discovered what many have discovered—showmanship doesn't hurt a bit, and people will pay for a little razzmatazz.

He thought of radio to raise funds to pay the church mortgage. After securing approval from his bishop, he arranged a broadcast on October 17, 1926, over WJR, a Detroit station owned by "Dick" Richards. Coughlin did not know it at the time, but Richards, owner of the Detroit Lions and eventual owner of several radio stations, was a bigot, whose attempts to distort newscasts would nearly cost him his broadcast licenses. An Episcopalian, he would also become one of Father Coughlin's staunchest backers.

That first broadcast was delivered at the church altar through a special line set up by WJR. Wearing his vestments, with a black biretta on his head, Father Coughlin gave a purely religious sermon. Enough letters came in to convince the station to make the sermon a regular 2 p.m. Sunday feature. These broadcasts—amidst jazz bands and balladeers—brought more and more letters, some of them including money. Attendance boomed at the church in Royal Oak. People even built houses in the suburb, because a Royal Oak address was becoming a status symbol. Three months after that first broadcast, Father Coughlin conducted the first novena of prayer ever broadcast. After two years of radio sermons, so much money had flowed into the church's coffers that Father Coughlin could plan a magnificent new stone church with a tall tower. By 1929 two important stations were also taking the Sunday sermons—WMAQ, Chicago, and WLW, Cincinnati. The postman delivered 3,000 letters a week.

Until 1930, Father Coughlin's magnetic voice was limited to sermons on man's faith. On January 12, three months after the stock market crashed, he attacked communism and socialism. The following Sunday he told listeners the choice was Christianity or communism. The week after that he attacked Bertrand Russell and a University of Wisconsin professor for their socialistic statements. With the economy collapsing, unemployment rising, and uncertainty everywhere, listeners were glad to get such clear statements of what was wrong.

Socialist leader Norman Thomas complained that Coughlin muddied the differences between socialism and communism and wanted air time to reply to him, but WJR refused; however, the station asked the priest not to mention the Socialist party by name. The broadcasts hitting the Red menace continued.

When a congressional committee investigating communism came to Detroit, Coughlin was asked to testify. He predicted a Communist revolution in the United States by 1933 and, astonishingly, he blamed Henry Ford. He noted that Ford sent ads to newspapers across the country calling for 30,000 additional assembly line workers in Detroit. The jobless poured in from all over the country in the middle of winter to stand outside the Ford gates. Said Coughlin, "There were no jobs for them and the only redress they had was to have the fire hose turned on them to drive them away."

Father Coughlin was also angry that Ford had signed a contract to build truck and tractor factories in Soviet Russia. Years later the two men would find common cause in their isolationism and pro-Nazi sympathies.

But those attitudes were not yet developed. They were not apparent in the early thirties as the Radio Priest spoke of the sacredness of labor and the need to hire men at a living wage.

In the fall of 1930 the CBS network picked up the broadcasts. Starting on October 5, they ran for twenty-five weeks. At 7 p.m., Sundays, Father Coughlin spoke to listeners over sixteen stations in twenty-three states, plus overseas listeners via shortwave. So many letters came in that fifty-five women were put to work to handle the mail and money. Catholics, Protestants, and Jews all wrote and sent in contributions.

On January 4, 1931, Coughlin intended to deliver a talk attacking international bankers and calling for a repudiation of the Treaty of Versailles, which he felt was causing the Depression. Learning of this, CBS asked him to tone down the broadcast. Coughlin replied that he would rather speak on a totally different subject. He did. In his talk he raked CBS over the coals for trying to muzzle him. The letters poured in supporting his plea against censorship. CBS executives stood mute as Father Coughlin went ahead the following Sunday with his original talk.

However, CBS had the last word. When the Coughlin contract expired, the network refused to renew it, announcing it was abolishing all commercial religious broadcasting. He tried to buy time on NBC, but was turned down. So he decided to create his own network. Helped by Richards and other broadcasters, he steadily built a chain of thirty-two stations from coast to coast.

Among the first were WOR, Newark (reaching New York City); WGAR, Cleveland; WGR, Buffalo; WLW, Cincinnati; KSTP, St. Paul; WTIC, Hartford; and WEEI, Boston. The money sent in by listeners more than paid the weekly costs of \$20,000 for clerical help and broadcast time to offer each Sunday "The Golden Hour of the Shrine of the Little Flower."

In 1933, Father Coughlin could tell an interviewer: "I have one hundred and six young women working here [145 employees by 1935]. I



pay them well. They handle the routine of the Shrine business. The Detroit post office has assigned the entire second floor of their building to me and other workers are there. I have my own printing office where reprints of my Sunday sermons are made. Upstairs my four private secretaries carry on. By the end of the season, more than two million pieces of literature will be sent out on requests from listeners. And it is all due to radio." During one record week, 350,000 letters arrived. When KSTP, St. Paul, asked listeners if they wanted to continue hearing Father Coughlin, 137,882 people wrote or phoned. All but 400 said yes.

The Depression was at its worst. More than 15 million persons were out of work. Breadlines and apple sellers were in the cities. Fear and hunger were everywhere. Bands of youths roamed aimlessly. Farmers plotted to foil the bank foreclosures and armed themselves against the sheriff. Men and women who could no longer bear to look at the pinched faces of their children went out and stole. More than a few picked through garbage cans for edibles.

It was plain that the systems and institutions upon which America depended did not work as they were supposed to. "The nation's business is business," President Coolidge had said. Well, businesses were going bankrupt or, at best, cutting back. Government was not making it any easier to provide a job or feed the children.

Something or somebody must be at fault, but it was hard to know who—unless you tuned to "The Golden Hour." Father Coughlin knew who was at fault and he said so every Sunday afternoon. People who could not afford a radio—many people—would walk across miles of country road to town to listen. All America listened. Estimates put the figure at 30 million people! Hoover's treasury secretary, Andrew Mellon, was to blame, he said. The Du Ponts were to blame. The international bankers were to blame; shadowy figures with names like Morgan, Rothschild, Kuhn, Loeb, Warburg had politicians dancing on their strings as they built their personal holdings at the world's expense. So said Father Coughlin. "Attune your ears long enough and you will be persuaded that our economic evils have been foisted upon us by the witchery of some preternatural agency over which good government has no control."

President Herbert Hoover was at fault for lending billions to foreign governments while refusing federal relief at home. He accused the president of "ardent zeal to protect the banking class—the banker's friend, the Holy Ghost of the rich, the protective angel of Wall Street." (He would later call Hoover "the greatest president of America in my lifetime.")

When Hoover ordered General Douglas MacArthur to break up the Bonus Army encampment in Washington, D.C., an angry Coughlin declared: "For the first time in the history of a civilized nation, ten thousand of its heroes, who had borne the brunt and hardship of battle while their fellow citizens remained at home to enjoy lucrative positions and immense war profits . . . have been told that there is no bread for them."

The Radio Priest also went after the Prohibitionists with great gusto.

“Fifty millions of dollars, according to the Anti-Saloon League’s own estimate—the greatest slush fund in the history of the Republic—passed through the organizations to finance dry legislation and propaganda,” he thundered one Sunday. He called for temperance, not abstinence. When a leading Prohibitionist, a Methodist clergyman, called American Legion conventions “drunken orgies,” Coughlin intimated that dead World War I soldiers had been insulted:

You and I, my friends, both abhor drunkenness. In common we both love temperance. Yet if the leaders of Prohibition can defend their policies only at the price of attacking lips which are silent and hearts which are broken, I prefer to cast my lot either with the dead soldier or with his living mother rather than with the sacrilegious cause which defiles them both.

Father Coughlin himself was a heavy cigarette smoker, but he drank sparingly.

The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America voted in favor of birth control by means of sexual abstinence. This is accepted by the Catholic church today, but not when Coughlin was preaching. His next radio sermon, entitled “The Great Betrayal,” stated that in the past “population was limited as the Almighty God saw fit to limit it—by war and pestilence and diseases and the marriage customs and fecundity of His Peoples.” This, he felt, was the natural, God-ordained means of population control. Birth control arguments, he hinted darkly, had a political-economic basis, and a connection to the doctrines of Lenin.

Father Coughlin was appalled by the rising divorce rate. He felt that woman’s place was in the home, producing and nurturing babies, not concerned with politics or a career. That was for men. He told a woman interviewer:

Woman is man’s inspiration. She always was and always will be. She must be. Women can do more to conquer the beast in man with beauty than with brains. And I don’t mean drug store beauty. I mean that beauty that comes from within. Women can do more with the gentleness of their voice than ten thousand armies with swords. We want women to have an education but we don’t want them to be engineers or pilots or such fanciful things. . . . Woman has no place on man’s level. She belongs above it. Women have finer passions, finer appreciation of beauty, finer depths of love.

When the Lindbergh baby was kidnaped, listeners heard an outpouring of sympathy to which they responded strongly, although people today might regard it as syrupy and overly sentimental. He addressed the kidnaper:

There is another mother, too—Anne Lindbergh! Do you realize that you are holding away from her arms flesh of her flesh, blood of

her blood? That you are not injuring the baby heart so much as you are crushing and breaking her heart, as if in a great press, making her bleed the wine of sorrow? My God, if you have any manliness, if you have the least spark of your own childhood, or for your own mother left in your heart, bring the baby to some orphanage, to some priest's house. Oh! If I could only do it, I would be glad to go there and take the child from your arms! . . .

I would like to tell you that this sacred little babe you are handling with your dirty hands—I would like to tell you that one time you, too, were just as he. One time you, too, were curly headed. Little soft hands, so lonely; heart so pure; soul pure as the driven snow. . . .

Most of his broadcasts now were devoted to economics, to a cure for the ills of the Depression. Echoing William Jennings Bryan ("You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold") and the Populists, Father Coughlin called for cheaper money, for raising the price of gold (then at \$20.67 an ounce) and printing greenbacks against it, for having a silver standard as well as a gold standard so that still more paper money could be spread around. Because so many Americans heard him, Coughlin earned a reputation as an expert on economics. He was called to testify before a House committee considering whether to vote a bonus for World War I soldiers. Coughlin favored it strongly.

The priest first met F.D.R. in 1932 and was impressed by his agreement that more money must go into circulation and there must be a "new deal" for the American people. Coughlin promised to support Roosevelt's candidacy. Roosevelt promised that he would call on the "padre" for economic advice. Coughlin kept his word. Roosevelt did not.

After his election, F.D.R. invited Father Coughlin to visit him. The Radio Priest brought his recommendations for the national monetary policy, which F.D.R. offered to study. Coughlin also urged that more Catholic ambassadors be named. Roosevelt said Coughlin could name the governor-general of the Philippines. Coughlin chose Frank Murphy, who eventually became governor of Michigan, attorney general, and a justice of the Supreme Court. Murphy also grew close to F.D.R. and away from his personal friend, Charles Coughlin.

Roosevelt wanted Coughlin's radio support, but didn't like him much. He tired of the priest's efforts to dictate fiscal policy. Franklin Roosevelt was no latter-day Louis XIII, needing a Cardinal Richelieu. Nevertheless, he made changes similar to those that Coughlin advocated. He took the nation off the gold standard. ("It is just a pure absurdity to say that you cannot have currency money if you have not got gold upon which to base it," said Coughlin.) The president also steadily raised the price of gold, which devalued the American dollar in terms of gold. This pleased Father Coughlin.

The gold issue caused a break between Coughlin and his old friend, Al Smith, former governor of New York and, in 1928, the first Catholic candidate for president. Smith wanted dollars backed by gold. Coughlin

lashed out at Smith, calling him a wealthy banker and a tool of the banking interests. Only a few months earlier Smith had written an introduction to a biography of the Radio Priest calling him "a man who has swayed minds and captivated hearts. . . . When the history of this period of American life is written, Father Coughlin will be known as one who lifted his voice for his fellow men."

The Detroit *Free Press* accused Father Coughlin of dipping into donations to buy stock for himself. Coughlin admitted buying the stock, but said he was acting on behalf of The League of the Little Flower, a nonprofit corporation which he controlled. Donations and expenses in the hundreds of thousands of dollars flowed each year through this untaxed corporation, whose name was changed in 1930 to The Radio League of the Little Flower. By 1935 more than 2 million dollars a year were moving through its coffers. Coughlin demanded an investigation to clear his name. The investigation showed him innocent of wrongdoing.

"Little Flower" referred to his church, the Shrine of the Little Flower Church in Royal Oak, dedicated to St. Therese, a nineteenth-century French nun who was canonized in 1925. St. Therese was the "Little Flower of Jesus." To her glory arose Father Coughlin's new church, at a cost of \$800,000. The church itself, an octagonal, seated 2,600. The tower beside it, 180 feet tall, was floodlit at night. At the top of the tower, reached by a narrow spiral staircase, was Father Coughlin's broadcasting studio, hooked by wire to "Dick" Richard's WJR, Detroit. He wrote his broadcasts there, too.

A more serious financial scandal arose in 1934. New Deal Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau made public the holders of large quantities of silver. Father Coughlin's secretary was listed as owning 500,000 ounces of silver, the largest holding in Michigan. A friend of Coughlin owned 100,000 ounces. This was at a time Coughlin thundered on the radio in support of unlimited coinage of silver and a policy of bimetallism—reliance on both gold and silver. Had Roosevelt followed this advice, the price of silver would have risen sharply. Plainly, Father Coughlin had been caught playing the silver market while broadcasting in support of silver. His secretary lamely explained that Father Coughlin had no control over The Radio League of the Little Flower, which was untrue. Coughlin counterattacked by blaming Morgenthau for publishing the names of silver contract holders. He said this was "a dead herring" used to smell things up to protect, among others, "the international bankers of ill-repute."

Coughlin had now been wounded, and there were those listeners who would never quite trust him again, although his total audience continued immense for two more years. He blamed Roosevelt as well as Morgenthau for letting the silver contract list become public. He had already made a broadcast critical of the president. Father Coughlin had coined the phrase, "Roosevelt or Ruin." It was soon to become "Roosevelt *and* Ruin."

The split widened when F.D.R. wanted the United States to join the World Court. Coughlin led the letter-writing campaign that helped to convince the Senate to vote down the enabling legislation. He said the "British-run" World Court was a greater potential menace "than the type

advocated by the Soviet Third International." Those two British-hating, isolationist publishers, William Randolph Hearst and Colonel Robert McCormack, helped to generate 200,000 telegrams to senators, enough to bury the legislation, but President Roosevelt and the *New York Times* gave Father Coughlin credit for its defeat.

Success did not crown all his efforts to control legislation. He urged passage of the Nye-Sweeney bill to establish a Bank of the United States, replacing the Federal Reserve System. It was defeated in the Senate 59 to 10. He urged passage of the Frazier-Lemke bill to give farmers cheap mortgages. It, too, was defeated.

As Father Coughlin turned against F.D.R., some listeners chose to tune out. "You could talk for the rest of your life," one listener telegraphed, "and never turn me against our President." The shake-out continued for years. Those who clung to the Radio Priest tended to be the poorer, more embittered members of society.

With each passing year, Father Coughlin sounded less like a minister and more like a political commentator, even a political leader. Six weeks before Christmas 1934—a bleak Christmas for Americans—he created the National Union for Social Justice. The NUSJ was a political organization with economic aims (not unlike Common Cause today, except that its goals were different). Among the NUSJ principles:

. . . every citizen willing to work shall receive a just, living, annual wage. . . .

. . . nationalizing the public resources. . . . [However, he opposed the Tennessee Valley Authority]

. . . private ownership of all other property . . . but controlling the right of ownership for the public good.

. . . abolition of the privately owned Federal Reserve Banking system and the establishment of a government-owned central bank.

. . . the right of the laboring man to organize in unions. . . .

. . . the recall of all non-productive bonds and therefore the alleviation of taxation . . . the abolition of tax exempt bonds.

. . . broadening the base of taxation according to the principles of ownership and the capacity to pay.

. . . lifting of crushing taxation from the slender revenues of the laboring class.

. . . in the event of war . . . a conscription of wealth as well as a conscription of men.

. . . it is also the duty of government to limit the amount of profits acquired by any industry.

. . . it is the duty of government to secure the production of all those industrial goods . . . until all honest needs within the nation are amply supplied.

. . . it is not in accordance with social justice that the owner of an industry will so operate his factory as to destroy free competition. . . .

. . . strikes and lockouts are absolutely unnecessary. . . . It is the business of the public authority to intervene and settle such disputes. . . . But in the case of the government's neglecting its duty . . . then there is nothing left except for a united labor to refuse to sell its services at a loss just the same as it is unreasonable to expect the farmer to plow his ground and sow his seed at a loss.

These principles were populist, socialist, and revolutionary, but Coughlin continued to attack socialism, as well as communism and capitalism. All these systems, he said, tended to concentrate ownership of the means of production in fewer hands, either the hands of the state or the hands of a few individuals. His system, he said, sought to spread ownership of the means of production to many hands.

According to biographer Sheldon Marcus, Coughlin did not indicate the type of political system that the NUSJ would support. "One can only conclude from this that Father Coughlin believed, at this time, that his principles of social justice could still be achieved within the existing political structure. It was not until the late 1930's that Father Coughlin publicly advocated a restructuring of the American political system along the lines of Mussolini's corporate state. . . ."

The left-wing *New Republic* editorially examined NUSJ principles and concluded that the priest of Royal Oak was "a dangerous demagogue—dangerous not because he promises too much, but because he does not know how to fulfill his promises."

But cynics were in the minority as members signed up. Within a short time Father Coughlin announced that the NUSJ had 5 million members, although he later admitted that he had exaggerated. Still, the membership was well above 1 million.

To add political muscle, Coughlin looked around for allies. Born in Canada and a committed priest, he himself could not be a candidate for president. One man in political power seemed to fit what Father Coughlin wanted. Huey Long, senator from Louisiana and former governor, was the founder of the Share-Our-Wealth Society, with a plan to "make every man a king" by giving him \$5,000 a year. Huey Long, the "kingfish," ran Louisiana as a fascist state and threatened to spread his power over the nation. Long and Coughlin met in Washington, sized each other up, and each apparently decided he did not like the other much but could use him. Together they just might be able to topple Roosevelt in 1936. An assassin's bullet put an end to Huey Long and that dream.

Father Coughlin next turned to two men. The Rev. Gerald L. K. Smith, who had once been a Huey Long associate, was trying to take command of the dead ruler's kingdom, using his considerable skills as an orator, but Coughlin saw him as "a viper, a leech, who was anti-Christian, anti-Semitic and anti-God." The other man, Dr. Francis Townsend, an elderly California physician, had many of the nation's old folks behind him supporting the Old Age Revolving Pension Plan, which would pay everyone over 60 years old a pension of \$200 per month, provided he or she spent the money in thirty days. The three men became political allies.

Coughlin went on a speaking tour on behalf of the NUSJ. Audiences packed auditoriums in Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, St. Louis, and New York.

He also met in 1935 in Chicago with some of America's leading fascists and far right extremists in an effort to develop support for a third party. Among those present at the meeting were William Dudley Pelley,

leader of the Nazi-imitating Silver Shirts, and Newton Jenkins, who was guarded during his speeches by uniformed guards wearing swastika armbands.

Coughlin began a weekly journal, *Social Justice*, to supplement his Sunday afternoon broadcasts. Armed with broadcasts, journal, powerful allies, and millions of enthusiastic supporters, Father Coughlin lacked only a candidate to go after Franklin Roosevelt. He found him in William Lemke, a colorless Republican congressman from North Dakota. Lemke was a poor speaker. He seemed to lack both strong political ambition and interest in issues not involving agriculture or economics. Why Coughlin chose Lemke was not clear. Perhaps no one else was willing to face Roosevelt as a third party candidate in 1936. Lemke would head the ticket of the newly formed Union party. Coughlin campaigned vigorously for Lemke, more vigorously, in fact, than Lemke himself did. For some reason, the candidate stayed in the background while his cause was espoused by two much better stump speakers, Charles E. Coughlin and Gerald L. K. Smith, although by this time they had come to dislike and distrust one another strongly.

At the Union party nominating convention in Cleveland, Father Coughlin unfrocked himself in the middle of his speech. He stepped away from the microphone to remove his black coat and collar, then returned to the rostrum to shout:

As far as the National Union is concerned, no candidate who is endorsed for Congress can campaign, go electioneering for, or support the great betrayer and liar, Franklin D. Roosevelt. . . . I ask you to purge the man who claims to be a Democrat from the Democratic Party. I mean Franklin Double-Crossing Roosevelt.

There was a moment of stunned silence, then 10,000 delegates were on their feet roaring with enthusiasm.

Coughlin's appeal cut across all demographic lines, but he was strongest among Irish and German Catholics. Smith's strength lay among rural Protestants in the South and Midwest. Lemke's strength was among the farmers of the Upper Midwest. Townsend appealed to the elderly everywhere, particularly in the Far West, where he was best known. Of the four leaders, Father Coughlin was easily the most popular.

Father Coughlin was so sure of his power to deliver votes that he promised his radio listeners that he would quit broadcasting if Lemke did not get 9 million votes. Lemke actually got less than 1 million. Coughlin kept his promise and went off the air—for about two months. He also promised to disband the National Union for Social Justice.

He had tried to win. He campaigned so hard for Lemke that during a speech in Cleveland before some 35,000 spectators, he collapsed of heat prostration and exhaustion. He cut his speech short and was helped away, so most spectators were unaware anything was wrong. Father Coughlin had campaigned so hard against Roosevelt, using such strong language,

that the Vatican sent its secretary of state, Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli—later Pope Pius XII—to put some clamps on the outspoken parish priest, whom many thought to be a spokesman for the Roman Catholic Church. Father Coughlin was ordered by his bishop not to do any political campaigning after the 1936 election.

His corner of the campaign had been so heated that Father Coughlin roughed up a reporter for the *Boston Globe*. At another time—during a Detroit rally—a demented listener wearing an Indian bonnet dumped a bag of chicken feathers over Coughlin's head and shouted into the microphone, "You can't talk politics here." Police led him away. He was the exception. Much more common was the adoration that everywhere greeted the Radio Priest. "Father Coughlin, test us, try us, lead us," shouted one man. Another rose to propose a resolution of thanks to Father Coughlin's mother for bearing him.

Father Coughlin's voice was melodious and velvety, with more than a hint of brogue in the trilled *r*'s and some odd pronunciations ("Detroit" came out: de-TROY-yit). The tones could be deep or light, deep and solemn, or high and anxious. One listener said it was

a voice of such mellow richness, such manly, heart-warming, confidential intimacy, such emotional and ingratiating charm, that anyone turning past it almost automatically returned to hear it again. . . . It was without doubt one of the great speaking voices of the twentieth century.

Someone else called it "a voice made for promises." No contemporary is on record as having accused Charles Edward Coughlin of having kissed the Blarney Stone, perhaps because they either loved what he said or hated what he said far too much for such flippancy.

The term for Father Coughlin's rhetorical style is robust. "Damn," "swell," "lousy," and "hot" came trippingly to his tongue; it was fun to hear a priest say them. He liked such catchphrases as "Roosevelt or ruin," "Christ or chaos," and "the marriage feast of Cana or the brothel of Lenin."

His enthusiasm was as extreme as his antipathy. He was lukewarm about nothing. Roosevelt was either "the new Lincoln leading the fight against financial slavery" or he was "the great betrayer and liar."

A study of Father Coughlin's speeches by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis found example after example of his use of such fallacies and stratagems as:

*Name calling*: "Imported radical."

*Glittering generality*: "Rightist" as a label for Washington and Jefferson, "leftist" for supporters of the New Deal and majority rule.

*Transfer* (for example, wrapping political views with the holiness of faith): "My friends, this is the most important crusade which we have ever undertaken. . . . It is a contest between Christ and chaos."

*Testimonial* (using untrustworthy sources or falsifying trustworthy sources): "The chief document treating of the financing of the Russian



Revolution is the one drawn up by the American Secret Service." (In fact, the U.S. Secret Service had never heard of it.)

*Plain folks:* "I glory in the fact that I am a simple Catholic priest."

*Card stacking* (only one side of an argument): (In refusing to discuss—not debate—What Is Americanism? on "America's Town Meeting of the Air") "Americanism is not a debatable subject with me nor is it controversial. . . . I am constrained to refuse your kind offer lest I be suspected of accepting a sop from the NBC and its censorial commissars."

Coughlin's career as a radio commentator divides itself into three somewhat distinct periods. From 1926 through 1929 he was a religious preacher. From 1930 through 1936, the period of his greatest popularity, he was something between a political commentator and a populist orator. From 1937 until he gave up radio broadcasting in 1940 he was a demagogue.

Typically, his program would begin with an organ playing a gentle tune. Then an announcer would say something like:

Ladies and gentlemen, once more it is my privilege to present to you Father Charles E. Coughlin, from the Shrine of the Little Flower, at Royal Oak, Michigan. He will speak to you this afternoon on a subject pertinent to persecution and communism. . . .

Transcribed and directed by Mr. Enold Courteau of New York, the Little Flower Choristers will sing for you the Advent Hymn, "Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel." During the singing of this hymn please phone some friend or family to listen to this program, which will be of outstanding interest to every American.

Here is part of a typical Sunday afternoon "Golden Hour" broadcast address at the peak of his popularity. The estimated audience of 30 million was greater than that for any other program on the air. The broadcast was delivered on December 16, 1934.

Principal in the Senate Investigation of munition manufacturing come those sterling patriots and lovers of our Constitution—the DuPonts. Co-founders of the American Liberty League, this family claims residence in Delaware for over a century and a quarter. This family witnessed American liberty in its cradle and is seemingly happy to follow it to its grave.

While to this DuPont Company, motor manufacturing is only a side issue, their big interest is munitions—powder, powder machinery, explosives, nitroglycerine and chemicals. Warfare is their game. They have become so wealthy that they dominate their economic sphere.

There is scarcely another powder company in America worth mentioning.

On go the DuPonts from fabulous wealth to economic domination. Now the next step must be taken. In the language of Pius XI it is "the fierce struggle to acquire control of the state so that its resources and authority may be used in the economic struggle."

On go the DuPonts! Do they attempt to gain control of the Government—these lovers of liberty—these co-founders of the American Liberty League? . . .

From mere wealth, to domination of their field; from domination through unchecked competition to dictatorship in the powder, the powder machinery and chemical fields; from this step to the control of the State where the War Department becomes a smart salesman, the Navy a peddler and the Department of State a foreign sales manager! The DuPont Corporation has run the gamut. From the control of the state one last step must be taken in its true sequence. That is the clash between states themselves. That is war.

If America is sent into war—war to take us out of the depression—the American submarine already will be in the hands of the enemy. All the world knows just one submarine—ours. Ours, whether made in Germany, England, France, Italy, Japan, Russia or at home. Ours with a profit to the Electric Boat Company. Our submarines challenge our use of the sea.

When our navy meets the navy of any foreign power, mark you, any superiority we have in design or construction was long since sold to our enemies.

When our armies meet on the field of battle, DuPont powder will send shot and shell screaming into their ranks. There is no advantage to the American soldiers.

When the new gases developed in laboratories of the United States pour forth death and destruction—even our own civilian population, our women and children will be killed by the self-same gases.

Who will win the next war—Communist or capitalist, it matters not. The DuPonts will be the real winners.

Yellow or white race—it matters not—the DuPonts cannot lose!

Away with these dictatorships! Give us a real democracy! That is why the National Union for Social Justice was instituted. Choose between it and the American Liberty League with its individualism, its war profiteering, its merchandisers of murder members, its salesmanship of slaughter as represented by the DuPonts and their front-men who prate to us about a liberty that is slavery and a prosperity that is death.

Before the 1946 election, Father Coughlin made some powerful enemies, mostly inside the New Deal, for he did not pull his punches in attacking its leaders. When he railed against Congressman John O'Connor (D.-N.Y.) for not moving a particular bill out of the House Rules Committee, O'Connor replied, "If you will please come to Washington, I shall guarantee to kick you all the way from the Capitol to the White House with clerical garb and all the silver in your pockets which you got from speculating on Wall Street."

After the election, Father Coughlin moved more sharply to the right, lost more and more of his supporters, and added to his list of enemies.

Among his new enemies were the leadership and some of the membership of the CIO. He stated that no Catholic could be a member of a

CIO union because "Catholicism was as incompatible with the CIO as Catholicism was incompatible with Mohammedanism." He helped to found a union that attempted to compete with the CIO's United Auto Workers. It was called the Automotive Industrial Workers Association.

After keeping his promise to leave broadcasting following Lemke's dismal showing in November 1936, Father Coughlin resumed his broadcasts in January 1937, explaining that his bishop had just died and had extracted a deathbed promise from the priest that he would go back to the airwaves.

He was to return this time for just a few months. His new archbishop, Edward Mooney, was not as supportive as the former bishop, Michael Gallagher. Archbishop Mooney did not like Coughlin's causes and thoroughly disliked his language. Mooney wanted censorial power over Father Coughlin's broadcasts and over *Social Justice*. The Radio Priest chose instead to cancel the broadcasts and hand *Social Justice* to lay control. At first, an appeal by Coughlin supporters directly to the pope proved fruitless, but a form letter campaign followed, and eventually the announcement came that the broadcasts would resume, free of interference. Coughlin had won. Mooney had lost. When the Sunday broadcasts returned in January 1938, sixty-three stations were hooked up. That number was to drop sharply during the next two years.

A new organization sprang forth to replace the National Union for Social Justice, a much more militant organization called the Christian Front. Jews were excluded. Father Coughlin told members not to worry about being called anti-Semitic, because that was just a word the Communists used. Many Christian Fronters were outspokenly pro-Nazi.

A "Buy Christian" campaign began. To get on the "Christian Index," a merchant had to sign a statement saying, in part:

I pledge my Christian word of honor

- 1) to buy wholesale or retail from Christians only;
- 2) to give employment to Christians only;
- 3) to stand loyally by other Christian traders listed in the Index;
- 4) to work unceasingly for the ideal of a united Christian brotherhood;
- 5) to try to make it pleasant and profitable for Christians to trade at my store;
- 6) to place absolute reliance in the decency and good judgement of decisions made by the Committee, inasmuch as such decisions will be made solely for the mutual benefit of Christian traders listed in the Index and for Christian Americans generally.

On the back was printed: "Christ himself sponsored this little leaflet for your protection." Gangs of Christian Front toughs roamed the big cities looking for Jews to beat up.

To all this, Father Coughlin turned a blind eye. He denied that he was even a member of the Christian Front or that he had any control over its activities. Yet he praised the organization. *Social Justice* repeatedly editorialized that Christian Front was battling the spread of communism. After seventeen Christian Fronters were arrested in Brooklyn on charges

of plotting to overthrow the government, Coughlin said he did not support their aims, but he was not "running out on the fine body of New York Christians who make up the membership of the Christian Front."

As Father Coughlin veered to the fascist right, he dismayed the moderates who believed in his program for social and economic justice. Many stopped listening to the broadcasts and cancelled their *Social Justice* subscriptions. Radio stations dropped out of the hookup. New York's WMCA tuned out when Coughlin refused its request to submit scripts in advance.

Coughlin covered his support of naziism with a veneer of dismay at its excesses. But he saw Adolf Hitler as a bulwark against communism and he tied Jews to both international communism and international banking. Jews were the culprits behind freemasonry and the French Revolution as well as the destruction of medieval Christian civilization. They now threatened modern Christianity. If Jews didn't "change their ways" they would get no sympathy for what was happening in Nazi Germany.

In Germany, the official Nazi newspaper, *Der Stürmer*, said, "Father Coughlin in Royal Oak, in the state of Michigan, has the courage to speak his conviction. His conviction is that National Socialism is right."

By the late thirties, Coughlin was reproducing Nazi propaganda. For example, on September 13, 1935, Josef Goebbels delivered a speech to the Seventh National Socialist Congress in Nuremberg. On December 5, 1938, Father Coughlin printed an article in *Social Justice*, over his own signature, called "Background of Persecution." Here are excerpts of each:

#### *Goebbels' Speech*

On April 30, 1919, in the courtyard of the Luitpold Gymnasium in Munich, the hostages, among them one woman, were shot through the backs, their bodies rendered unrecognizable and taken away. This act was done at the order of the Communist terrorist, Egelhofer, and under the responsibility of the Jewish Soviet Commissars, Levien, Levine-Nissen and Axelrod.

On the 26th of December, 1918, one of the Socialist members of the Reichstag, the Jew, Dr. Ozkar Cohn, declared that on the 5th of the previous month, he had received 4,000,000 rubles from Joffe for the purpose of the German revolution.

#### *Coughlin's Article*

On April 30, 1919, in the courtyard of the Luitpold Gymnasium in Munich, ten hostages, among them one woman, were murdered. This act was perpetrated by the direct order of the Communist terrorist Egelhofer, and under the responsibility of the Jewish Soviet Commissars, Levien, Levine-Nissen and Axelrod.

On December 26, 1918, one of the Socialist members of the Reichstag, the eminent Jew, Dr. Oskar Cohn, declared that on the 5th of the previous month he had received 4,000,000 rubles from Joffe for the purpose of instigating a revolution in Germany.

At the second Congress of Atheists, Bucharin declared that religion must be "destroyed with the bayonet."

In 1919, during the Bolshevik regime of the Bela Kun, a Jew, whose real name was Aaron Cohn, in Budapest twenty<sup>1</sup> hostages were murdered.

The Jew, Gubermann, who under the name of Jaroslowski, is the leader of the Association of Militant Atheists in the Soviet Union, has made the following declaration:

"It is our duty to destroy every religious world-concept. . . . If the destruction of 10,000,000 human beings, as happened in the last war, should be necessary for the triumph of one definite class, then that must be done, and it will be done."

Fiercely anti-British, Coughlin sided with the isolationists against any support for Great Britain, including repeal of the arms embargo. In a November 1939 broadcast he asked why the Czechs should support Britain, which betrayed them at Munich; why the Poles should support Britain, which sent them no weapons when they were invaded; why the Jews should support Britain, which betrayed them in Palestine; why the Christians should support Britain, which permitted 13 million Polish Christians to be turned over to the Communists. World War I, he told listeners, had been "largely a contest for commercial supremacy in which . . . German thrift and industry threatened England's leadership." The League of Nations was the "catspaw of the international bankers of the British Empire." Italy's invasion of Ethiopia wasn't aggression, because Ethiopia was a "camouflaging marauder" acting as an agent for British imperialism.

Broadcasts like those led to a decision by the National Association of Broadcasters to recommend limits of selling time to "spokesmen of controversial public issues." Although not binding on member stations, such guidelines carried weight with station owners fearful of losing their licenses. Father Coughlin, unlike most other nationally known political commentators, was neither a news division employee nor a sponsored

Remember that, when the second Congress of Atheists convened, Bucharin declared that religion must be "destroyed with the bayonet."

In 1919 Hungary, a neighbor to Germany, was overrun with Communists. The notorious atheist, Bela Kun, a Jew whose real name was Aaron Cohn, murdered 20,000.<sup>1</sup>

The atheist Jew, Gubermann, under the name of Jaroslowski and then the leader of the militant atheists in the Soviet Union, also declared:

"It is our duty to destroy every religious world-concept. If the destruction of 10,000,000 human beings, as happened in the last war, should be necessary for the triumph of one definite class, then that must be done, and it will be done."

1. Coughlin outdid Goebbels here by 1,000 to 1.

commentator on network contract. He bought time, paid for by donations, to express his views. By the fall of 1940, enough radio stations had unplugged from the Coughlin hookup that the Radio Priest decided to leave the air.

He continued to write for *Social Justice* and continued, in effect, to be its publisher and its guiding light, no matter what the masthead said. In 1942 he admitted controlling the magazine. *Social Justice* continued to move ever further into the fascist camp. The weekly journal carried articles praising Hitler as "The European champion" and supporting his takeover of Austria and Czechoslovakia. Reports of Nazi brutality were dismissed as leftwing propaganda. Mussolini and Franco were highly praised. American democracy was sneered at as "political partyism" and "mere majorityism." Charles Lindbergh was touted as a presidential candidate.

In the pages of *Social Justice*, before Pearl Harbor, the reader could learn that Japan was "the sole barrier against the menace of communism in the Far East." A *Social Justice* writer actually managed to discover a Chinese Jewish general, a certain General Moi Sha, who was "the power behind the Nationalist Government" of Chiang Kai Shek! Even that archconservative commentator Upton Close, whose knowledge of the Far East was based on firsthand observation, revealed no General Moi Sha.

The day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Father Coughlin refused to talk to a reporter who wanted his reaction. But *Social Justice* continued to attack Roosevelt. It ridiculed the war effort and the alleged weakness of American forces while describing the power of the German military juggernaut, which was certain to kill the young soldiers torn from many an American mother's arms. Naturally, it opposed sending food to England. The English had enough food, *Social Justice* said. Why send more while some Americans were starving?

This and much more led the government to conclude that *Social Justice* was advocating sedition in wartime. In the winter of 1942, the FBI seized Coughlin's business records and personal papers. An investigating Justice Department official reported that Father Coughlin had sent a messenger to Berlin in 1939 in an attempt to get Adolf Hitler to make a public statement supporting Christianity. It was also reported that Coughlin had asked a German agent for anti-Communist and anti-Semitic propaganda from the Fatherland, "which I can use against them in this country."

All the while, he was denying that he was pro-Nazi or anti-Semitic. He was only anti-Communist, Father Coughlin said, although he blamed "Jews and Communists and New Dealers" for the government's sedition action. (Years later he bought some Israeli bonds and told an interviewer he regarded Israel as a bulwark against communism.)

Instead of prosecuting Father Coughlin for seditious writing aimed at spreading an attitude of defeat in the United States, the government shut him up in a roundabout way by approaching Archbishop Mooney, who was once again ready to take on this nettlesome priest of his archdiocese.

Mooney gave Father Coughlin a plain choice: quit writing and publishing or quit the priesthood. Rather than be defrocked, Father Coughlin chose to submit to the church's order. In April 1942, *Social Justice* ceased publication.

According to the well-researched biography of Father Coughlin by Sheldon Marcus:

. . . when the Social Justice Publishing Company was finally dissolved on October 29, 1943, all assets were turned over to Amelia F. Coughlin and Thomas J. Coughlin, Father Coughlin's parents, who were listed as holding all the capital stock issued and outstanding. The 1943 Annual Report of the Social Justice Publishing Company listed assets of \$227,225.01, including \$152,914.13 in investments. Even if the debts amounting to \$86,029.00 were paid off, this still left a considerable sum of money for Father Coughlin's parents. When the priest's parents died they left him quite well-to-do.

With the broadcasts ended and *Social Justice* stopped, Charles Edward Coughlin was finally silenced. Was he?

Not quite. He continued to say mass at the Shrine of the Little Flower to overflow crowds of worshippers. He used his microphone to address them, and he preached often about the dangers of communism.

Drew Pearson alleged in a 1949 broadcast that Father Coughlin had paid \$68,000 to a Royal Oak physician, Dr. Bernard F. Gariepy, for the alienation of Mrs. Gariepy's affections. Coughlin sued Pearson and some of the priest's sympathizers applied pressure to get Pearson off the air. The suit was eventually dropped.

In 1966 Father Coughlin retired to his home, near the handsome church he had built. He wrote a book three years later, *Bishops Versus the Pope*, critical of liberal priests.

In 1976, at the age of 84, despite two heart attacks, he preached a sermon for the fiftieth anniversary of the Shrine of the Little Flower.

At present writing, Father Coughlin is still living. When he can, he likes to stroll over to the parish school and walk among the laughing, playing children. He is at peace with himself.

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## Boake Carter

HE was a pretentious little Englishman who may have been insane when he died at the age of 42, yet for a few crucial years in the midthirties he was the most popular radio news commentator in the United States and a pain in the neck to the New Deal.

His name was Harold Thomas Carter (Boake was an old family name on his mother's side). He was born in Baku, Russia, where his Irish father was a secretary for an English oil firm. Years later, political enemies trying to deport him saw a sinister connection in the similarity of his name and his birthplace. Carter claimed that his father was the British consul in Baku, but considerable doubt existed about it. He claimed that he was born in 1898 and also gave the date as 1901. The correct date seems to have been September 1903. Carter apparently figured he would make a better impression if he were older (others, including Edward R. Murrow, did the same thing) and if his father had a British diplomatic career.

Carter was a child when the family returned to England. He was sent to the upper-class Tonbridge boys school. While still in his teens he served

in the Royal Air Force coast patrol, which gave him a lifelong interest in military air power and a claim to expertise. Carter also later claimed to have attended Cambridge and to have been a reporter for the London *Daily Mail*, but no records exist at either place of a Harold Carter at that time.

The month he turned 18, Harold Carter arrived in the United States. The proper young Englishman was admitted under the Russian quota. After a short time in New York, Carter went to Mexico, where his father was now located. He accompanied his father on jobs in Central and South America and Cuba, occasionally working as a journalist. When Thomas Carter became a director of a Philadelphia-based oil refining company, son Harold soon followed. It is reported that Harold arrived wearing spats and a monocle and carrying a cane, just to make an impression. It may have worked, because the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin* put him on the rewrite desk. A year later he married Beatrice Olive Richter, assistant society editor of the *Bulletin*. The marriage advanced him socially, for her father was publisher and editor of *Sporting Life*. They named their two children Gladys Sheleagh Boake Carter and Michael Boake Carter, raising them in an old farmhouse they bought at Torresdale, outside Philadelphia. Carter switched over to the tabloid Philadelphia *Daily News*, where he was promoted to assistant city editor at \$50 a week.

Carter tried to present the image of an upper-class Englishman. Contemporary critic A. J. Liebling wrote: "Like all newspaper Englishmen he smoked a pipe beautifully. He possessed an English accent which he had carefully defended against the ravages of eleven years exposure to the American tongue in oil fields and city rooms and rather relished being kidded about it. Carter had a friendly though slightly pompous manner, lots of energy, and was on the whole popular with other Philadelphia newspapermen." Occasionally he dressed like an English country squire with riding pants and high boots, as if ready to hunt a fox. He took up painting as a hobby, displaying his works at Philadelphia exhibitions. Later, when Carter grew wealthy, he bought a sixty-foot ketch and joined the Delaware Yacht Club. He was a gourmet cook.

His first chance to broadcast came in 1930 when Philadelphia radio station WCAU, a CBS affiliate, wanted someone to broadcast a rugby match between an Anglo-American club and a team of U.S. Marines, who had learned the game in Shanghai. Carter may have been the only newsman in Philadelphia who knew anything about rugby.

WCAU's next idea was to sell Carter as a news commentator. Carter quit his job at the *Daily News* and went on the air on a sustaining basis. He lasted only a month because no commercial sponsor could be found. Listeners complained that they couldn't understand his British accent. Carter went back to the *Daily News*. A year went by before he got another chance at radio. This time, at the urging of WCAU program director Stan Broza, who thought "Harold Carter" was too ordinary a name, it was Boake Carter who returned to the air. Not only the name changed. According to contemporary Liebling: "What he employs now is sort of

pseudo-accent, about as authentic as the Negro dialect of Singing Sam, the Barbasol Man. The intonation is British, but the quantities and emphases are American.”

In his new radio job he presented two daily 5-minute news broadcasts, sponsored by Hearst Metrotone newsreel. As part of the job, Carter called himself the Globe Trotter and publicized the Hearst newsreel of the day and the theater where it was showing. The job raised his pay to \$75 a week.

Carter insisted on choosing his own news items and rewriting them as he saw fit. He treated the news in a rather dignified manner, helped by that now modified British accent. To each news item, Boake Carter added a nugget of editorial comment.

The audience liked what they heard. Pep Boys, an auto accessories chain of retail stores, signed on as a sponsor. His salary doubled as the nation was sliding into the Depression and most wages, when wages were still to be had, were being cut. Not only did the audience like Carter, so did WCAU's owner, Dr. Leon Levy, a former dentist and the brother-in-law of William S. Paley, president of the Columbia Broadcasting System. Levy wanted to give Carter national exposure, such as that enjoyed by Lowell Thomas, Walter Winchell, Floyd Gibbons, and Edwin C. Hill. The only trouble was that these commentators had national reputations before they sat behind a mike. Carter needed a break, something to get him that national attention.

The break was the Lindbergh baby kidnaping. Levy and Carter made the most of it. Most newsmen staked out the Lindbergh home, but Levy badgered Paley to let Carter serve as CBS reporter in Trenton, where the New Jersey state police headquartered and where Governor A. Harry Moore was making official statements. Paley didn't want Carter. What Paley really wanted was WCAU's mobile transmitter—a sending station in a truck. No Carter, no truck, said Levy, who later became Carter's agent. Paley yielded, and Carter got the Trenton slot. It soon developed that Trenton was where the action was, or at least most of the rumors, wild tips, and official pronouncements about one of the most sensational stories of the decade.

Carter delivered two broadcasts on a national CBS hookup, using material gathered by two radio news legmen. Carter filled the air with phrases like “by golly,” “great Scott,” “by jingo,” and “that's a very, very significant fact.” He once urged the kidnapers to surrender the baby boy “if they had one spark of manhood.” He editorialized about American organized crime and corruption, tying these in with prohibition. As it turned out, a psychotic carpenter, Bruno Hauptmann, acting alone, kidnaped and killed the Lindbergh baby, not the gangsters and bootleggers Carter railed against before his nightly sign-off of “Cheerio.”

After a while, CBS had had enough and cancelled Carter. But the public wanted more of the same. They wrote and phoned that Carter and his analyses of the news must be returned, so Boake Carter returned to the air by popular demand. Pep Boys released him from his contract to let him

sign with Philco. The Philadelphia Electric Storage Battery Company (Philco) made millions of batteries for radios until RCA came out with a vacuum tube which eliminated the need for the batteries. Nearly put out of business, Philco began manufacturing inexpensive radios. Dollar-pinched Americans, craving escapism and cheap entertainment, were a ready market. Philco had begun a successful expansion program when it hired Boake Carter not only to read news but also to read commercial copy. Carter switched from news to commercials without a pause: "The Communists became enraged. Chautemps collapsed. So the picture of Europe bubbles again—and becomes a point of interest again for those who like to tune long distances on their Philco 116 Double X's. One does not have to double oneself into knots as of old to see if you're tuned just right. That's the pleasure of a Philco Double X."

Listeners couldn't always separate news from promotion. When Philco sued RCA over patent rights, Carter supported the Philco position in several newscasts. Philco felt obliged to run a full-page ad in *Time*, unblushingly denying that Carter's comments were in any way influenced by his Philco connection. Not everyone swallowed it.

He later pushed Post Toasties and Huskies breakfast cereals for General Foods with equal skill. ("Hello, everyone. Huskies time. Boake Carter speaking.") He also appeared in newspaper ads for such products and services as the Nash automobile ("Boake Carter's Report on the New Nash"), Pullman sleepers on trains ("Pullman Is My Preference, says Boake Carter"), Gillette razors ("The Mystery of the Missing Whiskers—and 12 clues that solved it, by Boake Carter, Famous Radio News Commentator"), Underwood typewriters, etc. The Carter phiz, complete with pipe, clipped red mustache, and prominent chin cleft, was as familiar as the profiles of the stars of the silver screen.

People who listened to radio news in the thirties may recall Carter as a political conservative somewhere to the right of the early Fulton Lewis, Jr. That assessment is partly true. Carter liked argument. He once said: "I could have climbed the fence and been neutral, but what the devil? There's no meat in that. Meat is in argument. If I can provide an argument, so much the better."

Mid-Depression Washington offered Boake Carter a moor filled with fat liberal partridges to take pot shots at. According to critic A. J. Liebling, writing in 1938:

Carter has no consistent political philosophy. He will state his passionate belief in the decentralization of government. A moment later he will tell you that the United States should have a "Ministry of Transport," with power to co-ordinate rail, air, and water transportation and force the abandonment of superfluous lines. If you remark that this seems like more centralization than what we have now, Carter will answer that in England they study different ways of doing things and then choose the very *best* way of doing each individual thing.

Without question, Boake Carter was popular with radio listeners. Crossley Ratings and Hooper Ratings in 1936, 1937, and 1938 showed Carter, on CBS, neck and neck with NBC's Lowell Thomas, his chief rival. Sometimes one would be a few points ahead, sometimes the other. From January 1933, until he was dropped by CBS on August 26, 1938, Carter presented news and commentary each weekday, except for July 1937 to February 1938, when he was heard only on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. In the earlier years, his program was slotted at 7:45 p.m., EST, over as many as sixty CBS stations. At the height of his career, under General Foods sponsorship from February to August 1938, Boake Carter was heard each weekday at 6:30 p.m., EST, over eighty-five stations. In 1938 he was also voted the nation's most popular commentator in *Radio Guide's* annual poll. Even in 1940, more than a year after he had left the air, Boake Carter was rated in a poll as more popular by a wide margin than liberal commentators Raymond Gram Swing and Elmer Davis. After leaving CBS, he wrote a newspaper column which was rated third in the nation in number of readers, surpassed only by Walter Winchell and Dorothy Thompson, and ahead of Walter Lippmann and Westbrook Pegler, among others.

How could a foreigner, speaking with a hybrid accent, of no consistent political philosophy, who ended his broadcasts with an often incongruous "Cheerio!" so captivate Americans? What was Boake Carter's magic? No answer comes easy. He was helped by punchy writing which came across clearly, even though critics ridiculed it as flashy and full of platitudes. The real answer may lie in this feisty Englishman's simple solutions and his slashing attacks at much of the establishment during an era when millions of Americans felt from the tips of their scuffed shoes to the tops of their make-do hats that the establishment had failed them.

For example, in the Lindbergh baby kidnaping case, Boake Carter criticized almost everything done by the New Jersey state police, the governor, and the FBI. He returned to the handling of the case year after year, until Hauptmann was executed in 1936 during the term of a new governor, Harold Hoffmann, who also felt Carter's nationally broadcast barbs: "Crazier and crazier grows the Hauptmann affair. More and more desperate over this weekend became New Jersey's governor to justify his official blundering and save his tottering political reputation. More and more dizzy stunts are dragged across the old trails to befuddle the public and confuse the main issue." Governor Hoffman, miffed, sued Carter, Philco, and CBS for \$100,000. Eventually Carter apologized. The suit was dropped.

Carter liked to recall the time he interviewed Joseph P. Kennedy (President John F. Kennedy's father), who was about to be appointed ambassador to the Court of St. James. "'Don't take it, Joe,' I begged him. 'If you go over there, those Englishmen will pull the wool over your eyes and steal your pants. I know. I've been one of them.'" Millionaire Joe Kennedy then had a well-deserved reputation for shrewdness. Anyone

who tried to steal his pants should make sure he still had his own pants. What Kennedy replied wasn't reported by Carter.

For one reason or another, Carter engaged in verbal combat many of those with power over ships, both navy and civilian. After the *Morro Castle* ocean liner fire in 1934 took 134 lives, Carter made causes of ship inspection procedure, the shortcomings of the American merchant marine in general, and the secretary of commerce in particular. His ratings rose as he declared: "The U.S. merchant marine has been allowed to slide into decay and rot and not so very far from ruin. The vessels we do have are ninety-seven percent ancient, hardly seaworthy old tubs. They crawl when it comes to speed."

He predicted the day when air power would prove dangerous to battleships and he opposed spending very much money on building more warships. He further endeared himself to admirals and generals by repeated calls for pulling the army and navy air corps into a separate air force. "We in our small way try to point toward a better national air defense at less cost. But likewise never get to first base, either. For what reason? . . . Because at the tops in both services, the gold braid and the brass hats like to play politics as much as any politician."

His own youthful stint with the RAF coast patrol fueled his enthusiasm for airplanes, and so did his contacts with General Billy Mitchell and other proponents of air power.

As for civilian air transportation, Carter summed up his opinion of one part of it, "Trans-Atlantic commercial aviation is in one hell of a mess!"

Listeners and column readers loved it, while pilloried officials joined his lengthening list of enemies. There was even some talk of deporting Boake Carter to shut him up, booting him back to Baku on the grounds that he lacked naturalization papers. Carter had the papers. Carter figured the navy was behind the deportation move. "Take the General Board [of the navy] down to the Labor Department and rub their noses on the papers," he advised. "See if they can read."

Someone threatened to kidnap Carter unless he paid \$5,000. The radio commentator bought a gun and packed it in a holster under his left armpit. He also informed the FBI. Then, following the extortionists' instructions, Carter gave a signal during a broadcast, a slip of the tongue: "That sums up everything till tomorrow night—that is, till Monday." It was the signal that Boake Carter would pay up. That night, with FBI agents watching, Carter tossed a bundle of bogus bills under the landing of a warehouse along the Philadelphia waterfront. No one came to claim the money. Carter exploded when someone later suggested it was done for publicity. "Publicity stunt? Hell, no! If it were, why should I sit on my own story for three weeks? That kind of stuff is too damned dangerous." For some time after the night he drove to the waterfront, Carter packed his equalizer.

Not only were the War Department and the Navy Department sore at Carter, so was organized labor. Carter disliked strikes. He even disliked collective bargaining. He called the CIO a tyranny. He called John L. Lewis a dictator. In 1937 when the steel companies created vigilante



groups to attack strikers, Carter went on the air to argue that these groups were a genuine local repudiation of collective bargaining. And he ominously reminded everyone that Mussolini's Fascists came to power after a wave of sitdown strikes in Italy.

Labor leaders protested. Carter's home station, WCAU, was picketed. The CIO called for a boycott of Philco products. Because the company's sales depended heavily on low-cost radios, that hurt. Although Philco executives squirmed, there was little they could do under the terms of Carter's five-year contract except wait for it to run out. In his 1937 book, *I Talk As I Like*, Carter responded to the boycott:

If Mr. Average Man did not shower commercial sponsors in American radio with the intolerance of threats to destroy their business just because he may disagree with a viewpoint expressed on domestic or world affairs by an editor, there would be a far more sound, intelligent and keen reporting and discussion of radio news and radio news editing. . . . People love to write and say, "Dear Sir: I wouldn't buy your dishwasher if it were the last on earth, while you have that loudmouthed, know-it-all Bill Brown talking on your program." It gives them a sense of power and a feeling that "Well-I-put-that-bunch-in-their-place-they'll-fix-that-guy's-feet." But unless it is an organized boycott, such sporadic denunciations do not mean the loss of sales, even though sales managers fondly believe they do—at times.

There was a corporate sigh of relief when the Philco contract expired in February 1938. Philco's loss was immediately General Foods' gain or at least the gain of Chairman of the Board Colby M. Chester, American Liberty League activist and former president of the National Association of Manufacturers. Chester detested the New Deal. Boake Carter's attacks were meat and potatoes to Chester. Not everyone at General Foods agreed that a fire-breathing radio commentator was the best vehicle for selling breakfast cereal, but Colby Chester prevailed, even when the complaints came from F.D.R.'s ambassador to Moscow, Joseph E. Davies, whose new wife, Marjorie Post, owned more than a bite-sized chunk of General Foods stock.

Some of Carter's broadcasts were quite nasty. He implied that pressure from President Roosevelt to support unwanted New Deal legislation caused Senate Majority Leader Joseph T. Robinson's fatal heart attack. He accused the president of trying to duck his income tax, offering no proof. In tones variously described as "sneering," "bitter," "contemptuous," and "vitriolic," the commentator (whom Interior Secretary Harold Ickes called "Croak Carter") lashed out at one department after another in the Roosevelt administration until President Roosevelt himself felt it necessary to calm his exasperated son James. "If the President (or anyone else) were to undertake to answer Boake Carter, he would have no time to act as the executive head of the Government," said F.D.R.

In 1938 an estimated 2.5 million radios were tuned nightly to Boake

Carter. His total radio audience was estimated at between 5 and 10 million Americans. His newspaper column readership was estimated at 7 million. Begun in 1937 and called "But—," it was carried by fifty-two newspapers, including the New York *Daily Mirror*, Chicago *Times*, Philadelphia *Evening Ledger*, and Boston *Daily Globe*. Carter often wrote "But—" while sitting up in bed, with a portable typewriter on his knees. As for his broadcasts, Carter usually wrote his radio scripts in longhand and in the margins jotted such microphone "business" as groans and laughter.

Carter preferred to work out of his farmhouse home, to which he added many rooms, including a radio studio. Teletypes brought the news to the farmhouse. Carter was assisted by an editor working at the farmhouse and a full-time reporter in Washington. His monthly phone bill averaged \$400.

Life was very pleasant for Boake Carter in the midthirties. His teenage daughter attended a nearby private girls school. While working, Carter could watch his small son at play. On a warm day, he liked to take a dip in the swimming pool or drive in the Cadillac to Philadelphia, where mounted policemen would salute him with pride. Weekends might be spent on his ketch, sailing in Chesapeake Bay. He was earning about \$2,500 a week.

Within a very few years, it was all to unravel.

Although Carter slashed out at many targets with little regard for feelings, he was quite sensitive about himself. For example, he was extremely touchy about his height. He claimed to be five feet six inches tall, but he refused to allow any publicity photos of himself standing. He was almost always shown seated behind a microphone.

Yet he could describe Postmaster General James Farley with "the bank of brilliant white lights reflecting the sheen of his shiny dome." F.D.R. was, with Carter scorn, "the boss." Elected officials were not merely defeated, they were "swept from the seats they have warmed for the past four years." Other officials were sneered at as "our erudites, learned savants [who] do not understand the essence of the bicycle" (a description that must sound familiar to a later generation fed on campaign speeches by presidential candidate George Wallace that some professors "couldn't park their bicycles straight").

Carter spoke rapidly. With his curiously Americanized British accent, he was hard to follow unless the listener paid close attention. What rushed out of the radio loudspeaker was a writing style with Carter's special zing. He liked clichés. He liked compound adjectives: "the blue-eyed, square-jawed Hoosierite" (Wendell Willkie). He liked to put himself in his stories: "National Committee Chairman Farley said to me over the telephone, 'Monday, Boake, I'm going to come out and claim forty-six states for Roosevelt.'" He could switch instantly from savaging a politician to a cloying story about a seeing-eye dog, "a dog who will live forever after, for his service to mankind." One night he announced that his own dog, Rags, had died. Listeners offered him eighty-two replacements. And he could trip just as quickly to a commercial: "Mr.

Everett Moss of Wichita Falls, Texas, has a scheme that permits ladies to switch heels from one shoe to another in a jiffy. But I know another scheme which is good for summertime, wintertime, springtime, all the time — and that's the scheme to whisper in the ear of your grocer that you want not only to look well, but want to feel good, too, and so he is hereby notified of a standing order, until further notice, to supply a couple of large, ten-ounce yellow-and-blue packages of Huskies to the family grocery orders every week. Well, I see by the clock that my time is up, so until tomorrow at the same time Huskies and I say to you — Cheerio.''

An example of the full flower of the Boake Carter style is his broadcast of January 20, 1936, reporting the death of England's George V. Here is how it began and how it concluded. Anyone who thinks the newscopy is too corny to be believed might reflect that requests for printed copies came by the thousands.

A wintery sun cast its rays through tall windows, the curtains of which had been pulled aside. And at the noonday hour, the beams slowly etched a pathway, across the red, red carpet until they fingered the coverlet draped across a giant, magnificently carved four poster bed.

Inch by inch the rays of the January sun rose up the side and presently bathed the bed in light — to reveal the gray face of a bearded man.

In the sun's reflection, silent watchers in the shadows watched the rise and fall of the covers, as the sick man's breathing came rasping, heavy and with great effort.

Gradually as the afternoon hours passed, the sunbeams — like the Eternity to which we all eventually return, moved relentlessly on. And as they moved, their rays slowly dimmed — and the shadows, routed to the deep corners of the room a few short hours before, gradually crept forward again. And the sun hid its face behind the tall trees and the warmth of nature slowly faded. It was as though Nature herself was writing in her own epic way for the little group of watchers hidden in the shadows, the final earthly chapter of a good and kindly man — George Frederick Ernest Albert — by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, Ireland, and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Defender of the Faith and Emperor of India — and now by the Grace of God, returned to his Maker after a life's task well done.

Fully a quarter of the habitable world grimly realized that once more in the long, great, glorious history of the British Empire, the time was at hand when it heard again those fateful words: "The King is dead — long live the King." Reluctantly and with grief they were heard as life flickered from the tired frame of King George of England. at 6:59 Eastern Standard Time — midnight in London.

.....

Thus one wonders whether the death of Edward Patrick David Windsor's father tonight will force him into marriage — and remove from the ranks of bachelors one of the most eligible in the world.

So as the sun slowly sets over the palace in Britain today, so did

life slowly ebb from a great, good, dignified King—and his going leaves behind a mourning empire—a very much saddened world which always doffs its hat in reverence to a good and able man—and a great Question Mark for the future.

*The King is Dead.*

LONG LIVE THE KING.

Good night.

Despite Carter's sentiments about the passing of a British monarch, and despite his own English background, he developed a considerable dislike for English foreign policy and urged America to develop an isolationist stand.

When the U.S. gunboat *Panay* was sunk by the Japanese on a river in China early in 1938, Carter attacked what he alleged was a White House effort to involve us in an Asian war. These broadcasts, which drew strong listener support, were probably his most successful against the Roosevelt administration. Carter argued that Japan had a right to a kind of Monroe Doctrine of its own. Just as the United States could warn foreign nations to stay out of Latin America, said Carter, so could Japan tell foreign nations to stay out of Asia. Carter's analogy was poor. Japan was then engaged in a long and bitterly contested war with a fellow Asian country it sought to dominate and occupy, accompanied by much slaughter. United States forays into Latin America were not nearly so deep, long, or vicious.

Carter also thought England was trying to drag the United States into a war to shore up Britain's commercial empire. *Why Meddle in Europe?*, the title of one of his seven books, was published in 1939, one year after *Why Meddle in the Orient?* (coauthored by Dr. Thomas H. Healy). "If Hitler uses force or threatens force," the radio commentator wrote in 1939, "it is primarily because he has learned from other nations of Europe that force is the only language that is effective in international affairs." He added, however, that he did not approve of Hitler's totalitarian government. In an earlier book, *Black Shirt, Black Skin*, he expressed disapproval of Mussolini's attack upon Ethiopia.

In a speech before the Washington Forum on January 25, 1938, Boake Carter predicted, "If we continue the present drift in foreign policy, the United States will wind up in war again within four years." Seven weeks short of four years later, the United States was indeed at war!

Carter once said his favorite columnist was Westbrook Pegler "because Peg is always out on a limb." His favorite radio commentator was Father Coughlin, a personal friend. In his early radio days, Carter studied the Coughlin technique which, said Carter, "always titillates his listeners—he's provocative." Sometimes Carter would mosey up to Detroit for a weekend of chitchat with the Radio Priest. Carter used to say they were both potential victims of censorship.

A Princeton University survey of Boake Carter listeners elicited such responses as:

"Carter has a way of seeming to get right into you."

"A newspaper has so much material that you can't possibly cover it all. Boake Carter gives you something to look for in the paper."

"Mr. Carter has commentated on something which stirs up interest in it. I have often picked up the paper and read an article just because he mentioned the question."

"I like Boake Carter because he doesn't care what he says. He has less restraint than any of the commentators. He says just what he thinks."

Most of the listeners surveyed regarded Carter as a friend—moreover, a friend with an inside track on information newspapers either lacked or would not publish.

On August 26, 1938, CBS took Boake Carter off the air. It has never been made quite clear why. Certainly Carter had powerful enemies in and out of government. For some of those enemies, much more was involved than political differences. There was hatred, deep, unrelenting, and implacable. For example, Congresswoman Virginia E. Jenckes had told a meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution that every cherry tree around the Jefferson Memorial should be felled to show Japanese spies that the United States would brook no nonsense. Carter had fun with that one on the air. "Where is the lady from Indiana and her handy little ax?" he asked. The infuriated Mrs. Jenckes began a one-woman campaign to deport this nasty radio commentator.

Carter's dismissal may have been due both to pressure from the State Department on CBS and General Foods and to his own increasingly irrational attacks in broadcasts and lectures on American policy, particularly foreign policy. He saw it differently: "I pulled my punches and because of this and contributing reasons my radio rating, which had been at the top, began to drop."

In a bizarre turnaround, after F.D.R.'s reelection two years later, Carter sent a telegram to the White House, addressed "Dear Boss," saying, "Since yesterday's decision puts you again at the tiller, I'm ready to fall to and help trim sheets when you shout: 'stand by.'"

After leaving CBS, Boake Carter remained off the air for a year. From September 1939 until he died in November 1944, he was heard intermittently on Mutual affiliates at a variety of times and days of the week and with a variety of sponsors, including Land O'Lakes Dairy and Chef Boy-Ar-Dee, makers of spaghetti and sauce.

Friends observed that his behavior grew increasingly peculiar. Evidence exists that he was going insane, or was at the least under severe mental strain, which affected his behavior. Some right-wing extremists, including Senator Rush D. Holt of West Virginia, brooded about a British conspiracy that forced Boake Carter off the air, but, plainly, something other than politics had crept into Carter's life.

His newspaper column of May 5, 1941, stated: "I am quite certain that God had decreed that England and America, to win today's battle, must rearm so totally that we will both be broken economically. I am equally convinced that our political systems, and the filth and decay that is in them, will be destroyed in the next five years."



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He began to pepper his columns with biblical allusions. His mother belonged to an anti-Semitic group in England, the British-Israel World Federation, and Carter joined its American counterpart, the Anglo-Saxon Federation of America. Both groups believed that Anglo-Saxons, Celts, and kindred tribes were the true Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, while Jews were not descended from the people of the Bible. Carter gave that belief up to join a tiny mystical sect of Jews who believed that Anglo-Saxons were indeed descended from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel but that Jews were descended from the Tribes of Judah. Newspapers carried Carter's story, "Why I Embraced Biblical Hebrewism." He also divorced and remarried. He kept a kosher kitchen. Carter was totally sincere, a complete convert, along with his second wife and his sister, to this sect which numbered only a handful of people, including a black who called himself Abner Goldberg and who left the impression that he was really the prophet Elijah. Goldberg exerted a strong influence on Carter, apparently sought an affair with his second wife, Dorothy Carter, and was eventually arrested for draft evasion. Carter meanwhile wrote to President Roosevelt, his nemesis all these years, trying to interest him in the writings of the sect's leader, Moses Guibbory.

On April 6, 1943, when other radio commentators were busy analyzing the collapse of Axis resistance in North Africa, Carter told his vast audience of his new faith. There had been, said Carter, three great writings that influenced mankind, the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Mein Kampf. Now there was a fourth, *The Bible in the Hands of Its Creators*, written by Moses Guibbory.

Guibbory soon moved to the United States to carry on the work, which was heavily dependent upon Boake Carter's money. He convinced Carter to divorce Dorothy. Guibbory moved into the Carter home and sought the affections of the now ex-Mrs. Carter while the radio commentator remained in the house, outwardly content with this new arrangement.

Carter continued to broadcast, twice a week at noon. But the emotional pressures were building and building. On November 16, 1944, Boake Carter died of a heart attack in Hollywood, California.

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## Upton Close

HIS real name was Josef Washington Hall. In China during the Japanese invasion of 1916-1919, he worked as both the head of an American espionage group and as a news correspondent. He wrote a few articles for the Shanghai *Weekly Review*, concluding with the words: "Up close." It indicated where he was in relation to the fighting. The editor ran the phrase as the author's name. Hall liked the new name, which soon evolved into Upton Close.

It was as Upton Close that he would win a reputation, along with Fulton Lewis, Jr., Boake Carter, and Father Coughlin, as holding down the extreme right wing of American radio political commentary. In his later years Close helped to organize the reactionary American Action, Inc., and he bitterly opposed the United Nations, saying, "All this idealism is bunk." Yet the young Close's writings show a decidedly liberal international observer, a man who deprecated Mussolini and admired Lenin, a man who as early as 1932 predicted that China would go Communist and that "a mad military clique [was] riding the lovely land of Japan to ruin."

He was born on an Indian reservation along the Columbia River at Kelso, Washington, February 27, 1894, the son of a onetime gold miner who panned alongside the early California writer, Joaquin Miller. Close

studied at Washington Missionary College and got his B.A. degree at George Washington University. The year he got his degree, 1915, he married the first of five wives. He was divorced from all of them. Close was to have five sons, no daughters.

The year 1916 found him in Shantung province, China, in charge of the United States Legation espionage service during the Japanese invasion of 1916-1919. He remained until 1922, serving as a newspaper correspondent in China, Japan, and Siberia, as adviser to Chinese student revolutionaries, and as foreign affairs chief in the regime of General Wu Pei-fu until typhoid fever sent him home an invalid. As Upton Close, he returned to the West Coast to lecture on Oriental life and literature at the University of Washington.

He lectured at the university for five years and wrote the first two of seven books on Asian and world affairs, *In the Land of the Laughing Buddha* (1925) and *Outline History of China*, coauthored by Dr. H. H. Gowen (1926). Other books included *The Revolt of Asia* (1927); *Moonlady*, a novel (1927); *Eminent Asians* (1929); *Challenge* (1934) (revised, partially rewritten, and republished in 1942 under the title *Behind the Face of Japan*); and *The Ladder of History*, a high school textbook coauthored by Merle Burke (1945). Nothing was slapdash about these books. They were fat with pages and carefully researched. Several of them combined Close's own adventures, which were in the Richard Halliburton tradition, with appraisals of the character of the Oriental peoples, regarded generally by Westerners as inscrutable, plus political observations. In 1926, Close returned to the Orient, this time as director of the annual American Cultural Expeditions to the Orient. He led groups of students, teachers, and professional people to the Far East, India, Russia, the Middle East, and Europe. Twice he was reported dead. He went through Chinese famines and floods. He was picked up in the streets of Hong Kong unconscious from dengue fever. He was thrown into a Chinese military prison. He journeyed up and down and across Asia by car, wheelbarrow, airplane, mule, and on foot. His Chinese was, of necessity, fluent.

His observations led Close to some perceptive and liberal—even radical—political conclusions. For example, in 1924 he wrote: "The push of the 'Christian' nations upon China—politically, commercially, economically and culturally—may compel her to take up Western philosophy and weapons to defend herself, as it did Japan. Only thus will the 'Yellow Peril'<sup>1</sup> be born."

Visiting Indochina, then peacefully under French control, he observed, "The hold of the white benefactor and ruler impresses us as very insecure today."

Concluding a journey across Asia, Upton Close summed up: "First, Western control of Asia for profit, political or commercial, is discredited and in collapse. Second, the general and conscious demand of Asian peoples for control of their own destiny nullifies the white man's

1. William Randolph Hearst was selling newspapers by raising the scare of a Yellow Peril to our shores.

responsibility for their welfare. . . . A backward people has the inalienable right . . . to be bad off under its own rulers rather than well off under aliens, should it prefer."

Close continued to state his views not only in books but in many magazine articles, lectures, and radio broadcasts. He was nothing if not prolific. For a time in China, he was even the editor of the Peking *Leader*.

One of his journeys led him and the Reverend John Hayes, representing the International Relief Association, to a remote district of northwestern China, where an earthquake had caused widespread disaster. Close contracted amoebic dysentery. He later described the nearly fatal attack:

At ruined "Black City" I noticed the first symptoms of the supreme dread of the traveller in Asia. Many a man in the hinterland has made this discovery and gone in to write his farewell messages home. I hesitated to tell Hayes, but he guessed. Dysentery? We had no emetine. It was three hundred miles to a doctor: sixty to the nearest telegraph station. To move would aggravate the condition. Yet it was dangerous to tarry. Without remedies, I might reckon on three weeks to live. If I could get to a hospital within that time there was hope.

Hayes dispatched a man to the telegraph line with a message . . . I lay on a brick bed in the ruined inn awaiting an answer. It came the third day.

There was a native doctor's assistant visiting his family seventy miles to the north of us who was supposed to have some emetine with him. We made two attempts to start but each time I suffered so much from the rough roads that Hayes brought me back.

The world was gradually growing indistinct to me. . . . Marvellous visions of colors and shapes. . . . I had seen them once in my youth when I bled into unconsciousness—and awoke, startled to find myself alive with two hollow needles pumping salt water into my arteries. Good old Hayes was greatly troubled.

"No need to worry," I tried to assure him, "If I 'go west' don't attempt to take my body back. Just get a stonemason to carve the words: 'Glad did he live and gladly die,' and leave me here on the plain."

My great regret was my three little boys. I had dreamt of the time when the four of us, all young yet, would ride out together in search of adventure.

At last we left the Black City. I was swung in a hammock rigged up by Hayes under a great covered cart. Hammock and occupant were wrapped in oilskins for protection against the bitter wind, loaded with sleet and sand.

I know little of that journey. After some stages Hayes found the doctor's assistant. He said the symptoms were not dysentery, but cholera. Perhaps he was right, but cholera would ordinarily have been more painful and quicker ended.

"Give him opium," said the sympathetic natives.

There was one other treatment, kill or cure, of which I had heard. During a moment of lucidity, I told Hayes. It was the kerosene-salt-water injection, half and half. Hayes scoured the locality for kerosene.

This is one part of the earth where the Standard Oil Company has not penetrated. Luckily a man was discovered who had brought a quart from the east, as a curiosity. Kerosene and opium killed the germs and I survived.

My recovery was as rapid as my seizure. In a few days I was fretting to get out of the hammock. When we came within sight of Ning-an-bu, on the Yellow River, I mounted my McClellan and rode into town. We expected telegrams there, and I went direct to the office while Hayes hunted an inn.

One wire was to him from my wife. "Please bring the corpse," it read. Evidently the operators who had handled Hayes's wire to Tornvall had done some long-distance gossiping which reached her.

I wired a reply at once. "Bringing it as fast as I can." And signed my own name.

The man the *Chicago Tribune* was to call "the Marco Polo of news commentators" returned to make his living as a public lecturer. His radio commentaries grew out of his lecturing. As early as 1924, while still at the University of Washington, he made his first radio broadcast, with another adventurer, Lowell Thomas. Close believed radio gave lecturing a new lease of life. In 1940 he wrote, "Ten years ago prophets said radio would kill lecture going. The lecturer met that menace by turning forum leader and letting his audience talk back and ask questions. Since the radio goads people to talk back but they must attend a lecture to do it, nothing has given lecturing greater impetus than radio."

Sporadically from 1934 to 1941, Upton Close appeared on news programs over NBC. From April 1941 to September 1942, the months preceding and the following Pearl Harbor, NBC hired him to broadcast on Sunday afternoons as the network's authority on the Far East. The program, "Events and Trends of the Week," was sustaining (un-sponsored). Regarded at first as a temperate, objective news analysis, it was printed and distributed by the University of California Press as a public service. Close also broadcast occasional spots in NBC's nightly "News of the World" roundup, sponsored by Miles Laboratory.

During this period Close developed both a loyal following and a reputation for political paranoia. Millions of Americans heard Upton Close for the first time on the afternoon of December 7, 1941, as they hovered near their radios to make some sense out of the Japanese attack.

"Hello, Americans," Close told NBC listeners. "The most fantastic thing that has yet happened in this fantastic world is the bombing of Honolulu. . . . There is more behind it than meets the eye. . . . I think I have just received the most interesting and perhaps the most important sidelight on what has happened. . . . I have just been in touch with the San Francisco Japanese Consulate. The Consul was not able to talk, but his representative and secretary said that the attack is a complete surprise to the Foreign Office in Tokyo and the Japanese government in Tokyo. It is very possible that there is a double double-cross in this business . . . a coup engineered by German influences and with the aid of German vessels

in the Pacific . . . [or] a coup engineered by the group in Japan that wants the group that wants war kicked out of office."

Starting in September 1942, Close began a Sunday afternoon political commentary over NBC, "Close-Ups of the News," sponsored by Northern Pump and the Sheaffer Pen Company. Most of the commentaries were delivered from the NBC radio studios in Hollywood. When he traveled, he would broadcast from whatever city he happened to be visiting. His delivery was smooth and quick, honed by years on the lecture circuit.

The next two years saw Upton Close at the peak of his national popularity. By this time the thrust of his messages had changed. Instead of the old relatively objective analysis of events in the Pacific, he now lashed out at President Roosevelt, at liberalism, at Britain, and at Russia. Liberals responded by accusing him of being isolationist, anti-British, pro-German, antilabor, and anti-Semitic.

In April 1941, he predicted a time when "influences out of Russia may be more dangerous to democracy than Hitler's fraying threats." The previous month he called "the kicking around of Lindbergh . . . the most shameful page in American history" and he spoke of the reckless sympathy for England and hatred for Germany displayed by "the Anglophiles and the Jewish people on the umbilical coast, east of the Hudson River." His broadcast of January 21, 1945, quoted and supported the well-known bigot, Merwin K. Hart. "Let us not pursue the suicidal policy of cruelty to Germany because she has been cruel." On February 11, he scolded the "Protestant chiselers" and "Jewish opportunists" for calling attention to prejudices. And on March 11, he told listeners that "the shocker of the week" was President Roosevelt's possible approval of "Stalin's plan of putting 10,000,000 young Germans to forced labor in Russia." Close denied being biased and offered a \$1,000 war bond to anyone who could find anything in his writings or broadcasts that was anti-British, anti-Russian, or anti-Semitic. No one collected.

He spoke often of "America first" and of being a "war dad." During World War II, he called for bringing the boys back home as soon as possible, predicting they would come back to the United States "confirmed isolationists." He reportedly told a convention of Iowa teachers in October 1943, "It is time for the United States to pull out of the European conflict. . . . America is waking up and wondering why she got into this war."

Close erred badly at times. On March 4, 1941, he told San Francisco's Town Hall, "I see less reason for having a war with Japan who is frayed out, eaten out at the heart, who has the blind staggers—no, I see less reason to have war with Japan today than I have at any time in seven years." Yet by the end of 1942, he was calling Japan the "roughest, toughest, most unyielding enemy in the world" and predicted that Japanese bombers would be flying from the Aleutians over the West Coast and Great Lakes factories.

He told a Republican rally in Evanston, Illinois, on April 4, 1944, that the Japanese navy in the North Pacific was convoying our Lend-Lease

shipments to Russia, and "it is to be assumed that Japan gets her cut of our lend-lease materials in return for such service."

Opposition to Close was building up within NBC, fed by Close's ceaseless insistence that the United States concentrate on fighting Japan first rather than Germany. Some of Close's more extreme and sometimes unsupported statements included his assertions of Harry S. Truman's "early Ku Klux Klan connections." In June and July of 1944, Close went to the defense of Tyler Kent, an employee of the American Embassy in London, known as a friend of British Fascists and an intimate of a White Russian girl in Axis pay. Kent was caught in possession of more than 1,500 confidential documents lifted from embassy files. He was convicted by a British court after Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy waived diplomatic immunity. Over Mutual on June 25, 1944, Close argued that Kent "properly should have been brought to America for trial." Meanwhile, a friend of Tyler Kent, John Bryan Owen, grandson of William Jennings Bryan, was found dead in his Greenwich Village room of an overdose of a drug, veronal. Close saw a sinister linkage and a chance to needle Thomas Dewey, 1944 presidential hopeful of the liberal wing of the Republican party. In his NBC broadcast of July 9, Close asked: "Did the mysterious death of the grandson of William Jennings Bryan, just after his return from England, have a connection with all this? . . . Well, mystery of mysteries, will the former fighting district attorney of New York pick up the thread of that death in Greenwich Village and try to untangle the snarl of this international scheme? Will Tom Dewey, the young squire of New York's Dutchess County . . . roll up his sleeves again and get the truth for the American people?"

Close's inference was that someone important had Owen killed because he knew too much about the unrevealed truth in the Kent case. Once again, no evidence emerged to support any such allegation.

NBC took Close off the air in December 1944, replacing him as a commentator with Max Hill, former Tokyo correspondent for the Associated Press. Close blamed his removal on pressure from "certain radical and Communistic elements" or government sources.

NBC president, Niles Trammell, declaring Close's charges to be "completely false," added: "This decision on our part to replace one commentator with another does not involve in the slightest degree the principle of free speech which we have always upheld. . . . In connection with all commercial commentators on NBC facilities, it is a standing policy of the company . . . that the selection of such commentators rests with NBC, inasmuch as the balanced presentation of news and comment is an obligation and responsibility of the broadcast station or network."

Close's Hooper Rating ranged between 4.7 and 6.3, compared with, for example, an average 25 by Walter Winchell, but some of his listeners were fiercely loyal. Michigan Congressman Roy Woodruff called the NBC firing "terrorism on the radio." Merwin K. Hart's National Economic Council issued a leaflet, "Why Was Upton Close Dropped by NBC?" Close himself claimed that "the flood of protests, by letter and telegram, and the number of newspaper editorials and comments descending upon



NBC have far exceeded any such public reaction previously in the history of radio, in the case of the removal of any commentator from a major network."

Close also blamed his departure from NBC on a consumer boycott of one of his sponsors, the Sheaffer Pen Company—"the most dastardly, most anti-American thing that has yet hit America."

In 1945 Mutual hired him as a commentator. Close's opinions moved increasingly to the right. In 1946 Upton Close retired from radio. In the midfifties he moved to Mexico, where he lived, on and off, for the next six years. On November 14, 1960, his car collided with a train at a crossing near Guadalajara, killing him.

A contemporary critic has said of Upton Close that he talked so much over his career of a quarter century that "occasionally he has been most regrettably right, and at other times most regrettably wrong."

What follows are segments from a series of six broadcasts Close delivered in 1953 in Palm Beach, Florida, giving his opinions about some of his fellow radio commentators.

But before I rake up Drew Pearson and other more recent splashers on our air waves, I must set one more pioneer in his niche: H. V. Kaltenborn—aptly called "the schoolmaster of radio." The listener can almost see him wagging his finger as he talks in his high-pitched voice. HV uses dynamic rushes of words—the opposite of the easy flow style of Lowell Thomas. His disciple of the new generation is Morgan Beatty. I think HV is the only broadcaster active today who was born in the eighteen seventies! He has outlived several generations of network executives—who are prone to ulcers or liver ailments early in life! . . . in 1944, when he was President of our Radio Analysts association, [he] sided with Communist Johannes Steel and his fellow-travelers in the Association to expel without hearing and in absentia one of our members for being anti-Administration and anti-Russian!—But Radio has too often been like that!

"HV" was the pioneer of on-the-spot network broadcasting—setting up a mike in sound of the gun fire in the Spanish Revolution of 1936. H. V. Kaltenborn's success on the networks has given interventionist internationalism its most pious and untiring voice on Radio. Which ever way you feel about the internationalism that had taken us into three wars, you must recognize Kaltenborn's share. H. V. is never vicious—is always the gentleman. When Harry Truman did a crude imitation of him he said he was flattered. For the rough stuff on radio we must come to later "talent"—to use that word in the Chautauqua sense.

Radio commenting began in the crystal set days just 30 years ago, 1922-23. The gifted and erratic newspaper correspondent, Floyd Gibbons, Hearsts's sensation hunter, with his rapid-fire speech, founded radio news reporting. He predicted a war of Red Russia and Red China against the West, in his novel published in Liberty Magazine called "The Red Napoleon." . . .

Growly-voiced Boake Carter, the Englishman who was saddened

by the terrible mistakes of British policy and angered by the hypocrisy of New Dealers here, was the pioneer political critic and crusader on our air. He literally paid with his life.

Lowell Thomas, freshly back from adventures with Lawrence in Arabia, and your neighbor Upton Close, then freshly back from China, pioneered with adventure and travel talk. . . . Thomas standing in for Floyd Gibbons, became with the aid of his devoted script writer Prosper Marinelli [*sic*], and others who do his writing, the top window of the daily news scene. I became what the smart subversives of the American system and the English language called a CONTROVERSIALIST . . . because I could not endure to see what was being done to my country—after witnessing what had been done by Marxists to other countries.

The didactic, schoolmaster's voice of Hans Kaltenborn became the voice of internationalism, consistently promoting American participation and intervention in Europe's quarrels.

Just as radio became a prime influence in swaying American opinion, there arose a politician, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who knew how to use it to hypnotize the nation.

Most of the radio-struck younger commentators followed the path of least political and commercial resistance—taking care to please powerful groups and sponsors. They snidely supported the Social Welfare, Organized Labor, Internationalist and Tolerance Racketeer forces which thus obtained double grip on the nation—through politics and through radio information and interpretation.

The few dissenting voices paid dearly for their independence. Networks and stations which carried them, and their sponsors, paid, too!

Each of the successful radio pioneers has had a host of imitators. There is one old timer—not quite a pioneer—whom no one has successfully copied. He is radio's salesman supreme, the showman among commentators, Gabriel Heatter.

Gabe's complete disregard for consistency and logic has enabled him to go on year after year expressing the flash enthusiasms and indignations of most people, without bringing down on his head the wrath of a powerful group or boss. Probably they do not fear Gabe because his enthusiasms and denunciations simply would not glue together to make a political faith or cause. Likely they feel that this blowing off of iridescent steam actually relieves the danger of popular explosion against them. And Gabe never blows off steam but that there's a rainbow in it. . . .

I think people *like* Gabe because he is just as inconsistent as they are. You don't get mad at his inconsistencies any more than you do at a child's, or a clown's. . . .

Gabe has sold enough Serutan, Kreml, hearing aids, etc., to make his sponsors and himself very rich. For a time he was threatened with loss of his voice. Now, in his mid-sixties, he has his second wind. No one hates him—he is a comfort to millions, a pleasant relief to millions more. Had American commentating known only Gabe's type of showman we would have been spared its most vindictive and un-American chapter.

Two talkers made careers out of denunciation, alarm, and sensationalism in the years after the Great Depression: Walter Winchell

and Drew Pearson. They have very different backgrounds. But they are associated in the public mind because they have been mouthpieces for the same groups, and have used similar methods of sharp reporting and smear accusation. Of the two, Winchell, who grew up in vaudeville, and popularized gossip, has been a little more volatile; shown a little more adaptability; perhaps, been less cock-sure of himself. . . .

It should be noted that an opinionated, sensational or controversial figure speaking once a week brings a network more grief than a daily neutral analyst — and with one-fifth the revenue to the stations!

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## Dorothy Thompson

THE way she would tell it years later, the mayor of Friendship, New York, and some of the good old boys who lived in the village hatched a scheme to have some fun with one of these suffragettes who were going around trying to stir up trouble by giving the vote to women, as if there weren't enough problems without mothers hanging around polling places. The village was having a celebration and a suffragist was politely invited to speak. She arrived, a tall, blue-eyed, poised young woman. The mayor escorted her to the speaker's platform on a wagon located beside the bandstand, where the band and its leader had already taken their places.

A crowd gathered. If one looked closely, one might have observed an elbow here and there poking some neighbor ribs. The mayor announced that we have here a young lady who . . . and the bandmaster moved his baton smartly. The band struck up, the mayor jumped down, the crowd guffawed, and Dorothy Thompson was left standing there. It was even funnier when she tried to speak. As she raised her voice to be heard over the music, the bandmaster called for more volume from the brass and the drum. Talking was impossible. She gestured for a fair hearing. More jeers. It was time for her to climb down and go back where she came from.

And down she came, leaping nimbly, but not to go home. Across the street she spied a furniture store. In its window, a child's blackboard. She hurried in, paid the dollar for the board and chalk, and clambered back upon the platform. Puzzled looks from the crowd. The band played on. The young suffragist, only recently graduated from Syracuse, wrote out the first paragraph of her speech on the blackboard, which she then held up with defiance. Giving the audience time to read it, she erased the paragraph and wrote another. Someone in the crowd applauded. Then another. And another. The drum stopped drumming and the tuba stopped tooting. The band grew silent. Dorothy Thompson set her blackboard aside, brushed the chalk dust from her blue serge suit, and in a firm voice told the audience why women had as much right to vote as men did.

Dorothy Thompson was to go on to become a foreign correspondent in Europe, the first woman foreign correspondent of stature. "A blue-eyed tornado," John Gunther called her. The only "woman newspaperman" around, her colleagues said, meaning it as a compliment, pleased that she didn't use sex as bait for interviews, like the women correspondents who boasted that their exclusives from Mussolini came by way of the sofa in the Palazzo Chigi.

She went on to write one of America's most popular newspaper columns, to become a radio commentator, and to lecture widely. She was to hammer away for years at the menace of Adolf Hitler, while most Americans dismissed him as merely a nuisance, and to draw from Winston Churchill the tribute, "She has shown what one valiant woman can do with the power of the pen. Freedom and humanity are grateful debtors."

And she was wooed by a man who was shortly to become the first American to win the Nobel Prize for literature, Sinclair Lewis, with a passion so intense that he followed her to Moscow, where a delighted delegation of delighted communist officials asked him why he had come to Russia.

His reply: "Dorothy. Just Dorothy."

Of the many stories about Dorothy Thompson, some are true and some are sort of true. She loved a good story and was not above improving tales about herself.

This thoroughly liberated woman was born in upstate New York in 1894. Her father, a Methodist minister, came from the north of England, which partly accounted for the English pronunciations and idioms that crept into her broadcast delivery.

Her love of travel appeared at ages 3 and 4, when she tried running away from home, each time taking a friend along for the short journey they managed before falling asleep. Dorothy grew up a leggy tomboy. Despite the layers of petticoats, she shinnied up apple trees. If a boy could, she could. In a hayloft she rigged a trapeze, so she could hang by her legs and swing almost to the rafters, pigtails and petticoats flying. She also rigged a tightrope. Her parasol helped her balance on those aerial walks. Once she organized a circus. For the grand finale, Dorothy leaped from the hayloft window. An umbrella was her parachute. A fractured collarbone was her

prize. But her gentle father never rebuked this scamp, this scandal of the neighborhood.

Her mother died when Dorothy was 7, and her father married the church organist, a prim and sour spinster who addressed her husband as "Dominie" and thought Dorothy's antics brought shame upon the family. Antics? There was the time Dorothy and a friend were caught playing in their bathing costumes inside the lumberyard at Main and Centre streets. And when the family moved to Gowanda, New York, there were all the times she would roll down her stockings as soon as she was out of sight of her house. And the time her teacher discovered the caricature Dorothy had drawn of the principal, with an appropriate verse. That brought Dorothy a week's suspension, until she apologized. The next place she would be kicked out of was to be Hitler's Third Reich.

Meanwhile, enough was enough. At age 12, Miss Dorothy Thompson was packed off to live with two aunts in Chicago and go to high school. There she became a debater and played center on the girl's basketball team. She switched to guard when she went on to Syracuse University. Although pretty, she didn't get asked out too often at Syracuse. She was too interested in political discussion. A boy was unnerved to take a girl for a moonlit stroll during a dance intermission and have her discuss the tariff question.

She helped to pay her way through her last two years of college by selling ice cream cones on the boardwalk at Ocean Grove, New Jersey, by peddling books door to door, by waiting table, and by rolling taffy in a candy factory.

At Syracuse University, she was a leader in the feminist movement, then concerned with granting the vote to women. A member of the Equal Suffrage Club, Dorothy Thompson was already in demand as an orator, although her voice was not particularly agreeable and her delivery was halting. She spoke with a burning intensity and her ready wit put down many a heckler. Tall and skinny and intense, "the very figure of the valiant young feminist," someone said.

After she graduated she took a job at \$8 weekly in the Buffalo office of the New York State Suffrage Association as a speaker, organizer, list compiler, and envelope addresser.

Of course, speaking interested her most. In those days a woman somewhere would volunteer a car with herself as its chauffeur to drive to some busy corner. The speaker would climb upon the back seat and unfurl a suffrage banner. She would then exhort pedestrians to support the worthy cause of the emancipation of women, sometimes passing the plate before the police arrived. Dorothy Thompson often returned from these outings with the pockets of her blue serge suit bulging with silver and folding money. In one town an elderly woman wrote a substantial check and handed it to Dorothy. She still opposed giving women the vote, the old lady remarked, but she must say that she did indeed enjoy listening to the speech.

One of Dorothy Thompson's favorite stories recounted the day that

she and a fellow suffragist were walking through a fair soliciting support when they came upon a crowd around an antisuffrage tent, in front of which a well-dressed woman orator was holding forth, urging people to enter the tent to sign an antisuffrage petition. Dorothy listened in silence, her temperature rising, until a worker came around to ask if the two young ladies would care to enter the tent and sign. Dorothy stepped back dramatically and raised her hand. The orator stopped. Heads turned. The Methodist minister's daughter lifted her voice for all to hear. "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Then she and her friend strolled off, leaving the speaker to recover as best she could.

She spent much of her free time at the Niagara Falls mansion of fellow suffragist Gertrude Tone, her husband, and their two small sons, Ned and Franchot. (Franchot would grow up to become one of Hollywood's leading men.) They were a second family to the young woman, who developed a crush on Franchot Tone's uncle, a crush that apparently went unrequited.

Although her monthly wage had risen to \$75, the need for money drove her after three years of suffrage labors to New York City and a job writing publicity for a Bible publisher. She soon discovered she cared little for this, so she accepted a job at a lower salary to write publicity for a social service project in Cincinnati. A group of planners were attempting to organize a new social living scheme in a poor section of the city. When the mayor of Cincinnati attacked the project as bolshevistic, Miss Thompson went before the city council and, with well-honed words, took his honor's hide off. After Cincinnati it was back to New York for a while to work in the social group's New York office.

She was a blithe spirit. She was young, attractive, and confident. There was a world out there waiting to be experienced. In 1920 she took \$100 of her worldly savings of \$250 and plunked it down on a one-way steamship ticket for London, traveling with a girl friend and hoping to land a job as a newspaper correspondent. Aboard the ship was a delegation of prominent American Jews going to London for an international conference on Zionism. Among them were Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis and a future justice, Felix Frankfurter. And her girl friend just happened to be Jewish! By the time the ship docked, Dorothy Thompson, who may not have even met a Jew in all the years of growing up, had learned a lot about Zionism. As soon as she reached London she called on the bureau manager of Hearst's International News Service and said she wanted to cover the Zionist conference as a free-lancer. The bureau manager wondered what, if anything, she knew about Zionism. "I know more about Zionism than anyone else," was the firm reply. As she retold the story in later years, she got the job. Along with it, her first pay as a journalist.

After the Zionists left, she scratched out a free-lance living writing feature stories for wire services and newspapers. Meanwhile, she befriended Fleet Street reporters, who taught this enthusiastic and at-



tractive American some of the tricks of the journalist's trade. Wire services, even more short-handed then than now, welcomed free-lancers. Dorothy Thompson survived.

She developed a knack for being at the right place at the right time, something between luck and a sharp ear. She sailed to Ireland, partly to locate some distant cousins and partly on a tip that the Sinn Fein troubles were worsening. Dorothy Thompson interviewed several Sinn Fein leaders, including the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence McSwiney, an Irish patriot who had been arrested in the Easter Uprising of 1916. That was the last interview he gave to a reporter. Very soon after, he was arrested again. In prison he went on a hunger strike which attracted the world's attention. He died seventy-four days later. His last message to the world got out through Dorothy Thompson's typewriter.

She went to Italy, where she wrote about the strikes, the lockouts, and the street battles between Fascists and Communists, the visible writhings of the great industrial city of Milan that preceded Mussolini's takeover of Italy. Dorothy Thompson later told of the night in Milan that she stood outdoors in a pouring rain while taking notes of a speech. Later, because she could not get a room, she slept on a dining room table in a cheap hotel. The next day she caught a train to Vienna, where she reported her story and collapsed with pneumonia.

There was another story told by the girl friend with whom she sailed to Europe. Once, on the way to Vienna, they stopped at the port of Trieste to visit some Zionists waiting for a ship to take them to Palestine. They found the young pioneers destitute, huddled in bleak barracks. Miss Thompson sold her gold watch to provide them with money. She also gave them some of her own clothing.

She went to Paris nearly broke. The American Red Cross office hired her to write publicity, a penny a line. She continued to write news on a free-lance basis. It was the early twenties. The continent of Europe trembled in the cross-pressures caused by World War I, the peace terms imposed upon the Central Powers, and the Bolshevik revolution. Economic and social dislocations abounded. Men grasped for power. Breathe deeply and you could sniff the changes in the air.

Central European royalists attempted to establish Karl as emperor over the Hungarian remnant of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Miss Thompson learned that Karl, the empress Zita, and their party might pause near a spot where the Orient Express enters Hungary. She hurried there, discovered the imperial entourage, and secured an interview with the would-be emperor.

The Karlist putsch failed in an opéra bouffe war. Soon Karl, a pregnant Zita, retainers, and a small band of followers were holed up in a Hungarian castle. Reporters were denied access to them. Dorothy Thompson had already convinced the Red Cross to send her to Central Europe to write about its work there. Now she talked a Red Cross official into taking her, disguised as a medical assistant, into the castle. She

donned a nurse's uniform and, with the official at the wheel of a Red Cross car, scooted through the castle gate, where a clutch of reporters waited and fumed.

Emperor Karl gave the American free-lancer what proved to be his last interview, for he was exiled to the island of Madera, where he died a few months later. Empress Zita not only gave Miss Thompson an interview, but entrusted her with a note to her eldest son, Crown Prince Otto. Two versions exist of how that story got past tight censorship. According to the version Dorothy Thompson later told, she gave the story and the royal note to a sleeping car porter on the Orient Express, who then passed it along to a colleague of Miss Thompson when the train pulled into the station at Vienna. According to the colleague, he was at the castle with her and simply carried the story and the note to Vienna.

Another tale of derring-do had her in Sofia, Bulgaria, covering street riots from a hotel balcony. A machine gunner across the street mistook her for a member of the government party and peppered the balcony with slugs. Dorothy Thompson kept taking notes until a waiter reached outside the door and dragged her in by her hair, shouting the Bulgarian equivalent of "Are you crazy?"

Whether these wild and romantic tales were altogether true or not, there was no doubt that Dorothy Thompson kept feeding news on a free-lance basis to her best outlet, the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*. Soon she was a staff member of the *Ledger*, its Vienna bureau chief. Her news reports also began appearing in the New York *Evening Post*.

While attending the Vienna opera one evening in 1926, she overheard someone seated nearby remark that trouble was brewing in Poland. During intermission she threw a wrap over her bared shoulders and hastened to the telegraph office, where she learned that right-wing general Joseph Pilsudski was marching on Warsaw. The last train for Warsaw would pull out in one hour. She phoned her maid to meet her at the station with a suitcase. Money was a problem. She had brought little with her. Wondering who she knew who had ready cash at hand, she recalled that a man she had recently interviewed told her he kept a supply of currency in his home. She phoned him and he quickly consented to lend her the equivalent of \$500. And that explains how Dr. Sigmund Freud helped Dorothy Thompson to cover the revolution in Poland.

Now the story divides into two. The more intriguing tale goes this way. Dorothy Thompson boarded the train still wearing her opera gown and her satin slippers. Also aboard and headed for the revolution she found other foreign correspondents, including the dashing Floyd Gibbons. The train stopped at a village ninety kilometers short of Warsaw. The engineer refused to go farther, saying the tracks ahead were mined. The correspondents decided to rent private cars. Gibbons chivalrously let Miss Thompson have the best available, a Fiat. He and another correspondent set off in a broken-down Model T. But the frugally raised product of small-town America failed to reach a price with the Fiat driver she could accept. Instead, she and another traveler rented a more dilapidated flivver at half

the Fiat asking price. Its driver took them within nine kilometers of Warsaw, but refused to chug any closer to an active revolution. The pair trudged the rest of the way through woods and ankle-deep mud, Miss Thompson still in her evening gown and satin slippers. Threading her way past machine guns and bodies littering the streets of Warsaw, she located the American Embassy, where she met Floyd Gibbons. "My God, can you really be alive?" he exclaimed. On the way to Warsaw, Gibbons' car had passed the Fiat, abandoned and bullet ridden. He was sure Dorothy Thompson had been killed. At the moment she walked in, Gibbons was composing a cable reporting her missing and probably dead.

Miss Thompson got her story of the Polish revolution out of Warsaw, where strict censorship was being enforced, by the simple expedient of renting another car and driving to a nearby village, where the local telegrapher accepted her cable without question and tapped it over the wires.

The second version of this exploit has it that our heroine had time in Vienna to return to her hotel to change from gown and slippers to something more sensible for covering revolutions, and that all the correspondents up from Vienna arrived together, not slogging through mud, but in a bus, rundown yet serviceable. The earlier and more glamorous version, which built up the legend of Dorothy Thompson the war correspondent, was circulated by Miss Thompson herself, who seems to have liked a good personal yarn as much as did the war correspondent, Richard Harding Davis, whose adventurous exploits a few years earlier thrilled a generation of home-bound Americans, probably including the intrepid Dorothy.

She loved Vienna. She also loved Viennese food. Inevitably, the excellent cooking she found in the fine homes and restaurants of several European countries punished the tall and once-slim young woman with a matronly figure that remained with her for life despite sporadic crash dieting. Her home became a salon attracting diplomats, political figures, journalists, and others who supplied her with many a news tip.

In 1923, at the age of 28, she married a handsome and sophisticated Hungarian Jewish intellectual, Josef Bard. The marriage ended in divorce four years later because he was too much the international playboy for the Methodist minister's daughter. His hot glances were often returned by women, including visiting poet Edna St. Vincent Millay, if a report is accurate.

A year after her marriage, Dorothy Thompson was chosen to head the Berlin bureau of the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, the first woman to head a major American news bureau overseas. Among the applicants for that plum was Raymond Gram Swing, who had spent six years in Berlin as a newspaper correspondent and was then working in London.

Her divorce from Bard arrived on her thirty-third birthday. On that day she attended a press conference at the German foreign ministry in Berlin. Another correspondent brought along a famous American novelist, Sinclair Lewis. One look at Dorothy Thompson and Sinclair Lewis fell in

love. Thin and gangly, Lewis had carrot-red hair, a flushed face, and a bad complexion. His own marriage had recently broken up and was in the process of divorce. Like Dorothy Thompson, Lewis grew up in a small American town, Sauk Center, Minnesota, which became famous as the target of his 1920 novel, *Main Street*. This was followed by *Babbitt* in 1922, *Arrowsmith* in 1925, and *Elmer Gantry* in 1927. He was presently at work on *Dodsworth*. His novels, translated into many languages, were widely read in Europe. Dorothy Thompson interviewed him on the spot, while he, in turn, wangled an invitation to her birthday supper that evening. And there he proposed marriage. Flustered, she thanked him and politely declined. Replied the world famous novelist, "I'm going to propose to you every time I see you from now on, in public and in private." Two days later a dinner was given in Berlin in his honor. He insisted that she attend. At the dinner, called upon to speak, Sinclair Lewis rose gravely and turned to Miss Thompson. "Dorothy, will you marry me?" End of speech. Or so the romantic tale went.

Now began the celebrated chase. A few days later, learning of riots in Vienna, Miss Thompson chartered a plane. Sinclair Lewis pursued her and climbed into her plane, although he hated airplanes and had never flown. "Marry me, Dorothy, will you?" he begged as he turned ashen. Again she said no. Holding on to the armrests for dear life, he flew with her to Vienna, but the airport was fogged in, so the plane returned to Berlin. The plane took off once more, with Lewis once more aboard. Upon arrival in Vienna, Miss Thompson grabbed a taxi and bolted. Lewis grabbed another and lurched after her. During the week of rioting, this swain, mature yet ardent, proposed several times a day. Her walls of resistance began to crumble against his unrelenting onslaught, but only a little. She told him she would consider his marriage proposals if he would write his impressions of the rioting for the syndicate of her newspaper, the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*. He said he would. He would do anything, even write at free-lance rates.

Some weeks later it was on to Moscow for Dorothy Thompson, to cover the festivities of the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Lewis flew after her, more lovesick than airsick. News of his coming flew ahead of him and a band and welcoming delegation were at the airport to greet the great Sinclair Lewis, whose novels were so well known in their Russian translation. The chairman of the welcoming committee asked Lewis why he had come to Moscow.

"To see Dorothy," said Sinclair Lewis.

The chairman did not understand and asked again.

"Dorothy," was the reply. "Just Dorothy."

In Red Square, while the workers and sailors passed in review, Sinclair Lewis snuck in dozens of proposals.

If this fairy-tale courtship sounds a bit too much like a fairy tale, perhaps it, too, gained some luster in its later retellings. A later account has it that she was not so coy. This now-adult, once-married woman perhaps did not play hard to get with the famous and rather appealing man

who wished to marry her but whose divorce from his first wife was not final. She was an open and candid person who needed affection and returned it. Perhaps such a tale has less charm than the "chase" version given out in the thirties, but surely in the greater sexual honesty of our present times, it must have its own strengths.

According to this later and more exact narrative, Dorothy and "Hal" (his full name was Harry Sinclair Lewis) corresponded while she was in Moscow and he in Berlin. After a month he could bear the separation no longer and followed her. To the question of why he had come to Moscow, he indeed is said to have replied, "To see Dorothy." What? "Just Dorothy."

In their exchanges of letters at various times, Dorothy and Hal enjoyed a zany dialogue. They peopled an imaginary place with tiny folk called Minnikins and they planned to have their future daughter, whom they named Lesbia, living there.

Sinclair Lewis and Dorothy Thompson were married in London in 1928. They honeymooned through the rural English countryside during the springtime and early summer months in a car and trailer, a most unusual sight at the time. The trailer was equipped with two portable typewriters. Lewis used his to complete *Dodsworth*. Two years later he won the Nobel Prize for literature.

Their marriage was to last fourteen years. They lived together for the first nine. During the last five, Lewis pressed her to free him. They bought a house in Bronxville and a 250-acre farm, which they called Twin Farms, near Woodstock, Vermont, where she was to spend many happy years. They had one son, Michael. Lewis was a heavy drinker and an unpleasant drunk, although he was clever and charming when sober. Someone wrote that Dorothy Thompson "with the exception of her husband, Sinclair Lewis, has no conversational superior." In the early years of their marriage, Lewis wanted to be sure Dorothy would not be thought of simply as the wife of the famous novelist. He told people she was the world's greatest journalist. At a banquet he publicly accused novelist Theodore Dreiser of plagiarizing a book she had written. Dreiser replied by slapping Lewis's face. Other guests had to keep Sinclair Lewis from trying to slug Theodore Dreiser.

As the years passed and Dorothy Thompson became more famous and busier, Lewis fell silent and moody. He grew jealous of the time she gave to her career. He could not cope with the limelight that came to shine upon her. He also became an isolationist, a supporter of America First. The divorce was granted three weeks after the United States entered World War II. But that was still many years away.

In 1931, Miss Thompson was granted an interview with a fast-rising political figure in Germany, an interview that formed the basis for a *Cosmopolitan Magazine* article and a book, "I Saw Hitler!" The judgment she reached came to haunt her:

When finally I walked into Adolph Hitler's salon in the Kaiserhof Hotel, I was convinced that I was meeting the future dictator of

Germany. In something less than fifty seconds I was quite sure that I was not. It took just about that time to measure the startling insignificance of this man who has set the world agog.

He is formless, almost faceless, a man whose countenance is a caricature, a man whose framework seems cartilaginous, without bones. He is inconsequential and voluble, ill-poised, insecure. He is the very prototype of the Little Man. . . . There is something irritatingly refined about him. I bet he crooks his little finger when he drinks a cup of tea. . . .

I thought of this man before me, seated as an equal between Hindenburg and Bruening, and involuntarily I smiled. . . . Oh, Adolph! Oh, Adolph! You will be out of luck.

She hated Hitler and all he stood for. She felt then and continued to feel all her life that the fuhrer was an aberration in the soul of the Germany she loved so well. She identified closely with German and Austrian cultures and people. When she returned to the United States to earn a reputation as an aggressive anti-Nazi, she would say often, "I am one of the few real pro-Germans in this country." She enjoyed cooking Viennese dishes in her Vermont kitchen, where the salt, pepper, sugar, coffee, and bread containers were labeled "salz," "pfeffer," "zucker," "kaffee," and "brot."

In 1934 Mrs. Sinclair Lewis was expelled from Nazi Germany, a front-page story in American newspapers. Thereafter, although her concern never flagged, she had to rely on such friends as William L. Shirer, John Gunther, and Frances Gunther for information about Germany. The still loving Sinclair Lewis joked that if he ever sued Dorothy for divorce, he'd name Hitler as corespondent.

Upon Dorothy Thompson's return to the United States, the wife of the publisher of the New York *Herald Tribune*, Helen Reid, suggested that she write a column for the paper and its syndicate. In 1935 Miss Thompson began "On the Record," a thrice-weekly column, which spread to some 195 newspapers with a combined circulation of 8 million readers. She wrote in a style one critic called "gutsy and fresh. Where Walter Lippmann soothes and is soothed, Dorothy Thompson excites and is excited." Her subject again and again and again was Adolf Hitler. Another critic observed: "In the years when he was successively considered a buffoon, a man with some good ideas but some bad methods, a distant disturbance, a threat to his immediate small neighbors, perhaps to France, hardly to Britain, and not at all to the United States, she kept insisting on the boundless possibilities and probabilities of chaos from this puny, paunchy figure. Wrong though she was about Hitler in 1932, she was precisely right after 1933."

With a refugee actor, Fritz Kortner, she coauthored an anti-Nazi play, *Another Sun*. Reviewers called it "hysterical" and it closed on Broadway after eleven performances. In 1937 a columnist for London's *Evening Standard* nominated her for president of the United States. She discussed the half-serious nomination with both taste and humor, remarking that the

time was not ripe for a woman to be accepted as president. As for Sinclair Lewis, he expressed his disappointment that she would not run, because, he said drily, if she were elected he could write a column called "My Day."<sup>1</sup>

The power of Dorothy Thompson's pen grew. Among women, only Eleanor Roosevelt rivaled her. A monthly column appeared in *The Ladies Home Journal*, with 3.5 million readers. She continued it until she died. A 1938 article in *Foreign Affairs* about the plight of refugees from Hitler's Germany impelled President Roosevelt to start proceedings that led to a thirty-nation conference on the refugee problem. Her transatlantic phone calls ran up huge bills. She picked the brains of the best-informed men she could find: Wendell Willkie on utilities, David Sarnoff on entertainment, Raymond Gram Swing for some aspects of foreign affairs, recent refugees for information about what was going on inside Nazi Germany and the occupied countries. *Time* in 1939 wrote a cover story about her. Major articles about her appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post* and *The New Yorker*. Father Charles Coughlin, by now a race baiter who delivered a weekly radio commentary, once referred to her as "Dottie." After that, she called him "Chuck."

Like her column, her radio career began after her expulsion from Germany. In 1936 NBC hired her to help cover the Democratic National Convention in Cleveland, which endorsed President Roosevelt for a second term, and the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, which chose Alfred M. Landon of Kansas to oppose him. She proved as popular on the air as she was in print. In August of 1937 she began a weekly radio commentary, first in between spots for Pall Mall cigarettes, later under the sponsorship of General Electric, and still later over the Mutual network for a manufacturer of men's clothing. Her voice was variously described as "full of fire and fury," "vibrant, well modulated, with impeccable, faintly Anglicized diction," and as having "a synthetic accent which sometimes slips and is an intriguing blend of Oxford and Main Street." She came by the English accent and the British idiom naturally, her father being born and raised in County Durham. Someone else referred to her "private war with the dictators, waged every week in a crisp, metallic voice rich with scorn and irony."

A critic recalled her later broadcasts. "When the announcer had finished intoning his introductory paean to the products of the pants and vest makers who sponsored Miss Thompson, a torrent of words would burst from the loudspeaker, probably wreaking havoc on the digestion of the typical middle-aged citizen slumped in an after-dinner stupor. Miss Thompson talks fast. She would cover an incredible amount of ground in thirteen minutes, generally spanning the globe and indicating solutions of the principal problems stymieing men on each of the continents. . . . Miss Thompson would vent her vehemence on everything from women's hats to the foreign policy, or lack of one, pursued by the Administration. Her program was a kind of topical swing session, not

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1. Eleanor Roosevelt wrote a newspaper column under this title.

recommended to those suffering from either complacency or cardiac disorder.”

Her Sunday night commentaries drew an estimated 6 million listeners. For a while she broadcast on Mondays at 9 p.m. EST. During the New York World’s Fair she delivered some broadcasts from the General Electric Pavilion. The General Electric Company reacted somewhat nervously to the force of her views and tried to ease their effect by introducing her with the sweet strains of Phil Spitalny’s All Girl Orchestra playing “Love Sends a Little Gift of Roses.” It didn’t work. Radio station KWK in St. Louis even cut her off once in midsentence, explaining later that she was too belligerent— “against everybody.” GE did not renew her contract.

When she broadcast a commentary about a Jewish youth who assassinated a Nazi attaché in Paris, listeners donated \$40,000 for his legal defense, although Miss Thompson asked for none. Here is the text of that broadcast of November 14, 1938:

A week ago today an anaemic-looking boy with brooding black eyes walked quietly into the German embassy in the rue de Lille in Paris, asked to see the ambassador, was shown into the office of the third secretary, Herr vom Rath, and shot him. Herr vom Rath died on Wednesday.

I want to talk about that boy. I feel as though I knew him, for in the past five years I have met so many whose story is the same — the same except for this unique desperate act. Herschel Grynzspan was one of the hundreds of thousands of refugees whom the terror east of the Rhine has turned loose in the world. His permit to stay in Paris had expired. He could not leave France, for no country would take him in. He could not work because no country would give him a work permit. So he moved about, hoping he would not be picked up and deported, only to be deported again, and yet again. Sometimes he found a bed with another refugee. Sometimes he huddled away from the wind under the bridges of the Seine. He got letters from his father, who was in Hanover, in Germany. His father was all right. He still had a little tailoring shop and managed honorably to earn enough for food and shelter. Maybe he would have sent his son money, but he was not allowed to send any out of Germany. Herschel read the newspapers, and all that he could read filled him with dark anxiety and wild despair. He read how men, women and children, driven out of the Sudetenland by a conquering army — conquering with the consent of Great Britain and France — had been forced to cross the border into Czechoslovakia on their hands and knees — and then had been ordered out of that dismembered country, that, shorn of her richest lands and factories, did not know how to feed the mouths that were left.

He read that Jewish children had been stood on platforms in front of classes of German children and had had their features pointed to and described by the teacher as marks of a criminal race. He read that men and women of his race, amongst them scholars and a general decorated for his bravery had been forced



to wash the streets, while the mob laughed. There were men of his race whom he had been taught to venerate — scientists and educators and scholars who once had been honored by their country. He read that they had been driven from their posts. He heard that the Nazi government had started all this because they said the Jews had made them lose the World War. But Herschel had not even been born when the World War ended. He was seventeen years old.

Herschel had a pistol. I don't know why he had it. Maybe he had bought it somewhere thinking to use it on himself, if the worst came to the worst. Thousands of men and women of his race had killed themselves in the last years, rather than live like hunted animals. Still, he lived on. Then, a few days ago, he got a letter from his father. His father told him that he had been summoned from his bed, and herded with thousands of others into a train of box cars, and shipped over the border, into Poland. He had not been allowed to take any of his meager savings with him. Just fifty cents. "I am penniless," he wrote to his son.

This was the end. Herschel fingered his pistol and thought: "Why doesn't someone do something! Why must we be chased around the earth like animals!" Herschel was wrong. Animals are not chased around the world like this. In every country there are societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals. But there are none for the prevention of cruelty to people. Herschel thought of the people responsible for this terror. Right in Paris were some, who were the official representatives of these responsible people. Maybe he thought that assassination is an honorable profession in these days. He knew, no doubt, that the youths who murdered the Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss are heroes in Nazi Germany, as are the murderers of Rathenau. Maybe he remembered that only four years ago the Nazi Leader himself had caused scores of men to be assassinated without a trial, and had justified it simply by saying that he was the law. And so Herschel walked into the German embassy and shot Herr vom Rath. Herschel made no attempt to escape. Escape was out of the question anyhow.

Herr vom Rath died on Wednesday. And on Thursday every Jew in Germany was held responsible for this boy's deed. In every city an organized and methodical mob was turned loose on the Jewish population. Synagogues were burned; shops were gutted and sometimes looted. At least four people were done to death. Many, many more were beaten. Scores killed themselves. In cold blood, the German government imposed a fine of four hundred million dollars on the entire Jewish community, and followed it by decrees which mean total ruin for all of them. A horrified world was stunned. In the United States nearly every newspaper protested. A former governor, Thomas Dewey, protested with unusual eloquence.

But in Paris, a boy who had hoped to make some gesture of protest which would call attention to the wrongs done his race burst into hysterical sobs. Up to then he had been apathetic. He had been prepared to pay for his deed with his own life. Now he realized that half a million of his fellows had been sentenced to extinction on the excuse of his deed.

I am speaking of this boy. Soon he will go on trial. The news is

that on top of all this terror, this horror, one more must pay. They say he will go to the guillotine, without a trial by jury, without the rights that any common murderer has.

The world has endured for five years unheard-of things. The fortunes of American citizens have been all but confiscated in Germany. We have protested, and no attention has been paid. What could we do? Some weeks ago two hundred American citizens of Jewish blood were ordered to close their businesses and depart from Italy as undesirable aliens. Our State Department protested, but the protest has been all but ignored. What could we do? Every country in the world has had a refugee problem to add to all its others, as a result of a system which cares nothing for what happens to other countries, and we among them. What could we do?

We could, of course, do many things. There are half a million non-naturalized Germans in the United States, and as many Italians. We might have loaded them on boats, confiscated their property and shipped them home. There are hundreds of thousands of dollars in German and Italian fortunes in this country. We might have confiscated them as reprisals for the confiscated fortunes of American citizens and for unpaid debts. Why don't we do it? We don't do it because it isn't, according to our standards, decent. We don't do it because we refuse to hold people responsible for crimes that others commit. We don't do it because our sense of justice is still too strong to answer terror with terror. We don't do it because we do not want to add to the hatred and chaos which are already making this world intolerable. We fear that violence breeding violence will destroy us all, in the long run.

When the dictators commit what to the rest of the world are crimes, they say there is a higher justice — they claim the justification of national necessity and emergency. We do not think that such justice is higher. We think it low and cannot therefore answer it in its own language.

But is there not a higher justice in the case of Herschel Grynzspan, seventeen years old? Is there not a higher justice that says that this deed has been expiated with four hundred million dollars and half a million existences, with beatings, and burnings, and deaths, and suicides? Must the nation, whose Zola defended Dreyfus until the world rang with it, cut off the head of one more Jew without giving him an open trial?

Who is on trial in this case? I say we are all on trial. I say the Christian world is on trial. I say the men of Munich are on trial, who signed a pact without one word of protection for helpless minorities. Whether Herschel Grynzspan lives or not won't matter much to Herschel. He was prepared to die when he fired those shots. His young life was already ruined. Since then his heart has been broken into bits by the results of his deed.

They say a man is entitled to trial by a jury of his peers, and a man's kinsmen rally around him, when he is in trouble. But no kinsman of Herschel's can defend him. The Nazi government has announced that if any Jew, anywhere in the world, protests at anything that is happening, further oppressive measures will be taken. They are holding every Jew in Germany as a hostage.

Therefore, we who are not Jews must speak, speak our sorrow and indignation and disgust in so many voices that they will be heard. This boy has become a symbol, and the responsibility for his deed must be shared by those who caused it.

As might be expected, her efforts to save Grynzspan were useless. He was eventually killed.

In 1939 occurred one of those adventures which so delighted those who loved Dorothy Thompson and so infuriated those who hated her. In the company of her recently acquired press agent, Irving Mansfield (who, incidentally, later married novelist Jacqueline Susann), and Ethel Moses, wife of her literary agent, Dorothy Thompson was riding in a taxi to deliver a speech when a hullabaloo around Madison Square Garden diverted them. The German-American Bund was holding a mammoth rally. An estimated 22,000 persons were pushing in while a crowd estimated at about the same number ringed the Garden in protest and 1,700 police tried to keep order. On an impulse, she alighted from the taxi. With Mansfield and Mrs. Moses in tow, she used her press card to pass the police lines and occupy seats in the press section at the Garden, right in front of the speakers. There she heckled a Nazi speaker with loud and cynical laughter. Uproar! A near riot ensued inside the Garden until New York's finest formed a cordon around her and her friends and escorted them to safety outside. The girl who had stopped an antisuffrage speaker by quoting a biblical verse had done it again. *The New Yorker* commented: "Regardless of why Miss Thompson's laughter annoyed the Nazis, however, there can be no doubt that it had a healthy effect. . . . We live in merry times, Dorothy. Take care of your larynx."

A woman Nazi sympathizer once assaulted her outside a New York restaurant. One report had it that the woman bit Dorothy Thompson's finger, while another said Miss Thompson landed a blow to the solar plexus.

Despite her strong anti-Nazi feelings, four of her five servants were Germans who reportedly had Nazi sympathies. She told puzzled friends that she hired them for the quality of their service, not for their political allegiances or personal friendship, although the servants—if this same report be true—did not conceal their distaste for the many refugee guests they had to wait on. Why Dorothy Thompson permitted such a state of affairs to continue is not clear, for she was a sensitive woman and was particularly sensitive to the indignities that had been heaped on refugees in their homeland. Perhaps this tale, like others about her, shades the truth. A lighter note: she also employed three secretaries, whose names, curiously enough, were Madelon, Madeline, and Madeleine.

A sturdy internationalist, she called for universal conscription, certain that America would enter the war. After England declared war she went there, already well known because of a shortwave broadcast she had transmitted after Dunkirk. During her visit she met Churchill, addressed the House of Commons, and broadcast from the port of Plymouth. A

listener called her voice spellbinding. The London *Daily Herald* called her "queen of the air."

Using CBS facilities in 1942, Dorothy Thompson, convinced that a desire for democracy throbbed in German hearts under the Nazi breastplate, beamed a weekly shortwave broadcast to Germany in the form of letters to an imaginary friend, Hans. She spoke German fairly well. In a sense, the "Listen, Hans!" broadcasts were actually addressed to Count Helmuth von Moltke, an anti-Nazi friend who managed to retain some influence in Hitler's Germany. The Nazis executed him in 1945. Her broadcasts consisted of a dramatic running account of Nazi atrocities, mention of the inevitable Allied victory, and a plea to Hans to help rid Germany of the Nazis.

She was wrong in assuming that most Germans were anxious to replace Hitler with a democracy, as she was wrong in many of her predictions and pronouncements, but she correctly forecast the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939.

On domestic affairs she was an independent, sometimes infuriatingly so. She admired F.D.R. during the thirties, yet she tried to prove that only 4 million persons were unemployed, instead of the 9 to 12 million the New Dealers claimed. She had no objection to public spending, provided the money improved forests, farmlands, schools, and other visible elements of the public estate. She loudly opposed what she regarded as wholesale waste in the New Deal. She also lambasted businessmen and industrialists for the greed of some of their colleagues, and did so to their faces in speeches. Her rock-ribbed audiences ate it up and invited her back. Miss Thompson was the first woman to address the Union League Club, the Harvard Club of New York, the American Manufacturers Association, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. As a lecturer she could move audiences as did her beloved evangelist father. One year she got 7,000 invitations to speak, at up to \$1,000 for a lecture. John Gunther said of her: "She is impersonal, disinterested, sometimes brutal, often inconsiderate, generous, excessively single-track in her devotion to compelling enthusiasms . . . a whole-hogger who never trims or straddles. Once her mind is made up, she plunges." A James Thurber cartoon in *The New Yorker* shows an angry man writing a letter. His wife tells a visitor, "He's giving Dorothy Thompson a piece of his mind."

In October 1940, F.D.R. invited her to the White House. She had thrown her support to Wendell Willkie, although the isolationists around Willkie made her uneasy. She found the president, then in the midst of his campaign for a third term, to be energetic, courageous, charming, and certainly international minded. A week later she switched allegiance. "I shall support the President because I think he has assets on his side that nobody can match. The President knows the world. He knows it . . . better than any other living democratic head of a state. . . . No new president could acquire this knowledge in weeks or in months or in four years."

The Republican New York *Herald Tribune* exploded with angry

replies for days thereafter. Publisher Ogden Reid was livid. A versifier in the rival New York *Sun* penned:

Willkie's good  
And plenty hotty  
To all the Reids . . .  
But not to Dotty

Bernard Baruch, a supporter of F.D.R., bought air time for a debate between Dorothy Thompson and Clare Booth Luce, wife of the publisher of *Time* and a skilled debater. Many listeners regarded the outcome as a draw. On election eve Miss Thompson joined F.D.R., Cordell Hull, Carl Sandburg, and Alexander Woollcott for a 2-hour radio marathon. Four months later, the *Herald Tribune* cancelled her contract.

Heywood Broun once said about her: "Dorothy Thompson is greater than Eliza because not only does she cross the ice but breaks it as she goes. Moreover, she is her own bloodhound."<sup>2</sup>

She supported Roosevelt for a fourth term in 1944. One of her broadcasts, hailed as the best speech given in his behalf during the campaign, was printed as a pamphlet, *In Support of the President*. A half million copies were mailed. She said: "They say he's tired. And I say you *bet* he's tired. Churchill is tired; Stalin is tired; Marshall, Eisenhower and MacArthur are tired; Nimitz is tired; Admiral King is tired. And G.I. Joe is tired—so damned tired that he has red rims around his eyes and premature lines in his young face."

On a typical day, Dorothy Thompson awoke at 10 a.m. and worked in bed for an hour or two writing her radio commentary, a newspaper column or magazine article, or dictating 30 to 40 letters, which were a fraction of the 250 letters the mailman brought daily. Friends later came to tea and argued politics with her when she wasn't on the phone to Washington or Europe. She changed her private phone number every few months because she was forever revealing it to friends and acquaintances who, logically enough, would call her. To keep the incoming line clear for major news she changed her number again. In the evening she would often give a dinner and later sit up until 3 a.m., reading. Her name appeared on eight books, although all were collections of broadcasts, columns, and previously published writings.

Junoesque and a master of the dramatic entrance, she was always the center of attention at a gathering. She preferred the company of well-informed men. Most of the women of her day she found tedious, but millions of women idealized her as the totally liberated woman. According to *Current Biography 1940*: "Women who go to the same social affairs begin by being annoyed and wind up by sitting things out in cold fury. The men surround Miss Thompson and hang on her words." She disliked small talk. Politics was her meat.

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2. Referring to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

She continued to broadcast each Sunday night until the spring of 1945.

In the years after World War II she backed the Arabs in the Mideast. This, although she had been strongly pro-Zionist during the twenties, thirties, and early forties. American Jews, among her most fervent fans, turned from her in dismay. Some turned against her, even accusing her of anti-Semitism, but this was a squalid accusation, especially to those who knew her best. She joined the American Friends of the Middle East, a pro-Arab organization, and served for a time as its president. She was criticized for being both a journalist and the head of a political organization, that is, both observer and participant. Liberals were also angered by what they felt was too soft an attitude toward postwar Germany. Many newspapers, including her New York outlet, the *Post*, dropped the column.

As the nation entered the fifties, Dorothy Thompson's influence waned and she yearned more for the simple truths she could find on her Vermont farm. She grew increasingly deaf. She still lectured and wrote, but much of the old spark was gone. A year after her 1942 divorce from Sinclair Lewis, she married for the third time, her husband a refugee Czech painter, Maxim Kopf. Six weeks after his death in 1958 she wrote her last newspaper column. She had written it thrice weekly for twenty-one years, a record surpassed only by Walter Lippmann and David Lawrence. While on a visit to Lisbon, Portugal, Dorothy Thompson died of a heart attack, January 31, 1961. She is buried near her Vermont farm.

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*I can talk like anything,  
But only God can talk like Swing.*

—ANONYMOUS



# Raymond Gram Swing

IN a time when women whose consciousness had been raised were called militant suffragettes, young Betty Gram joined in hunger strikes and went to jail five times during the campaign for women's right to vote. She also wanted a singing career. To pursue it, she sailed in 1919 for Berlin, where she met and married foreign correspondent Raymond Swing. As a member of the Lucy Stone League, she insisted upon keeping her own name. That was all right with Swing, except for the problem of checking into hotels. He traveled a lot. When she accompanied him she signed the register as Betty Gram, despite the haughty stares of hotel desk clerks and the growing embarrassment of the recent bridegroom. Raymond offered a compromise. If Betty would take his name, he would take hers, a sharing of last names. Betty accepted. And that is why the radio commentator whose voice was "regularly heard by more people than any other voice since man learned to grunt," as one contemporary noted, would be known to an estimated 37 million listeners around the world as Raymond Gram Swing. He was a "liberated husband" two generations ahead of most.

Years later the marriage ended in divorce. Raymond Swing figured he was no longer entitled to his middle name, but to no avail. Except to his friends he would be known to everyone as Raymond Gram Swing.

Swing shared much in common with Dorothy Thompson, who was his friend, colleague, and one-time competitor. Both were born in upstate New York, she in 1894, he in 1887. Her father was a Methodist minister. His was a Congregationalist minister. Each rebelled against a strict upbringing, she playfully, he with desperation. She was a suffragist; he married one. Each composed music; her song is still sung at Syracuse University, his sonata was played on a nationwide broadcast. Each began a journalistic career writing for newspapers and developed a reputation as a foreign correspondent in the twenties and as a radio commentator in the thirties and forties. They competed for the same job as Berlin correspondent for the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*; she got it, he got the London bureau. Politically, each was moderate to liberal. Each appealed to an intellectual audience. Each developed a deep love for England, which was returned by the English. Personally, each married several times (she,

three times; he, four). The second marriage of each was to a headstrong, independent person; his second marriage was to Betty Gram, hers was to Sinclair Lewis.

When Raymond was 3 years old the family moved to Germany, so his father, Albert Temple Swing, could study at the university in Halle. They returned to the United States three years later. Pastor Swing was appointed professor of theology at Oberlin College in Ohio. The three Swing children, two boys and a girl, spoke only German by then. That fluency eventually faded, but Raymond Swing would always retain a speaking knowledge of German, which he was to find useful on many occasions, although he never had the thorough command of the language possessed by H. V. Kaltenborn.

The Swing home ran by a strict Puritan code, as befitted a family tracing its roots back to a brother of Cotton Mather. Card playing, for example, was forbidden. Family discussion centered around sin and redemption. A high-spirited boy, Raymond rebelled. Secretly he played cards and smoked. He ran with the boys in town, joining them in some petty drugstore shoplifting, and tried awkwardly and unsuccessfully to get closer to the town girls. During his freshman year at Oberlin he was put on probation for a prank. He and some freshman pals had plugged up the gas pipes providing for illumination in the church where the sophomores were holding a party. The sophomores managed just fine by candlelight, but young Raymond Swing was found out and he had to report weekly to the dean of men whether he had smoked any cigarettes during the preceding week. Each week Raymond admitted that he had indeed smoked.

His studies suffered. At the end of his freshman year, Oberlin regretfully suspended the wild son of its dignified theology professor, but not before the president of Oberlin and another faculty member had gone down on their knees in prayer with Raymond to try to wrestle the Devil out of him. "I tried desperately hard to accept," he recalled, "but something wouldn't let me."

Now the young sinner faced the need to earn his living. While working as a cashier in a barber shop and a clerk in a haberdashery, Swing hired himself out to play the organ for an evangelist (he had taken piano and organ lessons while attending high school and college). Six weeks of listening to the Reverend Mr. Violet preach night after night led Swing to seek baptism. He emerged from the water as full of doubts as ever.

His next job was as a night reporter for the *Cleveland Press*. Swing had now found his career, but the *Press* fired him in a quarrel over money. The city editor would pay him only \$10 a week and Swing wanted \$12, like the more experienced reporters. He went to the *Cleveland News* as a court reporter, and from there to the weekly Orville, Ohio, *Courier* as editor, and then to the staff of the Richmond, Indiana, *Item*, learning his profession in the time-honored way for newspapermen. When someone decided to begin a new newspaper in Indianapolis, the *Sun*, the editor of the *Item* was hired to be its editor. Swing went, too, as managing editor. He was 23. The next year found him on the Cincinnati *Times Star*. A few

months later a wealthy uncle offered to support him for a year of study abroad. Actually, the offer was for himself and his wife, Suzanne Morin, a French student he had met while visiting his uncle in Chicago. They left in 1912 and spent time in Paris, Munich, and Berlin, where he became foreign correspondent of the *Chicago Daily News*. The job sounded grander than it was. Before World War I, the *Chicago Daily News* really was not interested in foreign affairs. It maintained offices in London, Paris, and Berlin, mostly so it could boast of having foreign bureaus. The offices were places where visiting firemen from Chicago dropped in to sign the register and use the rest room. Swing had little more to do than cable the daily list of names back to Chicago for publication. In spite of this, his name was proposed for membership in the Association of Foreign Correspondents, but he was blackballed on the grounds that he was responsible for getting his predecessor fired. The charge was unjust and three members resigned in protest. After World War I, when Swing returned to Berlin, he was welcomed into the association.

Besides maintaining a showplace office, Swing was expected to write occasional feature stories. These he *mailed* back. Only the Chicago visitors' names were cabled. When he tried to write about the growing tensions and the mobilization in Europe, his words were ignored by the editors. The managing editor declared that he would not put up with any nonsense about the danger of war from the "youngsters" in European bureaus. Even when war was declared and Swing had switched from letters to cables to report on events, he was often ignored. Frustrated, he found he could be of use helping frightened Chicagoans book passage home from Germany. Meanwhile, his marriage was deteriorating. A son had been born and another child was on the way, but Suzanne was unhappy in a Germany at war with her own France. She returned to the United States, where she secured a divorce.

News was not always easy to come by, Swing wrote.

If as a correspondent in Berlin I sought news at the Foreign Office, a man with a long beard, standing at a desk, received me and invariably told me there was no news. If I asked a question, he invariably was unable to answer it. If I took him a report I wanted verified, he invariably said the news was not true.

Swing grew to understand the reason for this, just as he understood the reason that he, the journalist, sought out the man with the long beard:

The first reflex of the diplomat when trouble is stirring is to hide it, deny it, minimize it, so as to gain time to deal with it. The first function of journalism is to expose it, discuss it, and explain it.

One article written by Swing was published in the *Daily News* to his later dismay. He based it on an official German government White Paper explaining how Germany had tried to prevent the war. The *Daily News*

was delighted with it, as were many readers in Chicago's large German population. A local German patriotic society reprinted the article as a pamphlet under the title, *How Germany Was Forced into the War*. "I have long since stopped blushing about it," Swing said years later.

H. V. Kaltenborn, a minor editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, came to Berlin. He and Swing established a cordial relationship. Swing even loaned Kaltenborn his fur coat for a trip to the front.

On a trip to the front himself, Swing saw the rubble that had once been the sturdy forts of Liège, Belgium. What machine of war could have destroyed them? A German line officer proudly told Swing of powerful new guns made by Krupp. The manufacture of the "Big Berthas" was then a secret as well kept as would be the V-rockets during World War II, or, for that matter, the atomic bomb.

Here was a scoop. Getting it out of Germany past tight censorship would be difficult. Returning to Berlin, Swing made a deal with an American student he knew. The youth was leaving the next day to return to the University of Chicago by way of London. Swing offered him \$25 to memorize an 800-word dispatch, walk into the London bureau of the *Chicago Daily News*, and type it out. The student agreed. The story made front pages around the world.

Shortly thereafter, Swing became involved in a curious bit of diplomacy. Hearing that German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg had stated that Germany had no territorial designs on Belgium or any other European nation, Swing asked the chancellor for permission to carry this message to Sir Edward Grey, the British foreign secretary, in London. Von Bethmann-Hollweg approved on condition that no word of the young American journalist's mission would be published. Swing was to tell Sir Edward, in person, that Germany would not annex any Belgian territory after the war and would guarantee Belgium's independence. In return, Germany wanted an indemnity for having been forced into the war. Swing saw that the indemnity would be a sticking point. So did the woman who had introduced Swing to the German chancellor, the Canadian-born Baroness von Schroeder, wife of a Junker nobleman. She explained that Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg, a moderate, really did not expect or want an indemnity; he was simply protecting himself in case the German war party thought he was secretly negotiating peace.

Swing carried the message to London, where Sir Edward Grey reacted in moral fury to the notion of indemnity. Swing, still in his midtwenties, was so taken aback that he did not try to suggest that the matter of indemnity might be a ploy. Swing returned to Berlin empty-handed. It is conjecture to imagine that the history of this century might have turned out differently had Raymond Swing spoken up that day. Merely conjecture. And yet, one can't help wondering, what if . . .

In another questionable, nonjournalistic venture, Swing got a tip that Britain planned to invade Holland to strike behind the German front lines. Unwilling to see that charming land laid waste, he passed the tip along to the German minister at The Hague. Shortly thereafter, a German army

corps was moved from the western front to the Dutch border. The British never invaded, and Swing was never certain whether he had had a hand in that.

Swing managed another visit to the German western front, this time as the assistant to a surgeon. The young correspondent had to buy a car and surgical equipment, all of which he would have to donate to the German army. He also took a course in first aid. All went well until Swing and the surgeon reached front line headquarters, where he was told that no foreigner could be permitted to remain. Swing was chauffeured back to Berlin. However, the lieutenant in charge of escorting him back was a genial fellow with an unlimited gasoline ration. They both decided they would detour through Belgium to see what that country looked like in the wake of the battles. The stories that resulted were warmly received by the home office in Chicago, but Swing was told that he must never spend such a sum again. He had, of course, paid for the car and the surgical equipment with newspaper funds.

The Chicago *Daily News* in 1915 sent its Berlin correspondent to Turkey, an ally of Germany. The Turks were awaiting an attempt by the British fleet to blast open the Dardanelles by reducing the protecting forts, thereby gaining a year-round sea route to Russia and the control of the most strategic spot in the entire Middle East, plus having an important effect on decisions in the Balkans. Swing covered the battle, which saw three British battleships lost and several Turkish forts destroyed. When night fell, the Turks were almost out of shells, but the British did not know this. Licking its wounds, the British fleet departed. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, had conceived the attack and would be blamed for its failure. How close he came to succeeding would not be known to the British for some time. The *Daily News*, true to form, put Swing's report of the battle on page six.

Swing also went to the Gallipoli front, where the Turks under German command were dug in against Anzacs in opposite trenches. Getting there wasn't any fun. As Swing recalled it:

We were up early, had our breakfast, and were called for by a competent-looking Turkish officer. He took us to our horses. A party of six was making the trip. . . . My horse was pointed out to me. It was a gray Arab stallion. I must have gasped on seeing it, but I had determined to follow the experience through without a word. An officer held my stirrup, and I mounted. As I had been taught, I sat bolt upright, gripped the horse with my knees, and held the reins in my left hand.

The next thing that happened came about quite unexpectedly and noisily. A motorcycle messenger zoomed toward us down the road, his engine popping like a machine gun. My stallion had been on the road, but he made an agile leap across the ditch bounding it, and stopped nervously to survey the scene. I do not know why I was not thrown by this sudden leap, but I was still in the saddle. And then the command came to go forward. The horses started down the road, and my stallion

once more jumped the ditch. Once more, by incomprehensible good fortune, I stayed in the saddle. And then we began to trot. . . . I did not enjoy the trotting, and thought that I would feel more self-confidence if I could demonstrate that my stallion would obey my signal with the rein. So I gave it. I signaled it to stop. But there was some misunderstanding between us. Instead of stopping, or even slowing down, he rushed forward in a canter and quickly passed the horses. The others then galloped behind us. I was in a panic. I knew I could not keep my saddle on a galloping Arab stallion, and, true enough, my feet slipped out of the stirrups. I fell forward, grasping the horse around the neck.

Fortunately, the Turkish officer who was leading the expedition saw my plight, dashed ahead of me, grasped the reins on my stallion at the bit, and brought him and his own horse to a standstill. I ingloriously worked myself into an upright position and found my stirrups again. Thereafter, the Turkish officer proceeded at a walking pace, and all of us walked the rest of the way to Gallipoli headquarters.

Another humiliating experience was to befall the intrepid foreign correspondent. He was sailing aboard a small Turkish transport, the *Nagara*, in the Sea of Marmara, near Constantinople (now Istanbul), when a British submarine surfaced. Warning rifle fire brought the transport to a halt. An English officer ordered everyone off the transport because the sub intended to sink it. A Turkish officer asked Swing, who spoke English, to respond to the submarine.

"Will you give us time to get into the boats?" Swing shouted.

"Yes," replied the submarine officer, "and be damn quick about it."

But the Turkish lifeboats were in sad shape. One of them would take time to be launched.

"Wait a minute," Swing called to the submarine. "Can you give us time?"

The submarine commander now replied, "Yes, I will give you time. Who are you?"

That classic question of one ship to another, "Who are you?" was not known to landlubber Swing, and so he answered, "I am Raymond Swing of the *Chicago Daily News*."

On the deck of the submarine, the tall, blond-haired young Englishman in command bowed with mock politeness, "I am glad to meet you, Mr. Swing, but what is the name of your ship?"

Later, this exchange, slightly altered, would be recorded in the log of the sub by the amused commander, and no less a writer than Rudyard Kipling would come upon it and report it in the altered version, "I am Silas Q. Swing of the *Chicago Sun*."

The story made the rounds of English naval messes and elsewhere in England. Poor Raymond Swing was told that if he had any idea of going to work in London after the war, he had better forget it, for his name was a laughingstock.

But that was to be in the future. The end of this adventure was that the *Nagara* was emptied of passengers and crew and then was duly sunk. Swing and his companions rowed ashore.

Swing returned briefly to the United States, then went back to Germany, where he ran afoul of the authorities. He had quoted a Ruhr industrialist that Germany had to have the iron mines that lay beyond the Ruhr Basin in France, a policy contrary to Germany's announced war aims, which rejected territorial annexation. Swing got his story out not through Berlin, where censorship was tight, but through Dusseldorf, where an elderly functionary simply stamped an approval. Swing was almost expelled, but since his cable *did* have the censor's stamp the Germans grudgingly allowed him to remain.

A trip to the United States, including some meetings in Washington, led to a similar scrape with French authorities.

Colonel E. M. House, President Wilson's chief adviser, asked Swing to go to France to talk to liberal politicians there about Wilson's "Fourteen Points" peace program. Swing was asked to undertake this assignment without pay, except his salary as a *Chicago Daily News* correspondent. He regarded this request as somewhat unethical, but felt that to refuse to serve the president in wartime was even more unethical, so he went. In France he was told that mutinies had broken out in fifteen French army corps; the arrogant stupidity of some French military leaders and prolonged trench warfare had caused hideous numbers of casualties, sapping French army and civilian morale. Swing reported this through diplomatic channels to Colonel House, who rejected the information as inaccurate and would have nothing more to do with Swing. No one else had reported the mutinies and the French command denied it. In fact, the mutinies did occur. The details were first published in 1927 by Winston Churchill and were later confirmed by other historians. After the war, Colonel House wrote a letter of apology to Raymond Swing. As for his accepting the unpaid assignment in the first place without checking with his home office, Swing became so suffused with guilt that he resigned from the *Daily News*.

After World War I, Swing returned to New York and encountered hard times trying to land a job. At one point he was so broke that when a friend, shocked by his appearance, asked him if he needed money, Swing replied, "You might say so. I've had only two meals in eight days." The friend loaned him some money. Swing managed to work briefly for *The Nation*, then returned to Berlin, accompanied by his brother Dolf, this time as a correspondent for the *New York Herald* (which merged with the *Tribune* in 1924). He toured the Russian countryside in the early days after the revolution and wrote of seeing refugees dying of starvation:

What made the plight of these people both tragic and—if I may use the word—beautiful was the fact that in a field within plain view of the little community was a great mound of sacks filled with grain and guarded by a single soldier, who marched back and forth with a rifle at

his shoulder. This was seed grain for the spring. I asked the patriarch why he and his hungry people did not overpower the soldier and bring their fast to an end. He replied, "That is seed grain. We do not steal from the future."

. . . Our interpreter assured the patriarch that Moscow was striving to the utmost to send boats and relief and they must not lose heart. But he was exaggerating. Moscow was unable to do anything to organize relief on a scale that could have saved this little dying community and the scores like it that lined the river and filled the famine region. Nothing substantial could be done until the following year, when the Hoover Relief Mission brought in supplies and distributed them. All that our Volga trip had contributed was to prepare foreign public opinion for that mission.

Months later, however, Swing learned that his articles had not appeared in the *Herald*. A friend told him that the managing editor had declared that the only news he would run from Bolshevik Russia would be about Lenin and Trotsky cutting their throats.

For this and other reasons, Raymond Swing left the *Herald* and joined *The Wall Street Journal*, working out of London. He was now married to Betty Gram and let it be known that his name was henceforth Raymond Gram Swing. Two years later he bounced to the London office of the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, the number two man, with the promise of the first European bureau-chief vacancy available. That vacancy opened in Berlin, but the post went to Dorothy Thompson. Swing knew and liked Dorothy Thompson, and he was pleased that she was the first woman in the history of American journalism to be given a foreign bureau. Still, he smarted over the fact that he had been passed over. For one month, while Miss Thompson was back at the home office, Swing took charge in Berlin. When Swing was number two man in London, the bureau chief put his own byline over articles Swing wrote. During his month in Berlin, no articles came out of London. The home office figured out what was happening, and when Dorothy Thompson returned to Berlin, Raymond Swing was put in charge of the London office. He finally got his bureau. There he stayed for ten years. He wrote:

I look back on these years as notable for several personal reasons: the formation of some of the dearest friendships of my life, the development of my children,<sup>1</sup> and my own start at creative writing. The best of the friends made in England, and by now the friendship of longest duration, was John Gunther. He came off a cattle boat to London to escape from being a reporter on the Chicago *Daily News* and to find a future for himself as a writer about world affairs. He came to see me as a *Daily News* alumnus, and in that first week of our acquaintance, we walked the streets every night, talking with a candor and excitement that adults seldom achieve with each other.

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1. He and Betty Gram had two children during these years.



Swing also met Bertrand Russell. In fact, the Swings moved into part of a house owned by Russell's brother and used by Russell for an experimental progressive school, to which the Swings sent their children.

Naturally, I was impressed by the privilege of knowing Bertrand Russell, already recognized as one of the great intellects of his era. I dutifully read everything of his I could understand, and I am sure I always showed him the highest respect. I cannot, however, say that he had the slightest respect for me, not, I believe, on account of my personality, but simply because I was an American. The anti-Americanism prevalent in Britain in recent years<sup>2</sup> had not set in. Bertrand Russell's anti-Americanism was his own. I might say that he did not so much dislike Americans as scorn them. He made an exception of my wife, to whom he always showed gallantry, but I had no benefit from that. He never concealed his arrogance from me.

During this period, Raymond Swing wrote two plays. The second, *Mister Man*, was later used as the text for an operatic libretto. A competent pianist, he also wrote some music, including a sonata for violin and piano and a setting for voice and piano, both of which were performed on network radio in the United States.

A fascination with radio developed. John Gunther recalled a visit to the Swing home. "It was about 1924. I found him sprawled over a lot of mechanical stuff. He said it was a radio. It was the first I had ever seen. He spoke of how radio would bring the world into every home, of how it would be possible to talk to audiences so vast as to be almost uncountable. His set was not working well. I had a hard time believing."

Swing began broadcasting in 1930 by participating in a BBC discussion program. He also broadcast a news report from Geneva for NBC and he shared in some radio history with a friend, Cesar Saerchinger, who was Edward R. Murrow's predecessor as head of CBS's European service. Swing in London and Saerchinger in New York conducted the first transatlantic interview. It was on the British elections of 1932. He also did a few broadcasts for the BBC on America, to be used in British schools. Sir John Reith, managing director of the BBC, liked them, which was later to propel Swing into a career in broadcasting.

With the closing of the Philadelphia *Public Ledger's* foreign service in 1934, Raymond Swing's career as a foreign correspondent ended. At the age of 47 he returned jobless to the United States with his family and sought, of all things, appointment as minister to Ireland. Secretary of State Cordell Hull approved of the appointment, but President Roosevelt held back. Instead, Swing joined the staff of *The Nation*, where he wrote, among other pieces, a personality profile of the "Kingfish" of Louisiana titled "The Menace of Huey Long." The article became the basis for Swing's first book, *Forerunners of American Fascism*, in 1935, with chapters about Father Charles Coughlin, Senator Theodore Bilbo of

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2. Written in 1964.

Mississippi, Dr. Francis Townsend (although Swing did not consider Senator Bilbo or the visionary author of the Townsend Plan to be Fascists), publisher William Randolph Hearst, and the Black Shirt movement. Swing argued that much of the New Deal was fascist:

. . . it could only save itself from being fascist if the undemocratic bestowal of authority on the President were used to democratize economic power and not to consolidate it in the hands of a few. . . .  
 . . . democratic government is virtually impotent in opposing the growth of finance capitalism. For if President Roosevelt was not able to withstand these forces, who might be expected to?

After a brief stint on *The Nation*, Swing became for a time the New York correspondent for the *London News Chronicle* and, later, Washington correspondent for the prestigious British periodical, the *Economist*.

British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin was denouncing the New Deal as a dictatorship. President Roosevelt tried to improve relations with England by proposing an exchange of broadcasts between the BBC and an American network, convinced by the success of his Fireside Chats that broadcasts could work this magic. BBC's Sir John Reith agreed to the exchange on condition that he could choose the American who would broadcast to England. His choice was Raymond Gram Swing. CBS wanted H. V. Kaltenborn to get the job, but Reith insisted. CBS was chosen as the American network, but after broadcasting an English journalist's reports for a while, CBS felt that they were boring and dropped them. Swing carried on in the other direction, becoming more popular year after year.

Attempting to improve his radio voice, Swing sought advice from a clergyman who broadcast a religious program over CBS. Whisper, said the clergyman, for 10 minutes a day. Swing practiced faithfully to develop a sort of tense whisper. When he wanted to stress a point, he did not raise his voice. Instead, he increased its intensity and pace. "If you'd pluck him, he'd twang," a studio engineer remarked. In the studio his voice often sounded aggressive and indignant, but it didn't come out that way over the air. Listeners called it gentle. One observer said Swing's voice "makes disaster sound like a lullabye and transforms calamity into a soothing caress." He spoke slowly over the air. His accent was American, despite his years in England. And it was plain that it came from a cultured man.

With the gathering storm, the British became most anxious to hear about the slowly changing American foreign policy, as Roosevelt skillfully moved from neutrality to support for Britain. Swing's weekly "Things American" was awaited with no little eagerness by an estimated 30 percent of adult Britons. Members of Parliament formed one of several "Swing Clubs" of listeners. King George VI listened regularly. A member of the royal household wrote to Swing on the king's behalf, asking for an autographed picture. These broadcasts to Britain continued through 1941,

were stopped for a few months after the United States entered the war, then continued for two more years with Elmer Davis alternating with Raymond Gram Swing.

Swing was proud of the broadcasts. "If I can have my moment of vanity," he once said, "I like to think that I have contributed to understanding between England and America."

He regarded himself as an unofficial spokesman for the United States, which in effect may have meant the foreign policies of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whom he now admired. There was more than a hint that his pro-Roosevelt attitude carried over into his network commentaries to an American audience and that he supported both the domestic and the foreign policies of the New Deal. Secretary of State Cordell Hull was a personal friend. Swing often favored the administration by omission. He simply did not report unfavorable news. He also became the first radio commentator to join William Allen White's antiisolationist Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies and he was elected chairman of the newly organized Council for Democracy.

His American network commentaries began over Mutual. CBS vice-president Edward Klauber had disliked Swing's whispery voice and refused to consider him for an on-air news assignment. After hearing Swing analyze the foreign news on the weekly CBS "School of the Air," which he did occasionally in 1935 and 1936, other radio executives considered him too pedantic and . . . well . . . boring. Swing applied for and won the position of European director of talks at CBS, but when he learned that he would have to give up speaking into a microphone, he changed his mind. The job went instead to a younger man who had been in charge of a student exchange program. His name was Edward R. Murrow.

Swing instead began to do a weekly commentary over WOR, New York, the flagship station of the Mutual Network, for \$40 a program, starting in 1936. The commentaries expanded gradually from one a week to four a week, Monday through Thursday at 10 p.m. EST, and from one station to the entire network. Mutual made little effort to find a sponsor at first, but about the time Poland was invaded, in came the General Cigar Company, which wanted to push White Owls. The Swing audience tended to be high-brow, high-domed, and high income. Within five years Swing's salary had climbed to \$87,000. A poll of radio editors in 1938 reported that Swing was their third most popular news commentator—after H. V. Kaltenborn and Lowell Thomas.

When he was unsponsored, Mutual moved Swing from one time slot to another as sponsors for other programs came along. Curiously, this served to build Swing's audience, because listeners who wanted to hear what Swing had to say stayed with him, while others tuned in by chance and joined his following. He built that audience against such competition as Guy Lombardo, Kay Kyser, Bob Crosby, Glenn Miller, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Don Ameche, and Arturo Toscanini. Once he was sponsored, the 10 p.m. slot became so much a Raymond Gram Swing fixture that two detective novels had characters who used listening to his commentary as an alibi!

Swing accepted sponsorship with caution, even with a little reluctance, despite the obvious cash benefits, for he was wary of big business. He told the J. Walter Thompson Agency, which handled White Owl cigars, that he would not accept a sponsor unless it was understood that he was sole judge of his script and, in fact, would not even submit his script until after he read it on the air.

"Suppose you get White Owl in trouble?" an ad agency executive asked him. "What sort of guarantee do you offer that you won't?"

"I don't offer any guarantee except that if I get White Owl in trouble I get myself in trouble, too."

He got the contract.

Besides reaching the 110 Mutual stations that eventually hooked up, the commentaries were shortwaved to British Commonwealth nations as far away as Australia. They were translated into Spanish and Portuguese to be shortwaved to South America. They were translated into French, and even into Norwegian for the crews of the Norwegian freighter fleet which plowed through the North Atlantic seas on the Allied side after Norway fell to the Nazis. All this, plus the BBC commentary, gave Raymond Gram Swing an estimated peak audience of 37 million people around the world, including 15 million in the United States.

To foreigners he was a radio Uncle Sam, communicating American policy and American moods. To Americans, wrote one critic in 1940, "Swing seems a miraculous jigsaw puzzle solver. Everybody reads the foreign news these days, but very few can fit the myriad events and rumors into a coherent whole. Swing can. With deceptive ease he moulds the hodgepodge of reports into a sharply defined picture of the actual situation at the moment."

An article about him in *The Saturday Evening Post* opined: "An alarmed America worked itself into a state of nerves. A diagnostician with a good bedside manner was needed, and the best bedside manner in radio belonged to Swing. He stepped in to hold the nation's hand, and he has been holding it ever since."

Swing's nightly 15-minute broadcast, which allowed 12½ minutes of actual time for news and commentary, had commercials at the beginning, middle, and end, with news before the middle commercial and commentary after it. Swing came to hate that middle commercial. The announcer's rich tones broke the mood of the news report: "More men smoke White Owl cigars than any other cigar in the world."

Swing remained patient until May 10, 1940, when the Nazis invaded Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg, starting the western offensive that brought France to its knees. At the thought that his broadcast that night would be interrupted by: "More men smoke White Owl cigars than any other cigar in the world," Swing rebelled. He phoned the advertising agency, where an executive tried to soothe him by saying the German invasion was nothing to get excited about.

"Now, Mr. Swing, this sort of thing happens all the time. We can't take the middle commercial out for this sort of thing."

Swing exploded. "Happens all the time? Good God! Does the world

come to an end every day? Are three countries invaded all the time? I won't broadcast unless that thing comes out!" Executives of WOR, the advertising agency, and General Cigar went into emergency conference. Finally, unable to sway the stubborn commentator, they caved in at 9:55, 5 minutes before air time. No more middle commercials. Swing hoped his small victory would mark a precedent, but that was not to be. For other commentators, the middle commercial continued to interrupt the flow of thought.

He published two more books. *How War Came* in 1939 and *Preview of History* in 1943 were collections of his broadcasts.

In 1942, angered by Mutual's shifting of his program schedule, Swing resigned and, taking a cut in pay to reach a larger audience, moved to the NBC-Blue Network, where he continued broadcasting Monday through Thursday at 10 p.m. EST, this time for Standard Oil's Socony Vacuum, makers of Mobil gasoline. His contract specified that there would be no middle commercial.

Before Swing would agree to take Mobil as a sponsor, he asked for a meeting with Socony Vacuum president John A. Brown.

After luncheon and an exchange of pleasantries, Swing said what he had come to say.

"I want it understood that I have the freedom to criticize Standard Oil in my broadcasts if I consider it to be in the public interest."

Brown sat silent and almost motionless for a full 3 minutes. Then he asked quietly, "If you say anything critical about Standard Oil, is there any reason why we shouldn't answer you? Do you agree to that?"

"Certainly," replied Swing.

"Then that should settle it," said the company president, and he and his new employee shook hands on it. Years later Swing reflected that he never had any reason to regret having this sponsor.

He was never busier. People on both sides of the Atlantic wanted to know what Raymond Gram Swing had to say. In a letter to his mother around the time of the Munich pact, he wrote:

This last week I spoke in Delaware University Monday night; in Philadelphia, Wednesday; and Chicago, Friday. Friday I did a broadcast for schools in Britain, and then my regular British broadcast Saturday night. In addition I wrote a piece for *Ken*.<sup>3</sup> In Chicago I missed my train, the first time I've done anything like that for fifteen years. I had to fly. I wrote all but the last minute of my British broadcast in the plane, with the typewriter on my knee, finishing over Buffalo sometime after midnight.

This week I have a still harder schedule. I broadcast over WOR tonight. Wednesday I speak for the Foreign Policy Association in New York, rush down for an evening lecture in Bryn Mawr, lecture the next noon at the Cosmopolitan Club in Philadelphia, and then get back in the evening to speak at the Harvard Club in New York. The next evening I speak in Columbia University, and the following day do my broadcast to London.

3. A serious magazine from the publishers of *Esquire*.

Swing needed four assistants: someone to read current books and magazines for him, someone else to read the newspapers, someone else to edit the news wire, and a secretary. Swing's 12-hour days were typical of many successful commentators. The mornings were spent reading the news and making contacts with people in the news. He lunched with someone with whom he could talk about world events. His afternoons were spent writing. He did not regard himself as a fast writer. Instead, he plugged away diligently on a portable typewriter, fashioning the words of his commentaries with precision.

His script timing was remarkable. Swing divided his script into sections, which he timed. As he spoke he held a stop watch. From his drawn-out opening "Good eev-evening" to the closing "Good night," he kept so close to his planned timing that the control room engineer never had to signal Swing to speed up or stretch out his words. At the sign-off he was seldom as much as 3 seconds off.

On the table beside his script lay a wooden "cough box." If his throat tickled during a broadcast, he pushed a button on the box, which cut off sound from the studio until he finished coughing. A cautious man, he also kept two cups of water on the table, so that if one spilled he would still have one.

After the night's broadcast he often unwound by playing a game of cribbage with his wife, eating an apple, and drinking a glass of milk before going to bed. Weekends were private. He even refused to look at the Sunday newspapers before Monday morning.

Swing was a familiar figure at Washington news conferences. Tall, thin to the point of gauntness, and stoop shouldered, he wore dark horn-rimmed glasses and kept brushing his hair out of his eyes. He looked, in fact, so much like the image of an editor that Sinclair Lewis asked him to play that role in "It Can't Happen Here." Swing turned it down, saying he was too busy. His scholarly manner on mike was matched by a reserve off mike. His close friends called him Raymond. No one called him Ray.

When angered by the words or deeds of some public figure, Swing would write him a sarcastic telegram, then tear it up unsent. It was a way to let off steam. He was also a demon poker player and a Ping-Pong player of considerable skill and ferocity. Besides composing music, Swing composed sonnets. And he knew the batting order of every team in the major leagues. Needless to say, his friends credited him with a formidable intellect. He was a renaissance man of the twentieth century.

In trying to predict events, his batting average was considered good, although inevitably he missed some. For example, he predicted that Great Britain and Soviet Russia would sign a pact in 1939. Instead, the Russians signed with Hitler. And he guessed that Germany would try to get Poland by another Munich pact, not by invasion.

Swing's sympathies lay with Britain. He detested Adolf Hitler and he detested the Munich Pact, which dismembered Czechoslovakia in return for what Neville Chamberlain proclaimed as "Peace in our time." Swing recollected:

I warned Mr. Hull in the strongest language I could muster against President Roosevelt's giving a grain of approval to the Munich settlement. I remember saying: "Munich stinks! It will stink throughout history. And anyone who identifies himself with it will stink." President Roosevelt did not make any statement taking any credit for the Munich settlement; I must assume that others passed on the same counsel.

And he told radio listeners:

Hitler has never felt that Munich was a victory. He never has understood why the world press considered it his triumph. He returned from Munich and at once launched a violent attack on the British through the German press, to the great bewilderment of everyone at the time. The reason is that Munich prevented his marching into Prague at the head of his army. That was what he was bent on doing. And it was from that that Mussolini had to dissuade him in those ninety minutes on the train. He had to show him that if he got his occupation of the Sudetenland zones within a few days it was the substance of what he wanted, and the march into Prague was too dangerous. Hitler gave up the triumphal entry, dear to every conqueror, gave it up because Mussolini convinced him that Britain and France would not permit it. And he felt angry and frustrated.

Swing's opinion of Benito Mussolini was not much better than his opinion of Adolf Hitler, although he could sometimes express it with cynical, almost detached amusement, like the evening he told his broadcast audience:

Mussolini spoke in Rome on Sunday, and the broadcast of the speech, which was repeated over here by recordings later in the day, was a demonstration of what life is like in a one-man country. It was a speech directed to the primitive emotions. Individuals who have lost their personal aspirations became delirious in the expression still left them of their aspirations as a nation.

Mussolini's defiant, belligerent voice brought out the shouts of a hundred thousand responders. And that is the first function of a dictator's speech. It has another function, too, and here we saw the dictator's dilemma. The speech also has to make sense to listeners abroad. It is a dilemma only if the dictator is not going straight off to war. If he does not want to go to war, he has to be master of a special art. He must be able to sound bellicose to his own people and quite reasonable to the foreigner.

And this Mussolini accomplished on Sunday. His crowd roared like lions, or rather like students at a football game. Sometimes one almost expected to hear that the Duce had scored a touchdown.

In July 1941, Swing returned briefly to London, where his broadcasts had now made him a person of note. He almost failed to arrive. The pilot of the B-24 lend-lease bomber on which Swing hitched a ride overshot

England, mistaking the Orkney Islands north of Scotland for Ireland. The plane was heading for occupied Norway and a certainly unfriendly reception from German fighter planes. Fortunately, the pilot figured out what he had done and turned around.

The visit included lunch with Winston Churchill at Chequers and a special luncheon, with Swing as the speaker, attended by 267 guests, including 18 government ministers.

One year later, Swing had his only meeting with Franklin Roosevelt. Over gin and tonic at the White House with Harry Hopkins and Swing, the president chatted freely on a number of international matters and asked Swing's opinion of Elmer Davis for a possible government post. Swing praised Davis. A week later, F.D.R. named Davis to head the Office of War Information.

The day after Pearl Harbor, Raymond Swing told his anxious listeners that Japan had attacked the United States because its only other choice was to abandon its dream of Far East conquest:

To go to war was politically easier. And since the choice was for war, Japan struck first and with all the surprise it could conjure up. . . . The United States is at war because it was aiding China, because it had solemnly warned against further aggressions in the Far East, because it had shown its sincerity in backing its principles with the economic penalties imposed after Japan's entry into Indo-China. . . .

It is a literal fact that we are fighting Japan because Japan struck first. But that is a minor fact, whereas the major fact is that we were struck first because of what we believe, because of what we have been willing to do to express our beliefs, and because we declined to abandon our beliefs.

Four days later, Swing's commentary considered the declarations of war against the United States by Germany and Italy:

No one will believe that today's declarations of war were a casual and comradely afterthought. Japan's action is now more comprehensible. It asked a price for making war on the United States. Today Hitler and Mussolini publicly paid the price. No one will believe that Hitler was contented when he had to tell the German nation that after Russia he now had taken on the United States.

What Hitler was telling the German nation today was, in effect, that Germany now must expect to live 1918 over again. . . .

Benito Mussolini also spoke. Being only a junior partner, he talked for only five minutes. But in that time he used a line which should enshrine his memory with language experts for all time. He was saying that neither the Axis nor Japan wanted an extension of the conflict. "One man," he shouted (meaning President Roosevelt), "one man only, 'an authentic democratic autocrat,' wished and prepared the war." That phrase "an authentic democratic autocrat" is the one touch of humor in this otherwise solemn day.



Evening after evening, millions of thoughtful listeners all over the world listened through the static to his measured cadences as he tried to bring perspective to the day's battle communiques, speeches, and political maneuverings. He could not always do this well, and he was frank to admit his limitations. He told his listeners one evening:

A correspondent abroad, or in Washington, reads a communique. It is brief and uses words chosen with a high skill to convey precisely what is meant to be conveyed. The correspondent sits down to his typewriter and expands that communique with punch adjectives. By the time he has ended he often has puffed it up and made it vibrate with action and resound with thunder. He too is skillful. He doesn't fabricate anything. He just fills in. By the time what he has written registers on the reader's or the listener's mind, the effect is altogether different from anything that would have registered if the communique alone had been read or heard.

All of us want to exercise judgment, on what we are doing, on what our allies are doing, and on what our enemies are doing. Judgment is based on knowledge of essential facts, and is the power to relate those facts to other known facts. But without facts, we are not entitled to judgment. We have only opinions, hopes, and prejudices for judgment. I propose no remedy for this, for the only remedy I can think of is to keep on reminding ourselves that we know so little.

Swing and Socony Vacuum parted company at the end of 1944 over Swing's desire to leave his Washington base for one year to travel and do his broadcasts from abroad. Pried loose from NBC under pressure from an FCC ruling supported by a Supreme Court decision, the Blue Network by this time was following the lead of Mutual in seeking local sponsorship for some of its programs instead of depending upon a single network sponsor. The network supplied the programs to local stations, which could then sell spots to local advertisers. As Fulton Lewis, Jr., and others had discovered, the commentator felt freer under such a scheme because small local advertisers lacked the clout of a single large advertiser. By the end of World War II, Raymond Gram Swing was heard over 120 radio stations, with a total of 129 sponsors, and was grossing \$160,000 a year.

Yet Swing's star was fading. As the war clouds were lifted by one Allied success after another, listeners felt less need for his rather heavy and solemn interpretations. His Hooper Ratings slipped far below those of Lowell Thomas, Gabriel Heatter, and Walter Winchell, all of whom brought a lighter touch to their broadcasts.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's unexpected death, when everyone awaited news of V-E Day, shook some commentators as much as it shook most Americans. So stricken was Earl Godwin that Hilmar Baukhage had to complete Godwin's news program over the Blue Network at 6:15. But an hour later Raymond Swing delivered what was called the best commentary of the evening. "The news of President Roosevelt's death comes like the

message of the death, in his time, of Abraham Lincoln," he said, and went on to talk of F.D.R.'s twelve years as president. On this evening, when even Fulton Lewis, Jr., spoke of a "staggering loss," Swing offered no analysis and no forecasts, just a reminiscence.

If a single word may be used to sum up Raymond Gram Swing's purpose in his commentaries, that word would be: *perspective*. He gave his listeners a frame of reference in which to view the latest developments. He felt it necessary to remind his radio audience of what had happened before. A device Swing frequently used was the anniversary. It might have been the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the Bill of Rights or the first anniversary of the Yugoslav resistance. Here is part of Swing's commentary of May 10, 1943, the tenth anniversary of the burning of books in Berlin, a reflection of Nazi street bonfires fueled by the thoughts of men that exemplifies Raymond Gram Swing's commentaries at their best.

The anniversary of May 10, 1933, gives perspective in still greater clarity. For on that day the world had its warning and should have known what was in the making. But the world hadn't been training ears to hear warnings or eyes to see such beacons as were lit in the Berlin bonfire of books. And here I shall repeat something about this event which I said a year ago, and do so at the request of the Council of Books in Wartime and the OWI.

I know I didn't appreciate the full portent of the warning of that event in Berlin. But it came to me shortly, and on this anniversary I see again vividly the figure of the man who taught me. He was an unusually tall, an unusually narrow man, with legs as long as Lincoln's, a rounded stoop of the shoulders, and a long, gaunt face. He had been chairman of the Social-Democratic party in the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic, and his name was Dr. Rudolf Breitscheid. In my newspaper days in Germany I had come to know him well. And after Hitler seized power I knew that he had managed to escape to France. Then he came to London, and I was deeply moved to hear that I should be allowed to have an hour with him alone at the home of a member of the House of Commons.

I found him in that home, slumped and, it seemed, almost collapsed, in a big chair. He looked up at me with large eyes filled with the pain one sees during a mortal illness. The first glance at him told its story: here was a man whose life-work was in ruins, who had lost not only his country but all possibilities of serving his country or himself, a man bereft and broken.

I expected him to tell me, in that hour, about himself and his escape, and to give me the news of our personal friends in Germany, many of whom, I knew, had been tortured by the Nazis. I was keyed up to withstand the shock of the brutality our friends had suffered. But I was stopped short by his tragic appearance and was unable to start the conversation. I hoped he would begin without prompting, in his own way.

He was silent for quite a time, then he looked up with an expression of utter helplessness in his face, and he said weakly, but with horror: "Swing, they're burning books."

I was startled, and for a moment I thought that he was being irrelevant. I was expecting news of persecution, torture, and terrible personal disasters, and he began by mentioning what I already knew, that in Berlin they were burning books. But he was a true messenger of tragedy, for that *was* in the furthestmost depth of the tragedy, the burning of books. That was the symbol of it. . . .

That fire has not died, and it will not have died until Germans themselves have free minds again and no power remains on the face of the earth to deny the liberty of man's mind. And when the history of this awful war is written, there is a description of it that would be fitting. It was the war to put out the fire which Hitler lighted in Berlin ten years ago today.

World War II ended with the dawning of the atomic age. Glad as he was to see the war end, Raymond Swing was so horrified by the danger of nuclear bombs that he abandoned any effort to be objective. He decided to devote one commentary a week — on Friday nights — to what he felt was the only way to deal with atomic bombs — a world government. He realized that his task would not be easy. "As a news analyst I had never before espoused any cause or doctrine in my broadcasts," he wrote rather forgetfully, "as I believe that I did not have the right to do so. Now I should do so because I did not have the right not to."

Swing joined Americans United for World Government. And when that group merged into the United World Federalists, Swing served for a time as chairman of its board of directors.

Twenty-one of his Friday night broadcasts in favor of a world government were published as a book, *In the Name of Sanity*.

Now Swing was attacked from the political right wing. Hearst newspaper columnists, the *Brooklyn Tablet*, the *New Leader*, and *Counterattack* called him a Communist or a Communist dupe. At the same time, he was honored with the Du Pont and Peabody awards, plus six honorary doctorates, including one from Oberlin College, which had suspended him after his freshman year.

Poor health forced Swing to curtail his broadcasts. In 1948, Elmer Davis took over his three weekday evening commentaries, leaving Swing with the Sunday commentaries. A year later Swing gave these up also and remained off the air until the Korean War, when he broadcast commentaries over New York's WOR for about a year, some of them carried over New England's Liberty Network. In May 1951, Swing retired from commercial network radio and went to the Voice of America as its first political commentator. The five 10-minute commentaries he delivered each week were simultaneously translated into other languages for broadcast to many nations around the world. He continued to travel, visiting Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, and India. In far-off corners of the world Swing discovered that his name and his voice were well known to the more educated residents of the country, especially its politicians. His broadcasts to England, his wartime broadcasts by short-wave, and his broadcasts for the Voice of America made his name a

household word in some of the best households, while his voice brought a grin of recognition to faces of many hues and shapes, for they were now meeting him in person, here in their country, the Raymond Gram Swing of the radio broadcasts. After his divorce from the former Betty Gram, Swing tried to drop the Gram from his name, but the identification was too strong.<sup>4</sup> He had been Raymond Gram Swing for too long, and for most listeners he would always be Raymond Gram Swing.

He remained with the Voice of America two years, during which McCarthyism was in full cry. Swing grew incensed at what he felt was the State Department's failure to stand by Voice of America personnel being hounded by the McCarthy committee. Swing himself was questioned very briefly by the committee but was not attacked publicly. He waited until Congress appropriated money for his salary and he was reconfirmed as a commentator, so that no one could say he quit under fire, then he resigned.

In an angry defense of the Voice, published by *The Reporter*, he wrote:

It ought to be understood that professional affairs cannot be carried through by non-professionals. Congressional committees do not undertake to say what medicines should be used in veterans' hospitals. The Interior Department does not write directives to tell engineers how to build bridges and dams. International broadcasting is journalism; and while journalism is one of the less esoteric professions, nevertheless it is a profession. Imagine the State Department and Congress between them trying to publish the *New York Times*, or operate NBC or CBS.

Now 66 years old, Swing went to work not as a commentator, but as a writer of commentaries for Edward R. Murrow on Murrow's personal staff, not as a CBS employee. He also edited programs in the "This I Believe" series when Edward P. Morgan moved on to the job of CBS news editor. Swing regarded Murrow as one of his best friends.

Ed Murrow and I saw public affairs eye to eye; and at the time I wrote commentaries for him, I was saying what I would have said on my own program and saying it to a larger audience than would otherwise have been available to me at the time.

He did not give me orders what to write. We arrived at the topic of the commentary in a most informal way. Usually I would consult with him in the morning and tell him what I thought the possible themes were, in the light of the news, and what I would suggest saying about them. He then would express his preference. He would sometimes suggest a theme of his own, but if I did not like it I was under no compulsion to use it.

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<sup>4</sup> Swing remarried twice after his divorce. Altogether, he was married four times and had five children.

"This I Believe" presented the personal beliefs of ordinary people, plus those of famous historical figures like Confucius, Socrates, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Simon Bolivar. The program on Confucius was written by historian Will Durant. A program on Marie Curie, discoverer of radium, was written by her daughter, Eve Curie.

When Murrow left CBS in 1959, Swing returned to the Voice of America as a commentator. A heart attack the following year curtailed his work. He finally retired on New Year's Eve, December 31, 1963. During the last dozen years of Swing's career, except for listeners to FM public radio stations in New England,<sup>5</sup> Americans no longer heard his intense, purring voice, although for some of those years millions of listeners to the Voice of America broadcasts either heard him directly or heard his words translated into as many as thirty-six languages.

But even retired he would not rest. In 1964, Raymond Swing published his autobiography, "*Good Evening!*" *A Professional Memoir*.

Another heart attack proved fatal. He died in Washington, D.C., on December 22, 1968. He was 81. Finally stilled was that whispery voice that over the decades had been variously described as calm, urgent, soothing, satiric, suave, gentle, dry, trenchant, didactic, and bland.

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5. Under a special arrangement to rebroadcast Voice programs.

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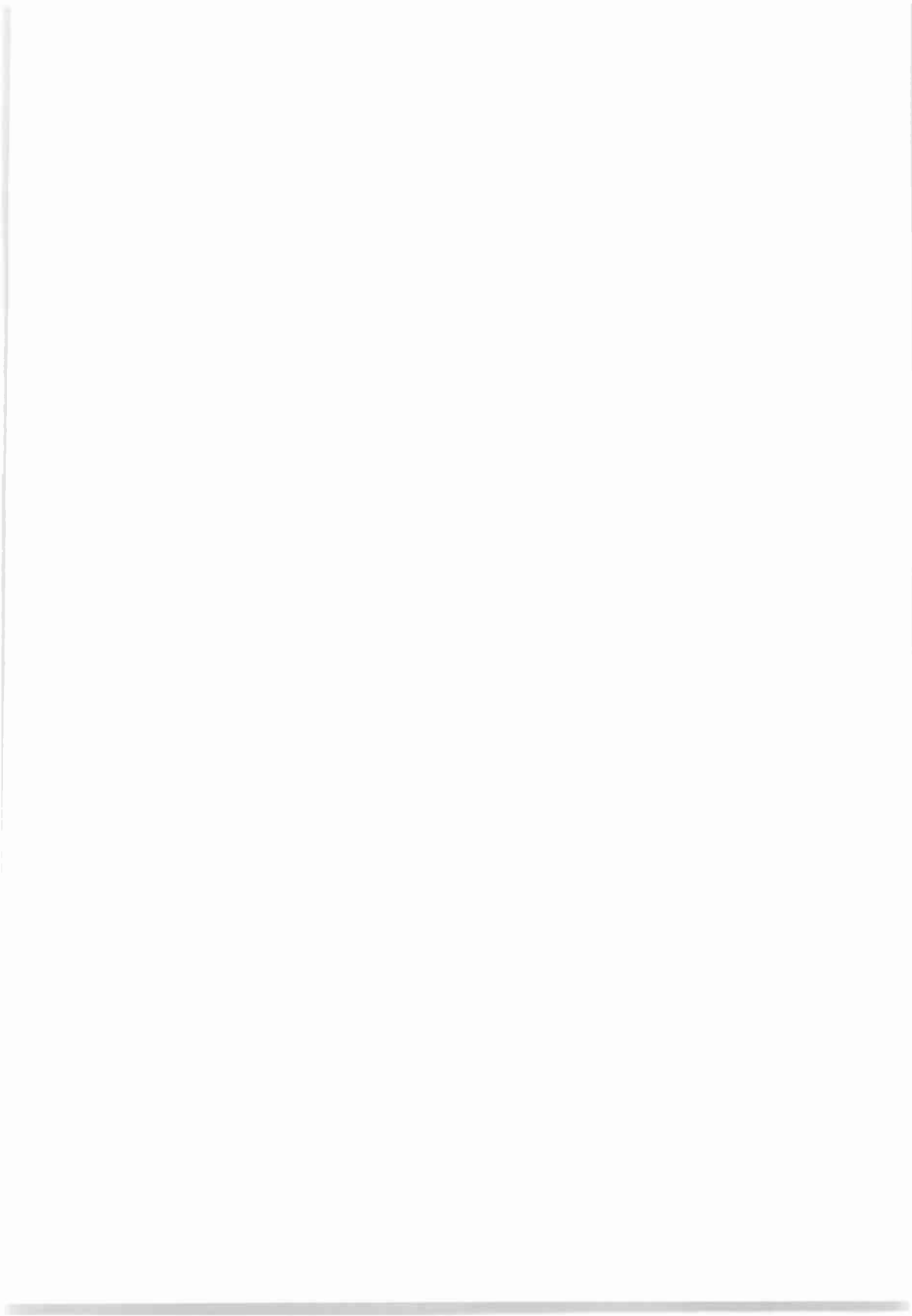
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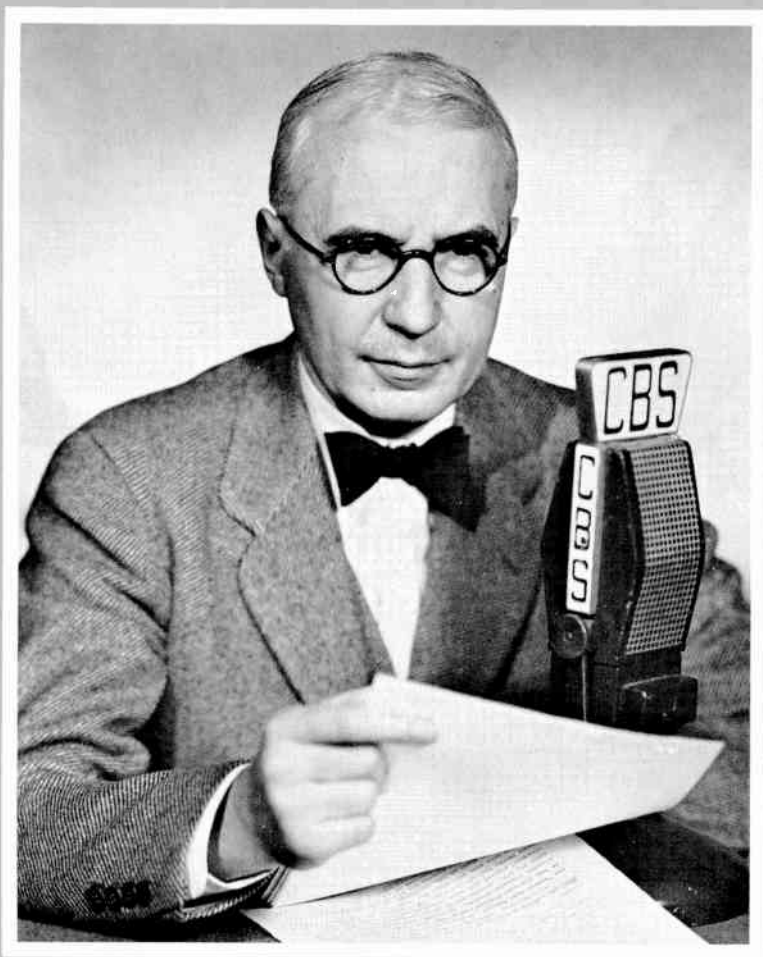
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*The President told us that he wished he had a good long ruler, the kind that school boys' hands used to be slapped with when he was in school; that he was good and God-damned mad at both of us.*

—ELMER DAVIS, recalling how F D R scolded him and Robert Sherwood



# Elmer Davis

A few months after World War II began, it was told, President Roosevelt was talking with advisers Harry Hopkins and Samuel Rosenman about the need to combine all government information activities, both domestic and foreign, under the authority of a single person.

"What about that radio commentator?" Roosevelt wondered.

"You mean Raymond Gram Swing?" asked Hopkins.

"No," replied Roosevelt, "I mean that fellow with the funny voice, Elmer something."

And that, supposedly, was how a CBS commentator with a scratchy Hoosier twang and the mind of a Rhodes Scholar with a classics education came to be the director of the Office of War Information.

Elmer Holmes Davis was born in Aurora, Indiana, on January 13, 1890, the only child of Elam Davis, a bank cashier, and his second wife, Louise, a teacher in Aurora High School and later its principal. Elmer grew up in this Ohio River town, some thirty miles downstream from Cincinnati, a skinny kid with a head out of proportion to his frame, not coordinated well enough to make the high school baseball team. But he loved baseball, so he became team manager and scorekeeper. In fact, he loved all sports well enough to learn so much about them that in later years he was a most competent sportswriter.

Elmer excelled in school. At 16 he entered Franklin College, near Indianapolis, where he earned almost a straight A average. He got less than an A in only two classes during four years of a solid liberal arts education which included classical Greek and Latin. He was graduated *magna cum laude*. He also won a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford University.

To pay his passage across the Atlantic, Elmer hit upon the same device young Hans von Kaltenborn discovered at the end of the Spanish-American War, when he earned free passage on one of America's railroads by convincing fellow soldiers to ride that line home. Davis convinced his fellow Rhodes Scholars, whom he met in New York, to book passage on the same ship in order to get acquainted with one another. So most of the forty-eight Rhodes Scholars of 1910 climbed aboard the

passenger-carrying cargo ship, *Haverford*, bringing cattle to Liverpool. Elmer traveled free.

At Queen's College, Oxford, the Hoosier student was assigned rooms once occupied by Jeremy Bentham, who became one of Britain's best known political philosophers. Elmer Davis pursued a classics education, but he decided to leave after two years instead of the usual three after getting word from home that a bad investment had plunged his father into debt. The scholarship would have kept him at Oxford, but he felt that he was needed at home. His examination earned him a Second Class degree. His tutor said later that Elmer "all but obtained" a First in spite of shortening his course of study by one full year, which the tutor called "one of the most remarkable achievements I have ever known" at the school. Not bad for a kid from a hick town along the Ohio River!

During his holidays at Oxford, Elmer Davis traveled across Europe as far as Turkey. In Prague he met some of Czechoslovakia's future leaders. While in Paris he met another American student, Florence MacMillan, of Boston. Among other things they discovered that they shared the same birthday, January 13th. Their meeting began a slow, four-year courtship that was kept alive by letters.

Davis did not return immediately to Indiana. His family urged him to continue his studies in Europe, so after another summer of traveling on the Continent, he found a place to stay in London while he began some postgraduate study. His ambition was to become a teacher of ancient history.

On January 13, 1913, he sent Florence thirteen roses. They became engaged. These soft days ended for both of them when both learned that their fathers were seriously ill. Both returned to their homes and both were too late to see their fathers alive.

Being "back home again in Indiana" was not as wonderful as Davis had expected it to be. More apt was the thought behind the song about keeping 'em down on the farm after they've seen Patee. Young Davis decided he would rather write than teach, and the place to begin his writing career was New York City, not Aurora, Indiana. Taking his widowed mother along, Davis found a place to live near Columbia University and a job at \$9 a week on the editorial staff of *Adventure* magazine. The following year, 1914, Davis managed to land a job on the *New York Times* as a reporter. He was now a tall, slender, scholarly 24-year-old, imbued with a deep love of the written word.

He proved so competent and conscientious that the managing editor remarked that he had never had to pay attention to Elmer Davis.

Meanwhile, the genius from Detroit, Henry Ford, reasoned that the war which had broken out in Europe was a horrible mistake that could be rectified if men of goodwill would make an effort to stop it. In a burst of idealism, he chartered the Scandinavian-American Lines ship *Oscar II* for a peace mission. He invited American leaders in many fields to join him. Telegrams went out to William Jennings Bryan, Thomas Edison, Jane Addams, and dozens of others. Few leaders accepted, but quite a few

other people wangled an invitation to get a free cruise to Europe aboard the peace ship at Henry Ford's expense. A contingent of reporters included Elmer Davis of the *Times*. The voyage in December 1915 was a disaster. Quarrels broke out among the professed peacemakers. Cynical and satirical stories were telegraphed to their newspapers by reporters. Davis played the story straight, although he had a biting wit which radio listeners a generation later would appreciate. The European press regarded the whole idea of a peace ship as madness. An embittered Henry Ford returned to America a changed man, his idealism replaced by something colder.

While reporting for the *Times*, Davis wrote potboiler novels and short stories, none of which became best sellers. There were *The Princess Cecilia*, (1915), the romance of a young American and a Malay princess; *Times Have Changed* (1923), a fantasy which was sold to a Hollywood producer; *I'll Show You the Town* (1924); *The Keys of the City* (1925), a Main Street type story set in Indiana; *Friends of Mr. Sweeney* (1925), a satire of typical American city life in New York; *Strange Woman* (1927), about the wife of a college president; *Giant Killer* (1928), a biblical novel about David; *White Pants Willie* (1932); and *Love Among the Ruins* (1935). A collection of essays was published under the title *Show Window* in 1927 ("American literature . . . should have a slogan. I venture to suggest one: . . . Fewer and better seductions.") And he wrote a ponderous *History of The New York Times* up to 1921. A collection of short stories was published as *Morals for Moderns* in 1930. He was a regular contributor of short stories to *Collier's*.

Like many *Times* reporters in those days, Davis was paid no salary; instead he got stringer rates, \$8 and up per column. This led to a writing style not noted for the brevity he employed in later years as a broadcaster. He also wrote political articles for *Harper's* and other magazines. Words flowed endlessly from his typewriter.

He spent a total of ten years on the *Times* as a news reporter, sports reporter, foreign correspondent, and editorial writer. From time to time he wangled an assignment in Europe. In 1916, crossing the English Channel from Holland, the steamer he was traveling on was sunk by a German sub. But it sank slowly. Davis called it "one of the most placid submarine sinkings on record, for the British navy had time to get not only all the passengers but all their baggage off before she went under." Several days passed before it was learned that everyone was safe, so some of Davis's friends thought he was dead. That would happen to him twice during his lifetime.

His income was enough in 1917 for the careful Elmer Davis to marry his Florence, four years after they had become engaged. She had been living in Brookline, Massachusetts, and they had visited each other infrequently, yet each January 13th, on their shared birthday, he sent thirteen roses. She had written once to say she still wore the pin he gave her to mark their engagement, but she would return it whenever he found a girl he liked better. Elmer would hear none of that. And now, at last,

they were married. They lived with his mother at first in a house they bought in Kew Gardens, Queens. Later they moved to an apartment in Manhattan. They had two children, Robert and Carolyn.

Davis wanted to cover World War I as a foreign correspondent. The *Times* promised to send him, but found reasons to keep him in New York. Davis wrote to a friend, "To stay in the same old job while everyone else is in it [the war] makes one feel like a eunuch amid the Follies chorus."

He followed the dispatches from overseas with a practiced eye. When he read some editorials in the *Times* based on reports that could not have been true, Elmer Davis pointed out the errors to the editors. His reward was not the overseas assignment he coveted but a job as an editorial writer and editorial page editor. Not until the war ended did the *Times* actually offer to send him overseas, as a correspondent in Berlin. This Davis refused. He explained to a friend, "Imagine having to fraternize with Hun households before the blood was dry on the family bayonet."

Among articles Davis wrote during the war were political and military analyses which compared what was going on in 1917 and 1918 with the Peloponnesian Wars among the Greek city states in the fifth century B.C.:

The war was about something, the Greeks had gone to war to settle certain things, and they would not be at peace until these things were settled one way or another. The sorry success of the peace patched up by Nikias and his lukewarm counterparts in Sparta ought to remind the student of ancient and modern history of the comment made by James J. Hill in September, 1914: "This war will end when somebody is licked; and until somebody is licked it will not end."

In 1920, with the national political conventions, came the introduction to *Times* readers of one Godfrey G. Gloom, a convention-goer since Civil War days. The venerable Mr. Gloom covered the conventions for *The Grapevine Telegraph* of Amity, Indiana. Never mind that Amity existed on no map other than the one in Elmer Davis's head. A "*Times* correspondent" interviewed Gloom, who opined: "Mr. Bryan said that the Democratic Party was expected to think. Them words stirred a number of painful memories in me. I looked back over the course of American history, and I found it simply studded with occasions when the Democratic Party was expected to think and disappointed all expectations. I surmised that nobody expects it to think except Mr. Bryan, and he expects it to think of him."

Godfrey G. Gloom, "the last of the Jeffersonians," attended convention after convention during the twenties. He was killed while leaving the final session of the 1936 Democratic convention, which renominated Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Naturally a "*Times* correspondent" happened to be there when Gloom was knocked down by a newspaper photographer on a motorcycle. Before he expired, Gloom managed to murmur a few hundred last words about what was happening to the political process. Among them:

There seems no more place in American politics for a genuine old-fashioned Jeffersonian. Jefferson has now been endorsed by both parties, and there seems as little prospect that the endorsement will ever be repudiated as that either party will ever put Jeffersonian policies into practice. . . .

To return to the possibility of literal application of Jefferson's theories we should have to cut the power lines, tear up the railroad tracks and in general return to the economy of 1800.

But most of the people in this country, especially those who are the loudest advertisers of their simon-pure Americanism, have adopted the alien and Marxian habit of thinking what the prophet said a hundred years ago with relation to the conditions of his day was divinely inspired and applies to the conditions of any day. So long as people insist on that in the year 1936 the best place for a genuine Jeffersonian is in his tomb.

Elmer Davis also made some barbed political observations under his own name. Writing in *Harper's* about the 1924 convention, he said, "The only visible difference of any sort is that the Republican party seems to contain a slightly higher percentage of crooks, and the Democratic party of fools."

Davis left the *New York Times* in 1924 to free lance. He stepped up his output of novels, short stories, and articles. An organization once phoned the Davis home to announce that he had won a novel writing contest and that he must appear on a radio program that afternoon, but Davis was at a ball game when the phone call came, and the prize went to another novelist. Besides political articles, Elmer Davis wrote light essays for *Harper's*, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, and *The New Yorker*.

He also took on the chore of writing editorials for *Life* (not the famous picture magazine, but an earlier weekly magazine of the same name). With foresight, Davis told readers in 1928:

It looks as if there were several billion dollars of sucker money in this country that are bound to be lost somewhere; now that the bottom has dropped out of Florida the money is getting ready to be lost in Wall Street, but violent fluctuation of prices on Wall Street is not very good for American business. It might be cheaper in the long run if we encourage the development of roulette.

His friend and co-worker, playwright Robert E. Sherwood, recalled that neither he nor Davis played the market. "It was no credit to our prescience that neither of us was wiped out in that unhappy incident [the 1929 crash]; neither of us had much of anything to lose."

A storm along the Connecticut coast, where the Davis family was vacationing, led to one of his delightful essays. Just as young H. V. Kaltenborn was reported missing and feared dead during a storm in the Caribbean, Elmer Davis was reported missing and feared dead in the Connecticut storm, the story appearing on the front page of the *New York*

*Times*. In his essay on the matter, Davis said that friends he met on the street gave him "a look of startled surprise, not altogether unmixed with resentment; for they had done their grieving for Davis, and it could not but be regarded as an imposition when they discovered that it was all a mistake, and that some day they would have it to do over again."

Davis's best known light essay, "On Being Kept by a Cat," appeared in the September 1938 issue of *Harper's*. His love of cats was tempered by his wit and his conviction that "nothing is true of all cats," and he noted categorically that the most independent of this independent breed was that practitioner of rugged individualism, the alley cat.

This ought to make the alley cat the favorite animal of the conservative rich; yet I suspect that if you took a census of these gentry you would find that most of them prefer the docile dog; their definition of individualism is usually "individualism for me."

Politically, he found himself a liberal, a supporter of Socialist party candidate Norman Thomas in 1932, although he wrote that he did not consider himself a Socialist. ". . . we thought it less unsatisfactory than any other [program]," he said. However, once F.D.R. was inaugurated, Davis gave him warm but not uncritical support.

Ever since his student days, Elmer Davis had an international outlook. When Nazi troops marched into the Rhineland in 1936, Davis was in Czechoslovakia, where one of his former acquaintances, Eduard Beneš, had succeeded another former acquaintance, Thomas Masaryk, as president of the republic. Davis later wrote about a conversation with Beneš, who had rejected a prevalent British Foreign Office notion that Adolf Hitler was mad:

Hitler, he said, was anything but crazy; he was a gambler, but every gamble was based on a cool and accurate calculation of realities. Evidently Beneš knew Hitler better than the British did; also Hitler knew the British better than Beneš did.

Davis was then on a tour of Europe to write a series of articles for *Harper's*. In 1936 Italy had already conquered Ethiopia and civil war raged in Spain. Of England he warned:

. . . do what you may, London remains two hours' flight from Germany, within gunshot of the Continent. There is a fourth of England's productive capacity within easy reach of the air fleets, against which there is no longer any effective defense except retaliation.

. . . it is England's problem now, but it will be America's or at least New York's, as soon as the time comes.

Davis wrote this when most Americans thought of little but coping with the Depression. Even in England few voices other than Winston Churchill's rose against the menace of a rearmed Germany. Davis added:

British conservatives would not like to defend Stalinist Russia; but would they be comfortable within two hours' flight of a Germany that had swallowed the resources of the Ukraine and had extended its frontiers to the Don? Czechoslovakia is far away, an inland state which could get no help from the British navy; British reluctance to undertake its defense is intelligible. But would the British like to see German influence dominant in the Balkans and on the Bosphorus, as it very soon would be if Czechoslovakia were conquered?

Replying to the American isolationists' argument that the Fascist nations would turn on each other before they got around to crossing the Atlantic, Davis contended:

It is easy to say that a world of Fascist nations could not long endure; like the dogs of Constantinople marooned on Prinkipo Island, they could only eat up one another. But a Fascist Continent would not be reduced to such a diet till it had tried to make a dinner out of the British Empire; and if it managed to digest that meal, South America might come next.

In another *Harper's* article Davis wrote:

The European problem today is the German problem, nothing else—an aggressive, vigorous, hungry nation, drunk on doctrines of racial superiority, constantly threatening to raise hell right and left and then innocently surprised that its neighbors take precautions.

Despite his internationalism, Elmer Davis did not advocate intervention in the war he was predicting would come. In a March 1938 *Harper's* article called "We Lose the Next War," he considered both intervention and neutrality, then reluctantly chose neutrality.

Everybody will lose the next war—victors as well as vanquished, neutrals as well as belligerents; we are going to lose it whether we go in or stay out. I believe we shall lose it less disastrously if we stay out.

This conclusion may derive some value from the fact that I did not reach it before I started and then set out to prove it; my emotional inclinations are all the other way.

Yet Davis sided with Churchill when Neville Chamberlain came back from Munich with "peace in our time," and Churchill growled, "Britain and France had to choose between war and dishonor. They chose dishonor. They will have war."

As the slide toward war in Europe continued, Davis leaned in one article after another closer and closer toward an American policy of intervention on the side of England. In a February 1939 *New Republic* article, "Is England Worth Fighting for?" he wrote:

That is the strongest argument for our helping England; the possibility that if we do not, the British navy will line up on the same side as Hitler—and the Japanese navy. . . .

And if the British felt that we had let them down, if they surrendered because we would not help them, even enthusiasm might not be lacking when they turned on us.

Elmer Davis's magazine articles were presumably read by influential people. If the articles indicated an internal conflict in Davis, they reflected the uncertain national mood. A public opinion poll taken right after the Munich conference reported that 59 percent of the American public approved of the "peace" settlement, but 90 percent thought Hitler would try to grab more territory. President Roosevelt steered a cautious course between isolation and intervention. He asked Congress to increase the defense budget and he recalled the American ambassador from Berlin, but the Neutrality Act stood for another year.

Davis began his broadcast commentaries less than two weeks before Germany invaded Poland. He was not entirely new to radio, but his past experience convinced him that radio was not his medium for expression. Some listeners complained that his twang and his placid way of talking annoyed them. Davis was none too pleased himself:

I recall a broadcast on the [Prohibition] repeal elections in 1933 when one of those accursed crossings of wires in the nervous system that hit us all occasionally led me persistently to say "wet" where I meant "dry"; but Ted Husing across the table caught me up every time, so promptly and skillfully that eventually the customers seem to have thought it was an act.

In a *Harper's* article, "Broadcasting the Outbreak of War," Davis described how easily he was seduced into giving radio a second chance:

I had a job to do—a piece of writing which had kept me hard at work for some months and which, I computed as I got up on the morning of August 22nd [1939], could be finished in about one more week of intensive and unremitting effort. Then for the first time in months, I was going to take an equally intensive and unremitting rest.

But when the postman brought the morning paper the news of the German-Russian treaty was spread across the front page; after which it was pretty hard for an ex-newspaperman with a continuing interest in European politics to put his mind on anything else. The old fire horse turned out to pasture rears up his head and sniffs the breeze when he hears the alarm bell; big news was breaking, and I wanted to be in on the story. I went back to my typewriter—but that afternoon Paul White, who runs the news department of the Columbia Broadcasting System, called up from New York and told me that Kaltenborn was in Europe, where even before the war broke out no country was receiving anything like as much news as we get here. A news analyst was needed in the home office, and would I come down and help out?

I had done some broadcasting at odd times over the past dozen



years, had sometimes even pinch-hit for Kaltenborn during his absences; but to fill in for him in such a crisis as this was a little like trying to play center-field in place of Joe diMaggio. However, I left my job unfinished and set off for town—reflecting that ten million other men had had to leave the plow in the furrow or the paper in the typewriter and start doing something much less pleasant than I was going to do, simply because Adolf Hitler wants what he wants when he wants it.

Another recollection of that telephone call indicated how White pitched the ball to get “diMaggio” Davis to play. “Sorry,” was Davis’s reply, “but I’m finishing a serial for *The Saturday Evening Post*. It’s already overdue.” “But Elmer,” White pleaded, “Germany is about to attack Poland. This isn’t a time for fiction. Come on down and get in the thick of a real plot.”

For Elmer Davis’s nightly news analysis Paul White managed to carve 5 valuable minutes out of the prime time of CBS prime time—8:55 to 9 p.m. EST, unsponsored. Arriving at the CBS newsroom, Davis felt like an *old* firehorse indeed:

. . . it struck me that of all the men in the room—with the single exception of one of the top executives of the system who had come down because he was an old newspaperman and couldn’t keep away from the excitement—I was the only one who had worn long pants in 1914. Most of my present colleagues, then, had not even been born.

Davis put in 18-hour days during that grim, exciting month of September, absorbing the reports pouring in from CBS correspondents and wire service reporters in European capitals and in Washington, ready to cut in immediately if a correspondent’s live broadcast should be blocked by static or the censor. Two or three times a day came voiced reports from Edward R. Murrow, Bill Henry, or H. V. Kaltenborn in London, Thomas Grandin or Eric Severeid in Paris, William L. Shirer in Berlin, and Albert L. Warner in Washington. A four-way telephone conference call might connect Murrow in London, Grandin in Paris, Warner in Washington, and Davis or Robert C. Trout in New York at the anchor post. Ordinary telephone circuits tied Paris with London, and Washington with New York. Transatlantic shortwave channels tied London with New York. These four-way calls not only carried reports of what was happening in each capital, but it let correspondents ask questions of each other. The American people listened in.

Davis recalled the morning of Sunday, September 3, when England declared war on Germany:

. . . when the British Broadcasting Corporation gave the tip that Chamberlain was going to talk from 10 Downing Street at what was barely daylight in New York, the men on the early morning shift in the office got everybody up. I turned on the radio in my room and took

notes on Chamberlain with one hand while I was pulling on my clothes with the other; then got to the office in two minutes, and by the time they had finished reading such early bulletins as had come in I was ready to go on the air. With what? I don't remember. What could anybody who had seen the world as it was before 1914 say about the outbreak of war in 1939 except, "Well, there it goes."?

That Sunday, September 3rd, with bulletins coming in from somewhere every minute and put on the air as fast as they came in, was just about as hot a day as radio reporting ever knew—hotter even than the night of the Lindbergh kidnapping, or the Hindenburg explosion, or of a national election. And every now and then one of the executives would pause in his work to sigh thankfully, "Anyway, it's Sunday."

(Sunday, of course, was—and is—the day with the fewest sponsored programs, and therefore the cheapest day to interrupt programming with bulletins and special reports.)

Davis was immediately accepted by the listening public. One critic later spoke of the voice that "used to steady us at five minutes to nine, quieting our goose pimples." And Roger Burlingame, in his biography of Elmer Davis, *Don't Let Them Scare You*, wrote:

From the first five minutes of that voice, Hans Kaltenborn's immense reputation began to fade. But the impact was curiously imponderable. The overtones carried nothing like the implications of cultural background that were in Kaltenborn's speech. Yet when Kaltenborn spoke one never felt his immediate presence. He was always talking from afar; one could picture the environment: the soundproof studio, the controls, the meticulously prepared script. Elmer Davis was right in your room. You could almost see him, though the visual techniques were then far in the future. He was telling you in the fewest possible words what you wanted to know. The why of it was partly in the words, partly in the inflection. In that flat, even voice, the impact of the faintest up and down was stunning. And hearing it, you could almost see facial expressions: the slight raising of eyebrows, the slighter twist of the mouth toward the smile that never quite came.

Within three months, a national poll of listener preferences ranked Elmer Davis third among radio news analysts in the nation, behind only Kaltenborn and Lowell Thomas.

Within two years his audience was estimated at 12.5 million.

While part of Kaltenborn's skill lay in ad libbing his analysis so fluidly that a listener may well have thought he was reading from a script, Elmer Davis had the opposite skill. He read his script with such a conversational manner that a listener may well have thought Davis was just chatting. It was an art which conceals art. Actually, both commentators read *and* extemporized well, although Davis confessed that he never overcame mike fright.

Few network newsmen read wire copy directly—a practice scathingly dismissed with the label "rip 'n' read"—but Elmer Davis created a

greater separation from the writing style of the "wires" by refusing even to tear the copy off the teletype machines for rewriting at his desk. Instead, he stood at the machines and jotted some notes on a pad. From these and from his broad knowledge of foreign affairs came the spare, dry style of his nightly 5 minutes of news and analysis. One of the trademarks of those broadcasts was to ask his listeners a question, then pause for a moment and begin his next sentence, "Well . . ."

He eventually installed a news service teletype in his apartment, but as a good reporter he could not be content simply with wire news. He set up interviews and attended press conferences, where his questions were respectful but sharp.

Elmer Davis was much more modest about himself than were his admirers. His wit was self-deprecatory and he had too much of it to be overly impressed with himself. He reserved his praise for colleagues he admired. He wrote about the "outstanding brilliance" of Kaltenborn's analyses: "The average listener would often have had a hard time figuring out what a given piece of news meant without Kaltenborn's informed interpretations to explain it." As for Edward R. Murrow, he praised that colleague's courage as well as his competence. In his introduction to Murrow's book, *This Is London*, Davis wrote:

The only objection that can be offered to Murrow's technique of reporting is that when an air raid is on he has the habit of going up on the roof to see what is happening, or of driving around town in an open car to see what has been hit. That is a good way to get the news, but perhaps not the best way to make sure that you will go on getting it. . . .

In a letter to Davis, Murrow returned the compliment. "I'm proud to be working with you . . . [Your broadcasts] stand out as the best example of fair, tough-minded, interesting talking I've heard."

Examining the craft of the radio news analyst, Davis dismissed "embittered commentators" who lumped people together in their minds as a single radio audience. He praised Kaltenborn and Raymond Gram Swing as analysts "who simply go in there and tell it the way they see it. I have never heard either of them talk down to his audience." Davis felt that the essence of a good style is explaining clearly and directly the essence of a complex situation.

Davis seemed less comfortable in defining the limits of a news analyst. He talked about

. . . the trade at which I have worked this fall—that of the radio news analyst, interpreter, commentator (nobody is quite sure yet just what to call us) who from time to time takes up the latest news, tries to explain what is true, what is probable, and what is almost surely false (and why); who ties it together, gives it a background, and tries to tell the listeners what it means.

Taking his cue from a CBS directive forbidding expression of political opinions, Davis said in 1940:

Radio news analysts have their opinions like everybody else, but those opinions ought to be kept out of sight as far as possible; not only because to let your opinions, your hopes, or your apprehensions affect your cold judgement of the facts is the worst of all blunders—but because the essence of this job is to try to straighten out the record so that the public can form its own opinions.

The CBS directive stated the policy of CBS News: "To help the listener to understand, to weigh, to judge; but not to try to do the judging for him."

Yet an older Elmer Davis observed the way Senator Joseph McCarthy used reporters as a conduit for allegations the reporters were convinced were untrue, and tempered his opinion about opinions:

Too much of our news is one-dimensional, when truth has three dimensions (or maybe more); we still have inadequate defenses against men who try to load the news with propaganda; and in some fields the vast and increasing complexity of the news makes it continually more difficult—especially for us Washington reporters—to tell the public what really happened. Some of these failings are due to encrusted habits of the news business, which can be changed only slowly, but which many men are now trying to change; some of them will be harder to cure because they are only the reverse side of some of our greatest merits, and it is difficult to see how to get rid of them without endangering the merits too.

The merits which entail the worst drawbacks are competition and the striving for objectivity, and we should be much worse off without either. But objectivity often leans over backward so far that it makes the news business merely a transmission belt for pretentious phonies.

Whether it was opinion or analysis, the Elmer Davis broadcasts prior to Pearl Harbor appeared to find the greatest merit in a foreign policy of guarded neutrality, yet with a pro-English tilt. He disliked and distrusted Adolf Hitler from the start:

The Nazis hold and have frequently proclaimed the philosophy of heroic and romantic nationalism in which it seems perfectly natural that one nation's will to live must mean the death of another. Hitler has set down in *Mein Kampf* his view of human history, a ruthless struggle for existence between the races in which victory goes to the one that can outfight and outbreed the rest.

Even in these days of foreboding, he found time for gentler reflection. Another collection of his light essays, *Not to Mention the War*, was published in 1940. As usual, biblical and classical references and quotations could be found on every other page along with generous helpings of historical allusions. A contract bridge player, Davis included

an essay called "The Purest of Pleasure," which he addressed "to average players—not to the experts or to the enthusiastic incompetents who are as much of an obstruction to the game as is a hay wagon to boulevard traffic." And, he went on: "To say that you cannot enjoy a bridge game unless there is money on it is about as reasonable as saying that you cannot get interested in a woman unless she has a husband who might shoot you. If you really want the woman you will need no such irrelevant and supererogatory stimulation."

Anxious to get closer to the war, Davis asked for an assignment to England, which was then battling the Luftwaffe blitz. He joined Edward R. Murrow for a month during the spring of 1941. He was impressed more than ever with the English people: "There is no limit to their resolution: so far as conscious will is concerned, they can go on taking it forever. But there may be a limit to what flesh and blood and nervous systems can endure." He predicted that the war would ultimately benefit them. "You will see a tougher, leaner, poorer England; more equalitarian, and probably on the whole very much better."

Davis and Murrow liked and respected each other. Two comrades who normally worked an ocean apart yet spoke to each other frequently, their short time together was a holiday. At a well-known London restaurant Davis ordered a bottle of his favorite Chateaufort-du-Pape, one of two bottles remaining. While they drank it with their dinner the anti-aircraft sirens and the ack-ack told the all too familiar tale of a Luftwaffe raid. Davis stared pensively at the empty bottle.

"You know, Ed, I have a suggestion. I have two reasons for it. One, our time may be short. Two, Jerry *may* cross the Channel, and good wine should never fall into the hands of an unappreciative drinker. So my suggestion is that we order the last possible bottle of Chateaufort-du-Pape." They did.

With Murrow, he drove to Coventry and other cities hard hit by the German bombers. In that month, claimed biographer Burlingame, Elmer Davis "gained more followers than from all his broadcasting up to that point and he did as much as any single man with the possible exception of Churchill to arouse American sympathy for the suffering English."

That claim may be inflated, but it is probable that the quintessentially American voice of Elmer Davis, hitherto cautious about American involvement, had some effect on his fellow Americans when he returned to the United States to urge increased aid for England. If he could not be an all-out advocate on the air, he could still say what he wished in magazine articles:

. . . every day it becomes apparent to more and more Englishmen that they cannot win unless we do far more than we are doing at this writing. In other words, England with American aid on the present scale cannot win (and not to win against Hitler means disaster, there is no middle course); but the war can be won by an all-out effort of America and England together—a partnership in which America, by mere size and volume of resources, must be the senior.

Like Murrow, he told of the effects of a London air raid not in terms of overall destruction, but on a smaller scale:

. . . certainly a foul smell clings about a burned district for days afterward—charred wood and cloth and whatnot, and perhaps some reminiscence of the chemicals in the bombs. Also there are wrecked buildings, many of them from whose cellars the occupants could never be removed, alive or dead; in that case they simply throw in quantities of quicklime.

We are apt not to think much of this aspect of air raids, for American correspondents in London have said little about it—perhaps because they are too revolted themselves.

That was for *Harper's* readers. For *The Saturday Review of Literature* readers he hammered home the peril to civilization:

The Nazi theory is that a sufficiently brutal and long-continued repression, coupled with a systematic extermination of all leaders of thought and national feeling, will eventually reduce the residue of the conquered peoples to the status of domestic animals. We cannot be sure that the thing is impossible.

His broadcasts were more restrained, but few could now doubt where his emotions lay. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, followed by declarations of war by Germany and Italy, finally permitted Davis to say openly what he felt. As a contemporary put it:

One immediate and grateful result of Pearl Harbor was to free broadcasters overnight from the ordeal of constantly umpiring feline and canine bouts between interventionists and isolationists. A certain clarity of purpose was now possible.

When he told the country of war on December 7, 1941, he was able to keep tension out of his voice. He spoke calmly and deliberately and he gave to millions of listeners a sense of reassurance and strength.

On the domestic front, Elmer Davis took the side of President Roosevelt and the liberals against conservatives who argued that the 40-hour work week stood in the way of increased production. He told radio listeners:

There is no doubt who most of the people are shooting at in the background. The other day a representative of the Associated Industries of Florida said to a Jacksonville Civic Club, "We are fighting two men, Franklin D. Roosevelt and John L. Lewis." If he said anything about fighting Hitler and Hirohito, it seems to have escaped the notice of the reporters covering the meeting.

. . . Well, you may not like Mr. Roosevelt, but if he loses the war we all lose it with him.

When the war began, the federal government had twenty-three separate information offices. News releases were sometimes conflicting.

Censorship rules varied. With the war going badly at first, military and naval leaders were determined to keep the harsh truths from the American people. In the Pacific, General Douglas MacArthur stated the philosophy behind his information policy. "When you start to tear down, to destroy public confidence in the leaders of a military movement, you practically destroy an army." The Department of the Army ordered news released only if the stories "do not injure the morale of our forces, the people at home or our allies." It was a policy of good news only; in short, censorship not for military secrets alone, but to hide grim battle reports from the American people.

Davis told his radio listeners. "The whole government publicity situation has everybody in the news business almost in despair." He called for the creation of what would amount to an information czar (to use a much later term). He said "almost anybody" could do the job better than it was being done by uncoordinated agencies.

Following the broadcast, *The New Yorker* editorially not only recommended that this be done, but that Elmer Davis should be in charge. Two months later, President Roosevelt summoned Elmer Davis to become director of the newly created Office of War Information, controlling all domestic and foreign government news services. Davis took the job, along with a considerable pay cut.

Despite the obvious danger in creating such a superagency, many journalists welcomed Davis's appointment because a respected colleague would now be in charge, not a bureaucrat. However, an enlightened bureaucrat may have been what the job needed, for Davis had no administrative experience when he undertook to head a complex organization of 2,300 persons and a \$20 million budget. Fortunately, F.D.R. appointed a skilled administrator, General Dwight Eisenhower's brother, Milton, as deputy director of the OWI.

For the next three years, from June 1942 until the OWI was liquidated in September 1945, Elmer Davis fought running battles with conservatives in and out of Congress and with military brass who wanted less bad news to reach the American public. Some of his critics called him "the American Goebbels." Yet in all his policy arguments with military and government people, Davis could be found on the side of truth and openness. The technique of the Big Lie was neither in his philosophy nor his methods. Davis also noted wryly that Goebbels did not have to go to the Reichstag for appropriations. Davis, of course, had to depend upon Congress for money to run his agency. One of the sharpest criticisms of his administration of the OWI followed a split in the Domestic Branch between a group of writers with a news background and a group of advertising men who were put in charge of the writers and who favored a sloganeering, Madison Avenue approach to selling the war effort on the home front. The writers handed in their resignations and Davis accepted them, reluctant to do so because several of the writers were his personal friends but feeling he had no other choice if he wanted to keep the OWI under control. The writers' revolt led to a congressional investigation. Davis survived, but Congress sharply cut the funds needed to operate the Domestic Branch.

He also survived verbal sniping by political enemies on the right, such as columnist Malcolm Bingay of the Detroit *Free Press*:

Elmer's popping off again. Yeah, Elmer Davis. Elmer, the deadpan study in chiaroscuroistic physiognomy with white hair, gray face, bootblack eyebrows and long black bow tie to synchronize the movements of his Adam's apple with his thought processes. Yeah, boy! Elmer was born to be an actor and that is the role he is playing now — with plenty of ham.

and columnist Frank Waldrop of the Washington *Times-Herald*:

Well, Uncle Elmer, you're a flop. The House of Representatives says so. The public distaste of your services says so. Uncle Elmer, get going, now.

Davis also dealt with a revolt among expatriate Italians working in the Overseas Branch, most of whom objected to the policy of keeping their propaganda writing within the bounds of American foreign policy. Their words, they pointed out, were beamed at Italy, and who knew better what Italians wanted to hear than other Italians. The expatriates disagreed among themselves about just what it was that other Italians wanted to hear, and they called one another many names, including Communist, an epithet Davis's enemies heard with visceral pleasure. Davis quelled this verbal mini-riot with a forthright demand that the name callers "put up or shut up." He wrote to one of the loudest complainers: "I am getting a little tired of this constant innuendo about Communists in the Office of War Information, which is never supported by any evidence that will stand up. To you, as to all others who talk this way, I renew my invitation to show some evidence."

Davis was less successful in settling a quarrel with his old friend, playwright Robert Sherwood, who became head of the OWI Overseas Branch. Their dispute over a personnel matter was brought to the attention of President Roosevelt. What happened next was related later by Elmer Davis:

Sherwood and I were called to the White House today. The President told us that he wished he had a good long ruler, the kind that school boys' hands used to be slapped with when he was in school; that he was good and God-damned mad at both of us for letting a thing like this arise and get into the papers at a time when he had a war to think about. He said he did not want to lose either of us, both because he was fond of us both and because it would take too much of his time to find someone to take our places. . . . He wanted us to go out in the Cabinet Room and get together.

If the famous, influential, and now middle-aged director of the OWI was embarrassed because President Roosevelt scolded him as if he were a naughty child, he did not let on. Indeed his keen sense of the preposterous



may have led him to regard the scolding with amusement. In any event, he and Sherwood came to an agreement on the personnel matter. They could then turn their attention to the job at hand.

That job was not an insubstantial part of the total war effort. For example, Davis was responsible for the "Four Freedoms" campaign, a simple statment of why America fought. Roosevelt outlined the Four Freedoms in a speech to Congress on January 6, 1941, nearly a year before the United States entered the war:

In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression — everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way — everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want — which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peace time life for its inhabitants — everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear — which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor — anywhere in the world.

The OWI pushed the concept of the Four Freedoms with pamphlets, posters, and broadcasts, although it must have been evident to Elmer Davis that he was selling a mirage. These freedoms did not fully exist in the United States, let alone in the totalitarian states allied with the United States in defeating the totalitarian states on the other side. Yet people everywhere wanted to believe in some ideals, some vision of a better world to come, to help them endure the war.

Davis toured the Pacific theater during the summer of 1944. American forces were well into the campaign of rolling the Japanese back, island by island. After he returned he did a CBS broadcast and described what he had seen:

A battle like that does things to improved real estate. When it is over the towns have been flattened to smoking rubble; the palm groves have been stripped of their fronds or simply knocked to pieces; the whole landscape is a mess of pulverized coral lumps, filth, mud, smashed guns, wrecked trucks, disabled tanks, punctured and flattened gasoline drums, and all the multifarious and unappetizing trash and garbage of war. There are civilian enemy dead to bury, too — plenty of them; and there are thousands of refugees to care for — friends as they were on Guam, enemies as on Saipan; but in either case helpless human beings, men, women and children, who need food, medical care and, when you can get it, shelter.

Davis never stopped fighting for freedom of information. When the Allies secretly approved plans to keep American and other outside newspapers, magazines, and wire services from newly occupied Germany, it was Davis who exposed those plans. President Truman took him to task for doing so. Hearst and Scripps-Howard newspapers, hostile to the OWI and its liberal director, renewed their editorial badgering, and conservatives on the House and Senate Appropriations committees tried to use their budget paring knives to emasculate the Office of War Information. Support for the OWI came from Generals of the Army George C. Marshall and Dwight D. Eisenhower, who said that if the OWI were not able to continue promoting American goodwill, then the army would have to provide the men and money to do it. The army preferred to let Elmer Davis's organization carry on.

When the war ended, the OWI was dismantled. Davis returned to broadcasting, but not to CBS. He got a better offer from ABC, so he went there. He left CBS at about \$1,000 a week. He started with ABC at about \$3,500 a week, delivering a 15-minute broadcast from Washington of news and analysis Mondays and Tuesdays at 7:15 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. EST. Raymond Gram Swing filled the 7:15 p.m. slot Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Davis returned to the air in December 1945, when the news was filled with the trials of Nazi leaders at Nuremberg. When Charles Lindbergh condemned the trials, Davis called on his long memory:

If Lindbergh is shocked not by the crimes but by the trials, maybe he hasn't been reading the papers lately. Back in June, '41, his explanation of the war was very simple; England and France had beguiled Poland into a futile war, and when Germany turned east they attacked her in the west. . . .

Again and again, in 1941, he insisted that we could not win a war. In May he knew — he said he knew — that England couldn't win even with our help. In June he said you could never base enough air squadrons in the British Isles to match the German air force. An invasion of Europe, he said, would mean the loss of millions of American lives — actually our total killed on all fronts in the whole war was little more than a quarter of a million; and if we could win at all he said it might be in ten or twenty or thirty years.

Finally in October, '41, he said that that might be his last speech because maybe the administration was about to abolish free speech, and he suggested that the administration might not permit Congressional elections to be held in '42.

There is the record — part of the record. All of us who talked about public affairs in those days made mistakes in our estimate of what was coming, but Lindbergh's mistakes all fell into a pattern.

When the verdicts came in, Elmer Davis devoted most of an evening of broadcast news, analysis, and commentary to the event. As usual, he used few emotion-laden adjectives or adverbs although he felt strongly about this story. With his dry, crackling midwestern voice he spoke thoughtfully and rationally to an audience he assumed was also thoughtful and rational:

It is argued, no nation ever admits that it is waging aggressive war; Hitler always claimed that his neighbors either had attacked him or were getting ready to attack him; and if he had won, the history of the world would thereafter have been written by Dr. Goebbels, and his story might have stuck.

So, it is maintained—and this argument has been advanced by some very respectable citizens, as well as by some copperheads—the Nuremberg trials merely amount to saying hereafter that the winners have a right to try the heads of the losing government, and put them to death if it seems advisable.

In wars of the old-fashioned type, that would certainly have been a new and dangerous implication; but it seems likely that we may never have any more wars of the old-fashioned type—wars of one nation against another, for limited objectives, such as for instance our war with Spain in 1898.

Radio listeners identified Elmer Davis as a liberal just as they identified Fulton Lewis, Jr., as a conservative. Davis agreed that he was a liberal: "For the record, I have no political affiliation as becomes a voteless resident of Washington; if I still lived in New York I should belong to the Liberal Party, to the left of the organization Democrats and to the right of the fellow-traveling Laborites." The *New York Times* called him "a horse-sense liberal . . . given neither to hysterical hand wringing nor to fuzzy optimism."

Davis did not admire Henry Wallace, however, and found much to criticize during Wallace's 1948 presidential campaign. It was reported that Wallace, anxious to confront the influential radio commentator face to face, arranged a meeting in a New York hotel. The candidate who grew up on a farm in the Hawkeye State and the commentator who grew up in a small town in the Hoosier State promptly forgot about politics to engage in a prolonged discussion—about raising corn and chickens.

A few months after the election, Davis told listeners:

This morning's papers carry the news that the Lions Club of Danbury, Connecticut, which had invited Henry Wallace to speak at one of its luncheon meetings, had canceled the appointment on account of the protests of the six Catholic priests of that city, who said that Mr. Wallace would have a bad influence on the thinking of thousands of school children.

Now listeners to these broadcasts know that I yield to none in my conviction that Henry Wallace is wrong. But wrong or not, he has just as much right to express his opinions as I have or anybody else. Free speech means free speech for everybody, not merely for those whom you happen to approve personally. It may be said that Mr. Wallace has no right to be heard by the Lions Club of Danbury if they don't want to hear him, and that is true; but evidently they did want to hear him till the heat was turned on. If the school children of Danbury have been so poorly instructed by the home, the school and the church that Mr. Wallace is likely to corrupt them, the only logical thing would be to forbid anybody to talk to the school children of Danbury till they are grown up and able to judge for themselves.

It is poor business for the representatives of a church which has stood up, and properly stood up, for free speech in Hungary to put on the pressure to suppress free speech in Connecticut. If the principle is a good one, as most Americans believe, it is good here as well as there.

Elmer Davis came out early and strongly against Senator Joseph McCarthy, contending that the greatest internal menace to the United States was not communism but the steady encroachment on freedom of thought. In a *Harper's* article he used more biting words than he could speak on the air: "I shall not speculate on his motives, being neither a psychoanalyst nor an inspector of sewers." And when McCarthy told a television audience that Adlai Stevenson, the Democrats' 1952 presidential nominee, "would continue the suicidal Kremlin-shaped policies of the nation," Davis commented:

When I listened to that broadcast, the past rose before me like a dream—a past I thought had been buried seven years before. I was reminded of another rabble-rousing broadcaster in another republic, who was taken up by rich men and conservative politicians because they thought they could use his talent for publicity against a middle-of-the-road government and then throw him over when he had served their purpose. But when he once got to the eminence for which he had been climbing, he threw them over when they had served his purpose. When I heard the applause for McCarthy that night an echo of memory seemed to give it an undertone—Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!

Supporters of Senator McCarthy hit back. An article in *American Mercury* entitled "Elmer Davis Runs Scared," by J. B. Matthews, staff director of McCarthy's investigating committee, declared:

Civilian "generalissimo" of the Office of War Information was one Elmer Holmes Davis (hereinafter referred to simply as Elmer), Rhodes Scholar, advocate of a "New Bible," and veteran left-winger in the ideological war of words.

Elmer's OWI was the most grotesque agglomeration of Communists, pro-Communists, Socialists, pinkos, phoney intellectuals, fake liberals, homosexuals, and perennial misfits ever recruited, *sans uniform*. . . .

The main reason that it is necessary to mention Elmer is that he, as well as anyone else, personifies the practice of broadcasting myths in guise of news. Elmer has established himself as an expert in this field, where competition is as keen as it is in selling low-calorie beer or non-cancerigenic cigarettes. He is, to steal his own figure of speech, one of the head anopheles mosquitoes in the malarial swamp of slanted newscasting. . . .

What bothers Elmer appears to be a gnawing guilt complex. Having demonstrated that he was a sucker for Soviet myths; having never until the very recent past sensed the gravity of the international Communist menace; having moved for a quarter of a century in a

circle of Communist agents, Communist sympathizers, fellow travelers, and Communist dupes; and having won honors by the kind of liberalism which is best described as anti-anti-Communism—Elmer seems to be the victim of a guilt complex and an infuriating frustration. In no sense of the word is he a Communist or a Communist sympathizer; hence the internal conflict. In such cases, an emotional outlet is necessary. Such an outlet could have been found in the religious experience of confession; but pride or some other attitude or combination of attitudes has kept Elmer from taking the path of confession. He has, instead, found an outlet for his frustration by unleashing an irrational anger toward all ex-Communists associated with the mythical monster of McCarthyism.

This attack and others were prompted by the publication and wide success of a book of essays by Elmer Davis published under the title *But We Were Born Free*. As usual, he spoke out for freedom of inquiry, for freedom of dissent—“in short for freedom of the mind, the basic freedom from which all other freedoms spring.”

Reviewing *But We Were Born Free* in an editorial, *The Saturday Evening Post* wondered “What ‘reign of terror’ petrifies the liberals?” But a reviewer for *The Saturday Review of Literature* said, “As one of the most civilized and civilizing publicists of our time, Elmer Davis deserves to be perpetuated, with all of his sanity, salt and courage.” Historian Henry Steele Commager wrote in *The Reporter*, that Davis “has always spoken his mind—and what a mind. He has always confronted life with courage. It is a courage tempered with humor, with tolerance, with humility, but a courage that never fails.”

During his lifetime Elmer Davis was showered with awards, including three honorary doctorates. He was elected to the boards of several prestigious organizations, among them, the Fund for the Republic. He was president of the Authors League of America for two years. He was one of the founders of Americans for Democratic Action. Altogether he wrote nineteen books, both fiction and nonfiction. His last, *Two Minutes Till Midnight*, warned of the threat to the world posed by a Soviet Russia newly armed with hydrogen bombs.

Raymond Swing, who divided the 7:15 to 7:30 p.m. time slot on the ABC network with Elmer Davis, had retired in January 1947, and ABC put Davis on across the week. His program continued to attract millions of listeners nightly. Undoubtedly some listeners tuned in because of an even more famous radio personality who followed on the network stations. Former Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes put the matter forthrightly in a letter to Davis:

You should know that my two youngsters, aged nine and seven and one-half respectively, quote you and speak your name frequently. I wish that I could say that this is because they are intellectuals of a high order, interested in public affairs, but I honestly cannot.

They are addicts to “The Lone Ranger” and you precede him. In

order not to miss him they tune in on you but I really think that is going to be a case of unconscious assimilation and I am looking forward to the day when they will have acquired the habit of listening to you after they have graduated from "The Lone Ranger."

Davis's liberal views, especially during the 1952 presidential campaign, led some stations and some local sponsors to drop him. After the election, many of them returned. At his peak, he was carried by about 150 radio stations.

High blood pressure forced him to give up his nightly radio news commentaries in the fall of 1953. For a few months he toured the country lecturing, then for a while in 1954, on Sundays at 1 p.m. EST, television viewers could see the handsome thatch of white hair and the bushy black eyebrows that went with the familiar dry voice, those plus the horn-rimmed spectacles and the bow tie which were Elmer Davis hallmarks. By then he was so highly regarded that *The New Yorker* devoted three columns to his television program, saying, among other things: "Elmer Davis, . . . praise the Lord, is appearing each Sunday over ABC to present a commentary on the news of the week. Mr. Davis breaks all the rules of the academy, and his program is triumphant. For one thing, he wears a bow tie; for another, he never shoots his cuffs. He looks at the camera only when he feels like looking at the camera, and that isn't often." And *The New Republic* devoted no less than six pages to the arrival of Elmer Davis as a television commentator, and to take a look in passing at the state of the art of television news in 1954.

But his illness worsened. In addition to high blood pressure, he was stricken with paratyphoid fever. Then, in March of 1958, a stroke. Bronchial pneumonia followed. His bodily functions ebbed bit by bit. One would rather learn that death came gently to this man, who spent leisure hours reading the poets Horace and Catullus in Latin and who enjoyed writing letters to scholarly friends in Latin. But that was not to be. He did not die gently. He died only slowly. In the final weeks, he could not speak or eat. He lived through intravenous feeding. And on May 18, 1958, even that was not enough.

When he was 64 years old, four years before he died, Elmer Davis wrote an essay which he called "Grandeurs and Miseries of Old Age." He had no illusions about growing old. "I am not persuaded that the best is yet to be," he wrote, then went on to reflect on a matter very much in his thoughts:

We have got to defeat this attack on the freedom of the mind; and I think we can defeat it if enough of us stand up against it—enough of all kinds of people, rich and poor, young and old. But it takes courage for a young man with a family to stand up to it; all the more obligation on those of us who have nothing left to lose.

At any age it is better to be a dead lion than a living dog—though better still, of course, to be a living and victorious lion; but it is easier to run the risk of being killed (or fired) in action if before long you are going to be dead anyway. This freedom seems to be the chief consolation of old age.

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“One of the most dishonest reporters the American people have.”

*“The name of Fulton Lewis is enshrined in Heaven. No man in our time is so fearlessly on the side of Truth, so inspired by God’s universal justice.”*

“A mealy-mouthed, mendacious menace.”

*“Lucid, fearless . . . of profound importance to all good Americans, . . .” (Herbert Hoover)*

“That blabber-mouthed mouthpiece of unbridled Big Business.”

*“Great reporter.”*

“A fiendishly talented architect of mass intolerance and hate.”

*“Probably the most influential man of his profession on Capitol Hill.”*

“The worst anti-labor hate-peddler alive.”

*“The most confident reporter in the nation’s capital.”*

“Fulton Lewis is just a paid stooge, a venal reactionary, a Fascist-minded prostitute.”

*“Fulton Lewis is one of the great patriots of the age.”*





## Fulton Lewis, Jr.

HE was born with a golden spoon in his mouth. He had a golden voice and golden looks. He delighted in whatever people said about him. They said a lot, but no one ever called him a traitor to his class, as they did his nemesis, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Fulton Lewis, Jr., was born April 30, 1903, in Washington, D.C., a fifth generation Washingtonian. Among his ancestors were Mordecai Lewis, a Revolutionary War financier, and on his mother's side, James Hamilton Saville, treasurer of the United States under Abraham Lincoln. His father was a Washington attorney. He was raised in a mansion in the Georgetown section. The family's summer home stood on what is now the grounds of the National Cathedral. He attended the tradition-filled University of Virginia, but left without graduating. He was a member of Washington's upper-crust Association of Oldest Inhabitants, which even presidents of the United States could not join, let alone mere senators.

Lewis dropped out of school for a while and earned some money based on the music lessons he had while growing up. He played piano, sang in his own dance band, and earned a \$25 prize by writing the music for "Cavalier Fight Song," which is still played at the University of Virginia. (Recall that Dorothy Thompson wrote a song still sung occasionally at Syracuse.) He tried the banking business for a while at the Washington Loan and Trust Company, but didn't care much for it.

Lewis liked to tell of the time he talked himself into a job as a theater organist although he had never played an organ in his life. He gave a demonstration to the manager by thumping on the keys after quietly disconnecting the foot pedals. His feet banged on the now silent pedals through a rendition of "Margie." The theater manager never tumbled to the truth, and Lewis got the job. He spent the rest of the day practicing on the university chapel organ, skipping meals and classes. By the next day he could play the organ. (You may recall that Raymond Gram Swing also started out with a job playing the organ.)

Rather than follow his father into law school, Lewis became a reporter for the Washington *Herald*. He was six feet tall, blond-haired, and blue-eyed. All in all, quite a catch. One day he was assigned to cover Davis Cup interzone tennis matches at the Chevy Chase Country Club because he was the only reporter in Washington who was a member of the club. There he was noticed by Alice Huston, daughter of C. H. Huston, Chattanooga millionaire and, at the time, the chairman of the Republican National Committee. She had a million dollars in her own name, as did each of her sisters. The year was 1929. Fulton and Alice were married a few months later in a wedding considered one of the great social events in Washington. The president's wife, Mrs. Herbert Hoover, was there. So was Vice-President Curtis, several Supreme Court justices, U.S. senators, and members of old Washington society. The family was hit by the 1929 depression and Lewis claimed that for a while they ate a lot of breast of lamb at 8¢ a pound, but that story was harder to swallow than breast of lamb.

Seven years later, when Mrs. Lewis gave birth to a son, Lewis proudly told colleagues that a new president had been born. Franklin Roosevelt heard about this and sent a White House limousine to the Lewis home with an autographed photo: "To Fulton Lewis III, from one President to another President—Franklin Delano Roosevelt." Lewis liked the gesture, but did not like the New Deal any better.

For a time Lewis wrote a fishing column for the *Herald*, along with the national news. He became assistant city editor and later joined William Randolph Hearst's Universal News Service, first as assistant bureau chief in Washington and then, for nine years, as bureau chief. From 1933 to 1936 he also wrote "The Washington Sideshow," a column sent out by Hearst's King Features Syndicate to some sixty newspapers.

He shook up both commercial and military aviation by uncovering an airmail subsidy scandal in 1931. It began when he learned that Eastern Airlines was awarded an airmail subsidy of \$2 a mile on flights between New

York and Washington, while at the same time a rival airline was operating profitably over the same route for 42¢ a mile. Helped by his wife, Lewis spent three months investigating the manipulations in airlines and airline stock. He discovered, for example, one instance where a stock manipulator parlayed an investment of \$253 into \$25 million in five years. Lewis traced all this back to the rigging of airmail subsidies with the connivance of some officials in the U.S. Post Office. The fact that this was in the Hoover administration did not stop Lewis. Nor was he stopped by William Randolph Hearst's refusal to accept Lewis's 398-page report, because, it was said, some men Hearst admired were implicated. Informed of Hearst's rejection of his report, young Fulton Lewis, Jr., is reported to have marched into the office of one of his bosses at Universal News Service and declared, "Who the hell does that guy Hearst think he is, anyway, refusing to publish my story. Well, by God, he can't intimidate me. I'll show that namby-pamby fuzzy duzzy!" Lewis took his report to Senator Hugo Black (later a Supreme Court justice). The Senate appointed an investigating committee which eventually forced a reorganization of the airline industry. At the same time, all commercial airmail routes were cancelled. To move mail by air, the United States Army Air Force was called out. That brought out some fatal flaws in pilot training, for planes began crashing all over the country. A new program eventually trained thousands of flyers for World War II. All this started with Fulton Lewis, Jr.'s, personal investigation.

Exposure of government scandal became a Fulton Lewis hallmark. Most of his journalistic career coincided with liberal Democratic administrations, which may have contributed to his reputation for ultraconservatism, since he seemed by instinct to be a battler. His family background would probably have tempered any liberal impulses, though Lewis described himself as an old-fashioned liberal. Few in Washington agreed with that assessment. One might wonder, however, what reputation he would have developed had he done his reporting through, say, the Nixon presidential years instead of the New Deal and Fair Deal era.

Lewis took pride in a second exposé during these years, although fellow journalists might argue that his behavior was unethical because he used his position as a newsman to serve as an undercover FBI agent. It involved an ex-navy officer who became so dependent on alcohol that he sold U.S. Navy secrets to the Japanese in return for gin money. With naval intelligence on his trail, former Lieutenant Commander John Farnsworth, now a sodden wreck, offered to sell Lewis the whole sordid story for \$20,000 plus five days to ship out of the country.

Lewis strung Farnsworth along and took his information to U.S. Navy intelligence and the FBI. Farnsworth was arrested and sent to prison, where he died. Lewis got a bylined story plus the conviction that he had done his patriotic duty. (In 1974 an Associated Press photographer was fired for giving the FBI information about the Indian occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, which may be a sign of the changing times.)

In the early thirties Fulton Lewis, Jr., began broadcasting as an almost

anonymous voice, just another member of the *Herald* staff taking his turn reading the headlines. His name, however, was mentioned. One day, to his delight, a salesgirl recognized the name. "Oh, I've heard you on the air!"

He also read his fishing column on the air, but got no nibbles. Then in 1936 he was asked to fill in for a newscaster who was going on vacation. This newscaster broke up the 15-minute daily newscast with a poem, but that wasn't to Lewis's taste. Instead, he presented personalized news features. One night he had a State Department code clerk read a coded report from an American cruiser that was rescuing American citizens caught in the Spanish civil war. Such innovations made no impression on the regular newscaster, who returned from vacation with a fresh batch of poems, but they did impress station manager William Dolph, who also remembered that when it was Lewis's turn to read the headlines, he always turned up on time and, even better, turned up sober, not so common an occurrence in those *Front Page* days. Months later, Dolph hired Lewis as a radio national news commentator, the first in Washington, over Mutual's WOL at \$25 weekly. Two months later, starting at 7 p.m., November 27, 1937, the programs were fed over the Mutual Broadcasting System network. The big names in news commentary were Boake Carter and Lowell Thomas, neither of whom worked out of Washington. Lewis was no immediate success. His competition on the other networks was Amos 'n' Andy, Easy Aces, and the music of Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians, all big audience draws.

Nearly a year went by before he got his first sponsor. As more sponsors arrived, Lewis and Dolph, who became his business manager, developed a method of local sponsorship. Lewis would have a different sponsor in every town where a radio station carried his nightly broadcast. If one of his eventual 530 sponsors grew mad at something Lewis said and cancelled, that was all right because 529 sponsors were still feeding the money in. Local affiliates carrying "The Top of the News" had three spots to sell in each 15-minute newscast five nights a week. For each local sponsor Lewis recorded a lead-in: "This is Fulton Lewis, Jr., bringing you the news for the Acme Dairy." The local radio engineer spun that disk, then watched the sweep second hand of his clock for the instant he would switch to the live network feed. The nightly audience was estimated at nearly 10 million at the crest of Lewis's popularity.

Lewis's peak year earnings were estimated at \$250,000 to \$450,000. Besides his broadcasts, Lewis gave lectures and, for a time, was paid an extra \$1,000 per broadcast by the National Association of Manufacturers for originating his broadcasts at some war plants. Liberals accused Lewis of being an NAM stooge. He denied this, arguing that the NAM was simply a sponsor. "I made those broadcasts without the help or interference of any outside source whatsoever, and I defy anybody to prove otherwise."

It seems most unlikely that the feisty and independent Lewis could be "bought" by anyone to say anything that violated his own sense of what was right. A much more reasonable explanation is that what Lewis thought was right and what the leadership of the NAM thought was right dovetailed neatly, and both parties were pleased to recognize this. Once, during a strike in the Pennsylvania coal mines, Lewis used a broadcast to urge the miners

back to work. Referring to the mediation board, Lewis told the miners, "I know these men personally. I can give you my personal guarantee that you'll get an absolutely fair deal." There is no report that the miners accepted the guarantee. However, Lewis took great pride some years later in displaying a gold watch he received from the United Mine Workers. He was also a friend and admirer of UMW president John L. Lewis (no relation) and scored a major scoop by predicting that John L. would throw his support in the 1940 election to Wendell Willkie.

Lewis's commentaries were consistently in close agreement with the policies and statements of the Republican party, leading radio columnist John Crosby to write in the New York *Herald-Tribune*, a Republican newspaper, "I think he ought to be recognized as a campaigner, not as a commentator, and his national air time be paid for and so listed by the Republican National Committee." Crosby wrote this during the Roosevelt-Dewey campaign of 1944, when Lewis was predicting a Dewey landslide and a Republican sweep. Interestingly, Lewis's manager and close friend, William Dolph, served as the Democratic National Committee's radio director in 1936 and got the idea for Lewis's local sponsorship from the success of his proposal to have thirty Democratic governors introduce President Roosevelt to local radio audiences.

As Washington's best known radio commentator, Lewis led a successful effort to have radio newsmen admitted to the Senate and House press galleries. Until 1939 radio newsmen were restricted to the visitors gallery. Newspapermen tried to keep it that way. Rejecting Lewis's application, they were embarrassed when the radio commentator pointed out to investigating senators that representatives of the wire services were freely admitted to the press gallery, although the original arrangement was for *newspaper* representatives only. The Senate and House decided to accord equal privileges to radio newsmen and the pencil-and-paper press, despite rather strenuous personal lobbying by some newspaper reporters. Microphones remained forbidden, but the radio journalist took his seat beside his newspaper colleague. A week after the Senate and House acted, White House "press" conferences became, in effect, White House "news" conferences. Eventually, the tools of the broadcast reporter—microphone, recorder, camera—were brought into the White House news conference as well, altering its nature markedly and bringing it within the hearing and sight of all Americans. Colleagues elected Fulton Lewis, Jr., the first president of the newly formed Radio Correspondents Association.

Lewis actually began building his national audience and his conservative reputation in September 1939, the month Hitler invaded Poland, followed by British and French declarations of war against Germany. At a private dinner Lewis met Charles Lindbergh, home after a tour of the Nazi war machine, which convinced him that the Third Reich could not be beaten. Lindbergh returned to tell the United States it should keep out of Europe and refuse to abet the "criminal" political activities of England. Lewis invited Lindbergh on his radio program. Lindbergh's broadcast made Lewis an overnight sensation. Isolationists called Lewis a patriot. Interventionists called him an appeaser.

Whatever Fulton Lewis, Jr., really believed, it was not that the United States should go to great effort to arm itself at the taxpayers' expense. In a radio talk reprinted in the isolationist Scribner's *Commentator*, Lewis gave the lie to arguments that the United States Army was so poorly equipped that new recruits, as shown in newsreels, had to train with broomhandles.

He called published photos of recruits drilling with broomsticks "a vast propaganda movement [that] seeks to impress the nation with the mistaken conception that its armed forces are pitifully equipped." He said there were rifles aplenty, enough Enfields and Springfields to equip 150,000 riflemen "not with one gun, but with nineteen guns."

Three years later, recalling Pearl Harbor, he did an about face concerning American preparedness and told his audience, "We had little or nothing in the way of an army, almost nothing in the way of a navy, and a war production machine that was barely beginning to expand."

This was not the only time Lewis's memory failed. During and after the war, for example, he urged an end to price controls, assuring listeners it would be "perfectly safe to remove all price ceilings and let prices simmer down to their own level." When controls were removed prices roared upward. Lewis did not refer to his earlier predictions. Instead, he blamed the Office of Price Administration for its price control system, calling OPA officials a "pack of wild-eyed theorists and statisticians" and "piddle-paddle, middle-talking fuzzy-duzzies."

He also hit out regularly at farmer and consumer cooperatives, calling them "so-called co-operatives" which he labeled "a new and highly threatening form of super big business." He said their

philosophy, fundamentally and underneath it all, is to tear down and destroy the profit system. . . . The people who are supporting, promoting and advancing this are the same left-wingers, ladies and gentlemen, who man the *Daily Worker*, the same who support *PM*,<sup>1</sup> the same people who were in the office of OPA during the war, the same people who throughout the United States, the length and breadth of it all the time, are playing government control, playing no profits, no advertising, no private enterprise, government financing, the people who want to take the American economic system out of the hands of private enterprise such as you and put it all into the hands of our government.

That was said in a speech to the National Association of Credit Men, a business group, in New York City. Six months later, talking to a group of farmers in Richmond, Virginia, he said, "Regardless of what . . . anybody . . . may tell you and regardless of what they try to prove, I am a firm believer and supporter of co-operative enterprise."

During the summer of 1946, OPA was on the ropes. While Congress was debating whether to continue the agency, Drew Pearson and Walter Winchell urged their listeners to write to their congressmen to save it. Lewis urged his listeners to do the opposite. A congressman who was a fan of Lewis said the

1. A liberal newspaper published in New York.

number of letters the commentator inspired against the OPA was "astronomical, bigger than Pearson's and Winchell's put together." The OPA was killed, and a top OPA official claimed that "Fulton Lewis, Jr., contributed more than any other single person to the obliteration of price control."

Lewis regarded his successful attacks upon the OPA as perhaps the most impressive achievement of his career, but he considered it just one battle in his continuing war against the New Deal, which he once called "a flim-flam structure of specious flap-doodle and preposterous mumbo-jumbo, honeycombed by termites, and operated by radical CIO-PAC, Communist-backed pseudo-economists."

He consistently attacked government economic controls and taxes, even in wartime. In 1942, when the Office of Defense Transportation set up gasoline rationing for commercial vehicles, with a central mailing office in Detroit, Lewis went on the air to say, "A bunch of clerks in Detroit are telling you how much gas you can get." When the "OPA clique" insisted on keeping wartime price ceilings on oil products during 1943, Lewis noted no difference between private profits and wartime taxes when he told his audience: "We still get this same old argument that it [an oil price increase] will cost the American people \$500 million a year, and at the same time Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau is trying to get Congress to cost them \$10.5 billion a year in additional taxes. We have crocodile tears about a half billion dollars, but we make a virtue of taking ten and a half billion away from the same people."

Lewis became the first radio commentator to give a person whose policy he attacked the chance to reply. Congressman Wright Patman (D.-Tex.), a supporter of food price subsidies, demanded radio time to reply to Lewis's attacks upon the food price subsidy program. The Mutual network turned Patman down, but Lewis, feisty as ever, put the Texas congressman on anyway. In fact, he turned his entire 15-minute program over to Patman one Monday evening, a sharp departure from radio practice.

During World War II, Lewis broke several major stories, all examples of military or governmental bungling involving contractors. Lewis learned that a German alien, Hans Rohl, had an army contract to prepare sites around Pearl Harbor for radar installation. The work was scheduled for completion in June 1941. Due to delays, it was not completed until late December 1941. The radar equipment was sitting around in crates when the Japanese attacked. Lewis's reports stirred a congressional investigation, and an army investigation, which bore out his findings.

Not as costly in lives, but much more expensive, was the Canol Project to bring Canadian oil to Alaska through a pipeline across several hundred miles of Arctic tundra and mountains, supplying high-octane gasoline for Alaska's defense. Lewis discovered that Rohl had the contract for much of that work also, and that it was given to him by the same Army Engineers colonel who had given him the radar site preparation contract for the airfields around Pearl Harbor—a Colonel Theodore Wyman, Jr. The information Lewis uncovered and passed along to his listeners in the form of news and scathing

commentary included a request by a construction superintendent for 2 or 3 trucks, a couple of bulldozers, 4 caterpillar tractors, and, if possible, 1 automobile. He received the following: 196 trucks, 46 bulldozers, 6 station wagons, 12 sedans, and no less than 236 tractors. This, in 1942, when the shortage of such equipment was critical. Three thousand Army Engineer troops were shipped in, but when a construction superintendent tried to borrow a transit, none could be found. The last thing to go into the ground in pipeline construction is pipe; it was the first material to arrive. The pipe lay on the ground rusting, getting in the way of other material being brought in. A locomotive disappeared on the job. Miles of road were built through muskeg, a layer of vegetation and earth on top of ice. When the brief summer arrived and the ice melted, much of the road sank. The cost of the project rose from an initial estimate of \$30 million to nearly \$200 million, and it did not provide one drop of gasoline for Alaska.

All this Fulton Lewis, Jr., presented to the American people. A Senate investigation followed.

Lewis also laid bare some of the deals in the Pan American Highway project, which lined contractors' pockets at the expense of the American taxpayer. For example, one company charged the government \$1,500 apiece for 100 old-fashioned privies. Lewis wryly commented on the air, "And that does not include the lilac bushes." He also told his audience about a contracting firm which rented twenty tractors from itself at a rate that repaid the cost of the tractor every eleven months and power units at a rate that repaid the initial cost every four months. The equipment was in such poor condition that construction workers had to cannibalize some trucks to make others run, but the cannibalized trucks, reduced to little more than rusting bare frames, were charged off at full rates. And so on and so on and so on.

"How do you like it?" Lewis demanded of his listeners, as he cataloged the boondoggles night after night. "It's your money." Again, a congressional investigation followed.

He also uncovered problems in American production of synthetic rubber to replace natural rubber from lands captured by the Japanese. Lewis discovered that the bureaucrat in charge of the synthetic rubber program knew nothing about synthetic rubber, that some war plants wasted millions of dollars producing nothing, while other plants that could produce synthetic rubber were denied permission to do so. The Lewis broadcasts were printed in the *Congressional Record*, not once, but twice. President Roosevelt appointed Bernard Baruch to investigate. The Baruch report gave full credit and praise to Fulton Lewis, Jr., and led to a speedup in the vital synthetic rubber program.

One of his less accepted exposés was that Vice-President Henry Wallace and Roosevelt aide Harry Hopkins were part of a conspiracy to send uranium to the Soviet Union, along with planes containing classified radar gear. It began with a tale told in 1949 by former U.S. Air Force Major George Racey Jordan, who said that five years earlier, in the midst of the war, he had seen uranium which a Russian commandant called "bomb powder" plus many documents secretly shipped to the Soviet Union from his base at Great Falls,



Montana. The papers, Jordan disclosed, were packed in black fiber suitcases tied with clothesline. Jordan related his story to Styles Bridges, Republican senator from New Hampshire, who passed it on to Lewis. The story had elements of derring-do, with Major Jordan forcing his way aboard a C-47 and finding himself face to face with two Russian guards brandishing guns. As the story was told by a biographer of Fulton Lewis, Jr., Jordan went to the door of the plane and spied a lone Yank sentry. He asked him in a whisper if he had had combat experience. Yes, the soldier said, in the South Pacific. "Okay, then," the major said. "I want you to cover me. If one of these guys aims a gun at me, I want you to let him have it. That's an order." Then Jordan ripped open some of those mysterious suitcases. They were full of valuable industrial and military information, alleged Jordan, including one folder marked "from Hiss." Another suitcase contained a letter with the White House letterhead and the cryptic notation "had a hell of a time getting these away from Groves" plus the initials of Harry Hopkins. (Army Lieutenant General Leslie R. Groves, who was in charge of the atomic bomb project, denied the story when he heard of it.) Jordan also found papers with words like "neutron . . . proton . . . fission . . . cyclotron," which Jordan did not understand, this being 1944, when the Manhattan Project was still top secret. Jordan also ripped the radar out of several C-47 transports.

Lewis's broadcasts caused a sensation. People who suspected a high-level Communist plot to sell out America praised Lewis; those who did not suspect a Communist plot criticized him. The House Committee on Un-American Affairs investigated. Edward R. Murrow and Elmer Davis ridiculed the story and *Life* said in an editorial, "The United States public was misled and insulted by a disgraceful abuse of the news." *Life* added, "Fulton Lewis, Jr., is just the man to do just that. We wouldn't like to share the responsibility for his radio existence which is borne by the Mutual network, the 314 stations which carry his broadcasts, and the 475 local sponsors who pay him handsome sums."

One later version of what actually happened was that 1,500 pounds of nonfissionable uranium derivative were sent to the Soviet Union, but neither Hopkins nor Wallace were involved in any attempt to give the Russians atom bomb secrets. As for the radar, the United States Army was officially training Russian officers in its use, doing so at the time that the Soviet Union and the United States were allies in the war against Germany.

After the war, Lewis turned his guns on domestic government projects in such areas as low-cost housing for veterans. His attacks on housing expediter Wilson Wyatt included hints that Wyatt favored a private corporation for some undisclosed reason. Wyatt threatened a libel suit. Lewis apologized and turned one evening's program over to Wyatt for a reply to many, many evenings of attacks. Lewis kept up his attacks upon public housing until President Truman cooled on Wyatt's project. Wyatt quit in disgust.

Lewis was sued for libel only once. The complainant got a judgment and a settlement of \$1.

During the height of his success, with his commentaries now beamed over some 370 stations and a newspaper column widely syndicated, Lewis averaged

1,100 letters and telegrams a week, with bouquets over brickbats by a ratio of 30 to 1. Forty percent of the letter writers were women. Many of their letters were mash notes. As with many broadcast newsmen, Lewis addressed himself to an audience of one. He pictured that person as a California housewife. When her husband got home from work, she would tell him what Fulton Lewis, Jr., had to say that day.

A congressman called him a "hatchet man." The War Writer's Board, whose members included Clifton Fadiman, Rex Stout, and Franklin P. Adams, called Lewis's broadcasts "a shockingly isolationist, intolerant and divisive program." At the same time, in 1943, he was awarded the \$1,000 prize established by Mrs. Alfred I. Du Pont and the Florida National Group of Banking Institutions for the year's best work as a radio commentator. A poll of members of Congress selected Lewis as the best network commentator on national news.

Lewis and a staff of a half dozen prepared the commentaries, which Lewis broadcast from either of two private studios. One was located in a lavishly appointed suite of offices he rented three blocks from the White House. The other was built on his estate, Placid Harbor, a 275-acre Maryland farm on the Patuxent River, sixty miles from Washington. Christmas broadcasts from here included his wife, son, and daughter. Scientific farming became a Lewis hobby, and he took great pleasure in his farm's bounteous harvests. The manor house burned down in 1947 while the family was away. Arson was suspected. Lewis replaced it with an even grander house. His pleasures included piano playing and cabinet making, both of which he did with skill. He also liked boating, deep-sea fishing, and home movies.

He served as organist and choir director of the new Methodist church in his district, a church which he not only helped to finance, but helped to design. He even helped lay the bricks! Lewis also took deep satisfaction in his church work with children.

He ended his relationship with this church unhappily. Lewis had embarked with his usual energy and enterprise on a scandal close to home: taverns in Maryland that employed and served minors, and slot machines in stores and lunchrooms near schools, all with the connivance of local and state politicians. He crusaded on his national radio hookup for months. Then one Sunday morning the pastor of his church rose to say that the problems of drink were not in the taverns alone. Drinking in the homes of church members must also be suppressed. Lewis took this as a personal attack and withdrew his family from membership in the church he had helped build with his own hands.

Lewis made a lot of money and lived sumptuously. He defended what he had with gusto. "God damn it," he was quoted as saying, "I love this God-damned country of ours. It's a religion with me, and I'm not going to stand by idly while a bunch of CIO-backed Communist left-wing crackpots try to wreck it." And on another occasion, "Our country is locked in a death struggle between two irreconcilable forces—those who want to choke the breath out of our economic system by a liberty-throttling, private, initiative-killing government control, and those who are fighting tooth and nail to

preserve the sacred principles of free enterprise that our Founding Fathers bequeathed to us. I'm in that fight."

He added, "I am an American, an American who can't sit by self-indulgently twiddling his thumbs while a bunch of drooly-mouthed fellow-traveling rats gnaw at the vitals of our government."

From the late thirties through the decades of the forties and fifties, the name of Fulton Lewis, Jr., was widely regarded as synonymous with political conservatism. He supported those in the right wing of the Republican party. In 1944 Lewis stood on the rostrum at the Republican National Convention, smoking a long cigar, with one arm around the shoulders of Herbert Hoover. One observer said Lewis looked blissful. Hoover, who disliked such familiarity, just looked uncomfortable. Lewis firmly supported Richard Nixon, starting with that first congressional campaign against Jerry Voorhees. Lewis backed Joseph McCarthy right down the line and did not hesitate to attack fellow journalists, those he called "the anti-anti-Communists, the apologists for Alger Hiss. Look at them — the *Washington Post*, the *New York Herald-Tribune*, *The New York Times*, the Alsops, Drew Pearson, Elmer Davis, Marquis Childs, Frank Edwards, Cecil Brown, John W. Vandercook . . . and all the rest of the so-called liberal columnists, whoever and wherever they are." Lewis said newsmen who favored Edward R. Murrow in the McCarthy-Murrow battle were guilty of "intellectual lynch law."

Lewis could tell his audience, "Now, ladies and gentlemen, I dislike very much indeed to become involved in any personalities with my reportorial colleagues, however sharply I may disagree with their views. But . . ." and then he would whale away.

Among the stylistic weapons he used to impale those he disagreed with were words and phrases that came to be known as "Lewisisms." These terms, used as modifiers, implied that what followed was fraudulent. Some Lewisisms: "purported," "so-called," "individual" (implying something less than human), "the same" (reintroduces the "individual"), "none other than" (it's that "individual" again). Example: "I listened with some curiosity last night to a gentleman who purports to be a great factual reporter . . . Mr. Elmer Davis . . . a sample of his so-called factual reporting. . . ."

Another rhetorical device was tongue-tripping: ". . . the Alger Hissky . . . ah . . . ah . . . ah . . . Alger Hiss case."

Like many other commentators, he made no attempt at balance. If he disliked a government program, he quoted critics of the program at length, allowing little or no time to its supporters. Lewis was a commentator, not a newscaster. However, he left listeners confused on occasion. Reviewing the results of a British election, he quoted those who heralded a Conservative "victory" and described what happened to the Labor party as a "resounding repudiation by the British people." The Labor party had actually won the election, though by a narrow margin.

In response to complaints to the network, Mutual contended that it offered a balance of opinions. Besides Fulton Lewis, Jr., Mutual carried Cecil Brown, William Hillman, George Washington Combs, and Bill Costello, among others, providing a wide spectrum of views. But more stations chose to

carry Lewis, and his audience was the biggest. He was able to use his influence to have Robert Hurleigh, news director of the Chicago *Tribune's* WGN, brought in as Mutual's Washington bureau chief. Hurleigh also substituted when Lewis left the microphone for a vacation.

Lewis used the tar brush with broad strokes. Someone in favor of the United Nations was "a member of the Russian appeasement group." Announcing an increase in FBI funds, he said: "That is one increase in government spending that very, very few American citizens worthy of the name are going to complain about. And if you find anybody who does complain, look him over carefully and suspiciously." As for wiretapping: "Why should any honest man be worried one way or the other about whether his wire is being tapped? . . . I have nothing to be ashamed of. I am not engaged or involved in any shady or illegal deal. Doesn't worry me in the slightest who listens in on my telephone calls. But if I were a part of an underground movement. . . ."

Another stylistic device was the multibarreled stream of adjectives to describe something or someone he didn't like: "a piddle-paddle, double-talking, CIO-Communist-backed, left-wing crackpot," or, "an inexperienced, impractical, theoretical college professor," or, "a Greenwich Village expert on art and culture with a capital C." (Fulton Lewis, Jr., disagreed with Edward R. Murrow on almost everything, including using adjectives.)

Nor did Lewis lack self-esteem. After attending a White House press conference with dozens of other newsmen, he might tell his radio listeners, "The President told me today. . . ." And when President Roosevelt did something which Lewis approved of—a relatively rare act—Lewis could say, "Well, ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States finally got around to doing something today that I have been insisting that he do for many weeks."

When television came along, Lewis did some commentaries in the new medium, but these did not have the old radio magic. In the late fifties and sixties, his popularity waned, in part because of his extreme right wing political pronouncements. On August 21, 1966, a heart attack stilled the "golden voice" of Fulton Lewis, Jr. His son, Fulton III, took over but did not meet with his father's success. The old magic was gone.

Lewis routinely began his workday with a noon conference with one or two staffers. They roughed out the evening broadcast. While the staff members dug out material, Lewis lunched with government officials or other likely news sources. In the afternoon, Lewis would telephone other politicians or officials. He put off writing his script until the clock hands demanded it, then typed the 185 lines, vocalizing as he went along. A stenographer retyped this rough draft so that Lewis could read from a clean copy. Sometimes the office worked under such pressure that Lewis would go into the studio with only the first part of the script in hand, while the stenographer feverishly typed the last part.

Lewis did not stint on costs for investigating a story. He would spend

more than half his income running his news operation. From time to time he hired old newspaper friends for special investigations, overpaying them. Occasionally an investigation would pull Lewis himself out of Washington. Then he would broadcast from a Mutual radio station studio in some other part of the country. Here is an example of his commentaries, one of a series of broadcasts delivered from Honolulu several months after World War II ended. It was broadcast December 14, 1945.

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, this is Fulton Lewis, Jr., speaking from the Mutual Studios in Honolulu, Hawaii. I'll have the news for you in just a moment.

\* \* \*

You will have difficulty, ladies and gentlemen, in believing what you'll hear in this broadcast tonight. I can only tell you that I've checked every angle that it was possible to check and every one of those checks has produced complete corroboration. It's the story of what happened to American citizens just like you when the black plague of military dictatorship under the then Colonel, now Brigadier-General Thomas H. Green took possession of this peaceful paradise that is . . . Hawaii.

If this were a single isolated case I would not be presenting it. It is not. It is merely a standardized sample of scores of similar cases which happened to other American citizens here, under the same identical circumstances in the same prisons at the hands of the same men in uniform of the United States military government of Hawaii. Don't think it couldn't have happened to you.

Included in this tragedy are some of the finest, and most cultured people that you could ever meet, once again American citizens . . . men and women with sons who were officers in the Army and Navy. Imagine yourself in this position as this story unfolds.

I have here at the microphone a clean-cut young man of twenty-seven years. His name is Carl Magnus Torsten Armfelt, and I have before me an affidavit that he has made and sworn to before a notary public. This is your sworn statement on oath, is it, Mr. Armfelt?

"It is, sir."

From here on, I'm reading, ladies and gentlemen, reading from this affidavit. Now, listen carefully.

"I was born in New York City on January the first, 1918. My father was a native of Finland, and my mother a native of Sweden. They came to the United States in 1916, located in New York and remained there until about the middle of 1918.

"At about three o'clock in the afternoon of December the eighth, 1941 (that's the day after the Pearl Harbor disaster), I was discharging the duties of chief of communications of the office of civilian defense in the city hall in Honolulu, having commenced work the previous day and having received special training for that kind of work strictly on a voluntary basis.

"My immediate superior said someone wished to see me. I went to his office and there were two men dressed in khaki uniforms and wearing badges. They said the *chief* desired to see me on a matter of

importance. They assured me that I would not be detained for more than an hour.

"I procured a substitute, and accompanied the officers out of the building immediately to an automobile that was waiting. The officers indicated that I was to get into the front seat which I did. One of them got into the rear seat and the other drove the car. The officer in the rear seat held a tommy gun pointed at me. I asked what it was all about, where they were taking me, but neither officer would reply.

"I was driven directly to the immigration station in Honolulu. I was ordered to get out of the car and directed to stand in line which was forming in front of the immigration station, approximately twenty-five people ahead of me. Others came in afterwards and stood behind me.

"The line kept moving toward a desk. In due course an army officer asked my name, which I gave. Whereupon he asked, 'German or Italian?' I replied, 'American.' He then said, 'Don't get funny, are you a German or Italian?' And I answered, 'I am an American.' He then ordered one of the guards to take me against the wall, put my hands against the wall while they searched me. They took everything I had in my pockets except my money and the officer at the desk said, 'Are you going to answer my question?' I said 'Yes, I am an American, and I would like to know what's going on.' Whereupon he ordered an army enlisted man to put down 'German' on the record."

This is your sworn statement, Mr. Armfelt?

"It is."

"Then I was pushed upstairs and a man in uniform shouted 'One prisoner coming up!' I was led by two guards to a cell door, was pushed in. The cell was dark and there were about a one hundred and seventy-five others in there. We were all kept for a period of approximately twelve days, although there were beds for only thirty. The rest of us slept on the floor without mattress, blankets, or other coverings. We were not provided with soap, towels, or razors, or facilities for taking a bath. We were not allowed to smoke. The wives of some brought cigarettes, which the guards confiscated and then sold back to us at three dollars a package.

"On about the tenth day, Captain X" and let me explain, ladies and gentlemen, that I am deleting the names in this affidavit although the original affidavit with the full names included will be turned over by me to the proper congressional committee . . . "On about the tenth day, Captain X told us to fall in line as our names were called. He said, 'What I read now goes for all of you.' Whereupon he read off what purported to be a warrant of arrest charging us with being enemy aliens.

"Another officer said we would be given a hearing and would be permitted to call four witnesses in our behalf. We were given a pencil and a piece of paper on which to write the names.

"At this time none of us had been permitted to bathe, shave, or change our clothes or other linen in the ten days since our arrest but we were taken downstairs, numbers hung around our necks, and we were photographed and fingerprinted in the manner of police stations.

"I asked if I might have a counsel of my own choice and at my

own expense at the hearing but was told that I could not and it would do me no good if counsel should appear.

"I then asked to be represented by military counsel, but Captain X replied that they did not have time.

"Sitting in a room at a table at my hearing was Captain Y presiding, a former advertising salesman with no legal experience. The rest of the court was made up of three civilians, Mr. A, a dentist, Mr. B, an undertaker, and Mr. C, whom I believed to be a former judge and retired army colonel.

"Captain Y announced that I was accused of being an enemy alien, and questioned me on where I was born, what my employment had been, also as to acquaintanceship with persons I did not know, and whose names I do not now recall.

"Then they called in the witnesses who appeared in my behalf. The first of these was Mr. . . . we'll call him Mr. D, a well-known attorney, and a former attorney-general of the territory of Hawaii. He was emphatic in his testimony as to my loyalty based on personal acquaintanceship over three years during which time he said, he'd had ample opportunity to familiarize himself with my character. He also presented to the court a passport issued to me in January, 1937, showing my American birth, also my honorable discharge from the United States Army, I having received honorable discharge at the expiration of my enlistment, endorsed character—excellent remarks, no time lost under AW 107. He also presented two of my army files certifying to commendable work in two special missions.

"My next witness was the chief engineer of a large charitable trust. He certified to my loyalty on the basis of his close association with me, and was as emphatic as Mr. D.

"My next witness was the consul of Sweden. The fourth witness I had called was the law partner of my first witness. I was informed that he'd addressed a note to the court stating that the only reason he did not appear was that his testimony was precisely the same as that of the first witness.

"In this hearing I was not confronted with any witness or accusation, nor with any specifications of anything that the board might have . . . heard against me. No witnesses were presented against me that I know of, and I was given no opportunity to cross-examine witnesses if there were any.

"On the twelfth day of June, 1942, I received from Captain A the advice that after careful consideration it had been found necessary to intern me for the duration of the war. My internment had been ordered on the date of March the nineteenth.

"About four days after my original hearing, I and the rest of the prisoners in the cell were transferred to Sand Island in Honolulu Harbor. When we arrived at the internment camp, we were ordered to disrobe completely, and our clothing was searched.

"This internment camp was under Captain F, a great hulk of a man, profane, and given to abusive language. At the time of disrobing, I was permitted to retain a wedding ring on my finger. When Captain F saw the ring later, he said, 'Take it off.' I said to him, 'Captain, this ring was placed on my finger at the time of my

marriage under the sanction of God, and I do not want to part with it.'

"He then said, 'Don't you understand an order?' I said I did but I felt that I should not part with the ring. Whereupon he said that if I did not take the ring off, he would. I replied that inasmuch as he was armed, I would not resist, and he yanked the ring from my finger. It was returned to me months afterwards.

"For approximately one month Captain F addressed us daily to the effect that as soon as he got orders, we would all be machine-gunned. That he had soldiers trained for that purpose.

"For approximately two months we were kept completely incommunicado. After that time we were permitted to write one page of not more than eighteen lines once a week to one person. But we were instructed to say nothing about internment camp, the conditions under which it was operated, the treatment we received, or the names of any persons connected with the camp or with the board before which our hearings had been held.

"After about two months of internment, I was loaded onto a ship with approximately two hundred others. Before getting on board the ship, we were taken to the immigration station. My name was called by an army sergeant and when I walked to the desk where he was seated, he shoved a paper in front of me and told me to sign it."

This is your statement, Mr. Armfelt, and you have given your oath as an American citizen that this is true.

"I have, every word of it is true, and it happened to many others."

All right, let me continue.

"I was about to read the paper when he again said, 'Sign it. You don't have to read it.' I told him that I was not in the habit of signing my name without knowing what I was signing, whereupon he went for a superior officer. The officer came in, and asked what an order was.

"I told him I was quite familiar with orders, having served in the Army for two years. Thereupon he took his gun and pointed it at me, and ordered me to sign. During the time the sergeant had left to call the superior officer I had occasion to read the paper and it contained the statement that I was a German alien.

"While the officer had his gun pointed at me insisting that I sign, I told him that I had read the paper and that it contained statements which were not true. That I was neither a German, an alien, nor an enemy. Still pointing the gun at me and uh . . . he insisted that I sign the paper, and indicated quite clearly that my refusal to do so would be reason enough for being shot. For that reason and that reason alone, I signed the paper." At this point, Mr. Armfelt, ladies and gentlemen, had been a prisoner two and a half months.

Now unfortunately, there is considerably more to this affidavit and there is not sufficient time left tonight to finish it, so I'm afraid the remainder of it will have to wait until tomorrow night.

Remember, this happened to a native born American citizen, and it happened to many, many more American citizens here in Honolulu under the military government of Colonel Thomas H. Green, now Brigadier-General Thomas H. Green.



It is *not* a story of Nazi Germany, nor a story of Fascist Italy. It's a story of things that happened to American citizens on American soil, supposedly under the protection of their *own* American flag.

Please don't fail, ladies and gentlemen, to listen to the rest of this story tomorrow night. You should know what has happened in these islands under the military dictatorship that was protected by absolute censorship. You owe it to yourself, you owe it to the nation, *to* know.

That's the top of the news as it looks from here.

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"A chronic liar." (President Franklin D. Delano Roosevelt)

"S.O.B. is an acronym for ABC." (President Harry Truman)

"A journalistic take and prostitute degenerate liar . . . twisted, perverted mentality." (Senator Joseph McCarthy, R. Wis.)

"This S.O.B. makes a heck of a business, a rent of money every fifteen or the price of news reporting." (Dwight Winchell, commentator)

"An ignorant liar, a pusillanimous liar, a peewee liar . . . a natural born liar, a liar during his childhood, a liar by profession, a liar for a living, a liar in the daytime, a congenital liar, a liar in the nighttime. It is remarkable how he can lie." (Senator Kenneth McKellar, D. Tenn.)

*“An ordinary, congenital, deliberate and malicious liar.”* (Senator Walter George, D.-Ga.)

*“Dishonest, unreliable, vicious character assassin.”* (Congressman Phillip Bennett, R.-Mo.)

*“A slippery, devious fellow, absolutely insensitive to the inhibitions of truth and ethics.”*  
(Westbrook Pegler, columnist)

*“He gathers slime, mud and slander from all parts of the earth and lets them ooze out through his radio broadcasts and through his daily contributions to a few newspapers which have not yet found him out.”* (Senator Theodore Bilbo, D.-Miss.)

*“Filthy brainchild conceived in ruthlessness.”*  
(Senator William Jenner, R.-Ind.)

*“Some men are evil for the sake of evil and the joy of evil. . . . His sadistic pleasure in crushing human hearts and in torturing his victims goes beyond the imagination of good men.”*

(Gerald L. K. Smith, well-known bigot)

## Drew Pearson

ANDREW PEARSON was born in Evanston, Illinois, December 13, 1897. His father, Paul, was a professor of elocution and English, a former Methodist minister, of Scottish, English, and German descent. His mother, Edna, who had some American Indian blood, was Jewish and came from pre-Revolutionary stock. She was a college graduate, a dentist's daughter. Both parents were raised in Kansas. After Drew's father joined the faculty at Swarthmore College, a Quaker school near Philadelphia, the family became Quakers. Drew Pearson, his younger brother, Leon, and two younger sisters, Barbara and Ellen, were brought up in a close, loving, educated family atmosphere in the pleasant town of Swarthmore. In his boyhood Drew founded

and edited the *Crum Creek Club News*—a hint of things to come. He nearly was expelled from school when he put a skunk gland in a shaving mug, which he stashed behind the classroom radiator. It was the first stink Drew Pearson made—also a hint of things to come.

Professor Paul Pearson established a Chautauqua circuit through small towns in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and Delaware, bringing lectures, theatrical plays, and other forms of cultural uplift. The whole family joined in the venture, which soon proved financially profitable. Years later, Drew would be followed as tent boy by another future writer, James Michener. When the Chautauqua circuit fell on lean days, President Herbert Hoover appointed Dr. Pearson, a Democrat, to be governor of the Virgin Islands.

Drew earned a scholarship to Phillips Exeter Academy, where he developed an interest in foreign affairs and an ambition to become a diplomat. He went on to Swarthmore College. One night, to celebrate a college team win, he climbed to the steeple of the firehouse and rang the fire bell. For that prank he was arrested. When World War I came and many of his classmates enlisted, Drew did not join them. Perhaps it was his involvement with Chautauqua that held him back, or perhaps his adherence to Quaker pacifism. He remained at Swarthmore, a dutiful son who didn't drink or smoke, a soccer player and swimmer, editor of the college weekly, fraternity president, Phi Beta Kappa key holder, lead in the senior play, and winner of the state oratorical contest. Many summers were spent working on the farms of cousins in Kansas. All in all, a youth to make the family proud.

After graduation, Drew Pearson joined a Quaker group working among World War I refugees in what is now Yugoslavia. He spent two years assisting farmers and villagers to reestablish their lives. Soon after arriving he was put in charge of a unit of a dozen Quakers, most of them women, all of them older than he was. He grew a mustache to add years and dignity. Pearson put in long hours dealing with local farmers, with bureaucrats, with medical problems, and with a thousand other matters. It was a heady experience for a young man. One new village he helped to build was temporarily named Pearsonavitz.

After returning home he taught industrial geography at the University of Pennsylvania briefly, a few years after Lowell Thomas taught public speaking at Princeton. Pearson still wanted to enter diplomatic service, but the low pay and high standards labeled this a career for rich men's sons. The Pearsons were moderately comfortable, but not wealthy. Drew Pearson, former college newspaper editor, covered the Washington Disarmament Conference for several college newspapers, then decided that if he could not be a diplomat he would make a living as a lecturer-journalist. Advertising himself as an experienced world traveler who "has visited all three continents" (meaning Europe, Asia and Africa), Pearson intended to send back reports while "encircling the globe by airplane, automobile, steamship and train; on foot, on horseback and on camel." A Chautauqua lecture agent booked him for a six-month speaking tour in Australia. Heading west by train, the nervy youth stopped off at city after city along the way to sell editors on taking his

dispatches on a free-lance basis. When he reached Seattle he tried unsuccessfully to get a berth on a ship heading across the Pacific. Pearson decided he had better look more like a sailor, so he got his chest tattooed—with his fraternity's Greek letters. Then he hung around the hiring hall with his shirt open until he was taken on as an ordinary seaman. He jumped ship in Yokohama, wandered around Japan writing feature stories for U.S. newspapers that had signed on, then went to Siberia, where he was arrested briefly for taking photographs. Next he went to Australia, where he both lectured and wrote stories. He visited India and went on to Europe. An American newspaper syndicate which had seen his copy wired him an offer of \$2,000 for interviews with "Europe's twelve greatest men," including Benito Mussolini. Pearson got the interviews. Feeling very good about himself, he treated himself to first-class passage home aboard the *Aquitania*. He had progressed from working as an ordinary seaman across the Pacific to traveling third class across the Indian Ocean to traveling first class across the Atlantic.

The trip had taken a year and half. He returned to settle down as a geography instructor at Columbia University. For a while.

When he was 24, Drew Pearson attended a dinner at the lavish Washington, D.C., mansion of Eleanor (Cissy) Patterson, heiress to the Chicago *Tribune* fortune, cousin of the *Tribune* publisher, Colonel Robert McCormick, and brother of Joseph Patterson, publisher of the New York *Daily News*. At the time, Mrs. Patterson was an attractive, fortyish divorcee with an eye for men, an enormously rich woman who had been married to a Polish count who, she claimed, raped her on her wedding night, chased other women, and demanded—and got—a fortune from her in exchange for a divorce. Cissy Patterson was a strong-willed, even imperious woman who had political clout in Washington. Her career and personal life were to intertwine with Drew Pearson's career and life for decades.

At that dinner young Pearson found himself seated next to Cissy's pretty 19-year-old daughter, Felicia. He was smitten. She was not. Cissy sent Pearson a telegram inviting him to vacation with them at her ranch near Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The telegram reached him in Columbus, Ohio, where he was wearily working his way across the country peddling syndicated features on commission to newspaper editors. He got an advance on a commission and took the train west. The headstrong young Countess Felicia remained unimpressed. To escape her mother and her suitor, she got on her cow pony, rode to the railroad station, and caught a train west. Pearson found another cow pony and rode after her, managing to climb aboard the same train to Salt Lake City. He failed to convince her to return. When they got off at Salt Lake City, Pearson proposed. Felicia rejected him, saying, "You bore me, and the more I see of you, the more bored I get." She strode away, leaving Drew Pearson flat-footed on the street. Pearson returned to the ranch. The voluptuous Felicia got herself a job as a restaurant dishwasher, but had to pull her soft hands out of the hot soapy water fast whenever the lustful proprietor came around. Unable to keep him away, Felicia quit, went to San Diego, and, after running into the same problem as a waitress in the Sailors Hash House, landed a job in a restaurant catering to a more genteel

clientele. Eventually she wrote a letter to Dear Drew, who again went after her. Broke and despondent, Felicia behaved more agreeably to her ardent swain. When she told him she was saving her tips to buy a portable typewriter so that she could write, Pearson bought her a typewriter. That did it. She accepted his next marriage proposal. A San Diego justice of the peace married them. Felicia was reunited with her mother, who herself soon took a second husband, Elmer Schlesinger, an ally of young Drew Pearson in bringing the Patterson women to the altar. Cissy explained her second marriage by saying, "Drew talked me into it."

Drew's marriage to Felicia did not go well. She had never known stability. Born in a castle, raised in a social whirl all over Europe, Felicia became a pawn in her parents' marital battles and was kidnaped by each of them. Cissy finally got her daughter back after President William Howard Taft personally appealed to Czar Nicholas of Russia, who ordered Felicia's father, Count Josef Gizycka, to give the child up. Bounced from convent to convent and school to school, she never established roots, unlike husband Drew, whose family roots ran deep and secure. They honeymooned on a round-the-world trip, a wedding gift from Cissy. Felicia was alternately frightened and bored as her husband poked around in out-of-the-way places looking for news stories. He got one important scoop, his eyewitness evidence—including photos—that Russian Communists were moving arms to Chinese Communists. The Pearsons came across a convoy of 200 cars carrying rifles. But this was the Roaring Twenties, and hardly anyone cared. Only the New York *American* printed the story, although this was the first solid evidence that the hated Bolsheviks were helping to build a guerrilla army in China.

After returning home, Pearson landed the job of foreign editor of the *United States Daily*, forerunner of *U.S. News & World Report*. He also became diplomatic correspondent for the *Baltimore Sun*, and he free-lanced for other newspapers. Pearson had connections, both through Cissy Patterson and through an uncle, also named Drew Pearson, who published *Iron Age* and other trade magazines. This conservative uncle later became so angry at his nephew's stories that he dropped the name Drew in favor of initials: A. C. Pearson.

The younger Drew Pearson attended the 1927 Geneva Disarmament Conference, where he uncovered the story that a stooge for several American shipbuilding companies was at the conference pretending to be a reporter and was spreading false stories in an effort to disrupt the conference. After all, disarmament holds little profit for makers of warships. Pearson's stories led to a Senate investigation.

A daughter, Ellen, was born to the Pearsons, but their marriage soon foundered. Felicia went to Reno without telling Drew, who learned about it in a State Department elevator when he glanced at a newspaper a girl held. The headline said: DREW PEARSON TO BE DIVORCED. Family history repeated itself when, instead of sharing custody of Ellen as agreed, Felicia fled with her to Europe. Drew went in pursuit, encouraged by Cissy. Felicia kept the baby and settled in Paris. When Ellen reached school age, she was

returned to Drew, who then raised her. Felicia wrote novels savaging her family. One of them, *The Flower of Smoke*, described the Drew Pearson character as a lousy lover. Drew and Cissy grew closer than ever in a mother-son relationship, particularly after her husband died, one week after she told him she wanted a divorce. Pearson also became a swinging bachelor and a drinker. Once he broke an arm falling downstairs.

To add to the general messiness in the young Quaker's life, Drew Pearson now became the Western Hemisphere director of the Irish Sweepstakes, a thoroughly illegal job which paid him \$30,000 a year and gave him a chauffeured Lincoln Continental. Some of the proceeds went to benefit Irish hospitals, but there was—and is—plenty left over to enrich the promoters, who had originally contacted Pearson because of his cool manner and his wide connections. Pearson oversaw the smuggling and sales of tickets and saw to it that some publicity was managed for this illegal enterprise, including a Hollywood movie, *The Winning Ticket*. By the end of the five years that Pearson managed it, Western Hemisphere Irish Sweepstakes ticket sales exceeded sales in Ireland. In fact, under Pearson's direction, sales of tickets in New York City alone exceeded sales in Ireland.

Curiously, this scandal never emerged into the light of day, even when scores of Pearson's enemies had the influence to make the most of the exposé. Pearson's fight to keep it hidden was hard, dirty, and successful. One enemy, F.D.R.'s son, James, came close until Pearson hinted on the air about an insurance scandal involving James Roosevelt. The two men reportedly met to talk, and that ended both the government probe of Pearson and Pearson's probe of James Roosevelt, according to Oliver Pilat's detailed account (*Drew Pearson: An Unauthorized Biography*).

Pearson continued to write diplomatic news. He founded and became the first president of the State Department Correspondents Association.

Meanwhile, William Randolph Hearst hired Cissy Patterson, one of the world's richest women, as editor of his Washington *Herald* at \$10,000 a year, probably less than she spent giving a single party. He wanted her to put some life into the paper, and indeed she did, beginning with a peppery front-page attack on Alice Roosevelt Longworth, then in contention as a leading Washington hostess. Circulation climbed steadily as one sharp campaign followed another.

Pearson became friends with another young newsman writing about world affairs. He was Robert S. Allen, Washington bureau chief of the *Christian Science Monitor*. Together they wrote a book, *Washington Merry-Go-Round*, in 1931, attacking Herbert Hoover as incompetent, the House of Representatives as inept, and Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon as the wheeler-dealer who was most responsible for the stock market crash. They also cut down the high jinks among Washington high society. The book sold a lot of copies and made quite a name—not always nice—for that man-about-town, Drew Pearson, even though the book was written anonymously. It took several months for Washingtonians to find out who the authors were. Although many familiar Washington figures were sliced up either by long verbal knives or sharp stilletos, some praise was accorded here and there by

*Washington Merry-Go-Round*. Two young men who were highly praised for their endeavors by the book's anonymous authors were journalists Bob Allen and Drew Pearson. Several important reputations were singed, and Drew Pearson made his first real enemies.

Allen was fired by the *Monitor*, eventually hired by International News Service, and then fired again because of pressure from a vengeful victim of Allen's pen. Pearson kept his jobs. The following year saw a sequel to the book, this one called *More Merry-Go-Round*, which included some titillating gossip about Cissy Patterson, among others. This time, Drew Pearson was fired from his jobs with the *United States Daily* and the *Baltimore Sun*. The pair also wrote *Nine Old Men* (a book critical of the Supreme Court), in 1936, shortly before F.D.R. proposed packing the Court with more judges. A year earlier Pearson and co-author Constantine Brown wrote *The American Diplomatic Game*, examining the moves toward war of the great powers, and predicted flatly, "War will come."

United Features Syndicate agreed to accept a daily newspaper column to be called "Washington Merry-Go-Round" from Pearson and Allen. The column began with 6 subscribers. It eventually climbed to 620. According to biographer Pilat, the energetic pair "picked up information where they found it, from society hostesses and ambassadors, cabinet members and clerks, newspapermen who passed along stories too sharp for insertion in their own papers, senators, even the President himself."

The pair worked the Nasty Guy/Nice Guy dodge that enables many detectives to extract information from suspects, but Allen and Pearson worked it on congressmen and administration officials. Allen would arrive first and badger the mark. He would bang his fist on the desk and shout demands for the information, leaving the official angry and shaken. The next day Drew Pearson would arrive, full of unctuous sympathy, and smooth the ruffled feathers. The official was frequently so grateful that he would pour out the wanted information.

Most of their targets were conservatives, but they did not hesitate to shoot at liberals, including the newly elected president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. An exposé reporting that Roosevelt planned to divert funds earmarked for public works to battleship construction brought a reprimand to Roosevelt from the new Democratic Congress. Roosevelt became so annoyed at Pearson and Allen that he hinted to General Douglas MacArthur that it would be appreciated if someone could get rid of that column.

MacArthur, a frequent target of "Washington Merry-Go-Round," sued for \$1,750,000. He later dropped the suit and even paid legal expenses to Pearson and Allen after Drew Pearson located MacArthur's lovely Eurasian mistress living in Washington, D.C., and secured letters the general had written to her. Actually, MacArthur was a divorced man at the time, but he caved in because he did not want a scandal to surface. The mistress was set up as the owner of a beauty parlor in the Midwest.

From the early days of the Roosevelt administration, Pearson got exclusives. F.D.R. fed some of them to the columnist despite his occasional annoyance with the column. One exclusive was that a black publisher, Robert



L. Vann, would be named special assistant to the attorney general, quite a shocker at a time when blacks in Washington, D.C., were so segregated they were not permitted to attend regular performances of "Green Pastures," which had a black cast.

Pearson was the first commentator to anticipate U.S. recognition of Soviet Russia.

He had a series of scoops on the profits of munitions makers. He broke stories on ruptures within the New Deal as ambitious men vied for power—for example, Harry Hopkins and Harold Ickes—and as liberals and conservatives pulled in different directions—for example, the conservative secretary of state, Cordell Hull, and the more moderate undersecretary of state, Sumner Welles. Hull was high up on the list of enemies of Drew Pearson, whose sniping at the State Department and at its secretary seemed like open warfare. State Department support for Latin American dictators irritated Pearson. Its evident sympathy for Franco's rebellion and, later, for Franco's Spain infuriated him. Hull, in turn, was infuriated by State Department leaks to Pearson and accused Sumner Welles of supplying them. Hull opened one staff meeting by asking acidly, "Is this for the room or for Drew Pearson?" Pearson gleefully reported to his readers that Hull asked the question.

Matters grew more serious in 1943 when Welles was forced to resign in the face of evidence of homosexuality. Angry, Pearson charged that Cordell Hull was dragging his heels on aid to wartime ally Soviet Russia and on the opening of the long-discussed Second Front because he "actually would like to see Russia bled white—and the Russians know it." Hull replied that these were "monstrous and diabolical falsehoods." Roosevelt felt obliged to call a press conference to brand Drew Pearson "a chronic liar." But at least one New Deal observer felt that the Pearson accusations against Hull helped to convince Roosevelt to commit himself to opening the Second Front.

Sumner Welles was among the leading members of the administration who frequently lunched with Pearson either at the exclusive Cosmos Club or the Presidential Room of the Mayflower Hotel. Harry Hopkins, Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, Agriculture Secretary and, later, Vice-President Henry Wallace and J. Edgar Hoover were others.

Roosevelt's attitude toward Pearson ranged from a wary use of this supporter of much Roosevelt domestic and foreign policy to outrage at some of the inside stuff Pearson reported, both accurate and inaccurate. One bit of trivia especially angered the president. In a column Pearson reported that Franklin Roosevelt liked Danish pastry for breakfast, the kind with cinnamon, sugar, and chopped nuts. F.D.R. exploded and went on for about 15 minutes about journalistic irresponsibility. Postmaster General Jim Farley told Pearson, "The President is certainly sore at you. You said he likes Danish pastry, and he doesn't at all." Pearson then soberly reported that F.D.R. may have called them "breakfast rolls," but he personally saw the bakery truck unloading something—"for the sake of accuracy we will call it a baked product of wheat flour with sugar on the top." And for the only time in his career, Pearson revealed his tipster: the Taylor Bakerette Shop.

Put it down to presidential tension!

Another Pearson broadcast revealed that the president's favorite song was "Home on the Range." A total error. This ditty was the favorite of the president's secretary. But the president's suffering ears were assailed by "Home on the Range" from band after band wherever he went thereafter. That was reason enough to call Drew Pearson "a chronic liar"!

It was also Drew Pearson who broke the story on his radio broadcast that in a military hospital General George S. Patton slapped a soldier who was suffering a nervous breakdown. General Eisenhower's press aides denied the story, but by the next day, American correspondents in Europe who had hushed it up admitted to their editors that it was true. Patton, in fact, had slapped two soldiers, each of whom had been in battle and had collapsed under the strain. A few newspapers editorially criticized Pearson for breaking the story. Most praised him and castigated military censorship. As for the two-fisted general, he was ordered by his boss, General Eisenhower, to apologize to each soldier and to the assembled officers of their divisions. Before the Pearson exposure, in a scene later made famous in the film, *Patton*, he stood before the ranks of thousands of G.I.s in Sicily and yelled out, "I just thought I'd stand up here and let you soldiers see if I'm as big an S.O.B. as you think I am."

The American troops roared out a cheer. Patton went on to drive his tanks through Germany in a bold gamble that may have shortened the war by months.

The Patton disclosure led Congressman Nat Patton of Texas, slightly tipsy, to wave a knife under Pearson's nose. It happened in the House restaurant. Another Texas congressman pulled his colleague away.

Pearson's relations with Harry Truman began cordially enough. Pearson had praised some of Truman's work as senator and suggested that he might make a good vice-president. After the man from Missouri was nominated, he encountered Pearson at a cocktail party and told him with such a serious face that the columnist didn't know whether he was kidding, "Drew, you're responsible for all this. You've got me into a lot of trouble."

Pearson's report of Inauguration Day for Roosevelt's fourth term changed that cordiality:

Mrs. Truman has a lot to learn about official receptions. The new Vice-President's wife looked like she was going to pass out after shaking only 1,000 hands in the early part of the day. She received the 3,000 guests with Mrs. Roosevelt at the front entrance to the White House, but couldn't keep the long line moving, complained that her right hand hurt. The First Lady handled the whole affair smoothly, seemed none the worse for wear.

The columnist meant no insult, but that was how Truman read it. He boiled over and cursed the man who wrote those things about Bess.

Several months later Pearson took it upon himself to carry to President Truman a petition signed by 30,000 G.I.s stationed in the Philippines, asking to go home after the war. When he walked into the president's office, the thick petition under his arm, Harry Truman chewed him out, particularly

about mentioning Truman's womenfolk in his reports. According to Truman's version of the conversation, which Pearson firmly denied, the president opened a drawer of his desk, pointed to a silver-handled revolver, and said, "Drew, the next time you write anything about my wife, I'm going to shoot you." The president also lit into the columnist for undermining foreign policy by Pearson's campaign to bring the troops home, since, Truman argued, the Russians were not demobilizing. As soon as he could manage it, Pearson dropped the petition on the president's desk and rushed away.

Relations were not helped by a series of Pearson disclosures that several Truman intimates got mink coats and deep freezers from lobbyists. Pearson particularly went after Truman crony John Maragon, a former bootblack, and military aide General Harry Vaughan, another Truman crony and former tea salesman. Maragon and Vaughan tried to get the Justice Department to prosecute Pearson for criminal libel. Vaughan managed to have Pearson's phone tapped, funneling the tapped information to Westbrook Pegler, who interpreted it to suit himself and published it in his column. When Argentina's Juan Peron awarded a medal to Vaughan, and Vaughan agreed to accept it in violation of precedent, Pearson told broadcast listeners that he intended to stand in front of the Argentine Embassy and take the names of everyone who showed up for the medal pinning. Pearson did so, in a heavy rain, admitting later, "I made something of an ass of myself."

After one Pearson attack upon Vaughan, Truman arose at a banquet to declare, "I want it distinctly understood that any S.O.B. who thinks he can cause any of these people to be discharged by me, by some smart aleck over the air or in the paper, has another think coming." Pearson tried to laugh it off that Sunday night by telling listeners that he would interpret S.O.B. to mean "Servants of Brotherhood." Truman wasn't having any. He replied to an adviser, "Some people should learn the alphabet. S.O.B. is as simple as ABC."

Congress eventually made Vaughan give the medal back. Maragon eventually went to jail for perjury. When he got out and nobody in Washington would give him a job, Maragon went to Drew Pearson, of all people, who found him a small job with a House committee.

One Pearson mistake was his conviction that Thomas Dewey would trounce Harry Truman at the polls. Most other observers were equally convinced, but Pearson sent out two "Washington Merry-Go-Round" columns about President Dewey's likely cabinet and the problems the new president would face. When it became obvious that Truman was reelected, an embarrassed Pearson rushed out a substitute column to replace the second column. It was too late to catch the first column. But some editors chose—perhaps maliciously—to publish the original second column, ignoring the substitute.

Truman was boiling mad when Pearson went after his secretary of defense, James V. Forrestal, alleging, among other misdeeds, a conflict of interest involving a German cartel. Walter Winchell predicted that President Truman was ready to drop Forrestal from the cabinet. Then Pearson went on

the air to say that Truman would have done just that if Winchell had not publicly forecast it. "Pearson and Winchell are too big for their breeches," Truman told a friend. "We are going to have a showdown as to who is running this country, me or them. And the showdown had better come now than later." Forrestal had been suffering suicidal depression and paranoia. He resigned his cabinet office and shortly after, jumped out of a hospital window. Westbrook Pegler was among those who accused Pearson of hounding Forrestal to his death. Feeling guilty, Pearson wrote that he had "an almost paralyzing urge" to join Forrestal.

It was Joe McCarthy's accusations that reestablished cordiality between Harry Truman and Drew Pearson. In 1953, after Truman had left office, Pearson phoned him with a tip that McCarthy intended to accuse the ex-president of stealing \$10,000 worth of filing cabinets. Truman greeted Pearson warmly and asked after his health. Of the McCarthy accusation, Truman said, "That is a damned lie. It's a lie out of whole cloth. I bought those filing cabinets and have the receipts to prove it. . . . McCarthy had better get his facts straight if he's going to tangle with me or he'll get his ass in a sling."

Two months later Truman and Pearson met face to face for the first time since Pearson had hurried away from that dressing down by Truman in 1945. The meeting was full of laughter and warmth and political gossip. The feud was over. But Pearson's feud with McCarthy was just beginning.

One of the biggest scoops of Pearson's career was the Igor Gouzenko spy network case. Gouzenko, a code clerk in the Soviet embassy in Canada, decided to defect to the West with his wife and child and with papers revealing a widespread Soviet espionage network in the United States and Canada, including names. Pearson got the story from a tipster, possibly the chief of British intelligence in the Western Hemisphere. At first he was greeted with skepticism and hate mail. Where he had been accused of being a Communist, he was now accused of being a Fascist and a poisoner of U.S.-Soviet relations. Six years later, in 1954, Pearson interviewed Gouzenko himself in a Canadian farmhouse before television cameras. Still fearing for his life, Gouzenko wore a hood over his face and head. During the interview Gouzenko remarked that many a Russian who would like to defect thinks twice about what his future life in the West might bring. "He continues on with the Soviets simply because he is afraid he will be humiliated there, and perhaps be put to work as a janitor or a doorman in front of a New York nightclub."

These anti-Communist revelations meant nothing to right-wing Pearson haters when the commentator took off after the junior senator from Wisconsin. As a Wisconsin circuit judge, Joseph McCarthy earned something of a reputation for granting super quickie divorces—in 5 minutes or less. He was a desk jockey during the war, although he built a later myth that he was "tail gunner Joe." Elected to the Senate, he made friends with newsmen and tried to generate publicity. He was generally regarded as a nice guy. He and Pearson aide Jack Anderson, both bachelors, double dated. McCarthy made little impression on Washington until he appeared before a club of

Republican women in West Virginia with the announcement that he had the names of 205 State Department employees who were members of the Communist party. The next day the number became 57. Pinned down, he produced only 3 names. By this time Pearson was looking into the accusations, finding nothing there. Pearson checked the three names—two had resigned from the State Department four years earlier and the third had never worked there. As McCarthy continued to expose “Reds,” Pearson continued to expose McCarthy. He pointed out that the senator had not paid state income taxes, had failed to disclose certain income, and had received some questionable campaign contributions. Pearson’s charges got a Senate investigation going under the direction of a Pearson enemy, Senator Millard Tydings of Maryland. The Tydings Report was highly critical of McCarthy. McCarthy lashed back at Tydings, eventually helping to defeat him at the polls. He generated ever bigger headlines in the newspapers with one accusation after another. Objective reporters found themselves trapped by their own objectivity. What McCarthy said was news, and it had to be reported straight, without the reporters’ opinions on how true it was. But Drew Pearson was not an objective reporter. His stock in trade was his opinions, and it was Drew Pearson’s opinion that Joe McCarthy was a fraud. He said so in column after broadcast after column. McCarthy went to the floor of the Senate for an hour to attack Pearson. His remarks in that place were privileged. Pearson could not sue. McCarthy called Pearson “an unprincipled, degenerate liar but with a tremendous audience both in the newspapers and on the airwaves—a man who has been able to sugarcoat his wares so well that he has been able to fool vast numbers of people with his fake piety and false loyalty.”

From his sanctuary, McCarthy called for a boycott of Adams Hats, which sponsored the Pearson broadcasts. The boycott worked. The company withdrew its sponsorship. McCarthy also printed and mailed—at taxpayers’ expense—his speeches attacking Pearson.

A bull of a man, McCarthy once attacked Pearson physically, although Pearson himself was quite husky. It happened in the cloakroom of the Sulgrave Club in Washington. The two men had been invited to a dinner and had exchanged some nasty words. Later, as Pearson was getting his coat, McCarthy came up to him. Reports of exactly what happened next differ. According to Pearson, McCarthy kneed him twice in the groin and punched him in the ear. McCarthy said he just slapped Pearson. Vice-President Richard M. Nixon stepped between the two men. Nixon later commented, “I never saw a man slapped so hard. If I hadn’t pulled McCarthy away he might have killed Pearson.”

Pearson kept after McCarthy. He reported that one of McCarthy’s young aides, G. David Schine, who had been drafted into the army, was getting favored treatment because of pressure applied by another McCarthy aide, Roy Cohn. Where did Pearson get this information? McCarthy wanted to know so badly that this became one of the reasons he began an investigation of the United States Army. That investigation, which included other matters beside leaks to newsmen, led to the televised Army-McCarthy hearings, which brought the downfall of Joe McCarthy.

Not long after the Sulgrave Club skirmish, Charles Patrick Clark, a lobbyist for the government of Spain, saw Pearson in a hotel lobby. Clark had been accused by Pearson of bribing a senator. Still furious, he decked the columnist. A judge fined Clark \$25. Almost immediately he received more than \$400 in small gifts, and the word went around that the biggest bargain in town was a chance to slug Drew Pearson for twenty-five dollars.

The Maragon-Vaughan disclosures of the Truman administration gave way to the Adams-Goldfine disclosures of the Eisenhower administration. Deep freezers were replaced by vicuna coats. Presidential assistant Sherman Adams was accused of a severe conflict of interest in helping Bernard Goldfine, a New England textile manufacturer, out of some troubles with the Federal Trade Commission over mislabeling wool products. Goldfine reportedly gave Adams a vicuna coat and other gifts, including an expensive Oriental rug. Goldfine gave out other vicuna coats also. One was said to have gone to President Eisenhower. Sherman Adams was also involved in other dealings between business and government, including a Department of Commerce decision on an airline route, with Adams intervening on behalf of Northwest Airlines, and the Dixon-Yates contract, with Adams intervening with the Securities and Exchange Commission to hold up hearings on what might have been a federal public power scandal "worse than Teapot Dome."

Drew Pearson was on Adams's neck frequently, informing his readers and listeners of the unfolding scandals — which Pearson himself was doing his best to unfold. Adams resigned from office.

During Lyndon Johnson's administration, Pearson's principal target for conflict-of-interest accusation was not a presidential aide, but one of Washington's most respected and influential senators, Thomas J. Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut. Pearson charged that Dodd got money from Julius Klein, a lobbyist for West German industrialists. Pearson was aided by photostats of files taken from Dodd's office by several disgruntled employees. The files contained even more damaging material, which Pearson dripped out daily. Dodd fought back as hard as he could, accusing Pearson of going after him because of Dodd's anti-Communist efforts. But his protests were in vain. The Senate by a vote of 92 to 5 censured Tom Dodd for misusing campaign and testimonial funds. Dodd served out the remainder of his term broken in spirit. He was defeated for reelection in 1970 and died the following year.

Almost all of Pearson's victims were conservative. One who was not was Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Democrat from Manhattan's Harlem district. Pearson accused Powell of living high on the hog at taxpayers' expense while giving little work in return. He said Powell often went fishing and holidaying on the island of Bimini with his two secretaries, while his wife was living in Puerto Rico on the government payroll. Following these exposés, Adam Clayton Powell became the only congressman in history to be expelled from the House of Representatives.

Pearson exposés sent four congressmen to jail: Kentucky's Andrew May, New Jersey's J. Parnell Thomas, Ohio's Walter Brehm, and California's Ernest Bramblett, all for financial wheeling and dealing. The governor of Louisiana, Richard Leche, went to jail, as did the president of Louisiana

State University. Also convicted were the commissioner of Internal Revenue, Joseph Nunan, and many lesser fry.

Senator John Bankhead (D.-Ala.) had a fatal heart attack after he read a Pearson column accusing him of secretly buying cotton futures on the commodity market while he was making speeches opposing price controls for cotton. Niece Tallulah and the rest of the family blamed Pearson for the senator's demise.

Other highlights in Drew Pearson's career: he was the first to propose a black journalist for membership in the National Press Club, and it was he who demanded that Benito Mussolini be kicked out of that club. He won on both counts.

Ten years after his divorce, Drew Pearson took a second wife, Luvie Abell, a Washington socialite whom he had known for years as the wife of an old friend, George Abell. In a repetition of the custody battles for Felicia as a child and Ellen as a child, there was now a bitter custody battle for Luvie's son, Tyler. His father kidnapped him to the English Channel island of Sark, where Pearson and his new wife found him and kidnapped him back to the United States. The Pearsons secured custody, but Abell threatened his old buddy's life, and Pearson applied for a gun permit, then withdrew it when someone pointed out that Abell didn't own a gun. However, a part-time bodyguard was hired for the child. Eventually, the matter simmered down. In 1948 Drew Pearson would be named Father of the Year.

Cissy Patterson was pleased that Drew had remarried. She hired Luvie to write movie reviews for two newspapers she now owned, the *Times* and the *Herald*, which she combined. Drew's brother, Leon, also joined the staff. To understand the depth of Cissy's later fury against Drew Pearson, one must recognize the affection she held for him. In many ways he was her son and the head of her immediate family. He was also the loving father of her only grandchild, Ellen. He was also a strong and sophisticated man with more than a touch of daring. She liked that immensely.

Cissy Patterson was being pulled to the left by Pearson, who was an admirer of F.D.R. and generally a supporter of New Deal proposals, and pulled to the right by those two Roosevelt haters, her beloved brother Joe and her cousin Robert McCormick, publishers respectively of the *New York Daily News* and the *Chicago Tribune*. She was pulled toward an internationalist position by Pearson and toward isolationism by her British-hating brother and cousin. She somewhat reluctantly let Pearson talk her into supporting Roosevelt for a third term.

But the strain was telling. She preferred what her brother and cousin were writing in their newspapers. Cissy Patterson was not a woman to let any man lead her by the nose. She began editing paragraphs out of the "Washington Merry-Go-Round." She killed a few columns entirely and buried others in the classified ads. She even sniped at Pearson and Allen, her "headache boys," in editorials. Genuinely fond of his daughter's flamboyant grandmother, Pearson stayed cool. One month before Pearl Harbor, with Cissy and her newspapers now furiously isolationist, Pearson gave his annual party for her. They were friendly to one another. But it was for the last time.

Pearson might forgive Cissy's editing, but Bob Allen was less charitable.

He wanted a dependable Washington outlet for the column and, meeting the publisher of the *Washington Post* at a conference, said the column might be available if the *Times-Herald* failed to renew the contract on the very day for signing. The *Post* wanted the column and offered a premium rate of \$100 a week for it. Pearson went along. Cissy Patterson was beside herself with rage when she learned that the column was being switched to the rival *Post*. Publishers dropped columnists; columnists did not drop publishers. Drew, she was convinced, had publicly stabbed her in the back, humiliated her, and scorned her newspapers. And hell hath no fury like . . .

Cissy Patterson now announced that she was firing Drew Pearson because he was irresponsible. For good measure, she fired his wife, Luvie, as movie critic and his brother, Leon, as Latin American specialist. To stick the needle in further, she hired Luvie's former husband, George Abell, who now hated Drew Pearson, to write a gossip column.

Drew Pearson tried to buy a full page ad in a Washington newspaper to explain that Cissy Patterson had not fired him, but no publisher would take the ad ("Publishers have to stand together," ingenuously explained the publisher of the *Evening Star*), but the *News* carried the Pearson message as a news story. Now the fat was in the fire.

Cissy Patterson stopped at nothing to damn Drew Pearson. Editorial after editorial poured poison on his head. "This racket made him rich," she told her readers. "It put in his pocket money beyond his wildest dreams. More than that it satisfied his natural and overpowering lust for lying, intrigue, character assassination and spying. All of which, next to money, are the aims of his life. We will say for him that he played his part with obnoxious art and success." And so forth.

One *Times-Herald* report began: "This is the story of the Quaker Oat who became a Sour Mash in Washington. We present for your inspection one of the weirdest specimens of humanity since Nemo, the Turtle Boy. People, on seeing him for the first time, often make wagers on which way he is facing . . . because he has two faces."

Cissy tried to get the Department of Justice to indict Drew for criminal libel. She told *Who's Who in America* that her former son-in-law had lied about his biography. She fed news stories about him to his enemies in Congress, some of which got out to the public under congressional franking privileges. In other words, the taxpayer paid for Cissy Patterson's hate campaign against the man she once thought of as her son.

She even had fun with his Quaker speech in the following conversation allegedly overheard between Leon Pearson and his brother:

*Drew*: "Where in hell has thee been all day, Leon?"

*Leon*: "Thee knows very well where I have been, Drew. Thee sent me, didn't thee?"

*Drew*: "Thee is right, Leon. Did thee get the dirt? Thank thee, Leon."

Drew Pearson responded to this vicious barrage with forbearance. He did not lash back. He said little.

He once told his 15-year-old daughter, "I may have to sue thy grandmother, Ellen."



"That's just exactly what grandmother wants," Ellen replied. "Don't give her that satisfaction."

Pearson did not sue.

Cissy Patterson's vitriol was poured on President Roosevelt also, as well as members of the New Deal. For example, a picture of Americans killed in war carried a caption hinting that Roosevelt was responsible. Many editors quit because they could not stomach stuff like this.

As she grew older she grew more venomous. She drank too much. She had lost Felicia and now she was losing her granddaughter. She and old friends avoided each other. The gay parties of her youth in her Dupont Circle mansion were a dimming memory. When she died in 1948 her newspapers were merged into the *Washington Post*.

Drew Pearson attended the funeral of the woman who used to call him her "headache boy." His column the next day said, in part:

A great lady died the other day—a lady who had caused me much happiness and much pain.

She was my ex-mother-in-law, Eleanor Patterson, who used to write about me in such scathing terms that even the very frank *Time* magazine had to interpret them with dots and dashes. And although I never answered her, I want to write about her now, because she represented a great newspaper cycle which may be coming to an end. . . .

I shall miss the personal journalism of my ex-mother-in-law, even though I did not agree with it. I shall miss her diatribes against me. . . .

And so the house on Dupont Circle now goes to the Red Cross, and a great lady, representing a great age of journalism, will be troubled by "headaches" no more.

Pearson suspected that Cissy Patterson had not died of natural causes, a suspicion that deepened when her financial manager was killed a few weeks later by falling from a hotel window and her former social secretary died about the same time from an overdose of sleeping pills. Hinting that Cissy may have been killed before she could complete a new will on a \$17 million estate, Drew Pearson stirred up a ruckus and started an investigation. Nothing was proved, and the matter was dropped.

All his life Drew Pearson stirred up ruckuses. Accepting an invitation to join a "University of Chicago Round Table" broadcast in 1939, Pearson remarked on that scholarly program that Herbert Hoover boosters were criss-crossing the states of the South, trying to "buy up" delegates to the 1940 Republican convention. Up roar! When a University of Chicago vice-president went on the air the following week to apologize for what Pearson had said, Pearson threatened to sue.

"Washington Merry-Go-Round" wanted a regular radio outlet. After a broadcast in Cincinnati, Pearson and Allen went on the Blue network with a half-hour Sunday evening commentary. Allen had a friendly, warm, measured delivery. Pearson came across with more pressure and at greater speed. They took turns reading items. Each program ended with "My prediction of things to come . . .," a redundantly titled feature with an

accuracy sponsors claimed averaged 77 percent. But a staff member said that figure could be kept high by predicting that Monday would follow the 6 p.m. Sunday broadcast. Pearson was often very, very right. More than a year before Sputnik, he said, "U.S. experts admit Russia will launch an earth satellite ahead of us—probably in 1957."

On the other hand, he predicted that John L. Lewis would support Roosevelt in 1940, that Marshal Tito would be assassinated in 1947, that Eisenhower would not seek a second term. And he disclosed that American G.I.s had sired 14,000 Japanese bastards—after American troops had been in Japan for only six months!

A survey of Washington correspondents in 1944 voted Drew Pearson "the Washington correspondent who exerts through his writings the greatest influence on the nation." Pearson got fifty-six votes, compared with Walter Lippmann's twenty-eight. In fact, Pearson got more than one-third of all the votes cast. He came in second, after Arthur Krock of the *New York Times*, as "the Washington correspondent who exerts through his writings the greatest influence on *Washington*." But, in "reliability, fairness, and ability to analyze the news," Pearson tied for fifteenth place with a miserable two votes.

At first, Pearson wrote his own broadcast copy. Later, the broadcasts were written by a Pearson staff member, William Neel, who also wrote a weekly newsletter, *Personal from Pearson*, for clients willing to pay for additional inside-Washington news. Neel later had added to his duties the job of managing Pearson's farms!

Like Walter Winchell, who also broadcast over NBC on Sunday evenings, Pearson and Allen had the advantage of going on the air some 18 hours after most of the nation's presses had stopped rolling. With few liberal commentators and columnists around, Pearson, Allen, and Winchell had pipelines to such important liberal and internationalist sources as the president, much of the New Deal, and British intelligence. Pearson and Winchell found themselves allies, usually supporting the same points of view. That lasted until after World War II, when Winchell veered sharply to the right, attacked Harry Truman, and swung behind Joe McCarthy.

To pump up the importance of what Pearson and Allen were saying, the announcer reported the number of newspapers subscribing to the "Washington Merry-Go-Round." To pump up the number of subscribers, Pearson and Allen offered the column to new publishers at a cut rate.

To further pump up the importance of what they were saying, they used catch phrases which hinted at mystery. Among Pearson's favorites:

"It hasn't leaked out yet, but . . ."

"The State Department is trying to hush it up, but . . ."

"This will be denied, but . . ."

"Only those close to Prime Minister Churchill know it, but . . ."

Sometimes Pearson even listed all the stories he had recently broken, but which he boasted were denied, giving readers or listeners the impression that officials denying the stories were covering something up. No matter what the officials said, they appeared guilty. Little wonder Pearson's list of enemies grew!

During World War II Pearson carried on alone. He urged listeners to send him news tips. G.I.s were among thousands of contributors, and Drew Pearson broke many a scandal. He reported that a dozen carloads of leather jackets were intentionally torn up the back at the Philadelphia Navy Yard so they could be marked condemned, then resold. He reported that 400 American paratroopers were shot down over Sicily—by American and British warships. Some military men in Washington discussed ways to shut Pearson up, citing the need of military secrecy. General George C. Marshall, the chief of staff, ignored them. He publicly praised the columnist and commentator as “one of my best inspectors-general.”

Pearson disclosed some secret cables sent by Winston Churchill. The British prime minister exploded. F.D.R. explained to Churchill that twenty-one top secret copies had been made, and that he would have them back in two hours. Within one hour, *twenty-six copies* were returned. British intelligence eventually discovered the Pearson leak. It came from an Indian military attaché. He was transferred to the front lines, where he was killed in action.

Military spies shadowed Pearson and bugged his telephones. Pearson learned to talk to contacts in a kind of code, arranging to meet them later. Sometimes he would take the number, then call the tipster back on a pay telephone.

On one broadcast, Pearson accused a congressman from Kentucky, Andrew J. May, of accepting bribes from war contractors. May went to jail. Another broadcast reported that Lord Beaverbrook, Churchill's personal ambassador to Roosevelt, had given an emerald necklace worth \$140,000 to the wife of Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's closest adviser. Hopkins heatedly denied that his wife had received any emeralds. The next Sunday Drew Pearson apologized. It wasn't emeralds, he said. It was a diamond necklace, still worth \$140,000.

NBC-Blue Network president Mark Woods, alarmed by the frequent attacks upon influential politicians by two of his network's commentators, Pearson and Walter Winchell, sent them a memo in 1953 directing them not to make “derogatory or insulting remarks” about any member of Congress “or any other person holding any public office.” The memo, with its surface appeal to wartime patriotism, went considerably further than the National Association of Broadcasters' code. Pearson and Winchell paid no attention.

Pearson and Allen unsuccessfully challenged the Hearst corporation license for radio station WBAL in Baltimore, trying to take over the frequency themselves. The Federal Communications Commission held hearings and voted narrowly in favor of the Hearst ownership—3 to 2, with 2 abstentions.

Sponsors included Adams Hats, Lee Hats, Carter's Little Liver Pills, Serutan, the coffee growers of Brazil, and the Retail Clerks Union. Adams had sponsored Pearson for years until McCarthy's demand for a boycott of the sponsor caused Adams Hats executives to cover their heads and depart in fear. For a time the broadcasts were sustaining. Carter's Pills dropped Pearson in 1953 and ABC refused to carry him unsponsored, even though

Pearson volunteered to go unpaid until a new sponsor could be found. Pearson hinted around that a conservative conspiracy was trying to drive liberal commentators off the air. He decided to set up his own broadcasting company to syndicate his commentaries on film and audio tape to interested local television and radio stations and local sponsors. He signed up about 200 stations, at prices ranging from \$7 to \$100 per program, depending in part upon market size. The arrangement followed the pattern established by his disliked radio and newspaper rival, Fulton Lewis, Jr.

One potential sponsor was International Latex. In his diary, Drew Pearson noted the following:

Spent the day at Dover, Delaware, with Abe Spanel of International Latex trying to decide whether or not I should go on the air for him. I like everything about him except the prospect of advertising baby pants and women's girdles. I asked Abe if the commercials would read pantie-girdles, and he said that they would. He promised, however, that they would not use such commercials as: "Don't hold a leaking baby on your lap."

Fortunately for Pearson's blood pressure, Adams Hats signed on as sponsor instead.

When television arrived, Pearson tried a weekly 15-minute commentary consisting of Pearson talking to the camera, as he did to the microphone. The program was dull. He also did a series of interviews, starting with Harry Truman, who by this time had forgotten what an S.O.B. he thought Pearson was. Pearson also produced and narrated a few television documentaries on subjects he cared about, such as the Quakers and the nation of Israel. His diary entry for July 8, 1952, read: "Staged 'Pearson's Parade,' my first TV show covering the [Republican] convention. It was a dubious success. My only consolation is that when it comes to flops, the reverberations from MacArthur's speech last night make him a worse flop."

After the 1952 election his regular television program ended, although he continued occasional single broadcasts.

On November 27, 1953, he wrote in his diary:

I now learn that the plane which crashed at Fort Bragg during the paratroop maneuvers was manufactured by Kaiser, not Fairchild. Last Sunday I chided Secretary of Defense Wilson for accepting entertainment from Fairchild when he was switching airplane orders from Kaiser to Fairchild. If I now go on the air and correct this, it would look to Henry Kaiser as if I were retaliating for his aloofness in buying my television film. I ought to stay away from selling.

He gave up television entirely in the summer of 1956, admitting he had been a flop in it. Two years later, Mutual offered to take Pearson back on network radio with a live daily 5-minute broadcast, but he turned the offer down. "I can't walk out on the stations which have supported me for so long a time on tape."

Pearson was sued many times, but he ended up paying only one judgment, \$40,000 to a former friend, Norman Littell, a onetime government official who later befriended Pearson rival Westbrook Pegler. Pearson accused Littell of acting as a propagandist for the Dutch government, which was then trying to hang onto Indonesia. Littell sued for \$300,000. While the suit was pending, Pearson accused Littell in a broadcast of aiding Polish Communists wanted for questioning on an espionage matter. Littell sued for another \$300,000. To protect himself, Drew Pearson had evidence against Littell *planted* in the Department of Justice. Then he broke the news of the evidence.

Littell fought back. He found an ex-reporter for Pearson who knew about the frame-up. The reporter was mad at Pearson for dropping him in an economy move. He would testify. When Pearson learned about this, he quickly offered the reporter a higher salary and buried him in a job in Nevada. Nevertheless, a jury awarded Littell \$50,000 in damages. Pearson settled for \$40,000 and dropped plans to appeal.

A suit Pearson really hated to lose was one he brought himself against C. W. Snedden, editor of the Fairbanks, Alaska, *Miner*, for calling him "the garbage man of journalism." Pearson would have been better off forgetting a remark printed in a newspaper of less than 10,000 circulation, but he went ahead with his law suit for \$176,000. Pearson lost, appealed, and lost again. And by this time the whole nation knew about it.

Temperamentally unable to remain outside the political arena as a totally objective journalist must, Pearson hounded politicians he didn't like. One of them was Senator Millard Tydings, Democrat from Maryland, who had angered Pearson by opposing the reforms made by the governor of the Virgin Islands, Dr. Paul Pearson, his father. Son Drew went for Tydings' throat. When Tydings ran for reelection in 1938 Pearson bought one Maryland newspaper and provided a dozen others with a free column of anti-Tydings material. Pearson also raised money for Tydings' opponent and somehow managed to become the dispenser of federal patronage to Maryland Democrats. Tydings won reelection easily.

The two men were bitter personal enemies. Tydings, for example, spread the story that Pearson had tried to avoid letting the Internal Revenue Service know his real income by squirreling away stacks of \$1,000 bills in a safe deposit box. It is ironic that Tydings was finally beaten not by Pearson but by a powerful Pearson enemy, Senator Joseph McCarthy, who led the drive to defeat Tydings for reelection.

Dr. Pearson returned to the United States and completed the nation's first integrated public housing project — in Chicago — before he died in 1938.

With the coming of war, Robert Allen left the column and the broadcast to join the army. Colonel Robert S. Allen lost his right arm in battle, fighting under Patton in Europe. He never returned to the "Washington Merry-Go-Round." Leon Pearson, who was a part-time legman for his big brother, also quit. After Cissy fired him, Leon found a job as a wire service reporter because he couldn't raise his family on the salary Drew offered. Besides, he felt that his brother was making him do some unethical things to get scoops.

"Washington Merry-Go-Round" was transferred to the Bell-McClure syndicate. Pearson later became a major owner of the syndicate. Though his own income approached \$500,000 a year, Pearson paid skimpy wages to the reporters and secretaries who helped him produce his column and broadcasts. An effort to unionize the staff was rebuffed by the usually pro-union Pearson. He demanded total personal loyalty from staffers, including their availability at any time he chose to phone them.

He could be harsh or pleasant. He was paternalistic, but he also had a reputation as a swinger. Rumors circulated of affairs with young women on the staff and with other women attracted to the handsome, cultured, and famous journalist.

The Pearson operation was housed in the sedate three-story Georgetown mansion where he lived and where he kept his extensive — and notorious — files under lock and key. A United Press Teletype and several telephones brought in the day's news.

The living quarters had a separate telephone, which was usually answered by the Pearsons' black butler, Melvin Beal, saying, "Mrs. Pearson's residence." Drew Pearson sometimes answered the phone, imitating Beal's voice to avoid talking to people who didn't interest him. If the call turned out to be interesting, Pearson would laugh and switch in midconversation to his own voice.

Pearson would be up at 6:30 a.m. in bathrobe and slippers to type a first draft of the column. After a coffeeless breakfast of orange juice, milk, and eggs, he might do some more work on the column, read the morning papers, and go through the mail. By late morning he would be driving through Washington, D.C., in his car to talk to contacts. Lunch at an exclusive club would be used for more conversation. Then he would return to his office where he would work with his black cat, Cinder, curled up on his desk for a snooze. Pearson was once chairman of National Cat Week.

For relaxation there was a 450-acre working farm in Maryland along the Potomac, with a large mansion on a bluff overlooking the river. During the war, with a severe shortage of help, Pearson drafted his own reporters to help with the harvest. He also arranged to have German POWs from a nearby camp help with the farm chores for 80¢ daily.

It may be hard to believe, but Pearson earned up to \$150,000 a year from selling *manure!* It came from his herd of dairy cows. It was put into bags labeled:

PEARSON'S BEST MANURE  
BETTER THAN THE COLUMN  
ALL COW, NO BULL

The manure was even sold as souvenirs in a Washington, D.C., department store, along with bags of mud from the property of "the Best Muckraker in the U.S." Drew Pearson not only knew how to hold on to a buck, he also was an expert at turning one! His interest in farm affairs was so great that the farm manager once had to call him in California to decide whether an ailing cow should be killed.

Farm animals were named after political figures. Harry S. Truman was a fine Holstein bull. A fat Hampshire boar was named Edward R. Stettinius, after F.D.R.'s last secretary of state. The pig pen was known as the State Department.

Despite his miserliness on salaries, Drew Pearson was not without generosity of spirit and he spent freely on travel and maintaining his news contacts. During the postwar years he conceived the notion of a "Friendship Train" to carry gifts of food directly from the people of the United States to the hungry people of Europe. Under the Marshall Plan, the United States was shipping great quantities of food to Europe, but the food was distributed quietly, without much reference to its givers. After reading about street parades which greeted the arrival of a single Soviet cargo of wheat in Marseilles, Pearson felt this oversight needed correction. He personally contributed \$10,000 to the project and organized a committee to oversee the Friendship Train. What began as a single train leaving Los Angeles on November 5, 1947, under klieg lights, became ten trains, 275 boxcars full, by the time they reached New York City. Total value: \$40 million worth of food.

The Friendship Train was split into fourteen trains when it moved through Europe distributing the gifts of food. Pearson arranged to have one journalist on each train. They reported back home and took an active part in the speech making and food distribution. Pearson himself went to France to take part. The trip was a huge success and was helped rather than hindered by the dog-in-the-manger criticism of the Communist press.

Pearson also came up with the idea of floating balloons bearing pro-American leaflets across the Iron Curtain. With sponsorship from the Crusade for Freedom, more than 200 million leaflets were sent over Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary.

His anti-Communist activities were forgotten when he interviewed Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito, first in Yugoslavia and then in New York. Pearson's sympathetic reports on Tito led Congressman Michael Feighan (D.-Ohio) to accuse Pearson of being a paid agent of Communist Yugoslavia. Feighan demanded that Pearson be denied entry to the House Press Gallery. At Pearson's request, an investigation followed and the Feighan charges were declared to have no basis in fact.

He attacked the Ku Klux Klan so often that Klansmen invited him—indeed, dared him—to attend a Konklave on Stone Mountain, Georgia, to deliver a broadcast. Pearson accepted. So much publicity resulted that the Klan called it off. But not Drew Pearson. He broadcast from the steps of the Georgia State Capitol. A courageous governor, Ellis Arnall, introduced him and stood beside him as Pearson spoke to a crowd that hooted and jeered when he called for racial tolerance.

Pearson lectured widely, at fees ranging from \$50 to a civil rights group to \$1,000 to address a business audience.

And he wrote the plot for a comic strip, "Hap Hopper," a crusading Washington journalist, just like . . . well, er . . . Drew Pearson.

Pearson collaborated with his heir-apparent, Jack Anderson, to write a book about America's alleged lack of military preparedness, particularly in missiles, because of the old-boy network they saw foisted on President

Eisenhower by the military-industrial complex. The book, *U.S.A.: Second Class Power?* appeared in 1958. The critics panned it.

The book was typical of Pearson's slashing attacks in broadcasts and columns. It accused Senator Pat McCarran (D.-Nev.) of propping up Franco's government in Spain by an infusion of American dollars to be used to build American military bases with the help of West German contractors who, in turn, bought heavy machinery from a Nevada company in which McCarran had "the most intimate relations." The villain was an entrenched politician, a conservative who also happened to be a Roman Catholic, a man anxious to do shadowy business with overseas Fascists and industrialists at American taxpayers' expense, while lining his own pockets. And all this in the name of national defense. Drew Pearson returned to variations on this theme again and again with different Washington political figures. He was no friend of the established Roman Catholic Church. And many of his targets in Congress were both conservative and Catholic.

About the development of Cape Canaveral into a base for launching missiles, Pearson and Anderson wrote:

Suddenly in 1953, just as the Air Force had settled down to a highly efficient operation of this all-important testing ground, its management quietly passed to a private contractor, as curious a cuckoo as ever invaded any nest: Pan American Airways.

Immediately Pan American began recruiting missile managers on a jobs-for-buddies basis, hiring former pilots, mechanics, ticket agents and baggage handlers. Its motives weren't alone patriotic. The contractor was paid a fixed fee as its profit for managing the base, and this fee quickly jumped to a million dollars a year. . . .

Pan Am may not have been proselyting Air Force personnel, but it has ended up with a startling number of retired colonels and generals. These pastured officers, who enjoy the Florida sunshine and the opportunity to supplement their pensions with Pan Am paychecks, got their jobs through Pentagon cronies whom the company wanted to please. This nepotism has reached such proportions and produced such inefficiencies that even Pan Am is worried.

Those who were convinced that Drew Pearson wrote more fiction than fact may have remarked that Pearson was still using the same mold when he wrote a bestselling novel, *The Senator*, in 1968. Most of the novel reportedly was ghosted by a writer named Gerald Green. The same year saw the publication of another ghost-written book, *The Case Against Congress*, also a best-seller. Although Pearson and Jack Anderson were credited as authors, most of the book was written by William Haddad and George Clifford. Pearson wrote one chapter.

*The Case Against Congress* argued that many congressmen were altogether too chummy with business firms whose profits they could influence. And the book named names: Everett Dirksen of Illinois, Lyndon Johnson of Texas, and many, many others. The nepotism, the seniority system, the power of lobbyists, and the junkets to faraway places with strange



sounding names like Paris and Beirut and Hong Kong—all this made choice reading when accompanied by familiar names, actual dates, and dollar figures. *The Case Against Congress* singled out a few white hats amid all the black hats. One of these was Senator Paul Douglas (D.-Ill.):

For more than a decade, the craggy Senator Douglas assaulted the oil depletion allowance with the same results he could have expected if he had been attacking the Declaration of Independence. His chief opponent was Robert S. Kerr, oil millionaire, uranium king, cattle baron and Senator from Oklahoma, who dominated the Senate's back rooms in the late 1950's and early 1960's. He worked his will with the finesse of one of his prize bulls. He was a one-man stampede, who simply trampled down his opposition. Five years after a heart attack felled him on New Year's Day, 1963, they were still talking about Bob Kerr on Capitol Hill.

Lyndon Johnson, who was president when *The Case Against Congress* was published and who maintained a kind of guarded friendship with the powerful columnist-commentator, came off relatively unscathed in an examination of the Johnson family broadcast empire, although the book got in a lick or two. About the close ties between broadcasters and their "watch-dogs" in government, the book was more pointed:

Of all the watchdogs, the Federal Communications Commission seems the most eager to sit up and beg or roll over and play dead at the command of Congress. The politicians on Capitol Hill have tamed the FCC until it has become little more than a retriever for the networks. The network executives soothingly stroke its fur, confident that Congress will keep the watchdog from biting. The Congressmen, who will sit up and beg themselves for a chance to appear on stations in their constituencies, are only too happy to oblige. . . .

Some members of Congress, taking advantage of the FCC's timidity, have joined in applications for radio and television licenses. They are aware that strategically placed Congressmen have accumulated vast wealth from radio and television licenses, which have been awarded almost as the kings of yore awarded colonies to regal favorites.

Among the many things Drew Pearson was called, the label Harry Truman gave him—S.O.B.—stuck. So many people referred to him as an "S.O.B.," that Pearson took a perverse pride in it, and was even thinking of having "Drew Pearson—S.O.B." carved on his tombstone. A letter addressed simply,

The S.O.B.  
Washington, D.C.

was delivered to Drew Pearson's door.

During his career, he was dragged in front of congressional committees eight times. From time to time detectives were assigned to his home and broadcasting studio when threats were made to his life.

The year 1960 saw Mr. and Mrs. Pearson in Russia, where the American journalist had an extended interview with Nikita Khrushchev and enjoyed a swim with him in the Black Sea. What Khrushchev said about wanting peace provided interesting—and exclusive—material for several Pearson columns, but it brought more than the usual amount of hate mail. After a second visit to see Khrushchev in 1963, Drew Pearson was summoned by President John F. Kennedy for a discussion about what Khrushchev had said, particularly what he had said about Soviet-Chinese relations. Pearson met Khrushchev for a third time in 1964 at the Aswan Dam project dedication in Egypt. Pearson also made several trips to Israel and in 1965 traveled to West Africa, where he contracted malaria.

Pearson was never close to President Kennedy. Of an early meeting, he wrote in his diary:

Lunched with Jack Kennedy, the new senator from Massachusetts. He has the makings of a first-class senator or a first-class fascist—probably depending on whether the right kind of people take the trouble to surround him. His brother is now counsel for McCarthy's committee and he himself has been appointed on McCarthy's committee, though Jack claims against his wishes. There was a time when I didn't quite understand why F.D.R. broke with Joe Kennedy. But the more I see of Jack, the more I can understand it.

Honing his dislike for the entire Kennedy clan, he cut at them in broadcast and column. He alleged that old Joe Kennedy's \$300 million fortune was tapped to buy the West Virginia primary for John in 1960 and the Indiana primary for Bobby in 1968 and made Teddy a senator at the age of 29. It was the Roman Catholic Kennedys, he said, who bolstered a corrupt Roman Catholic regime in South Vietnam and helped push us into that mess. In particular, he disliked Robert Kennedy for his support of Senator McCarthy and for his actions as attorney general and he disliked, of all people, Jacqueline, dropping so much unpleasant gossip about her that even his own staffers began to wonder what had gotten into the Boss. And this was after she had become Mrs. Aristotle Onassis!

Lyndon Baines Johnson and Drew Pearson seemed to understand one another. The two men were much alike in style, temperament, and interests. It was at Pearson's request that Johnson agreed to hold an interfaith memorial service in Washington after Kennedy's assassination, to help hold the nation together and diminish the possibility that any group would be used as a scapegoat. President Johnson even considered appointing Drew Pearson as ambassador to the Soviet Union, but did not do so, perhaps because it was politically inadvisable. Pearson's column continued to urge better U.S.-Soviet relations, and he was now being regarded by many people as possessing a statesmanlike quality, a far cry from his old image as a sloppy muckraker. Pearson opposed the war in Vietnam, a public position which created some tension between him and L.B.J., but the two men remained more allies than enemies, so much so that Pearson was accused of being the president's hatchetman.

During the years when he was a senator, L.B.J. took a liking to Pearson's

stepson, Tyler Abell. When Tyler married the daughter of Kentucky ex-Governor Earle C. Clements, Lyndon and Lady Bird held a reception for the couple. But when Pearson tried to get Abell the post of U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, L.B.J. did not go along, preferring his own nominee. At that, Pearson delivered some low blows in his column about the draft deferment for Lynda Byrd's heartthrob, actor George Hamilton, and some other items about the Johnson daughters. As Harry Truman did before him, when one of his womenfolk was mentioned in print without gentleness, Lyndon Johnson grew wrathful. Eventually, Pearson sought to heal the breach and relations improved. But of one thing there was no doubt—Drew Pearson played the nepotism game as well as anyone in Washington. Tyler Abell's wife, Bess, became Lady Bird's White House social secretary and Abell got a nice job in the Post Office Department.

As might be expected, Pearson did not care much for Richard Nixon, but he was willing to give the ambitious politician credit for the strengths he saw. In 1958 he said of the now vice-president:

Richard Milhous Nixon is a young man with a wet finger in the wind. His course changes as the wind blows. He has been on all sides of many political fences. He has been a liberal, an extreme reactionary, a moderate; finally a liberal once again. He is able, shrewd, fast on his feet. He has imagination, verve, and energy. He has great courage—the courage to face a hostile mob of Latin American voters, or a critical audience of TV viewers. But would he be able to lead the nation up the path of self-confidence and adequate defense to its onetime glorious rating as the world's greatest power?

The answer is not easy.

In 1967 Drew Pearson was operated on for ileitis, an intestinal inflammation which Dwight Eisenhower had also suffered. His health was generally good, but as he passed his seventieth year he was growing testier and more suspicious of those around him. He still relished a good fight, but his enemies seemed to be everywhere. A love letter to a former secretary with whom he had had an affair had been discovered and Xeroxed for the delectation of congressmen and other politicians with long memories. Addressed to "Dearest Cucumber," it became known as the Cucumber Letter.

Years past the age when other men retire, Drew Pearson kept driving himself. The farm he loved beckoned, but the siren song of the column continued to hold him in Washington. His famous mustache had long since turned white and his hair was nearly gone, but his bearing was erect and he looked fit.

At the age of 71 he grabbed a photographer who tried to take his picture and allegedly pounded him in the stomach several times with a briefcase. That was the only time Drew Pearson ever hit anyone, as far as is known.

Within his own family, discord had grown between his wife and stepson on the one hand, and his daughter by his first marriage on the other. In his column, Drew Pearson wrote more and more thoughtful open letters to one grandchild or another, but within his family there was much anger.

In late July or August of 1969, two months after the incident with the

photographer, Drew Pearson suffered a heart attack, which he did not even recognize. It showed up on cardiograms. He returned to the farm to recuperate. There, on September 1, he suffered a second and fatal heart attack. His body was cremated. The ashes, in an urn, were buried in a rock at the farm overlooking the Potomac River. He left an estate worth about \$5 million, over which his relatives fought.

A tax-exempt foundation Pearson had created was renamed the Drew Pearson Foundation, giving prizes annually for excellence in investigative reporting. In 1971 the top prize went to Neil Sheehan of the *New York Times* for the Pentagon Papers story. In 1972, three *Washington Post* reporters—Carl Bernstein, Robert Woodward, and Barry Sussman—won for the Watergate exposures.

No doubt Drew Pearson, the S.O.B., would have been pleased.

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## Walter Winchell

HE wanted to go to the toilet. He didn't go because feeling anxious gave him an added edge when he spoke. He removed his jacket. As he sat down, he unzipped the fly of his tight pants an inch to give his stomach a little more room. He pushed the gray snap-brim fedora to the back of his head. He pulled his tie loose. He fidgeted with his copy. The hands of the clock on the studio wall edged to 9 o'clock. He fidgeted some more and rattled off some remarks to no one in particular. Barely controlled energy radiated from him. Now the big hand of the clock landed on the 12. It was time. On a cue from the studio engineer in the next room, the resonant baritone of Ben Grauer announced, "The Jergen's Journal, featuring Walter Winchell . . ." and then the opening commercial. That done, the nervous man began punching a squealing wireless sender, leaned into the mike, pulling himself half out of his chair, and in a high, tight voice burst out at machine gun speed, "Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. North America and all the ships at sea. Let's go to press."

Walter Winchell had quit school at age 13, had not finished the sixth grade, and had hardly read a book since or interviewed a statesman or traveled anywhere to acquire information. Yet he was firing off opinions on economics, domestic politics, and international diplomacy to the largest regular audience in radio in 1948 for any kind of program whatever, including Jack Benny and Bob Hope, an estimated 25 million listeners, or 1 out of every 7.5 persons in the United States. You could walk down the street of almost any city in the nation on a warm Sunday evening in the summertime, when windows were flung open to catch a vagrant breeze, and listen to Winchell from radio to radio, hearing the whole program, hardly missing a word. And he was the world's most widely read columnist, with some 800 newspapers. In fact, Walter Winchell invented the gossip column. He was also the first major commentator to broadcast attacks on Adolf Hitler and on bigotry in the United States and he was credited with keeping Franklin Roosevelt in the White House for a third term.

He probably sold enough Jergen's Lotion to fill several good-sized lakes. Jergens paid him \$500 for each minute he was broadcasting, and his next sponsor, Warner Lambert, more than doubled that, paying him \$16,000 per newscast. Walter was worth every penny of it. It was estimated that 19.8 percent of the people who listened to Winchell once a month, 30.2 percent of the people who listened twice a month, and 51.2 percent of the people who listened every week used Jergen's Lotion! Sponsors must have thought they had hired a hypnotist! He also helped sell Phillies cigars, Gruen watches, Kaiser-Frazer cars, Hazel Bishop lipstick, and TWA plane rides.

Yet there was much truth to the accusations that the range of his ignorance was astonishing, that he was frequently wrong, that he was petty and vicious.

Here is the Hooper Rating of commentators and newscasters for the twelve months ending August 1946:

Walter Winchell	18.9	Gabriel Heatter	6.1
Lowell Thomas	11.0	William L. Shirer	4.9
Bill Henry	9.7	Fulton Lewis, Jr.	4.9
H. V. Kaltenborn	9.3	Arthur Hale	3.8
Drew Pearson	8.3	Robert Trout	3.0
John W. Vandercook	6.9	Raymond Swing	2.6

Mr. and Mrs. America listened, glued to the radio, for the 12.5 minutes of Winchell in the 15-minute report until they heard his wrap-up, something like: "And so, with lotions of love, this is your favorite newsboy Walter, telling you to take good care of yourself, because if you don't, ain't nobody else who will. Goodnight now!" Or, instead of sweet advice, he might end with a dig at someone, for Winchell could be syrupy or nasty.

What made this ill-informed, churlish man so popular? Perhaps we ought to turn to Abe Lincoln's observation that you can fool some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time. Winchell himself admitted that the reason he talked so fast—clocked at up to 228 words a



minute—was that if he talked slower people would realize how dull he was. But there was more than that. He reached something in people. Despite the brass and the New York accent and the Broadway beat, he was molded from the common American clay. That was important. Yet there was even more than that. Walter Winchell was an original. There was no one like him before or since. Izzatso! Cock-a-doodle-doo!

Walter Winchell was born into poverty in the tenements of Harlem, then a European immigrant melting pot, on April 7, 1897. Grandfather Chaim Winechel served a small congregation as both rabbi and cantor. Walter's father, Jacob Winchel (one "e" was dropped), was a ne'er-do-well, a sometime traveling salesman who once owned a tiny silk store but could usually be found playing pinochle for pennies with his cronies. His mother, Jenny, barely managed to scrape enough together to pay the landlord for their fifth-floor walkup and put some food on the table for Walter and his younger brother, Al. Bitter household quarrels were common, often about Jacob's attentions to other women, until Jacob one day simply walked away. They were eventually divorced. While Jenny worked, the boys were sometimes put out to stay with a grandmother for a few days or some other relative or friend who could put them up. If this wasn't enough, Jenny sometimes tied Walter's left hand behind his back to cure him of left-handedness. When Jenny moved to Virginia to live with relatives, she took Al. Walter stayed in Harlem and was raised by his 80-year-old grandmother.

To survive in the streets, he joined the gang of young toughs in his block. To earn pennies, Walter stood at subway entrances in the rain with an umbrella, offering to walk people home. He hawked newspapers and *The Saturday Evening Post* on street corners at the age of 8. This was Walter Winchell's boyhood.

*He would never forget that he was a newsboy. Only he would come to spell it differently when he was paid more than a million dollars a year, the highest salary (from several sources, although not the highest total income) of anyone in the land. That's right, ANYONE, you ingrate, you dope, ANYONE. He was certainly the best paid reporter in the history of journalism. But he called himself a newsboy, not a reporter. He spelled it:*

*neWwsboy*

He flunked arithmetic in the sixth grade. Rather than agreeing to be "left back" to repeat the class, Walter quit P.S. 184. Who needs it?

Better prospects were around the corner. With neighborhood pal George Jessel and another boy, Jack Weiner, Walter entered show biz. They were booked into the local Imperial Theater (where Georgie's mother was the cashier) as "The Imperial Trio," singers for \$5 a week plus 10¢ a song on Sundays and doubling as ushers. They sang in the orchestra pit to hide from Gerry Society snoops looking for underage entertainers. Winchell carried the melody, Jessel and Weiner the harmony. One day Winchell didn't show up. His partners did the best they could with the harmony, but it wasn't the same

without the melody, and the audience began to throw overripe vegetables. The theater bouncer found Walter in the balcony, making out with a neighborhood girl. Cursing, he lifted Walter out of his seat and appeared ready to drop him over the balcony until the young singer squirmed away and ran to the orchestra pit for the final chorus of "Sunny Italy."

At least that was the story he liked to tell interviewers for magazine articles. Many years later he said the incident never took place.

"The Imperial Trio" boys joined Gus Edwards' touring vaudeville revue. One of the youngsters in the "School Days" revue was Eddie Cantor. Walter, who never lacked for moxie, learned some survival lessons on tour. The most valuable was how to grab an audience anywhere in America.

At 18, Walter teamed up with Rita Green in a boy-girl song and dance act. They played the vaudeville circuit until war came along. Walter bid farewell to Rita and joined the navy, but he saw no more of the world than the New York Customs House, where he was an admiral's yeoman. One day he was trying to overhear a conversation in the next room between the admiral and another high-ranking officer about women while at the same time melting sealing wax which the admiral used for confidential correspondence. He was also wearing a bandage to cover blisters on his nose. He became so interested in the conversation that he neglected to notice how close his nose bandage was getting to the candle used to melt the wax.

"Jesus Christ, I'm on fire," he screamed.

The two naval officers rushed out to find Seaman First Class Walter Winchel (still with one "l") with a scorched nose that he had tried to pry into someone else's business. He would be doing that all his life, and sometimes he would get burned. And it was typical of Winchell that he loved telling this story to magazine interviewers. If he embroidered it, so what? That improved the story, didn't it?

After the war he and Rita teamed up again with songs, dances, and funny sayings. They also married. One day in Chicago, Winchel's name was misspelled on a theater marquee: Winchell. The young troupier liked the change. He tried something else new. Walter typed a one-sheet bulletin of gossip about his fellow troupiers, added a few gags, and tacked it on the backstage call board under the title: THE NEWSSENSE. When you read that title as fast as Walter liked to talk, it sounded like "the Nuisance." "Mrs. Winchell's little boy Walter," as he referred to himself in later years, had found his role in life.

People began to notice the pale, blue-eyed, intense youth who looked as if he were about to pop out of his skin. *Newsense* netted him one black eye from a juggler whose drinking had been duly recorded, but fellow troupiers liked reading the gossip and talked about it. A copy of *Newsense* found its way to *Vaudeville News* in New York, which reprinted it. Winchell, sniffing opportunity, called on the editor, Glenn Condon, for a job. *Vaudeville News* was a throwaway, an anti-union paper competing with *Variety*, which supported a union for performers. Condon, who ran the paper by himself, agreed to hire Winchell for no salary as a combination reporter and ad

salesman. Winchell sold many ads by promising favorable news items as a package deal. All his life he would regard a news report as a kind of coin.

Winchell's gossip items in news stories and in his columns, "Merciless Truth" and "Broadway Hearsay," attracted so much attention, the publishers decided to charge a nickel for copies instead of giving them away.

By this time Walter and Rita had decided to break up their boy-girl act and their marriage. Later, covering a story, he interviewed June Aster, a red-haired 17-year-old Mississippi beauty and member of a vaudeville sister act. He was smitten. She was considerably less impressed, but he wore her resistance down and she agreed to marry him. Winchell at first proved to be a devoted husband and father. They adopted a daughter, Gloria, who died of pneumonia in childhood, had a second daughter, Walda, and a son, Walter, Jr. Walda and young Walter were both named for—guess who? When his children were small, Winchell loved them dearly and spent much time with them. He was always crazy about little kids. But as the years passed he neglected his wife and children to pursue his career—and chase showgirls. Winchell bought a sixteen-acre estate in Westchester County, but that was mostly for the family. He remained a city boy. June Winchell chose to live most of the year in Florida. Late in life she moved to Scottsdale, Arizona. Winchell spent most of his time in New York and never lacked for beautiful female companionship, including a longtime affair with an ex-Texas showgirl, who was 16 when they met.

Winchell's children grew up estranged from him. Walda changed her name to Eileen, then became a minor actress, Toni Eden. Walter, Jr., was a spoiled and moody boy who once asked, "If you were Winchell's kid, how would you grow up?" He married the daughter of a Nazi general, fathered two children, goose-stepped around Manhattan in a Nazi uniform, worked as a dishwasher, applied for welfare, and in his thirty-third year, put a .38 automatic to his head and pulled the trigger. But that gets ahead of the story.

In 1924 an eccentric millionaire, Bernarr Macfadden, founded what may have been America's worst newspaper, the *New York Evening Graphic*, a tabloid specializing in sensational news. The *Graphic* created the "Composograph," melding two separate photographs into one, so that readers could not tell who was really caught by the photographer doing what, but it sure looked suspicious. Winchell was hired to write a Broadway column and serve as drama critic, drama editor, Broadway reporter, and seller of amusement ads. His boss on this scandal sheet was Fulton Oursler, who later wrote a best-seller, *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, the life of Jesus.

At first Winchell filled his weekly column, "Broadway Hearsay," with poetry and jokes, along with news about new plays. Gossip he passed as tips to the *Graphic* city desk. After the city editor ignored one gossip tip, which enabled the *New York Daily News* to score a beat, Winchell vowed never to give him another tip. However, he continued to collect gossip items, which he scribbled on scraps of paper. One day, instead of jokes and poems for his column, he decided to shove in the gossip. And that was how the famous Winchell column began:

Helen Edy Brooks, widow of William Rock, has been plunging in Miami real estate . . . It's a girl at the Carter De Havens . . . Lenore Ulric paid \$7 income tax . . . Fannie Brice is betting on the horses at Belmont . . . S. Jay Kaufman sails on the 16th via the *Berengaria* to be hitched to a Hungarian . . . Report has it that Lillian Lorraine has taken a husband again.

Winchell changed its name to "Your Broadway and Mine" and kept filling it with gossip and rumor about the great and near great, the who's who and the never-will-be of the entertainment world. Readers lapped it all up—the truths, the lies, the slurs, the innuendoes, and the slick style that became known as Winchellese. The readers couldn't wait to learn that "Five pounds of matzohs were expressed to F. Ziegfield in Florida," or the blind item: "What ticket speculator dropped \$17,000 in a dice house the other morning?"

Because he was both careless and ignorant about much of the world, it wasn't that hard to put Winchell on. In his column of May 14, 1928, he ran this item someone had given him: "A. Woollcott is that way over Lizzie Borden." Winchell knew who Alexander Woollcott was, but he had never heard of the young woman who killed her parents with an ax. More than one character assassin was glad to see Winchell coming around looking for items.

Heywood Broun thought the column was the only thing in the *Graphic* worth reading. Deploring the heavy news filling most newspapers ("If a story involved fewer than fifty thousand people, it could not make the front page."), Alexander Woollcott remarked that Winchell made us aware there were individuals as well as groups astir on this planet. "Soft-shoeing into this dreary phase of American journalism came Master Winchell, his eyes wide with the childlike interest all newcomers have, his nervous staccato pace as characteristic of his day as are the rhythms of George Gershwin."

Other newspapers began to syndicate the column. Simon & Schuster wanted Winchell to write a book. He did not, but he managed to knock out a few magazine articles in addition to the column. A posthumous autobiography was published in 1975.

As readership grew, so did the anxiety of press agents to "plant an item in Winchell." Winchell used his growing popularity to the limit of its power over others. The column could be used to dispense favors. A favorable item was a favor granted and Winchell often demanded favors in return. Never money, of course, or gifts. These he spurned. What he wanted was admirers—sycophants who would always be around to listen to Walter Winchell talking nonstop about himself, yes-men who would respect Winchell and hate his enemies, companions who would follow him on his insomniac rounds of the city, sip chocolate sodas with him, and listen, listen, listen. Mrs. Winchell's little boy Walter needed to be admired, no matter how nasty he was, even to his friends, who would be surprised to discover unpleasant items about themselves in the column. ("I know," said Walter. "I'm a son of a bitch.") It was as if he needed the hostility as much as he needed the admiration.

Winchell developed an elaborate system of reward and punishment for the press agents who fed the column. For every item he printed about a client,

the press agent owed him five news tips. FOR YOU, the agents would write above five items. FOR ME, they would write above one.

A press agent who slipped him an inaccurate item—a “wringo” or “WWringo”—was barred from the column for six months. He was on the DD (Drop Dead) List until a call from Winchell's secretary, Rose Bigman, gave him permission to submit items again. The press agents put up with this because getting items in Winchell meant the difference between a handsome income and press agent penury. One press agent even washed Winchell's car each week.

The press agent whose friendship proved most beneficial to both men was Irving Hoffman, a university-educated writer of considerable flair and wit. How much of Winchell's brilliancies came from the pen of press agents will never be known, but it is certain that Hoffman contributed his share. In return, Hoffman made a fortune from the clients who flocked to him. And Hoffman was one of the few friends who lasted. Much of Winchell's stuff came from Ernest Cuneo and Herman Klurfeld, two staff writers who wrote about the Boss after his death.

Plugs by Winchell meant something. Plugs for *Hellzapoppin'*, a revue panned by critics, helped it to run for 1,404 performances. Plugs for *Under Cover*, a book about fascism in America, turned it into a best-seller. Singer Roberta Sherwood was a Winchell discovery. Comedians Dan Rowan and Dick Martin were about to bust up their unsuccessful act when Winchell began to promote them.

In his leaner days, Winchell befriended *Daily News* columnist Mark Hellinger, a big spender who took young Winchell along on some of his visits to New York night clubs. At one of these Hellinger asked Winchell if he had any money. Winchell pulled out \$100. Hellinger plucked it from Winchell's fingers and handed it to a head waiter as a tip. At least, that's the story Winchell told, adding that the money had just been borrowed to pay his rent. Was the story true? Don't worry about it. It's a good story, isn't it?

Winchell also made friends with Hearst reporter Damon Runyon, who began to write those famous short stories about Broadway characters (*Guys and Dolls*) after Winchell urged him to try his hand at fiction. Runyon disliked the brash columnist in the beginning. Runyon's first story was about a Broadway columnist named Waldo Winchester, who fell in love with a tap dancer who was the sweetheart of a low-life named Dave the Dude. But Winchester was already married to Lola Sapola, an acrobat. And so on. Winchell not only didn't mind the story, which appeared in *Cosmopolitan*, he was flattered. Winchell was even more severely parodied in the 1932 play, *Blessed Event*. One critic wrote that Winchell turned pale on opening night. Winchell also claimed that *Guys and Dolls* was based on an incident involving him and that Runyon had changed the central character from a newspaperman to a gambler.

Winchell's income began to rise, but like many men who come to wealth from a boyhood of extreme poverty, he had idiosyncracies about money. He provided very well for his family but was almost a skinflint when it came to spending money on himself. He wore a pair of shoes till it went into holes. During the many years he and June lived apart, he went home to a hotel

apartment in the St. Moritz. He refused to buy stocks, even during the Roaring Twenties when his friends were making paper fortunes. Asked, "What are you putting your money into?" Winchell would reply, "Rubber bands." The money actually went into savings banks, several of them, either in savings accounts or as cash in vaults. Winchell carried his bankbooks wherever he went and liked to pull them out to show his friends: "Take a gander at that!" But, tightwad or not, Winchell was not a totally greedy man. In 1948 sponsor Jergens wanted the "Jergens Journal" to carry commercials for a deodorant, Dryad. Winchell refused. He was refusing an extra \$390,000 a year. Jergens wasn't his only sponsor. Over the years others included Kaiser-Frazer cars, Richard Hudnut home permanents, Gruen watches, and, toward the end, Carter's Little Liver Pills.

Besides providing well for June and the children, Winchell sent money regularly to his mother, although there were reports of some distance between them. Her life ended in tragedy when, ill in the hospital, she jumped to her death from a tenth-floor room.

Winchell jealously protected his family's privacy except when he himself chose to refer to his wife or children. The columnist, whose fame was based on his unabashed snooping into the private lives of others, would brook no attempt to inquire into his own private life. J. P. McEvoy was rebuffed when he told Winchell he intended to interview wife June for a *Saturday Evening Post* article. McEvoy pointed out that Winchell earned his living inquiring into people's private lives. Replied Winchell, "That's different. That's business."

If Winchell showed some small ability to make friends of newspapermen, his skill at making enemies of them showed nothing less than blazing genius. Perhaps never has a reporter been so detested by so many other newsmen. Nor were these casual dislikes. They were bitter, deep, and very long lasting. Emile Gauvreau, Winchell's managing editor on the *Graphic*, hated his popular columnist. Winchell asked help from the sports editor, Ed Sullivan, who happened to be a friend of a *Graphic* advertising executive. Sullivan agreed. A week later, managing editor Gauvreau exploded at Sullivan for going over his head to the advertising executive. Sullivan asked Gauvreau how he knew about it. "Winchell told me," came the reply.

Now Sullivan, too, hated Winchell, and that feud became famous as both men went on to become New York gossip columnists—Sullivan in the *Daily News*—and to develop careers in broadcasting. He once told Winchell: "You son of a bitch. If you say one more word I'll take you downstairs and stick your head in the toilet bowl." Feelings ran so high that when Ed Sullivan offered his hand in a gesture of amity, June Winchell spat into it. Not until a few years before Winchell's death did the two celebrities speak cordially to one another during a chance meeting.

As for Gauvreau, the battle with Winchell never abated. Gauvreau never let up and Winchell gave as good as he got, or worse. Winchell called Gauvreau, who was disabled by a childhood leg injury, a "goddamn cripple" and once actually pushed him down a flight of stairs. After Winchell left the *Graphic* to go to the New York *Daily Mirror*, that newspaper decided to hire a new managing editor. His name—Emile Gauvreau. The war continued.

Winchell's column ran in the *Daily Mirror* from 1929 to 1963, an astonishing thirty-four years. It appeared on Page 10. Many people said it was the thing most worth reading in the *Mirror*. Some said it was the only thing worth reading in that rag.

Gauvreau sniped at Winchell by killing column items giving free plugs to night clubs and entertainers. Winchell got around that by giving "Orchids" to whomever he wanted to plug.

Winchell began broadcasting in 1929 over a forty-two-station CBS hookup with a program called "New York by a Representative New Yorker." The sponsor was Gerardine, a women's hair tonic. George Washington Hill, the flamboyant boss of the American Tobacco Company, tuned in one night and liked what he heard. Winchell was signed up to deliver gossipy newscasts in the middle of the "Lucky Strike Hour" of beautiful music Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, 10 to 11 p.m., over NBC.

The "Jergens Journal" began in 1933, 15 minutes of Winchell's unique blend of gossip, news, rumor, criticism, praise, and hullabaloo over CBS stations each Sunday evening at 9. Winchell was on both networks at the same time for a while.

The Winchell script consisted of a sheaf of typed and stapled pages. As air time approached he would leaf through the script, rearranging the order. Sometimes he deleted an item, sometimes he accepted a last-minute item from one of the claue of press agents who constantly hovered around him.

During each broadcast Winchell would signal some particular item or other by tapping on a telegraph key or wireless sender, which filled the air with meaningless squawks. Listeners familiar with Morse Code knew that what Winchell tapped out was gibberish. Some telegraphers complained and Winchell was offered the services of an experienced telegrapher, but he refused. "I want the feel of it myself," he said. The gibberish continued. Winchell couldn't care less.

At first the "Jergens Journal" was Broadway and Hollywood gossip. Winchell began inserting political news when he became interested in what President Roosevelt was doing in the United States and what Adolf Hitler was doing in Europe. When the press-radio war limited his access to newspaper items and wire service news, Winchell began picking up items from foreign newspapers. An ex-Canadian newsman, Art Arthur, whom Winchell had helped to get a job, scanned the foreign press and fed the items to Winchell. Arthur, a sharp journalist, figured out that the Prince of Wales, not yet crowned Edward VIII, might abdicate because of a romance with a commoner and that the British press could not bring itself to do more than hint at the rumors. Arthur talked a somewhat dubious Winchell ("No guy in his right mind would give up being a king.") into floating the rumor in a broadcast. It became a worldwide scoop for Winchell as the British newspapers followed with stories of the Wallis Warfield Simpson romance.

A decade later, Winchell predicted the end of the marriage. Nothing happened. He again predicted that the Duke and Duchess of Windsor would phfft! Again, nothing happened. In 1949, a typical Winchell remark: "The Windsors are delaying that announcement to make WW look loony. But he'll

have the last tee-hee. The lifted pinky set says the blowup will be any edition now." The Duchess of Windsor referred to Walter Winchell as "that diseased squirrel." He called her the "Dookis of Tookis." But not on the air.

It may well be that Winchell's lasting impact on the American scene, his footprint, will be his coinage of words, or Winchellese. F'rexample:

making whoopee  
flicker (a motion picture)  
giggle water (liquor)  
the hardened artery (Broadway)  
foofff (a pest)  
keptive (a mistress)  
the idyll rich

He also combined words or used them in a new way. People didn't marry. After they were "on the verge," "that way," or "on fire," they "lohengrined," "merged," or "middle-aisled." After their "pash dimmed," they would "phewd." People didn't divorce. They were "on the verge." They "Renovated," "soured," "curdled," "wilted," "melted," "told it to the judge," or "went phfft." People didn't have babies. They "got storked" or had a "blessed event" or a "bundle from heaven." And if the baby had not yet arrived, the couple was "infanticipating." When the baby did arrive, it was an "image" or a "parrot."

There were bad guys around: "swasticooties," "pinko stinkos," "Chicagorillas." There were also delights to ogle: "hatchicks," "terp-sichorines."

Here are some examples of Winchell's writing style and political opinions:

"Captain Ben Gomez proved what sort of American he is. He left something for us all on Mindoro, in the Philippine Islands—both his legs."

"History books say that Christopher Columbus discovered America. But all of us fortunate to live in it know that he really discovered Heaven."

"The European nations that failed to get down to brass tacks are now in iron chains."

"It is both un-American and unnecessary to throw eggs at Henry Wallace. He has enough bad eggs around him already."

"President Truman says that he will beat the Republicans. Well, that's very possible. He has already licked the Democrats."

"Election day will be the date for all Americans to have their eyes finally opened when facts that would frighten you now will be made public."

"A story never made public before, but which the best newspaper people in Washington, D.C., believe, is this. . . ." (A rumor)

Instead of beginning by addressing himself to "Mr. and Mrs. America," or "Mr. and Mrs. North America," he might vary it slightly, for example: "Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. North and South America and all the ships at sea. Let's go to press." Listeners recognizing the slight alteration would wait with interest for what was important enough to direct his remarks to South America. If the news did not live up to the expectation, the listeners didn't quit listening, nor did they laugh at the realization—if they realized it at all—



that Winchell's broadcasts were not heard by a South American audience, except by short wave, and even if they were heard, few Spanish or Portuguese-speaking South Americans would be likely to understand the frenetic pace and intentional fracturing of Winchell's English. But all this mattered little. Walter Winchell was a pitchman, and everyone loves to listen to a pitchman.

Several catch phrases marked the breaks in the broadcast. Among them: "Behind the International Scene," "Behind the Diplomatic Headlines," "Around the World in a Minute," "The Washington Ticker," "A Reporter's Report to the People," "A Reporter's Report to the Nation," "Now for Some Tips to the Papers."

Commercials would be introduced with the promise, "I'll be back in a flash with . . ." and then a catch phrase or the hint of something extra special. Finally, reluctantly, the listener might hear: "And that, ladies and gentlemen, winds up another Jergens Journal until next Sunday night at the very same time. Until then, and with lotions of love, I remain your New York correspondent, Walter Winchell, who . . ." and the last remark.

Despite the sections, the broadcasts were a hodgepodge of information. A flash about a bundle from heaven would be followed by news of a ship collision, then a film plug, then an item on the Battle of the Bulge, followed by the breathless news that a New York showgirl was recovering from an overdose of sleeping powder.

His column, too, had departments. Frinstance: Flashes\_\_\_\_ Or-chids\_\_\_\_ Sallies in Our Alley\_\_\_\_ Manhattan Murals\_\_\_\_. Once a week or so there would be: Memo from Girl Friday\_\_\_\_, full of notes from the secretary to Winchell, including information that he'd been fed a WWrongo and information that someone important thought he was wonderful. Who wrote the Memo? Winchell, who else?

Actually, he did not write all his columns and broadcasts. He was more editor than writer. Press agents and staff writers wrote much of the material in Winchell style, and then Winchell would compress the copy even more. He was very good at that.

To say that Winchell was none too careful about his facts is not quite correct. He just did not distinguish fact from rumor. To him, an item was an item. There was no time to check them. Tipsters who gave him WWrongos were punished by banishment. Libel laws could be skirted by language hinting at what it did not plainly say: "Is Tommy Manville's latest seeing a lawyer?" does not make the assertion that Mr. and Mrs. Manville have embarked on the destruction of what God hath joined. It could be a real estate transaction that led to a knock on an attorney's door by the millionaire playboy's fifth wife—or was she the sixth? Winchell was inaccurate so often, he developed a system for making corrections that did not sound like corrections. If the injured party did not demand a correction Winchell simply ignored the error or offered a free plug on another matter. If nothing less than a retraction would do, Winchell would try to phrase it so that he was breaking a fresh story and correcting someone else's error:

"Attention Chicago American. It is not true that . . ."

"Those who know are snickering at the rumor that . . ."

"Don't believe what you hear about . . ."

Sometimes a correction would be softened by a closing: "Oops, soddy . . ."

For instance, Winchell broadcast: "Orlando, Florida. The founder of the Wilson Meat Packing Company, Harry Wilson, died today."

The following Sunday, Winchell declared: "The Chicago American. Gentlemen: Harry Wilson, whose death was reported last Sunday, was not of the Wilson Meat Packing Company."

Of course, it wasn't the Chicago *American's* error, and Winchell didn't precisely say it was, but that's what it sounded like.

An analysis of 239 column items in 1940 reported that 108 were unverifiable (no names mentioned, no one willing to confirm or deny, or expressions of opinion). Of the remaining 131 items, 54 were totally inaccurate, 24 were partly inaccurate, and 53 were accurate. In other words, in this sample, Winchell was accurate less than half the time.

Here's another item and its correction.

Item:

Remember Anna Sten, the actress from the Old Country, imported to rival Garbo? She now runs a frock shop in Hollywood.

Correction, one week later:

New Yorkers are talking about . . . the items about Anna Sten's shop on the coast — which are false. She has no shop. She is making a film — you dope!

It would take more than a volume to list all of Winchell's errors. Here is a tiny sampling:

"After having her molars fixed so that they would photograph better, Barbara Stanwyck will make no more flickers." (1931)

"The orb operation on Joan Crawford is gradually blinding her." (1932)

"Rigid cellophane will replace shatterproof glass in windshields at one-third the fee of safety glass." (1933)

"Adolf and Benito have phfft! The break will be officially announced soon enough." (1937)

"The local stores will be selling television sets for as low as \$3.95 by October 1." (1938)

"Herbert Hoover starts colyuming soon — in 250 gazettes." (1938)

"Uranium is now obsolete in the production of atomic bombs. . . . Lead works just as well." (1946)

"Some of President Truman's intimate friends are now pretty certain that he will not run in 1948. That is stale news to constant listeners of Winchell, who was very sure of it five months ago over this microphone." (1947)

How could Winchell be so wrong so often? The answer probably is a high degree of sloppiness combined with a low threshold of caring about it. What



first soldier in our land in the cause of democracy.” When 200 New York chorus girls organized an American Federation of Labor local, they called it the Walter Winchell Chapter.

If another example of Winchell’s sanctimonious writing is needed to make the point, the columnist, who may have been the biggest purveyor of divorce gossip of all, noted that the Samuel Goldwyns would soon celebrate their silver wedding anniversary, then added, “Recommended to all newspapers that play up Hollywood divorces.”

In fact, Winchell was quite irritated by couples who denied that they planned to “phfft,” and then went ahead and “Renovated” anyhow. “You try to play square with people like that,” he grumbled, “and they lie to you. It burns me up.” He did not consider that the couples might have been making a last desperate attempt to salvage their marriages. All that mattered was that he had lost the item.

His self-centeredness was total. Staff writer Herman Klurfeld recalled the time he and Winchell, walking along Fifth Avenue after a broadcast, met an editor.

“What did you think of the broadcast?” Winchell asked in greeting.

“I’m sorry, Walter,” the editor said, “I didn’t hear the broadcast. My mother died this morning.”

“That’s no excuse,” Winchell snapped, and strode away.

After he wrote that Nita Naldi was broken down in a French sanitarium and might be a dope addict, the actress—Rudolph Valentino’s leading lady—walked up to him in Lindy’s and slapped him in the face with all her might. “Who is she?” asked the columnist, who attended few movies. When told, he reportedly said, “Jeez, I’m lucky she didn’t kill me. I’ll get that bitch.”

Traveling the night club circuit in the twenties and thirties made it inevitable that Walter Winchell, like the fictional Waldo Winchester, would encounter gangsters. Organized mobsters controlled the nightlife, not only the corner speakeasies they owned, supplied, or “protected,” but even the entertainers booked into the big clubs. The real-life counterparts of Dave the Dude had their fingers deep into Winchell’s Broadway. The columnist became friendly with mobster Owney Madden, who in turn provided bodyguards for Winchell when a column item, or later, a broadcast, angered a rival mobster. When Madden grumbled that the *Herald Tribune* never mentioned his name without noting that he had served time for homicide, a sympathetic Winchell accompanied him to the *Tribune*’s editorial department to complain about it. Madden even gave Winchell his first car, a Stutz roadster. Years later, when Madden, broke and living in Arkansas, asked Winchell for a loan, the columnist sent him \$10,000 and never asked for it back.

No sooner had the *Mirror* reached the newstands with Winchell’s report that mobster Vincent “Mad Dog” Coll had fallen from grace than a machine gun tore up a corner telephone booth in which Coll just happened to be. Some of the boys didn’t like the column publicity, and Winchell was convinced the underworld was out to get him, especially when a stranger accosted him in a night club, saying, “I’m going to kill you, you son of a bitch.”

In addition to Madden's bodyguard, Winchell asked for a police bodyguard and for a gun permit. For years thereafter, Walter Winchell packed a gun, sometimes two guns, one in his overcoat and one under his jacket. He also suffered a nervous breakdown. He took June and the children to California for an extended vacation. Some years later, when Winchell was alone in the White House with President Roosevelt, he remarked that the Secret Service wasn't very efficient. He pulled out his gun to prove it. Roosevelt just laughed.

The New York City Police Department allowed him to outfit a Ford with red light, siren, and police radio. During the early morning hours between the night club beat and the surrender to sleep, Winchell forgot his insomnia as he patrolled the streets for gritty adventures. He liked to share these hours with Damon Runyon, friendly public relations men, actors, actresses, or other acquaintances willing to sit in a car during the predawn hours listening to Walter talking nonstop about himself. Myrna Loy dropped off to sleep the night she went. When the police radio signaled a crime in progress, the Winchell adrenalin—never very low—surged. Sometimes with red light and siren going, he raced to the scene to get what he called "a thrill." More than once he arrived before the police did, like the time the red light and siren stopped a holdup man standing in the middle of the street, gun in hand. Winchell prudently sat quietly in the car until the real cops showed. At least once, Winchell, waving his own gun, joined a police chase.

Playing cops and robbers filled the hours that Winchell could not sleep. He once complained to columnist Mark Hellinger that he got only 6 hours of sleep a night. When Hellinger replied that Edison got by on only 4 hours, Winchell said, "Sure, but I need a clear mind. I've got important things to think about."

The night club he preferred to all others was the Stork Club. Until Winchell settled in at Table 50, the Stork was just another drinking spot. Winchell "made" the Stork Club and, not incidentally, a fortune for owner Sherman Billingsley, an ex-Oklahoman who had served time in Leavenworth for running liquor during Prohibition. Billingsley showered attention on the columnist, who responded with column and broadcast items that packed the Stork night after night with celebrity gazers and celebrities who wanted to be gazed at. Winchell intentionally ignored the fact that Billingsley preferred not to have too many Jewish customers in his club and didn't want any black customers at all. According to biographer Bob Thomas:

A long-time associate of Winchell once upbraided him: "My God, Walter, how can you be pals with that Billingsley? You love Roosevelt and stick up for the Wagner Act—and he fights the unions. You're an enemy of prejudice—and he hates 'niggers.' You're a Jew—and he's anti-Semitic!"

"I know, I know," Walter replied sadly. "But Sherman never lets me see that side of him."

None so blind as he who will not see.

Winchell spoke up often about prejudice, often movingly. He said this during the war:

The American doctrine of tolerance for the world will be judged by the tolerance Americans have for each other. That means that this country can no longer afford to be tolerant of the intolerant. Tonight there are some Americans sharing the same grave who in the United States could not have shared the same hotel.

Usually Billingsley did what Winchell asked. The columnist once got mad at Mayor William O'Dwyer for demoting a police sergeant to patrolman over what Winchell considered a trumped-up charge. Actually, what Winchell was really mad about was O'Dwyer's refusal to reinstate the policeman at Winchell's request. So Walter Winchell told Sherman Billingsley to bar the mayor of New York City from the Stork Club. Billingsley pleaded that he could not do such a thing. Thereupon Winchell announced that he would not return to the Stork until O'Dwyer was denied admission. Three weeks later Billingsley called to say that the police sergeant had been reinstated. Would Walter please come back to the Cub Room of the Stork Club?

When Winchell was at the Stork, he held court either at Table 50, which was always reserved for him, or in the adjoining Stork Club barbershop, built especially for him by Billingsley. Enthroned in the barber's chair, a friend or press agent as consort in the next chair, Winchell listened to the politicians, the small-time operators, the chorus girls, and the celebrities who trooped in to plant an item in the broadcast or the column. Sometimes tourists would sit in the Stork for hours just to shake the Winchell hand. Winchell always shook hands. He adored children, and when a parent, seeing Winchell on the street or in a drugstore, would send a child up for an autograph, Winchell reacted with delight and sometimes wrote a playful message.

Winters might be spent at the Roney Plaza Hotel in Miami Beach, the winter headquarters for the "Jergens Journal." Naturally the press agents followed him there. And sometimes so did the politicians, the small-time operators, and all the rest. Wherever Winchell was was where it was happening, baby!

Winchell admired few men. One exception was Franklin Delano Roosevelt after he became president. Another was J. Edgar Hoover. Winchell developed a friendship for the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation amounting to hero worship. It was Winchell who popularized Machine Gun Kelly's term "G Men" for FBI agents, the "government men." In return, Hoover occasionally assigned an FBI bodyguard to Winchell. Once, during a Chicago visit, Winchell had three separate sets of bodyguards trailing him, supplied by the FBI, the Chicago Police Department, and New York vice lord, Lucky Luciano. Hoover also gave him news tips. Through a tipster Winchell learned of the arrest of Bruno Richard Hauptmann on charges of kidnapping the Lindbergh baby. Winchell called Hoover, who asked the columnist to hold off publication because of the chance that FBI agents might

nab a Hauptmann confederate. Winchell agreed, and was scooped. Hoover, nevertheless, was grateful that Winchell had "put patriotism and the safety of society above any mercenary attitude in his profession." Hoover's gratitude over the years was to prove most valuable.

Winchell attacked Hauptmann so vigorously that when prospective jurors were being quizzed, they were asked, "Do you read Walter Winchell's column?" and "Do you listen to Walter Winchell on the radio?" A "yes" to either question would excuse them from jury duty.

Louis (Lepke) Buchalter, one of New York's top mobsters, ran scared when District Attorney Thomas E. Dewey put a \$25,000 reward on his head, dead or alive. For that price, one of his own boys might decide to cash in. Buchalter faced the electric chair if Dewey got him. His only chance was to surrender to federal agents and hope for a lesser sentence. Buchalter knew that Walter Winchell was close to Hoover and the FBI. The word went to Winchell. In his nationwide broadcast, Winchell dramatically offered to walk in with Lepke if he surrendered. J. Edgar Hoover came to New York personally at Winchell's urging for the surrender. After two weeks of nervous stalling ("Here he is, the biggest hot air artist in town," said a fed-up Hoover), complicated directions were given for the meeting. Driving alone in a borrowed car, Winchell went from one designated spot to another, each time being met by a Buchalter henchman who sent him onward. At one point Winchell was told to summon Hoover to be at a particular corner at a particular time, Fifth Avenue at 28th Street between 10:10 and 10:20 p.m. Then Winchell drove to another corner where Buchalter was waiting. They drove to the Hoover rendezvous and the meeting was completed.

*Winchell:* "Lepke, this is Mr. Hoover. Mr. Hoover, this is Lepke."

*Hoover:* "How do you do."

*Buchalter:* "Glad to meet you."

This story might have had a happy ending for the three men, with Hoover getting his man, Buchalter getting a sentence in a federal penitentiary, and Winchell getting a major front page scoop. But none of that happened. Hoover lost jurisdiction to Dewey. Lewis (Lepke) Buchalter was electrocuted after all. And Winchell did not get the big front page play, because the date Buchalter chose for the surrendering was August 24, 1939, the day Hitler acted to take over the free city of Danzig, one week before Germany invaded Poland. The front pages were filled with the threat of world war.

"Little Boy Peep" continued to make enemies. A city editor remarked, "If his background had been different, he would have been so befuddled by canons of what some people call good taste that he would have been revolted at some of his best stuff."

When Winchell's acid reviews irritated the Shuberts so much that they ordered him barred from their theater openings, Winchell wrote: "A certain columnist has been barred from all the Shubert openings. Now he can wait three days and go to their closings." Despite the Shuberts' order—or maybe because of it—he announced his intention to cover the opening of the Marx Brothers' *Animal Crackers*. The Shuberts ringed the theater with guards to

keep Winchell out. The Marx Brothers themselves wanted Winchell there, so they dressed him in a duplicate of Harpo's costume, wig and all. Winchell watched the play from the wings. When the stage manager asked why there was a second Harpo, Groucho explained, "Oh, Harpo sometimes throws a fit, and we need to keep an understudy ready at all times."

Winchell also made an enemy of Al Jolson, who was convinced that Winchell had used Jolson and his courtship of Ruby Keeler as the basis for a movie script Winchell wrote for Darryl F. Zanuck, *Broadway Through a Keyhole*, starring Russ Columbo as a singer, Constance Cummings as a chorus girl, and Paul Kelly as a mobster. Jolson was so mad that when he encountered Winchell at a boxing match in Hollywood, he slugged the columnist in the mouth. It got to be something of a free-for-all, with June Winchell using her shoe to defend her husband and Ruby Keeler reportedly coming in on Jolson's side.

The feud ended some years later in a curious way. Jolson learned that Winchell was suffering from piles. He gave a mutual friend some salve, which had helped Jolson, to pass along to Winchell. The stuff worked and the grateful Winchell embraced Jolson at a Hollywood nightclub.

Besides writing a movie, Winchell appeared as an actor in three movies, *Wake Up and Live*, with Alice Faye, Patsy Kelly, and Ben Bernie, in 1937; *Love and Hises*, with Simone Simone, Joan Davis, Bert Lahr, and Ben Bernie, in 1938; and *Wild in the Streets* in 1968, playing himself. Winchell's feud with Ben Bernie was widely promoted, but it was strictly a promotion, not a feud at all. Winchell's column lifted the obscure musician to fame and fortune. Winchell's other feuds were real enough.

Earl Carroll, producer of *Earl Carroll's Vanities*, got so incensed at Winchell that he walked up to a table at a party where Winchell was sitting with New York Mayor Jimmie Walker and actresses Billie Dove and Pola Negri. Stormed Carroll, "I want you to know that you are not fit to associate with decent people. You don't belong."

Ethel Barrymore's comment about the columnist was even more succinct: "I don't see why that vulture Winchell has been allowed to live."

George Jessel, harmony carrier of The Imperial Trio, began publicly feuding with the former melody carrier after exchanging wisecracks about the Bruno Hauptmann investigation. When he heard Winchell was ill, Jessel remarked, "He can't be very sick or the flags would be out and the schools would be having half holidays."

Columnist Westbrook Pegler detested everything about Walter Winchell, who returned the hatred. A thinly veiled Pegler parody of the Winchell column began:

Oh, how I love my beautiful, darling wife and kiddies. I am one of the best husbands in the world. And fathers, too. Some husbands and fathers keep these things in the bosom of the family, but it is a business with me, and I blab it all over good white paper.

Hello, sweetheart. Here is a kiss for you. I am selling this kiss to the customers for three cents a copy; ten cents on Sundays. Don't forget to give little Shirley her spinach tonight. . . .



The column ended:

That certainly was nice of President Roosevelt to write me that boosting letter telling me how much he liked my stuff. I wrote him, saying, "I certainly hope you have a successful administration," and he wrote back out of a clear sky, "I cannot find words to express my opinion of your stuff."

What is life, after all? A guttering candle. A flickering flame. A cast of the dice. A wee deoch and doris.

Hello, sweetheart, here is another kiss for you (three cents a copy today). Don't forget to give little Shirley her spinach, dear.

Benedict Arnold certainly was a dirty bum.

Henry the Eighth was a King of England.

Goodnight, sweetheart.

The statements about Benedict Arnold and Henry the Eighth were a reference to Winchell's "Things I Never Knew Till Now" section, appearing occasionally in his column. Winchell was schooled by the street, not by formal education. He never developed much of an appetite for reading beyond the newspapers. An interviewer asked him about books. "Sure, I read books once in a while, but I can't think of the names of any of them now," replied the man who could create a best-seller by a few plugs. In fairness, it must be noted that Winchell's mail was enormous, and that he read a lot of it himself.

Here are a few of the "Things I Never Knew Till Now":

"That only six monkeys were born in the U.S. last yr."

"That helium gas makes the toughest basso sing tenor."

"That in Spain women do not go to funerals unless, of course, they are in the hearse, you dope."

"And that among other things I don't know yet is why they call it a shipment when it goes in a car, and a cargo when it goes in a ship."

Besides a lack of interest in books, Winchell had few if any hobbies or concerns outside what would go into his columns and broadcasts. He saw his first football game when he was 35. He cared so little for sporting events that he once left a baseball game during the eighth inning, with a pitcher going for a no-hitter. He was bored. The baseball-loving press agent who followed him outside was in agony every step. Winchell never played a game of golf or tennis or, apparently, even Ping-Pong. He did not fish or cook. He learned to swim at the age of 41. However, when he was 43 he did learn to rumba, and he was known to go into a record store, put on a disc, and step in time. He and daughter Walda sometimes wowed Stork Club patrons with nifty rumba footwork on the dance floor. His skill as a hooper had not been lost.

The gossip stuck his nose into politics late. In 1932 he wrote: "I don't care whether Roosevelt wins or Hoover loses. I know too much about politics to care." How he learned he never explained.

After Roosevelt's election, Winchell began to say nice things about the new president and his New Deal. But when Eleanor Roosevelt made an uncomplimentary remark about gossip columnists, Winchell reacted with characteristic venom. He made fun of Mrs. Roosevelt's buck teeth. If F.D.R.

was bothered, he didn't let on. Recognizing the public relations value of Winchell's widely disseminated opinions in print and over the air, Roosevelt went out of his way to keep Winchell's support. The president and the gossip columnist met privately a number of times.

"Walter, I've got an item for you," F.D.R. might say.

Winchell informed his friends that during his private sessions with Roosevelt he told the president the latest dirty jokes and got news tips in return, including gossip about Roosevelt's enemies in and out of Congress. (Winchell admitted that he got tips from a lot of people in a sort of easy barter for the latest smutty gags.)

After 1937, Ernest Cuneo, an attorney with New Deal connections, assisted Winchell in reporting national and international affairs. Cuneo later served as a liaison between the OSS and both the FBI and British Intelligence, so he brought considerable inside expertise to the Winchell broadcasts and columns. Cuneo also used Winchell. In 1938 he urged Winchell to broadcast support for a third-term draft. Cuneo's reasoning was Byzantine. He hoped Winchell's broadcast would bring out the Roosevelt opposition so that it could be identified and fought. He also wanted plenty of time for the no-third-term tradition to be talked to death. He got both. Winchell's broadcast lit up the network's telephones. Cuneo recalled:

The President's opposition within and without the Party went absolutely berserk. A firestorm of protest developed. We nearly collapsed with relief. The enemy cannot be destroyed unless he is developed. In one week, Winchell had developed every last ounce of resistance to F.D.R. in the country. We had nearly two full years to destroy it.

It amazes me that the historians have missed this. Practically all of them say the President hadn't made up his mind. They miss the point: the great debate on the third term which Winchell detonated *was* the third-term campaign itself. The President didn't have to lift a finger. Winchell would proclaim and proclaim, F.D.R. would deny and deny, then Winchell would proclaim again.

The denials made Winchell nervous, feeling he was out on a limb assuring listeners that Roosevelt would run. The columnist did not realize that for a long time he, virtually alone, led the third-term campaign. By the time F.D.R. announced, the shock was gone, support had grown, and the opposition had been identified. White House insiders said Winchell's broadcasts and columns provided the 1940 victory margin. Cuneo eventually became a Winchell staffer.

Walter Winchell was one of the few commentators or columnists to support President Roosevelt, the Friend of the Common Man. That made Winchell, too, a Friend of the Common Man. You could trust Winchell, couldn't you? Wall Street could never buy that guy off! And besides that, he was fun to listen to and read. It wasn't too hard to figure out those words he made up, and you could understand everything he said!

Winchell's unabashed support for President Roosevelt irritated his newspaper boss, William Randolph Hearst, whose own early support for

Roosevelt soon changed into hatred. In 1938 Hearst wired all editors of Hearst newspapers publishing Winchell's column: "Please edit Winchell very carefully, and leave out any dangerous or disagreeable paragraphs. Indeed, leave out the whole column without hesitation, as I think he has gotten so careless that he is no longer of any particular value."

Hearst did not spell out what he meant by "dangerous or disagreeable paragraphs," but some editors read it as political. Hearst not only detested the New Deal, he had become quite isolationist as Roosevelt was becoming interventionist in response to events in Europe. Hearst hated the English. He had admired Mussolini and although he was not an admirer of Adolf Hitler, he saw Hitler as a bulwark against communism, which Hearst regarded as the real danger. Such thinking was far from the thoughts running through the head of his popular gossip columnist, a rabbi's grandson.

Winchell's feeling about Adolf Hitler and his Nazis was visceral and immediate. Before most Americans were aware of any problem in Germany, before most columnists and commentators became critical, Walter Winchell attacked Hitler. He did so with cold fury and he never let up.

Starting in 1932, Winchell portrayed Hitler as a homosexual, responding to a tip from foreign correspondent Quentin Reynolds. "Didn't you scream laughing at the way Adolf Hitler lifted his eyes in yesterday's *Mirror*?" ran one mention. The columnist also exposed Fritz Kuhn and other Nazi supporters in the United States, calling them "swastinkas," "swasticooties," "Hitlerooters," and his favorite, "ratzis." Charles Lindbergh was also a frequent target.

Both in Germany and in the United States, the Nazis returned the attack. An article in the official Nazi newspaper, *Völkischer Beobachter*, sneered, "His listeners and readers are morons." In the United States the Bundists asked what else could you expect from a Jew? One night two thugs jumped Winchell and beat him with their fists, cutting his face and loosening a tooth. Winchell was sure they were Bundists.

Winchell joined the Naval Reserve in 1934, concerned about the menace of Hitler. He was commissioned a lieutenant. He plugged the navy on the air and in his column. On the day Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Winchell requested active duty. The navy turned him down because he was 44. Winchell persisted, pulling strings, and three weeks later was sworn in as a lieutenant commander. His job at first was to continue to plug the navy, which he did in his columns and broadcasts, which also continued. He staged benefits for Navy Relief. But when he wore specially tailored navy uniforms to the Stork Club and Lindy's, and even broadcast in uniform, congressmen who did not like Winchell hit the roof. Get off the radio or get out of uniform, they hollered. Winchell did neither. Instead, his broadcasts lambasted congressmen who had been isolationists before the war; others he called "pro-Axis Americans." Such a vendetta developed between Winchell and Mrs. Eleanor (Cissy) Patterson, the fiery isolationist publisher of the *Washington Times-Herald* (which carried the column — except when Cissy killed it), that Winchell refused to sign a new contract with King Features Syndicate unless it contained a clause that the column would not be sold to the *Times-Herald*. However, Winchell never found another Washington outlet.

Lieutenant Commander Walter Winchell was assigned to conduct a one-man goodwill tour of Brazil for two months. Winchell threw himself into the task. The results seemed quite successful and the admiral was pleased. Winchell also collected reports of pro-Nazi activities in Brazil, which he handed over to the navy. The admiral said he was amazed by the quantity and accuracy of the material Winchell collected. He shouldn't have been. Walter Winchell was simply doing what he did so well: gathering news tips and talking to Mr. and Mrs. — in this case — Brazil.

Upon his return, he lit into his enemies in Congress even harder than before. On one broadcast Winchell declared, "What worries me most are all those damned fools who re-elected them." That really hit home, for congressmen tend to be sensitive about constituents who vote for them. Winchell, they said, profaned the Sabbath by saying "damned" on Sunday. Public hearings about Winchell's naval commission were announced by Carl Vinson, chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee and no lover of Walter Winchell. Upset that he might be harming the navy, Winchell went to his commander-in-chief personally with his letter of resignation. Mrs. Winchell's little boy Walter didn't do things in half measure. But neither did Mrs. Roosevelt's little boy Franklin. The president read the letter, crumpled it into the wastebasket, and smiled, "Now, Walter, have you heard any good jokes I should know about?" Roosevelt knew the value of Walter Winchell to his policies, domestic and international.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt represented to Walter Winchell a kind of father figure, the powerful and magnetic father Walter had never had. In his memoirs, *Winchell Exclusive*, the commentator recalled one visit to the president's office at F.D.R.'s request:

Oh, boy! (Whew!) He's going to give me hell or demote me back to apprentice seaman.

The usual greeting of "Good morning" (as you walked quickly to his desk) didn't welcome me. He was busy signing papers.

Grace! ushered me to the chair I always sat in alongside of him. I sat there rigid, like a schoolboy hailed before the principal for misconduct or something.

"Why doesn't he look up and say hello?" I worried. . . .

F.D.R. pushed aside the letters he had signed, removed his eyeglasses and, with his long cigarette holder pointed to the headlines, smiled and softly said, "Thanks."

What a relief! I went limp in the chair.

A compromise with the hostile congressmen was reached. The columnist remained in the navy, but went on the inactive list and hung up his uniform. Said Congressman Claire Hoffman of Michigan, "No longer will Navy men wince at the spectacle of a Broadway gossipier sporting lieutenant commander's stripes while he snoops about night clubs for sexy tidbits." Said Winchell, "Those who tried to force me off the air waves have failed. I am now free to carry on, no longer strangled by the gold braid."

1. Presidential secretary Grace Tully.

On the floor of Congress, Mississippi's John Rankin, one of the nastiest racists ever elected to Congress, claimed that Winchell's real name was Lipshitz, a lie American Bundist leader Fritz Kuhn had been spreading. Rankin also called Winchell "a little slime-mongering kike." Winchell as usual gave at least as good as he got. In broadcasts and columns he slashed not only at Rankin but at Mississippi Senator Theodore Bilbo, Gerald L. K. Smith, and other bigots in public life. Winchell reported in one broadcast that Bilbo wrote a "Dear Dago" letter to an Italian-American woman whose brother had died in the war. Perhaps a lie, but Bilbo reportedly replied to letter writers who protested his bigotry, "Dear Nigger-Lover. . . ."

Winchell also battled Congressman Martin Dies of Texas, under whose chairmanship the House Un-American Activities Committee usually ignored organizations sounding the Nazi line and instead concentrated on organizations and individuals that to him sounded communistic or just too liberal. "How long will America stand for this person from Texas?" Winchell asked. Dies in 1944 subpoenaed all Winchell's scripts and recordings for the previous two years. Dies also demanded and got 15 minutes of air time from the NBC-Blue Network, Winchell's 9 to 9:15 period, which he used to attack Winchell as a "Charlie McCarthy of the Smear Bund." In reply, immediately following Dies, Winchell broadcast "A Newspaperman's Declaration of Independence." Listeners to both broadcasts contended that Winchell won, hands down. A few weeks later Dies announced that he was ill and would not seek reelection. Winchell boasted in his column: "Sudden thaw: Martin Dies quit because there were two obstacles he couldn't overcome. Winchell's opposition and Pegler's support."

NBC and the advertising agency representing Jergens Lotion began monitoring their popular commentator's scripts more closely, censoring remarks they regarded as anti-Republican. Winchell responded by feeding the portions removed to the liberal newspaper *PM*, which each Monday printed "what you could not hear on Walter Winchell's broadcast last night." He soon began writing a regular column for *PM*, based on items removed from his columns by Hearst editors and from his broadcasts. He signed the column Paul Revere II.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's death hit Winchell hard. Years later, when a congressional investigation into the Pearl Harbor attack was critical of F.D.R., Winchell told his Sunday night audience:

There are some very cheap politicians with their eyes on the next elections who are attempting to blacken F.D.R.'s name—who were not fit to blacken his shoes when he was alive.

The truth is, ladies and gentlemen, that Mr. Roosevelt was not to blame for Pearl Harbor, but he was responsible for the grand over-all strategy which gave us victory. And that will be repeated again and again, so long as the mighty Hudson he loved flows to the sea, and so long as electrical current runs to this microphone.

After Roosevelt's death, Winchell changed. He could not develop the same feeling for Harry Truman he had held for F.D.R. Nor was the man

from Missouri charmed by the Broadway columnist. A meeting between the two men arranged by Defense Secretary James Forrestal ended in argument and coldness. Later, Forrestal's suicide would be blamed in part on attacks by Winchell and Drew Pearson. Winchell began criticizing President Truman, who ignored the columnist until Winchell wrote in his column that Truman's daughter Margaret had her nose bobbed secretly in her quest for a singing and acting career. Truman grew so angry that when he appeared at a National Health Week banquet to speak and give out medals to celebrities who had done work in the health field, he refused to present a medal to Winchell.

The president simply said, "Walter Winchell has been involved in the Damon Runyon Memorial fund for Cancer Research since its inception." He left the medal on the podium and sat down. Winchell walked to the podium and said, "This cause is bigger than anyone in this room," then went on with his acceptance speech. The two men never met again.

However, Winchell continued to attack Truman. He supported Thomas Dewey in 1948. He broadcast the lie that Truman had once been a member of the Ku Klux Klan. This and other attacks took Winchell into what had always been the enemy camp. He now made common cause with the right wing. His friends, the liberals, became his new enemies. His vast radio audience and his readers, puzzled at first, began to melt away. But the political right did not now thrill to Walter Winchell, even if he did attack Truman, even if he did support Senator Joseph McCarthy. Westbrook Pegler, the witty newspaperman-essayist of the twenties who became the venomous reactionary of the forties and fifties, had lost none of his skill when he savaged Winchell, whom he once called "the gents-room journalist":

I had watched the rise of Winchell to a power and wealth which are a fantastic reproach to journalism and radio. The truest observation ever made about Winchell was to the effect that he enjoyed absolute freedom from the inhibitions that restrain most of us because he realized that he could never move as an equal among those whom he envied, and therefore needn't make the effort.

His money can't buy the one thing that he bitterly desires. Neither can the threat of dirty calumny compel superior men to propitiate him.

As he often did in his later years, Pegler missed the mark. Winchell was no parvenu social climber, certainly not among his fellow journalists, nor among entertainment celebrities, for whom the one-time song and dance man had little respect or regard. Pegler's earlier essay about Winchell, parodying the absurdities of his column, hit the mark dead center. Much about Winchell was absurd, but if he ever envied other men, he did not show it.

Winchell's political alliance with Senator McCarthy—partly based on fear—was a 180-degree turnaround for a commentator who had supported liberal causes for two decades, attacked fascism before it became fashionable to do so, and praised the fighting spirit of the Russian soldiers during World War II. Even Westbrook Pegler now managed to be cordial when they met.

although not much love was lost between the two waspish columnists. The only time Winchell criticized Joseph McCarthy was when the senator defended German SS officers convicted of killing American prisoners at Malmedy. As it had been in the days of F.D.R., a liaison with Walter Winchell was mutually beneficial. McCarthy got lots of strokes on the air and in print. Winchell got tips. During the 1954 Senate investigation of McCarthy, Winchell was called to testify. He admitted having possession of a secret FBI document, but he didn't remember who gave it to him, he said, and he wouldn't tell if he did remember. He said J. Edgar Hoover had advised him that he could be jailed if he let the information in the document become public, so he burned the papers and flushed them down the toilet.

When Hoover became ill, Winchell made political capital of it by a direct personal appeal familiar to listeners, tugging at the heart strings. It was a typical Winchell ploy:

WASHINGTON. John Edgar Hoover, the top G-man is still very sick. The doctors call it bronchial pneumonia. In my opinion, ladies and gentlemen, that's just another way of spelling exhaustion. Exhaustion from twenty-five years of overwork in public service, at practically a dollar and a quarter a week. G-man Hoover is very sick, and I'm sure I know why. It is heartache; heartache over the attempt by Senator Ferguson and others in both parties to get the top G-man fired. President Truman doesn't know about it, I'm sure; but you the people can let him know about it right now, please, by writing to the President at the White House, Washington, to see that it doesn't happen.

One of the tragedies of Winchell's life was that while his enemies grew in number, his friends became fewer. The talented, alcoholic newspaperman and short story writer, Damon Runyon, squandered the fortune he had made writing short stories and, when he was broke, discovered that he was dying of cancer. A heavy smoker, Runyon lost his larynx to the surgeon's knife. The cancer spread. It was only a matter of time. Winchell remained by his side, taking him along to the Stork Club and the other night spots on his Broadway beat, keeping him company through the long pain-filled hours of night in Winchell's car with the red light and the siren and the police radio. Without a larynx Runyon could not speak. He interrupted Winchell's endless flow of chatter—always about Winchell—with notes scribbled on a pad, notes like, "Walter, you're full of shit."

When Runyon died in 1944, Winchell established the Damon Runyon Memorial Fund for Cancer Research. He plugged it continually on the air and in his columns, beginning with this announcement:

Mr. and Mrs. United States, a very good friend of mine—a great newspaperman, Damon Runyon—was killed this week by the number two killer, cancer. Let's do something about this terrible thing. Let's fight back. Will you please send a penny, nickel, dime or a dollar? I will turn over all of your donations—no expenses deducted of any kind—to cancer fighters to help them in cancer research.

The money poured in from everywhere. Buckets of it. Barrels of it. By 1970, more than \$32 million had been gathered and disbursed for cancer research. Probably no single individual has collected so much for a charity. And Walter Winchell, who once walked subway riders home in the rain for pennies, was true to his word. Nothing was ever deducted for expenses.

Runyon and many of Winchell's other friends drank heavily. Throughout his career Winchell moved in a booze-filled world. Yet he drank little himself, except coffee. Two martinis were his outside limit in an entire night of nightclubbing. It's hard to believe, but what Winchell liked to drink was chocolate sodas, and he usually drank two of these nightly. Naturally, the press agents who followed him around loved to drink chocolate sodas, too.

Since he didn't drink, there was little for him to pay for at nightclubs. Anyhow he seldom got a bill from proprietors, who were delighted that he showed up. However, when a dinner waiter did bring a check, the skinflint in him took over. Walter Winchell was one of the great check fumlbers. On those few occasions when he and Drew Pearson, another tightwad, lunched together without a government official or press agent around to pick up the tab, the after-lunch check fumbling was the best show in town.

One night at the Stork Club, Josephine Baker and three friends ordered a snack. When it did not appear after a lengthy wait, the party left, convinced they were victims of discrimination. The next night the black singer and dancer appeared on the Barry Gray talk show to complain about it. She stated that Walter Winchell had seen what happened, but did nothing. Liberals, already angered by Winchell's political turnabout, jumped to the attack. Winchell defended himself on his Sunday night broadcast, saying he was appalled at efforts to involve him in an incident in which he had no part. In fact, Winchell had praised Miss Baker when she was dancing in the Folies Bergère and when she opened her act in Miami. Now Winchell reacted as he always did when he was attacked. He gave at least as good as he got. He began attacking Josephine Baker on the air and in print, saying that she herself was anti-Negro and had supported Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia and was now pro-Communist. Old Winchell enemy Ed Sullivan waded in:

I despise Walter Winchell for what he has done to Josephine Baker. . . . This smalltime vaudeville hooper has developed into a smalltime Hitler. . . .

This man has the audacity to give out sage opinions on foreign policy and he has never been to France, to England, to Germany, to Italy, to Ireland. He has never even crossed the ocean. I'll bet him a thousand dollars to one that he can't draw the map of Europe, can't possibly.

Sullivan's biting attack was made on Barry Gray's talk show. Twice during the next few months Gray was jumped by thugs. Once they left him with his skull fractured. Winchell had been a friend of Gray and had done him some favors. Now he lambasted him mercilessly and tried unsuccessfully to get him fired. He did manage to scare celebrities from appearing on Gray's radio program.



Muckraking writer-publisher Lyle Stuart put out a tabloid newspaper, *Expose*, which spit poison at Winchell. The material formed the basis of a nasty book, *The Secret Life of Walter Winchell*. In response, at Winchell's behest, police raided Stuart's office and arrested him for publishing comic books which they said were obscene. And one day three thugs blackjacked Stuart unconscious. Who sent them was never determined. It probably was not Winchell, who chose other weapons. Winchell attacked Stuart on the air: "Read about this rat." Stuart sued and collected \$21,500.

The New York *Post* now began running article after article critical of Walter Winchell, a series of twenty-four articles in all. This time Winchell did not hit back immediately, but suspended his columns and broadcasts for two months. Then he roared back in his old form, lashing at "the New York *Post*stitute" or "the New York *Compost*," accusing editor James Wechsler of being a Red. Winchell and the *Post* sued each other. The suit ended with a formal apology by Winchell to Wechsler in print and over the air.

Jack Paar, the popular late-night television talk show moderator, sniped at him repeatedly, doing to Winchell what Winchell had done to so many others, lashing out at someone again and again to an audience of millions.

Winchell was becoming increasingly isolated. The liberals who once loved him now hated him. The conservatives never really warmed to him. He still had his press agent pack of sycophants and there were still many in the entertainment world who feared his power, but that power was waning as his audience waned. The decade of the fifties was not to be what the decades of the thirties and forties had been. Old friends slipped away or left with parting wrath. Columnist Leonard Lyons noted that Walter Winchell had never voted in his life. Winchell admitted this was so but defended himself with spirit, saying he "was busy voting against Communists, Fascists, Nazis and crooked Democrats and Republicans." Arthur Godfrey resigned as president of the Damon Runyon Memorial Fund for Cancer Research after a quarrel. Winchell even broke with good ol' Sherm Billingsley. The Stork Club eventually was torn down. In its place was created a vest-pocket park. People who could never get past the head waiter now rested their feet. Something else was happening in the fifties. Network radio was dying. ABC gave Winchell a \$500,000-plus television contract for telecasts of his regular radio broadcasts. But what worked on radio failed on television. Winchell looked ridiculous on the tube. In Marshall McLuhan terms, Winchell was hot content in a cool medium. And he was sounding less newsy, less fun, and more opinionated than ever. Winchell tried such tricks as giving tips on horses and stocks, until the Senate Banking Committee and the Securities and Exchange Commission investigated manipulations in *Pantapec Oil*, a Winchell-touted stock.

In 1955 Winchell quarreled with ABC over which of them was responsible for punitive libel damages. In a huff he resigned. Perhaps to his surprise, ABC accepted the resignation. Winchell had given up a lifetime contract bringing him \$16,000 a week plus a hookup of 365 radio stations and 45 television stations. He went to the Mutual Broadcasting System, a comedown.

He tried hosting a variety program, "The Walter Winchell Show," over NBC in 1956, but low ratings caused its cancellation after thirteen weeks.

There were quarrels with the director and pettiness from Winchell, who was now 60 years old. One guest, singer Jane Froman, wore leg braces because of an airplane accident. Guests normally were assigned dressing rooms on the second floor, but the producer decided to give Miss Froman Winchell's dressing room, the only one at stage level. The producers were sure Walter wouldn't mind, since he had offered its use the previous week to Helen Hayes. But Winchell did mind: "No goddamn singer is going to run me out of my dressing room!" Miss Froman hobbled to the second floor without complaining.

Winchell tried television again the following season with "The Walter Winchell File," crime stories based on his own records. That lasted the whole season. Then he hit television paydirt as narrator of "The Untouchables," which had a successful four-year run over ABC. "The Untouchables," starring Robert Stack, was a series of stories about how federal agents fought crime in Chicago during Prohibition.

Winchell tried another television newscast over the ABC network in 1960, but gave it up after six weeks. He continued his Mutual broadcasts. Winchell had done a little traveling outside the country by now, going to Asia with President Eisenhower, who didn't seem to like Walter Winchell any more than Harry Truman did. During his late 60s, Winchell covered the riots at Columbia University. When he protested to a cop who was hitting a reporter, the cop turned and bopped Winchell on the head with his club. Winchell was not seriously hurt.

But this was a new generation. Winchell had outlived his own. The trouble was, he couldn't quit. He couldn't allow himself to get bored. He couldn't slow down, even when he was slowing down. Age was the one son-of-a-bitch Walter Winchell couldn't get even with. Newspapers by the hundreds were dropping the column. Editors couldn't even understand what he was referring to anymore. Anyhow, gossip was boring. More important things were happening. The Winchell voice, too, had lost much of its snap.

He kept trying. On September 13, 1967, he ran a full-page ad in *Variety* under the headline: WW BACK IN SHOW BIZ. He begged New York City editors to consider taking the column: "Is the 2nd Largest Newspaper Circulation in America [*Wall Street Journal*] in the market for an extra janitor? . . . *Women's Wear Daily*, maybe? *N.Y. Morning Telegraph*? Never claimed being a newspaperman, Mr. Editor. Always called myself a newsboy. Peddling papers. Why not audition the column for one month?"

Winchell was 70 years old when he ran that ad, and a millionaire. He admitted later that he was humiliated by it and by its lack of response.

A little more than a year later, Walter Winchell, Jr., broke, half mad, and abandoned by his father, committed suicide. Shortly after, Walter, Sr., retired, gave up the column, gave up the broadcast, gave up—deeply depressed by his estranged son's death. He joined June in Scottsdale. They spent a year together before she died in 1970. And by now, friends were few.

On February 20, 1972, Walter Winchell died of cancer of the prostate at the UCLA Medical Center. His daughter Walda said, "Technically he died of cancer, but actually it was a broken heart." Most of his estate went to her, but

only as income from a trust, and she sued to break the will. As for his two small grandchildren by his poverty-stricken son, Walter Winchell left them \$500 each.

He once joked that his epitaph should read: "Here lies Walter Winchell . . . with his ear to the ground . . . as usual."

To review Walter Winchell's life and conclude that he was a small man isn't enough, for Americans accorded him admiration and power that weren't small.

Perhaps it's truer to say he dazzled Americans with his fancy footwork and at times he rose above the smallness of his nature. Isn't that enough, Mr. and Mrs. America and all the ships at sea?

Izzatso!

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*30 Years of Knowing Who and Knowing How . . .*

—Advertisement for "Baukhage Talking"

# BAUKHAGE

HILMAR ROBERT BAUKHAGE—better known simply as Baukhage, the only name he used on the air—was born on January 7, 1889, in LaSalle, Illinois, descendant of a Prussian high court judge. The family soon moved to Buffalo, New York, and there he went to high school, where he began a lifelong friendship with classmate David Lawrence. Baukhage went on to the University of Chicago, earning a degree in literature and developing a strong liking for the kind of poetry Rudyard Kipling was writing. Before graduation he had some experience on the *Chautauqua Daily* near his home and the university's *Daily Maroon*.

The young man added to his scholarly store by continuing his studies abroad at universities in Bonn (1911), Kiel (1912), Jena (1912), Freiburg (1913), and the Sorbonne (1913). The fluency he acquired in French and German would stand him well in later years. While at the Sorbonne he found employment as an assistant to the Paris correspondent of London's *Pall Mall Gazette*. He also filed a few stories for the Associated Press. He returned to the United States in 1914, the year war broke out in Europe, and joined the AP in Washington, D.C., covering the State Department and the various embassies and legations. As the only diplomatic correspondent fluent in French, Baukhage volunteered to translate communiqués into English for dissemination to the press, asking in return that he be allowed to use the telephone at the French embassy. Naturally he called the AP before handing out his translations.

He left the AP to join *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly*, a forerunner of *Life* and *Look*, rising quickly to assistant managing editor. About this time his contacts in the Austrian embassy tipped him off that the Germans intended to sink the *Lusitania*. What he was able to do with this hot item is not clear, but the *Lusitania* went down in 1916 with the loss of nearly 1,200 lives, including women and children. Among them were 128 Americans. The incident brought the United States closer to war. Years passed before the public learned that the British steamship carried munitions as well as passengers.

When the United States entered the war, Baukhage tried to enlist, but encountered difficulty because of his poor eyesight. He was accepted as a private in the coast artillery and received a second lieutenant's commission in

the field artillery just about the time the war ended. Undaunted, he made it to Europe as a reporter for *Stars & Stripes*, thanks to a contact with the assistant officer in charge of the army newspaper, Steve Early, who later became President Roosevelt's press secretary, a most valuable connection for Baukhage. He arrived in time to cover the Paris Peace Conference, an assignment he got because nobody else on the *Stars & Stripes* staff particularly wanted it.

Baukhage also wrote some doggerel verses to accompany a book of World War I sketches, *I Was There*. Here is a typical poem:

#### THE LINE

Form a line!  
Get in line!  
From the time that I enlisted  
And since Jerry armististed  
I've been standing, kidding, cussing,  
I've been waiting, fuming, fussing,  
In a line.

I have stood in line in mud and slime and sleet,  
With the dirty water oozing from my feet,  
I have soaked and slid and slipped,  
While my tacky slicker dripped,  
And I wondered what they'd hand me out to eat.

Get in Line!  
For supplies and for inspections,  
With the dust in four directions,  
For a chance to scrub the dirt off,  
In the winter with my shirt off,  
In a line.

I have sweated in an August training camp,  
That would make a prohibition town look damp,  
Underneath my dinky cap  
While the sun burned off my map  
And I waited for some gold-fish (and a cramp!)

Get in line!  
For rice, pay-day, pills and ration,  
For corned-willy, army fashion,  
In Hoboken, in the trenches,  
In a station with the Frenchies,  
In a line.

I've been standing, freezing, sweating,  
Pushing, shoving, wheezing, fretting,  
And I won't be soon forgetting  
Though I don't say I'm regretting  
That I stood there, with my buddies,  
In a line.

Returning to the United States in 1919, he made use of another contact. David Lawrence had founded the Consolidated Press Association and Baukhage joined the sales and promotion staff, later serving as bureau chief in Washington, San Francisco, and Chicago. He continued working for Lawrence on *The United States Daily* and *The United States News*, forerunners of *U.S. News & World Report*. In 1922, at the age of 33, he married Marjorie Collins.

In 1932 Hilmar Baukhage began his career in broadcasting with "The National Farm and Home Hour," produced by *The United States News* for the NBC-Blue Network, 12:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Baukhage did a daily 5-minute news commentary. Listeners could get a copy by writing in. After five years of this he made the smooth transition of doing his commentaries directly for the network, becoming an NBC-Blue staff commentator based in Washington. He kept his hand in the print medium by writing a Washington column for the North American Newspaper Alliance, later switching to a weekly column, "Washington Digest," for the Western Newspaper Union syndicate.

NBC-Blue sent him to Europe in 1939 on the eve of war. He was at the Reichstag when Hitler announced the invasion of Poland. Baukhage reported the outbreak of World War II from Berlin. He later said that his greatest regret in thirty years of reporting was that he could not take advantage of the moment. "I was close enough to poke him with a bayonet, but I didn't have one handy."

Baukhage also visited both the Siegfried and Maginot lines and was in Berlin during its first air raid.

Another memorable moment, December 6, 1941, found Baukhage in the Japanese embassy chatting with fellow University of Chicago graduate Saburo Kurusu, an official spokesman for the embassy. While they mused about the good old days on this pleasant Saturday, "There was great activity in the rooms I passed through. People hurrying about—stacks of paper in their hands. The next day I sat before a microphone in the White House press room reporting the attack on Pearl Harbor—as those papers were being burned."

Baukhage was the first reporter ever to broadcast directly from the White House. He recalled: "Hardly more than minutes [after news came of the Pearl Harbor attack] the first microphone ever set up in the White House press room was keeping me busy sending out the bulletins. Soon others were set up and the place was in bedlam." The following day he anchored NBC-Blue's broadcast from the Capitol, as the Congress heard the president speak of the "day that will live in infamy."

NBC-Blue became the American Broadcasting Company, Baukhage remaining on staff to become its Washington commentator with a 15-minute program at 1 p.m. EST called "Baukhage Talking," the words he used as his daily greeting. Neither he nor the announcers used his first name. He might begin: "Washington . . . August 4 . . . and in just a moment I'll tell you what we're thinking about here today." *Commercial*. "Baukhage talking . . ."

Here is the first part of his broadcast of November 25, 1945, from Nuremberg:

Baukhage talking: This is the Court Room of the War Criminal trial on November 20, 1945. In just a moment I'll tell you what we've been thinking about this trial today.

— *Commercial* —

I'm sitting just where I sat yesterday when I talked to you. We are now in the second closing half. On my left the Judges are seated, the representatives of the Foreign nations with their flags: Russian, British, United States and French.

On my left is the bench. The bench of course faces the defense and now we have plenty of them in line and I'll introduce them to you more personally in a moment. There are some twenty, I believe, in the Counsel for the Defense. There are about twenty persons, too—there are thirty or forty, I believe in the Counsel for the Offense. They are seated, naturally, on the floor of the courtroom. The defense faces the bench. Beyond and in front of me are a few correspondents and a few visitors that are level with me in the gallery. When I came in this morning it was quite a surprise to see Goering sitting there. He looked so different from what he had on that day when I saw him in 1939 when he presided over the Reichstag meeting—the results of which he and his colleagues are learning today. Hermann Goering weighs about 220 pounds, and he looks older, it is true, but not bloated. He is dressed in one of the many uniforms which he salvaged, but he has no decorations. He said yesterday that the organization to which these men belonged was no longer in existence and they can wear no decorations.

Next to him is Hess. Hess, — tall, easy-going, relaxed, and number two man of the Nazi Party is now a nervous creature with sunken cheeks, and eyes moving quickly under dark eyebrows. He's sitting there now and his arms are folded and he's moving his head. He slept a little. Some people say this is an act. If he is acting the role of a mad man he has a good natural make up.

Next to him is Ribbentrop—the dandy. He's a little bit frowzy now and his white hair is ruffled. He wears no monocle. Next to him is General Keitel. He has one of his blue uniforms with brass buttons and no decorations. He is gray, but perhaps the most dignified member of the Defense. Next to him sits Rosenberg, Rosenberg—the man who invented the theory of the Herrenwaffe. He looks younger. He has a pug nose and he's dressed in a brown suit. Right now he's nervously feeling his mouth with his hand. He did that all through the reading of the indictment, which has just been read.

Next to him is tall nervous Frick. He's following the text. He's responsible for crimes in Bohemia and Moravia. . . .

Some days the broadcast would consist of many items, other days, as above, just one. It might be an interview or a light essay on the gossip of the chattering squirrels on the White House lawn. One slow day he interviewed the statue of Thomas Jefferson. He often quoted the classics. Baukhage gave himself wide latitude on topic and format. On a visit to



Florida, during which he followed his occasional practice of reporting on local weather, flora, and fauna, Baukhage found time to talk about the lizards. On his return to Washington he found a box of Florida lizards in his mail. He settled them in an aquarium, but despite his efforts they died. This he reported on the air. The man who sent the lizards figured they needed Florida flies, so he sent a box of these. Of course, the lizards were now dead, and there was no one who wanted to eat the flies.

In other mail Baukhage received such treats as dogwood berries from Canada, trailing arbutus from New Hampshire, sage and cactus from Wyoming, and praying mantis from Virginia, as listeners responded to what Baukhage liked to talk about.

ABC sold the program on a co-op basis, with Baukhage recording local commercial lead-ins for the stations buying the program: "This is Baukhage speaking for Jones Motors of 105 Main Street, Springfield. I'll be back in a minute with news of interest after this word from Jones Motors."

A blue-eyed, rangy six-footer with a brush mustache, an easy-going manner, and a tendency toward absentmindedness, "Buck" Baukhage—his friends never called him Hilmar—often reached the studio a minute or so before air time. Like F.D.R., he wore pince-nez glasses.

His politics were generally middle-of-the-road. Listeners regarded Baukhage as an informed, objective commentator who considered all sides of a controversial matter before commenting on it, although he said "there was no use kidding myself into the idea that I could be fully objective." Like many commentators he kept himself informed by reading widely and by interviewing top political and military figures in Washington. He was considered particularly knowledgeable in financial matters.

One of his wartime broadcasts had this to say:

And so the commentator has come to take a new role in democracy. Thanks to the fact that the radio is continually dinning at you, officials themselves have become publicity conscious and there is a movement on foot to take government back to the people, because the people are demanding it.

President Roosevelt's death caught radio commentators, as well as the rest of the world, by surprise. At the Blue, Earl Godwin began his regular 6:15 p.m. commentary from Washington, but was unable to continue, so great was his emotion. Baukhage completed the broadcast. An hour later, Raymond Gram Swing went on the air with an accounting of the president's record in office, offering what many listeners considered the best commentary of the evening. He was followed by Raymond Moley, recalling his association with the president and other friends and colleagues. Meanwhile, Fulton Lewis, Jr., a bitter critic of F.D.R., had spoken over Mutual at 7 p.m. of the nation's "staggering loss," followed on NBC at 7:45 p.m. by H. V. Kaltenborn. Douglas Edwards from London and Lowell Thomas from Luxembourg had been among those commenting at CBS.

Baukhage stood out a few days later with his description of the Hyde Park funeral service, a broadcast preserved in an aluminum recording by the Library of Congress, the text published in the *Congressional Record* and reprinted in several newspapers. For it, Baukhage received the National Headliners Club Award for the best domestic broadcast of the year.

He choked a bit as he spoke, leaving long pauses between some of his words. His voice had a nasal quality that day, as if he were holding back a tear. No doubt some of his listeners did not hold back.

Here is how that broadcast began:

Baukhage talking from this little house down the . . . Boston Post Road a bit from Hyde Park, where I've come following . . . President Truman, . . . a little way from the rolling farmland and woodland and . . . hedgerows and stone fences and plowed fields . . . and the old home behind the trees where Franklin Roosevelt . . . first saw the light . . . over the hills of the Hudson . . . and where I've just left him in the midst of his own acres, taking his last, long rest.

I'm not going to . . . talk about the death of a president today because I'm thinking about something else. I'm thinking about an American, like others who fell at Lexington and Appomattox, at San Juan Hill and Château Thierry, on the Normandy beaches, on Guadalcanal, at Aachen, and now at the very gates of Berlin . . .

Baukhage possessed a deep, slightly raspy baritone—a good broadcast voice. His enunciation was clear. His writing could be erudite, but almost never was. His grammar, of course, was excellent. In a note to himself about the speech-writing style of a British politician, Baukhage observed: “He changes phrases, repeats words in order to get emphasis or when he wants to break a sentence, and then brings back the subject or the verb by repeating it. I frequently do it. It was a great stunt of Roosevelt’s.”

Among his other awards was one from the alumni association of his alma mater, the University of Chicago, and another from *Radio Life Magazine* as the most “listenable” commentator on the air. He was praised for his gentle sense of humor and his ability to make important people seem “human.” One reporter said of him, “For ‘Buck’ the story of events is the story of personalities, and he succeeds in making ‘big shots’ and their eccentricities just as understandable as ‘small fry.’ ”

He could be very human about himself. On a flight to Germany in 1946 he found himself seated in a military aircraft next to Colonel Anthony Biddel of the Joint Allied Command. Baukhage’s diary read:

3:45 p.m.—Fasten seat belts. No smoking. We are coming in. I have just had a very interesting chat with Biddel. Foolish thought. If we crash, he’ll get all the publicity.

In addition to his ABC broadcasts, Baukhage began to broadcast occasionally over Mutual after 1948 and switched to that network full time in 1951. “Baukhage Talking” reached some 545 stations. However, Mutual

cancelled his program in 1953 because a new network manager felt his salary was too high and his 15-minute commentary ran too long; this, though his local sponsorship across the country continued strong. Baukhage, now 64, decided to retire.

His network activity ceased, but he grew frustrated just fishing. He returned to write an investment column for the Army, Navy and Air Force *Register* newspapers and a number of magazine articles. After 1959 he also did some broadcasts for "Pentagon Reports," a weekly program for American troops overseas, distributed by the Armed Forces Network, plus a column for *U.S. News & World Report* from 1963 to 1967.

A series of strokes forced him to cease work. He lived quietly with his wife in Washington, D.C., where he died in February 1976 at the age of 87.

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It got so that I would lock the door at night but come back to try it again and again, held by an uncertainty which made me feel the door was not locked. I would put on my shoes, tie the laces and then untie them, lace and tie them, perhaps fifteen or twenty times, until I would give up in exhaustion and go to bed.

I began doing things for good luck. I thought that if I touched a certain tree when leaving the house, it would help. Why a tree? I never knew. I doubt if I shall ever know. I began to touch different objects around the house, some a dozen times a day. Time and again I would go out into the woods to be alone and curse myself and call myself every name I knew, and then I would fall down in the grass and sob and cry until I barely had strength enough left to go home again.

—*There's Good News Tonight*

courtesy Broadcast Pioneers Library



## Gabriel Heatter

ALL his life Gabriel Heatter fought compulsions, obsessions, depressions, and phobias. Even when 20 million listeners hung on his cheering words some wartime evenings, Heatter was so torn up inside that he would shrink from the coming of nightfall and sometimes could scarcely bring himself to meet a stranger.

Except for his family, "Gabe" was close to being a recluse, as close as it was possible for a leading news commentator who also served as the moderator of a popular entertainment program, "We, the People." While other commentators regularly sought out government and other news sources and sounded them out at lunches, Gabe ate lunch at home with his wife. On Saturdays, his only day off, he would sometimes dine with an ambassador or a Supreme Court justice.

Yet the letters poured in from all over America: "Thank God for Gabriel Heatter, who makes it possible for us to sleep at night."

He was born in 1890 in New York's Lower East Side, one of five children

of Henry and Anna Heatter, immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. When he was four the family moved to another lower class tenement neighborhood in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn. Henry Heatter stitched together a living as a tailor, first for someone else, then for himself, one of many tailors who did contract work when they could get it on material sent over from Manhattan factories. The Heatters' was a warm and loving home, with the parents pushing the kids to study, because an education was the way out of the ghetto and America put no restrictions on Jewish children going to school. Heatter recalled those days in his autobiography, *There's Good News Tonight*:

Parents lived for their children completely. They seemed to feel it was too late for them, but not for their children, even in the ghetto of Brownsville. I call it a ghetto because it might as well have been a real one. A boy who lived in Brownsville, even a grown man with a beard, would take his life in his hands to go beyond the limit, never more than ten blocks either way. The minute school let out Brownsville boys would line up on one side of a street and the non-Brownsville or gentile boys would line up on the other. The battle of rocks would last until it was too dark to see.

Despite the family pressures to excel and the hostile world immediately outside of his neighborhood, Gabriel's life seemed normal, for these pressures were shared by all his friends. And there were compensations. The boy read a lot, even reading books while walking to school. He played ball, joined school debating and literary clubs, and went on dates with girls. In the warm evenings everyone strolled the streets to enjoy the air and chat with their neighbors.

Yet Gabriel began to develop depressions and fears:

It seems to me that when I was only twelve I used to feel a depression set in with the coming of night. Anxiety. I was afraid of night. I hoped it would delay its coming. I would walk at night, I suppose, to ease that feeling of anxiety. It seemed to wear off as I walked. I would walk a mile or two. The harder it rained or snowed, the more exhilaration I found. I would come home drenched, but it never bothered me. I would sleep at an open window and let the snow half-bury my face as it came down. . . .

I was afraid of dogs. That I remember clearly. If a dog followed me, no matter how small or friendly-looking, I would feel a chill of fear down the back of my spine.

As an adult, Heatter owned dogs, but he never overcame his fear of strange dogs, even though he developed a national reputation for his news stories about heroic and loyal dogs.

Despite his love of books, the boy was not a brilliant student. Mathematics totally floored him. He failed to get his high school diploma because he couldn't pass the math test.

Gabriel did have one talent. He spoke well. Even as a child his voice was rich. When he was 10 years old a neighbor used to take him to the center of a

vacant lot so that the boy could practice speaking out of doors. When he was 16, Gabriel debated the affirmative on the subject of city ownership of utilities. A politician heard him and offered him a job in the mayoral campaign of William Randolph Hearst, who then favored municipal ownership of utilities. Preceded by fireworks and a small German band, Gabriel, billed as "the boy orator," warmed up a crowd in front of whatever hall or saloon Hearst was scheduled to speak in. When the car carrying Hearst would approach, a honk on the auto horn would be Gabriel's signal to wind it up fast, jump down from his barrel, and run to the next location, repeating this five or six times a night:

People would yell, "Does your mother know you're out?" or "Why don't you go home and do your homework?" or "How much are you being paid?" Someone else would yell, "Shut up! Give the kid a chance"; and more than once a group of boys would come rushing from behind and down would go barrel and boy orator.

Apples used to be my favorite food until one night an overripe apple landed with remarkable accuracy on the tip of my nose. I gave them up after that, for every time I reached for an apple I had a sensation I never want to experience again.

Curiously, the boy did not meet the candidate he declaimed for until the election was over. Hearst had lost. The publisher summoned him and asked him what he wanted to be. "A reporter," replied Gabriel. Hearst gave him a note to his editor at the *New York Journal*. "Come in when you are ready," he said.

Gabriel Heatter realized he was not ready for a job on a New York metropolitan daily. During the campaign he had secured a part-time job as a reporter for the weekly *East New York Record*. Under a tough editor he learned economy of language:

Any time I tried to add a few paragraphs for color, his blue pencil came down with fury.

"Young man," he'd shout, "don't you know the entire story of Creation is told in under six hundred words? Have you ever counted the words of the Gettysburg Address?" And out would come my purple prose. I didn't realize it then, for I had never heard of radio, but this training was very valuable. When I finally got into radio without any preparation for facing a microphone, I had to measure the time in split seconds and get off the air when the light said "Off." This editor taught me never to use three words where one would do.

At 19 young Heatter joined the *Brooklyn Times* as a full-time reporter. He also became Brooklyn correspondent for Hearst's *Journal*. And he attended classes at New York University. When election time came again, Heatter became a volunteer speaker for a candidate for alderman, the man who built the first public baths at Coney Island. Heatter joined the campaign because it gave him another chance to get up on a platform and talk.

His next venture was an attempt with two other youths to start a

newspaper of their own. The *Weekly Reporter* lasted for seven issues. After it failed, Heatter went back to working for New York metropolitan dailies. A series on slum children called "Children of the Crucible" won a prize. He also served for a time as a political correspondent in Albany.

In 1915, when he was 25, Heatter married:

Saidie Hermalin was twenty-three when we met. She had been teaching school for two years on the Lower East Side of New York, teaching a class that many women would hesitate to take on. These were grown boys of fifteen and older, who came to school with knives and slingshots. Even Saidie, who was as fearless as any woman I ever met, would never dare close the door to her classroom. Virtually every day she had to take on some rough customer who was out to make trouble. She was only five feet four inches tall, and weighed 110 pounds, but she never backed away.

In their years together the five-foot four-inch Saidie would provide the strong emotional support the six-foot "Gabe" needed to cope with the world outside his door. Her inner strength and his powerful voice made them a team to beat.

Saidie's father, David Hermalin, was the well-known editor of *Der Tag* (*The Day*), a Yiddish daily.

In 1918, with World War I nearly over, Gabriel, Saidie, and their 2-year-old daughter, Maida, sailed to London, where Heatter was to begin a job for the Congoleum Company, which made linoleum. His job would have been to persuade foreign governments to grant import licenses on the ground that Congoleum floor covering did not really compete with locally manufactured floor coverings. But Heatter never started the job because of a fresh onset of the unknown terrors that obsessed him. The family returned to the United States shortly after they sailed away. For the next year or two he barely functioned:

. . . if anybody in the house mentioned trouble, however far away, the horrible nightmare feeling came back and I had to go up to my room and just sit there and look at the wall, curse my weaknesses and my fear, and call myself names I would never use for another human being.

. . . I try desperately to recall what I did with my days and my nights. I remember that I was unable to work, virtually unable to leave the house. My wife would persuade me to walk around the block once or twice. After that I had to go back inside.

The small family survived on financial help from both sets of parents. A year after their son Basil was born, Heatter, now 30, recovered enough from his nervous breakdown to hold a temporary publicity job in the Warren Harding campaign. This was followed by a job writing for the magazine *Forest and Stream*. Heatter had learned something about the outdoors from his father-in-law, an avid fisherman and hunter. Heatter tried going hunting with him, but the older man's toughness didn't rub off:



He walked off with the dogs and I was alone with a gun. The dogs picked up a scent. I could hear their shrill bark. Finally, in that patch where I was stationed, a rabbit came through and seemed paralyzed for a moment as he sat poised on his haunches facing me. He was no more than five yards away. He was evidently so surprised to find anyone there that he froze completely and didn't move. It was as perfect a shot as anyone could ask for. Even I could never miss that one. But instead of taking aim, I froze just as the rabbit did. Finally I motioned with my gun as if to say, "Get out of here. Go on. Get out."

The rabbit paid no attention. I could hear the dogs coming closer and knew I had to do something. I walked up to the rabbit and almost poked him with the gun, at which point he broke and made for the woods.

What Heatter wrote for *Forest and Stream* was certainly not on the art of bagging a rabbit. He wrote inspiring pieces about the spiritual rebirth and the good health that can be found by communing with the great outdoors. Although the author at times almost had to be dragged out the front door by his wife, the images he conveyed were moving enough to land him a job as editor of a steel magazine, *The Shaft*. He was also expected to travel around the country giving pep talks. It was all he could do to get on a train to Pittsburgh, but once there he managed to make a creditable appearance, including a speech to some 150 steel industry men. Heatter gave them what he gave the readers of *Forest and Stream* and what he was to give millions of radio listeners year after year. He gave them inspiration. The campfire, the forge, and the battle were only incidental to Heatter's real subjects, hope and cheer. That was why some radio listeners would address letters to "The Rev. Gabriel Heatter." The frightened man had found his calling. Although he himself was terrified by nameless dread, he inspired others.

Here is a sample of his writing at this time:

Upstream is where the rocks and boulders are. Where the rapids run. And the climb is hard and high. . . . If you want to float and coast along, downstream is your highway. And you will find lots of company. But if you are going anywhere at all and really want to get there—upstream is your road.

The decade of the twenties passed relatively quietly for Heatter. In 1931 he sent an article to *The Nation*, which printed it in 1932 under the title, "No Room for a Socialist Party in the United States." Written as an open letter to Socialist party leader Norman Thomas, it urged him to strip his program bare of "the verbiage it has gathered through the ages, and offer it to people in language they understand and approve." The article was followed on the page by Thomas's reply.

The program director of New York radio station WMCA read both statements and proposed a debate between Thomas and Heatter. When Heatter arrived at the station he learned that Thomas had been called out of town. He was asked to use the entire time to discuss the article. A week later

he was asked to come back to talk on another subject for 15 minutes. That broadcast led to the offer of a job as news commentator, 15 minutes each evening, seven nights a week. He was 42 years old, a modest man, tall and slightly heavysset, with a broad, ruddy face and prominent features, embarking on a new career at \$40 per week. Heatter later recalled that he was paid nothing whatever, getting only the promise of a salary if a sponsor would appear. Whichever is accurate, it was far less than the \$400,000 a year he would earn at his peak, when 196 stations of the Mutual Broadcasting System would carry his commentaries six nights a week.

A year later he found a sponsor that wanted to advertise on a larger station, WOR. The sponsor, a beer company, hired him to do publicity as well as to broadcast the news at \$75 per broadcast, doing four newscasts a week. However, at the end of the first week the company told him, "Mr. Heatter, you can't be on two payrolls. The salary you are getting for publicity will have to cover the radio work." At his wife's urging, Heatter gritted his teeth and stuck with it, living on the low publicity salary.

When Bruno Hauptmann was tried in 1935 in Flemington, New Jersey, for the kidnap-murder of the Lindbergh baby, WOR sent Heatter to do three broadcasts daily for the Mutual network. In his autobiography Heatter wrote:

I realized that radio had never before broadcast a murder trial and this was the most sensational of all trials. I began to see Colonel Lindbergh's face on the keys of my typewriter. I seemed to feel him talking straight at me and saying, "Remember—this is a story of a dead baby. My baby." This was a time for respect, for good taste. This was no time to sensationalize.

All the softness and gentleness in the newscaster's personality flowed out in a voice of liquid sympathy. Not for him the strident anger of Boake Carter, who had covered the initial investigation by attacking the New Jersey governor and declaiming against organized crime. Not for him the scoop interview or any other hoopla which eventually led the American Bar Association to write the famous Canon 35, which to this day has barred the broadcasting and photography of trials. Gabriel Heatter felt the human tragedy and that is what he reported.

The public responded with praise. Critic Alexander Woollcott pushed through the crowd to introduce himself and shake the surprised Heatter's hand. One day the court clerk came to him:

"You are Gabriel Heatter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Judge Trenchard wants to see you up at the bench."

Now the old fears came with the force of an avalanche. What had I done? It must be something terrible. Did I say anything to offend him? When he began to speak he smiled and said, "Mrs. Trenchard has given me a special assignment. You are doing so much work here she wanted to make certain you would be where you could write. She doesn't want you to take sick rushing out to your broadcasts. I have arranged with the court clerk for you to share his desk."

Ghoulish as it sounds, Heatter's coverage of the trial brought him three sponsors.

A year later Hauptmann was executed and Heatter was on the air to cover it for what was foreseen as a 5-minute broadcast over the entire Mutual Network. But the 5-minutes dragged on to 50. With few notes, Heatter ad-libbed in that deep, warm, emotion-filled voice which could communicate anguish so well:

I am in a hotel room looking at a certain window . . . as close as I wish to get to a room in which a man is about to die . . . could not bring myself to enter the chamber itself . . . merely waiting for a signal . . . will come in a moment . . . merely a moment . . . there will be no reprieve, of that I am certain . . . perhaps I am wrong, perhaps the cold, silent man has talked at last. . . .

Wonder what's going on in that room . . . it wouldn't be a confession . . . no, that silent fellow, lips pressed together, would not confess . . . an accomplice? . . . type who works alone . . . reprieve? . . . doubtful if Governor . . .

A writer recalled that evening:

Soaked in sweat, Heatter began desperately to improvise. He reviewed the highlights of the trial, philosophized, moralized and speculated on the possibility of a reprieve; then did it all over again, with variations. This went on until 8:48, when the word that Hauptmann was dead came from the penitentiary gate. When it was all over, Heatter was near collapse, but his marathon ad-libbing had made him, and he has had a waiting list of sponsors ever since.

That broadcast brought in more than 50,000 letters. Shortly after, Gabriel Heatter was asked to fill in for the vacationing host of "We, the People," a highly rated CBS program. Each Tuesday night, seven or eight people related interesting experiences that had gotten their names in the newspapers. Once again the sympathetic Heatter manner bubbled out. The fill-in soon became the permanent master of ceremonies. A typical evening might bring together, from all over the country, heavyweight champion Joe Louis, a former president's son, a man who won a tablecloth-knitting contest, a woman wrestler, an explorer, a 109-year-old woman, and a man who had been on the brink of suicide until he had heard a reason to live. Heatter would meet with each of them before the program, listen to their tales, and determine which portion should be told on the air. Then a rough script was drawn up. The program was broadcast live, then rebroadcast to the West Coast at a later hour. (This, of course, was in the days before audio tape, although "electrical transcriptions" on phonograph records were made.) Heatter served as moderator until 1941.

After the Hauptmann trial, Mutual put Gabriel Heatter on the air five nights a week at 9 p.m. EST for 15 minutes. Mutual regarded the time slot as a white elephant because CBS, NBC-Red, and NBC-Blue scheduled their best entertainment programs at that period. At first the newscasts were

sustaining—no sponsor. Heatter had some income from two other newscasts he did each week and, later, from the \$2,000-plus a week he was paid for “We, the People.”

When sponsors did come along, Gabriel Heatter did a curious thing. He insisted on reading some of the commercials himself. More than that, he chose to weave the commercials into the commentary, to the despair of commentators who were trying to divorce news from commercials.

Said one contemporary, “Heatter is the acknowledged master of the elegiac, or crooning, commercial, which he slips into his news discussion with the deftness of a Sicilian footpad easing in a knife.” Said another, “The average listener who hears Heatter for the first time becomes somewhat nonplussed when this broadcaster swings easily from describing the occupation of Japan to the merits of a hair tonic.” A harsher critic wrote, “His equal anxiety over Dachau and dandruff, Japan and gingivitis made his news commentaries ludicrous.”

For example, Heatter would discuss the gloomy economy, concluding: “It’s going to be a long winter. You’d better fill up this summer with all the sunshine you can get.” Then without pausing or changing emphasis or any other hint that something new was coming up, he would say that listeners could get all the sunshine they wanted, but be careful of sunburn and be sure to use Noxzema, the medicated skin cream.

Gabriel Heatter offered his commercial messages with the resonant sympathy he showed with a human interest story: “. . . the treat of Kreml on your hair . . . ah, here’s a treat I’d like to see you enjoy . . . Will you try it tomorrow instead of combing your hair with water? Thank you very much.” Or: “. . . half a minute, please, for a word of caution. Watch out for gingivitis! Tender gums . . . It creeps in like a saboteur, without warning. . . .”

Said a writer in the *Atlantic Monthly*, “No sponsor could ask for greater ardor than Heatter can bring to a middle commercial, ambushed in the thicket of the news.”

An interviewer reported this exchange at the supper table:

“What is the product for tonight?” Gabriel asked.

“Kreml shampoo, Gabe,” replied his brother Max.

“Impossible to follow the Burma jungle item with a shampoo,” Gabriel replied. “It will have to come after the Polish question.”

“Definitely,” said Max.

Heatter personally used the products he plugged, the Kreml hair tonic, the Forhan’s toothpaste and tooth powder, Barbasol shaving cream, Sunoco gas, Mounds candy, and the rest. Among his many sponsors over the years were Rogers Peet, Johns Manville, Sanka, and the Big Yank shirt. He was proud of having so many sponsors and he felt that doing commercials for them was part of his job. He was interested in their sales and in the results of his commercials. One year he was selected as the top radio news commentator of the year. A combination of his inferiority complex and his pride in his sponsor convinced him that he should not appear at a luncheon to accept the

award, but that it should go to the president of the company sponsoring him. Heatter tagged along to the luncheon, but the award went to the sponsor, and when Gabriel Heatter was called on, he said no more than "Thank you," and sat down again.

He felt bad news deeply. The news that France had fallen came less than an hour before air time. When the engineer cued Heatter that night, about a minute of dead air followed. The commentator was weeping and could not speak. When he regained his composure, he told listeners how he felt about the fall of France and that traitors were to blame, not the French people.

When the German panzer divisions rolled across Russia, Heatter told listeners that the Russians would turn the tide. When the Russians began to make a stand at Stalingrad, Heatter alone told the radio audience that he was certain the Russians would hold. No other commentator predicted this outcome. And when the Luftwaffe was pounding Britain night after night, Heatter told listeners that the Nazis would never win the air battle over Britain. When he was asked later how he knew the Russians and British would hold fast—who tipped him off to their military strength—Heatter said no one told him. He just felt it.

He had no liking whatever for the Soviet government, and he said on the air that the only difference between the Nazis and the Communists was the color of their shirts. The Nazis wore brown, the Communists red. He said Stalin was an ally by grim necessity, not by choice, and that he did not become our ally until Hitler double-crossed him. He continued to say these things on the air despite attacks from listeners who considered him unnecessarily unkind to a brave ally. Great Britain was something else again. Like many other commentators, Heatter developed a love for the British under fire and especially for that tough old lion who lived at 10 Downing Street. The commentator took the occasion of Prime Minister Churchill's speech to America, "Give us the tools and we will finish the job," to say that the United States was next on Hitler's list, and that this country had better prepare for war. Sending arms and supplies to Britain was necessary but it would not keep us out of war. That night the switchboard lit up again with angry calls.

Gabriel Heatter's inferiority complex led the commentator to test his own limits. When the ocean liner *Normandie* arrived in New York Harbor on its maiden voyage, Heatter decided to broadcast from the place he could get the best view, the ledge of the roof of the skyscraper housing the Mutual studios. He forced himself to remain on the ledge until darkness fell, bringing the time of day he feared.

He was also superstitious. For years he numbered the pages of his manuscript 12, 12A, and 14, to avoid a page 13. Nor did he ever speak the word "trouble" on the air. He would use only yellow paper—until the day he went to cover the Hindenburg crash, discovered he had forgotten to bring along paper, and could find only white paper at a nearby store. He recognized the craziness of this behavior—"an infernal superstition which makes you tremble with fear"—but he apparently never sought psychiatric

help, even when he contemplated suicide at the height of his career. In his autobiography he related a conversation with himself after he had compulsively touched a tree, although he had tried to stop himself:

I began to walk faster, talking to myself. As I recall it now, I was almost shouting: "All right, worm. All right, you superstitious idiot. Now I know you are unfit to live."

The river was only two or three blocks away. My mind was made up. I had never been afraid to die. I had always been afraid to live. This would be it. Midnight would come and the people in charge of the program would ask, "Where's Heatter?"

Someone would say, "I haven't seen him come back. He isn't anywhere around." And the next morning the usual news item and the end of tears and fear and nightmare for one life.

One life! Those two words stopped me. What about the others? My wife, my daughter, my son? Didn't they matter? Would it be the end for them, too, or only the beginning of a long, horrible memory?

What about my wife's help all these years? Would this be her reward?

Slowly I turned back toward the theater. . . .

Looking back upon radio commentary during these years, one is tempted to leave these private torments undisturbed in the dust which has mercifully gathered over them. But Heatter was too important a figure for the whole man to be ignored, and the commentaries which gave courage to millions grew out of his personal torment. He was deeply impressed by the courage of others because he sensed so little courage in himself. He wanted to share his appreciation with his radio audience, so he filled his nightly commentaries with the gloom and foreboding he felt in the world plus the tales of achievement and personal victory which moved him. His recurring theme: things are bad, but they'll get better.

One night, early in the war, the reports of American losses and retreats were broken by the story that a Japanese destroyer had been sunk. Elated, Gabriel Heatter, after the customary "Good evening, everyone!", began his broadcast, "There is good news tonight."

The switchboard lit up as listeners called in to say how pleased they were to know that someone believed in American courage.

"There's good news tonight!" became the Heatter byword, his trademark opening for many commentaries. "Even when the news was grim," he said, "I tried to find a patch of blue or even a straw on which to hang real hope."

At first he was worried enough about a Nazi invasion to ask his wife to help him commit suicide the day the German Nazi army landed on Long Island. He had an air raid shelter dug in his basement in the suburb of Freeport. His wife preferred to have the shelter in the backyard, but Heatter worried that the neighbors might be upset if they knew that Gabriel Heatter — so optimistic of an Allied victory — had built an air raid shelter for his family.

Meanwhile, this fearful man continued to bring hope and optimism to his listeners. Soldiers wrote to Heatter thanking him for helping to keep

morale up for the folks at home. One letter: "We are going into battle. This may be the last letter I will write. I am dedicating any contribution I can make in this battle to you, because you have kept my mother going all this time with your broadcasts of hope and good news." Heatter carried that letter around in his pocket to read again and again.

His own son, Basil, was wounded in action while serving as a navy officer. Basil later became a writer.

Letters from all over the country, scrawled on tablet sheets, thanked Heatter for his comforting words. In one small town, a typical activity took place each evening. People gathered around a radio in a store for the 9 p.m. newscast. "After you said good night we could go home feeling better," one of the townsfolk wrote. *The Saturday Evening Post* published an article, "The Great Gabbo," which noted:

More than any other wartime commentator, Heatter was able to supply the bright crumb, which he customarily served up with a thick emotional frosting. The frosting was an inimitable Heatter specialty, like Oysters Rockefeller at Antoine's, and there was no mystery about it except that of Heatter's peculiar genius. But how he obtained the crumb was a source of mystification and envy to other star commentators, who, when the news was bad, were dealing it out dutifully in doleful black slices. It nettled them to tune in Heatter at nine p.m., long after finishing their own bleak stints, and to hear him open with "Ah, there's good news tonight . . . and then go ahead to prove to his own satisfaction that there was.

"Looking back on it all now," a competitor remarked not long ago with cynical admiration, "I can see that Gabe had a great formula. If a Pacific task force was wiped out, but one badly listing destroyer was still popping away with a forward gun; if the Third Army was in the depths of defeat, but ten Yanks were still fighting with bayonets—we won. Gabe's sense of victory was magnificent."

Cartoonists picked up on this commentator with the voice of a bishop who found rays of hope amid the gloom. One *New Yorker* cartoon showed American soldiers under a rain of enemy bombs. One G.I. listening to a radio shouted to his miserable buddies, "Hey, fellers—Heatter says we are giving 'em hell." In another, a group of Helen Hokinson clubwomen were lunching. "I'm so glad for Gabriel Heatter," confided one. In a third cartoon, the driver of a wrecked car tells a mechanic, "Gabriel Heatter sounded an ominous note as I rounded a curve." Heatter wrote:

I meet men who say, "You know, you almost broke up my home. My wife wanted to see a nine o'clock movie and I wouldn't leave the house until nine fifteen and she would say, 'We'll be late,' and we would argue, and it was all your fault. . . ."

What was it that made people wait for those fifteen minutes and let nothing interfere? Mere war news? Perhaps. But sometimes I think they were getting more than war news. They were getting confidence.

From the beginning he attacked Adolf Hitler, the Nazis, and the Axis powers. Upon learning of Mussolini's downfall, Heatter told a friend that he "hounded the Duce like a dog, night after night—called him a clown, a guttersnipe." The day that Adolf Hitler's death was reported, Heatter opened with, "Ah, Hitler is in Hell tonight!"

He sometimes made himself an element of his commentaries, as he did in this broadcast of the Nuremberg trials. Note how individual acts symbolize large events:

During the war, in the grim days of war, there were people who said this man Heatter is a wishful thinker. Foolish enough to believe that Hitler would never get to England when he was only 18 miles away. Foolish enough to believe that Stalingrad would hold out when there were only two thousand yards left. When so many people were sure Hitler would conquer all Russia in eight weeks. Well, I know some real wishful thinkers tonight. They're the people who really believe shooting Goering and a handful of Nazis will end the chapter and spare the children a war in their time. They're the wishful thinkers. Those men whose names were called today, they were the rabble, the window dressing. The real masters of Germany were never in that courtroom.

We're setting up a new German government. We're turning Germany back into German hands. She'll have goods and probably credit and perhaps in time a fat loan. Better look carefully at the hands into which we turn it back. Better look carefully for marks on those hands lest our children pay for it as our sons paid and their fathers before them.

They say the last trace of humanity left the Nazis' faces today when they heard the verdict guilty. Well, the old people of Europe, they knew it would come. The day of judgment, the day of retribution. But the Nazi leaders had no time for the nonsense prattled by old men and women.

In a village in Greece a boy climbed up to haul down a Nazi flag and they shot him dead. In another village in Czechoslovakia a boy tried not to tell where his father was hiding. They shot him dead. The old men wept and cried out, "God's judgment will fall on your heads." But the Nazis were too busy to bother to listen.

They're no longer too busy tonight. It was retribution day for the man Hitler called my right arm—Keitel, the Field Marshal. Retribution day for Jodl, who was probably Hitler's left arm.

On domestic issues he could not be characterized as either liberal or conservative. That 1945 *Variety* survey of thirty commentators (see Chapter 1) judged five to be conservative, ten middle-of-the-road, four liberal, and six reactionary. *Variety* put the remaining five in miscellaneous categories, ranging from no political slant to a "confused" status for Gabriel Heatter. A dubious distinction!

Heatter sometimes used the word himself. Commenting on a presidential budget message to Congress, he wasted little time talking about the budget, but said into his microphone: "We are in a wilderness of confusion. . . . We



are the people of efficiency, but we are doing too many things at one time. . . . ^ What this country needs is a list of the six most immediate things to be done. . . ."

That simplistic comment was typical of Gabriel Heatter, who offered adages to the ordinary folks he liked to identify with. On low salaries: "This land was founded on the proposition that every man willing to work should have the right to put away a dollar." On Communist aggression: "One way to handle it in this hemisphere—give them their own medicine and give it to them fast." On morality: "Better ten million times to stand alone than to hand over another man's land." On the family: "I'm telling you—a deep freeze refrigerator makes a home a happy home."

And yet it was Heatter who predicted that England would hold, that Russia would hold, and in 1948 that Truman would beat Dewey, when everyone else knew better!

This is how Heatter described the way he selected his news items:

I say to myself, "What are today's Heatter stories?" . . . What will people be talking about at breakfast tomorrow? Will Russia fight Japan? Incidentally, I'm on record saying yes! Where is Hitler? Is the monsoon season over in Burma? Heatter stories every one of them. I read of hotels serving cottage cheese instead of butter and I ask myself, "How many people eat in hotels?" Not many. Not a Heatter story. . . .

I look for the human things. I try to think: How will it affect people? I put a little bit of religion in it, a little bit of inspiration, surprise and wonder, and finally a little bit of a chuckle. . . .

If the man on the street identifies himself with me I'm happy. I want him to say, "That's what I was saying to Sam last night." Or, "That's just what I've been telling my wife the last few weeks."

The average commentator lectures the listener; he is the professor, his audience is a classroom. I always identify myself with the plain, everyday man. There is no one better or smarter than he is.

Gabriel Heatter was a well of sympathy and simple patriotism. His eyes would mist when a Boy Scout troop marched by. Seeing soldiers on parade and hearing a bugle call could make him weep. The sight of the American flag brought a lump to his throat. He had a deep religious faith. When he related stories about someone's belief in prayer, his mailbox overflowed. One of his best received stories, which he learned about from a listener's letter, was of farmers in a drought-stricken midwestern community who had gone to church to pray for rain.

Then the preacher asked, "Do you believe in prayer?"

The congregation replied, "We believe."

The preacher seemed sorrowful. He paused, looked over his audience and asked, "Where are your umbrellas?"

People everywhere wrote in asking for reprints of that story to give to their children.

He told of a poor mother who offered to take a job in an aerial circus in

order to pay for music lessons for her talented daughter—"lessons made possible by a mother jumping in a parachute!"

And in the middle of a winter broadcast, with war everywhere, he reminded his listeners to put out crumbs:

Outside your window tonight, tiny friends of man, birds and small animals, are fighting to live. . . . They will need food and they . . . they . . . will repay it handsomely a thousand times over.

He wept easily. When he read a newspaper column item that most of the justices on the Supreme Court listened regularly to his broadcasts, he cried for 20 minutes, unmindful of his fellow passengers on the Long Island Railroad.

Congressmen were also impressed. One Heatter commentary was entered into the *Congressional Record*, commercials and all.

Gabriel Heatter loved to tell dog stories. He might still be unnerved when a strange dog sniffed at his heels when he took a walk, but dogs he read about on the news wire—they were something else again. Let a dog save a child, let a dog find his way home from a great distance, let a dog do a human-seeming act, let a member of the K-9 corps be mentioned in a military dispatch, and Heatter's listeners would hear about it. This affection for the species could be cloying to the point of absurdity. Consider his comments about a national champion cocker spaniel:

I asked a man today who was always close to the dog, "What was he like away from all the dazzling spotlight of competition where he won so much fame?"

And the man who knew him well told me he carried himself with the simple modesty which belongs only to the truly great—in men or dogs. . . .

He was a dog of rare courage. He was in a car one day driving to Boston. There was a crash and a bad shaking up. Yet a few hours later he went into the ring and his poise and control were an amazing thing . . . and when they gave a dinner in his honor in Poughkeepsie, men who watched him said he looked up at everyone as if he seemed to understand and asked in all humility, "Surely this isn't all for me?"

"News of heroism—either of men or dogs—and of people holding to their faith, these are Heatter stories," he said. Heatter believed in God, home, mother, the family, thrift, and the flag, and one or the other found a place in his broadcasts.

Once, following the war, agency executives complained to Heatter about the gloominess of recent broadcasts. They asked him to try to see the cheery side of life again. "Specifically, what would you gentlemen suggest?" Heatter asked. The agency men went into a huddle, then came out with a reply. "Gabe," said their spokesman, "throw in more dog stories." Gabe was happy to comply.

Here is a Heatter dog story that brought a lot of fan mail:

I ran into a man who said, "I must tell you a story about my ten-year-old boy. He had a cocker spaniel pup and they were great pals. Ate together, played and even slept together. One day Rover disappeared. We searched everywhere. We advertised. We offered a reward. I could see my boy was sick of loneliness and worry for that dog. He would pass up dinner and go upstairs to his room and sob. Finally," the man said, "I decided to do something about it.

"I went up to his room and said, 'Bobby, listen, please. I am your father, but I am your friend, too. And I was Rover's friend. But he is gone. He will never come back again. Let's go out tomorrow for a new dog.' And the boy cried, 'No, no — Rover *must* be somewhere — a dog just can't go out like a light.'"

Feelings of inferiority persisted. When he was finally pressured into attending a dinner party at which other commentators were present, Gabriel Heatter blushed when H. V. Kaltenborn shook his hand and said, "Hello, colleague." Someone said, "Heatter, I always thought you were a myth. I never met anybody who ever met you."

One occasion found him a few feet away from Edward G. Robinson, whose acting he admired, but he could not bring himself to say hello:

A few minutes later I heard someone say, "Eddie do you know Gabriel Heatter is here?"

Robinson said, "No kidding!"

Robinson wheeled around, came over, introduced himself, and said, "I promised myself if I ever had the pleasure of meeting you I would tell you what a wonderful job you are doing for the war and the fight on fascism."

For a moment I almost thought he would ask me for my autograph. We visited for half an hour. When he left, I went back to one of my talks with myself, with one of me on this side of the mirror and the other on the inside looking out.

His wife sometimes broke the isolation. When they found themselves in the same elevator with a famous governor, she whispered to Heatter, "Introduce yourself." Heatter shook his head. Mrs. Heatter turned and said, "Governor, I would like you to meet my husband, Gabriel Heatter." The governor graciously responded, "This is a pleasure I have looked forward to for a long time." Heatter felt slightly foolish that his wife had to break the ice.

His greeting to strangers would often be awkward, almost servile. "I am humbled and honored," he intoned, grasping and wringing the stranger's hand. But he meant it.

Public banquets at which he spoke were so unnerving that he could not eat what was served. Instead he snuck from his pocket a sandwich prepared at home and nibbled it furtively. His brother seriously proposed to have a rubber pocket sewn into his jacket so that the sandwiches wouldn't dry out. Heatter often passed up invitations to dine at expensive restaurants, preferring to eat alone at corner diners, where he could eat anything on the menu and enjoy it. More than once he stole away from a large banquet table in a private home to

slip into the kitchen and ask the maid to fix him a sandwich he could eat at the kitchen table. On those dining occasions when there was no hope of slipping away unnoticed, if a dog was in the house, Heatter would try to pass the dog as much of his dinner as he could manage so that his plate would look reasonably empty. One hostess remarked, "Gabriel, my dog has taken a fancy to you. He seems to prefer settling down near your chair. I wonder if it's because you tell so many dog stories in your broadcasts."

A sponsor located in a midwestern city invited Heatter to spend Thanksgiving weekend with the heads of the company. Aghast at the thought of flying and of being the center of attention among strangers, plus a dislike of colder weather, Heatter wired his regrets, saying he was ill. The company president changed the invitation for a Christmas weekend. When that date came and Heatter again wired regrets, the president felt slighted, grew angry, and did not renew a \$5,000 weekly contract. Heatter could only feel miserable about it.

For the same reasons he turned down a chance to go to Hollywood to play a brief role as himself in *Once Upon a Time*, a Cary Grant film for Columbia Pictures. In the picture, Curley, a dancing caterpillar, achieves fame and fortune when Gabriel Heatter shows an interest in his career. An actor who sounded like Heatter took the commentator's place, using Heatter's name. Millions of moviegoers thought they had finally looked at the radio commentator they had been hearing Sundays through Fridays at 9 p.m. When Heatter saw the movie he burst into tears at the honor paid him.

Sometimes he'd get violent hay fever sneezing attacks 5 minutes before air time. As soon as the microphone went live, the sneezing stopped, only to return the moment he went off the air. Yet he never sneezed during a broadcast. Sometimes his wife or brother had to give him a comforting word or pat just before air time. And after each broadcast he would be so drenched in perspiration that he needed a bath and a change of clothes before he could relax over a cup of tea with Mrs. Heatter.

On occasions when he did speak from a studio with an audience present, the audience was asked to remain seated for a few moments. The lights were turned out and, moving rapidly in the dark, Heatter changed into dry underwear.

Night club comics loved to mimic the Gabriel Heatter voice and his frequent opening phrase, "Ah, there's good news tonight." His rich baritone was his greatest asset. (The author of this book, who heard it often during World War II, when he was in his teens, can easily recall it.) An *Atlantic Monthly* article by Dixon Wecter stated: "Heatter's throbbing resonance and solemnity suggest the camp-meeting exhorter, ringing changes upon the same refrain, calling errant nations to repent as he contemplates the darkest hour of the Axis: 'Lord, make it dark, and make it bright for all mankind.'" Many listeners wrote to ask Heatter if he were a minister or had studied for the ministry. "I suppose it's because I feel very deeply anything I say into a microphone," said Heatter. Despite his "good news" opening, Gabriel Heatter was more than once called "the voice of doom" because his broadcasts often dwelt on disaster. Author Irwin Edman came up with this bit of doggerel:

Disaster has no warmer greeter  
Than gleeful, gloating Gabriel Heatter.

One of the most perceptive remarks about the widely heard commentator came from writer Wecter: "By and large, Heatter is really an exhorter, not an analyst. Spot news is merely the bible from which he culls a text for tonight. His influence is good, because his heart is in the right place, even though it is a considerably enlarged organ."

As with most commentators, Gabriel Heatter's audience was drawn from all segments of the nation, but his appeal was greatest among the elderly and people of low and moderate incomes, especially white-collar workers.

After the war Heatter crusaded for better pay for civil service employees and increased Social Security payments and pensions. Night after night he returned to the theme of providing a decent living for the aged. Was it intended, he asked, that elderly people should eat only every other day? Social Security was a mere handout when it should be a dividend, he declared. The Social Security battle lasted five years, but it was won. Social Security payments were increased, more people qualified for it, and conditions under which it was paid became more reasonable.

Heatter's crusade to improve the wages of civil service employees was coupled with the familiar contrast between the billions of dollars sent abroad and the low wages paid to government workers at home. Heatter often spoke of the plight of postal workers and, in return, they sent him fan letters, sometimes on postcards measuring up to three feet by six feet, signed by every employee in some particular post office.

Still another crusade was for the underpaid white-collar worker, whose relatively fixed income was being eroded by inflation. He returned repeatedly to what inflation was doing to the average family and told stories about white-collar victims of salary discrimination—stories which came from letters they sent to him. Heatter's was called "the white collar microphone."

Personally, the commentator, who was born on the Lower East Side, felt uncomfortable about the perquisites his own new wealth brought him. Instead of swimming in his private swimming pool or at his beach club, he sometimes went to the public beach. He went in his chauffeur-driven Cadillac, which also embarrassed him, so he would ask the chauffeur to park the Cadillac a little way down the block. "The solemn truth," he admitted, "is that I felt strange in the presence of men and women who could afford a private-beach-club beach, but felt at home with those who used the public beach."

Heatter created a weekly half-hour dramatic program, "A Brighter Tomorrow," for the Mutual network in 1946. The program's purpose was to take "the cases of real people to show that the world hasn't gone to pot, that tomorrow has a lot of good living in it." Actual events were dramatized, with Heatter serving as interlocutor, but not in the studio. Heatter did his stuff from his home over a broadcast-level telephone line. An orchestra in the studio provided music. A critic called the program "one of the richer fruit-

cakes of radio." Again, Heatter's sympathy and sincerity shone through. *Newsweek* reviewed the first "Brighter Tomorrow":

The program graphically recounted the tale of a boy who lost both legs when he was twelve, of a man who languished in prison in the 1840's because his neighbors didn't like his beard, and of a little boy's faith when his beloved dog was killed. Later on, Heatter told *Newsweek*, he expects to hunt up more cheerful items not only for "A Brighter Tomorrow" but for his news shows as well.

With the coming of television, Heatter's time slot on the Mutual network was shifted to 7:30 p.m. His audience declined for a while, but six months later, almost as many people as before were listening to him at the earlier hour.

He continued as usual to report the gloomy turn of events with a ray of hope here and there, plus human interest stories to show how some virtue such as courage, hope, or faith triumphed. Stories of scandal he avoided. Ditto gossip. Ditto news that injured someone's reputation: "I would either pass it up or find words to soften the impact." When a prominent person committed suicide, Heatter would not use the ugly word when he reported the event.

When his commentaries first became popular, Heatter began broadcasting from his home. The study in the Freeport house was turned into a studio. A United Press news wire was installed in the sun porch. Each newscast was a family affair. Brother Max Heatter gave up his dress-manufacturing business to become Gabriel's manager. Saidie Heatter edited her husband's commentaries, besides preparing meals and looking after the household. Heatter later wrote about the daily life:

My son worked at home, writing. My daughter had a workshop in the basement, where she made silver jewelry. Her husband worked at home, designing shoes. My granddaughter, about two years old at the time, was everywhere. Into this scene my brother, Max, came every afternoon after lunch to handle my business affairs. The radio engineer arrived about five in the afternoon. Telephones would ring at least twenty times a day and the doorbell ten times a day, with telegrams and special-delivery mail, and three or four times a week there would be photographers or advertising men or telephone men to check on the equipment. This was all in one modest-sized home. That particular bedlam ran for about nine years.

Heatter closed each news broadcast with an enthusiastic, "Ladies and gentlemen, your friend and mine, Len Sterling!" returning the program to the announcer for the closing commercial. Sterling was in the Manhattan studio. Their connection was the broadcast-level telephone line, controlled by a radio engineer at each end.

Besides the news wire, Heatter got material during the war from his phone calls to the Office of War Information, from sources at the British embassy—where he was a favorite—and from what he called "the un-

derground." He also got the usual flood of publicity releases and letters from readers, which would occasionally yield a nugget for a broadcast.

Heatter estimated that he worked about an hour for each minute he broadcast the news, often skipping dinner to labor over a late-breaking story. Because most of the important news stories had already been reported by newscasters and other commentators before Heatter's 9 p.m. broadcast, he could hang on to his millions of listeners only by offering something different. And what he had was a style of his own, a blend of story choice, very simple language, and, of course, those buttery vocal cords, which curiously gave comfort even as Heatter spoke of despair. In the margins of his script he would write reminders to himself of how each sentence should be spoken: "triumph," "lyrical," "relish," "happy," "vital." A critic wrote, "Heatter can, and does nightly, go from deep melancholy to elation in the course of ten seconds." By use of words like "tonight" and "tomorrow," Heatter gave his listeners a sense of something important impending: "We are driving on the road to victory tonight . . ."; "There's a powerful piece of news shaping up in Paris tonight . . ."; "The hottest inside tip tonight is . . ."; "This much, however, is certain tonight . . ."; "There may be an important headline in coal tomorrow . . ."; "There's a deadline, and it's only about ninety hours away now . . ."; "Well, civil war may be the next headline from Iran . . ."; and so on.

He personalized events. For example, take the 1946 Security Council debate over Soviet intervention in Iran: on the day the Iranian delegate protested and the Soviet delegate replied, Lowell Thomas summed it up that evening saying neutrally, "The whole thing sounds peculiar." Raymond Gram Swing on his program grumped, "Today's discussion can't be said to have clarified the issue." H. V. Kaltenborn shrewdly observed, "The Iranians are smart boys; they are using the U.N. to get concessions from the Russians." But listen to the way Gabriel Heatter began that news item: "A man representing Iran pointed to the Soviet Union."

Note that he didn't say "delegate" and that the "man" didn't point to another man, but to a whole nation. Heatter had turned the debate into a contest between a single David and a national Goliath. He ended the item, "Whatever happens next Wednesday—and I do not expect much—a small power can stand up against a big power."

In the early years the Heatter family moved from home to home, driven by Gabriel's impulses. At one time they had four different homes, including an apartment in Manhattan and a Connecticut dairy farm that had belonged to golfer Gene Sarazen. The Heatters fixed up makeshift studios in several homes. Mrs. Heatter became expert at nailing rugs to the walls to deaden sound reverberation.

In 1951 the Heatters moved to Miami Beach, where he continued to deliver his nightly commentaries over the Mutual Broadcasting System. He tried television for a while and wrote a column for the Miami Beach *Sun*. His autobiography, *There's Good News Tonight*, published in 1960, was an eye-opener, publicly revealing for the first time his inner turmoil. That pain

lessened with the passing years. Age brought this gentle, decent man a degree of serenity.

In 1965 he gave up his regular network broadcasts. For a while he continued to write the local newspaper column. Saidie, his wife of fifty-one years, died in 1966. The following year he suffered a stroke which paralyzed his right side. He lived with his daughter until March 30, 1972, when he died of pneumonia. He was 82.

Gabriel Heatter had addressed from 11 to 14 million listeners regularly during World War II and the postwar years. On days when major events occurred, his audience swelled to an estimated 20 million. He told them the news as he saw it, and he gave comfort to many of them. Heatter captured the essence of his success when he told an interviewer: "When I talk about conquering fear, for instance, I am talking about myself primarily. In effect, I am trying to lift myself by my own bootstraps. And in so trying, I seem to inspire others."

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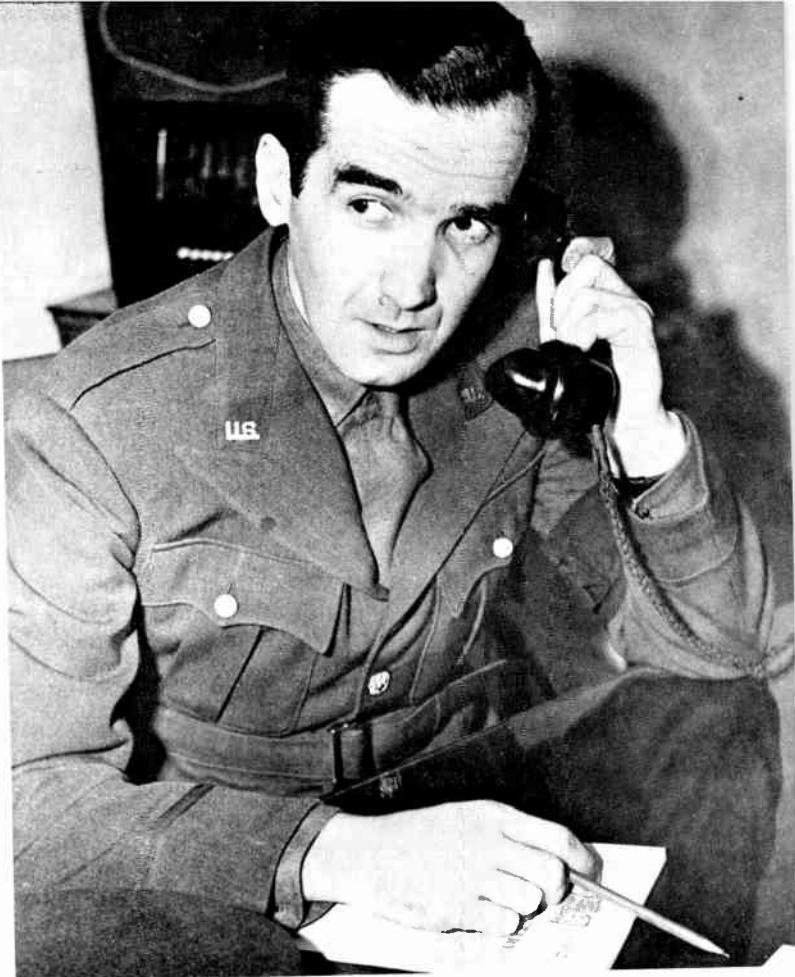




I am talking to you, Ed Murrow. And what I have to say to you is this—that you have accomplished one of the great miracles of the world. . . .

How you did this, I do not know. But that you did was evident to anyone. You spoke, you said, in London. Sometimes you said you were speaking from a roof in London looking at the London sky. Sometimes you said you spoke from underground beneath that city. But it was not in London really that you spoke. It was in the back kitchens and the front living rooms and the moving automobiles and the hotdog stands and the observation cars of another country that your voice was truly speaking. And what you did was this: You made real and urgent and present to the men and women of those comfortable rooms, those safe enclosures, what these men and women had not known was present there or real. You burned the city of London in our houses and we felt the flames that burned it. You laid the dead of London at our doors and we knew the dead were our dead—were all men's dead—were mankind's dead—and ours. Without rhetoric, without dramatics, without more emotion than needed be, you destroyed the superstition of distance and of time—of difference and of time.

—ARCHIBALD MAC LEISH, poet  
and Librarian of Congress,  
at a dinner honoring Edward  
R. Murrow, December 2, 1941



## Edward R. Murrow

FOR millions of Americans, the voice of London during the "blitz" was the voice of a man born in North Carolina.

Egbert Roscoe Murrow was born in Greensboro, April 25, 1908. He was the third son of a poor farmer and his wife. Four years later, his father, hoping to better the family fortunes, resettled in Blanchard, Washington. Their first home was a tent. Ed (he later changed his name to Edward) grew up in a close family unit, nurtured in hard work, discipline, and Bible reading. Money was never plentiful, but there was usually enough for what was needed. Ed grew up in Blanchard, a small town with just a few houses and with dirt roads leading out of town.

When he was 18, he entered Washington State College. He worked to

help put himself through. In summer he was a chainman on a survey gang. In winter he washed dishes and tended the furnace at a sorority house. Although he was big enough, he did not participate in athletics. He majored in history and speech and took part in dramatics and debating. He graduated with a Phi Beta Kappa key. In his senior year he was president not only of the Student Council, but of a group of West Coast student councils.

He was graduated into the Depression of 1930, and accepted a job for \$25 a week as president of the National Student Federation of America. His main task was arranging European tours for student groups.

The NSFA convention in 1930 was held at the Biltmore Hotel in Atlanta. When a dozen black delegates appeared, southern white delegates threatened to leave. Murrow talked them out of it. The hotel refused to serve the blacks, but permitted them to sit at the table. Black waiters handed plates of food to white students, who passed them along to black students. The convention voted to end all racial bars to membership.

Two years later, Murrow took a job as assistant director of the Institute of International Education. His new task was helping to place scholars who were refugees from Hitler's Germany. Of this he said: "I got more of an education from those professors than I'd ever had before. I was running a kind of revolving seminar. That's when I learned to talk slowly, too, because some of them couldn't speak English very well. Most of my time was spent with people twenty to forty years older than I was. They took me seriously, and I guess I took myself pretty seriously."

While holding this job he married Janet Brewster, who had first seen him three years earlier when he spoke at Mount Holyoke College, where she was a sophomore. A large crowd made up mostly of coeds surrounded Ed Murrow, who was clearly enjoying himself. She thought the scene was "repulsive."

In 1935 he joined the Columbia Broadcasting Company as director of talks and education, lying about his age by adding five years to it. The job had been offered to Raymond Swing, who turned it down because he wanted to do his own broadcasts. Murrow's task was to find educational material to broadcast. He also dealt with political and scientific subjects. He had to convince some listeners that radio was a medium for public information.

His first news broadcast followed a Christmas Eve party in the CBS newsroom. Murrow decided that regular newscaster Robert Trout had too much to drink and took the script from him. According to Trout, it was Murrow who had imbibed too well. He expected Murrow to slur his words or goof, but Murrow never missed a beat.

Murrow was 27, a young age for a man to be making decisions concerning cultural information to be broadcast over a major network. But he was an exceptionally bright young man, bright enough for the trustees of Rockford, a women's college in Illinois, to offer him the post of college president within a year after he took the CBS job. Murrow refused the offer.

In 1937, CBS appointed him its European director. The job was new not only for Murrow. It was fairly new for CBS or for any American network to have broadcasters abroad. CBS had been represented in the post by Caesar Saerchinger since 1930, but the network did not place too high a value on the

job. In 1932, when Adolf Hitler was about to become chancellor of Germany, Saerchinger got him to agree to do a 15-minute broadcast to the United States for \$1,500. CBS cabled: UNWANT HITLER AT ANY PRICE, and ordered Saerchinger to get back to organizing the broadcast of a song festival from Frankfurt. Saerchinger was the pioneer and dean of this esoteric profession of foreign radio representative. He quit it in May of 1937 because he felt there was no future in it! And indeed, when Murrow took it, further financial advancement was improbable.

He arrived in London in time to see the English crown pass to George VI, the second in line, after the abdication of Edward VIII, who told a worldwide radio audience that he could not reign "without the help and support of the woman I love."

Shortly after Murrow arrived he was presented to Sir John Reith, then head of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

"Why," Reith demanded, "did they send you over here?"

"I really don't know," Murrow replied.

"Well, in view of your record I daresay your company's programs in the future will be a little more intellectual."

"On the contrary," Murrow said, "I want our programs to be anything but intellectual. I want them to be down to earth, in the vernacular of the man in the street."

"Humph! Then you will drag radio down to the level of Hyde Park Corner."

"Exactly. And literally, I also plan to broadcast from English pubs, from the Brighton Pier, and from crowded places on bank holidays."

This seemed to be typically American and therefore beneath contempt, but Sir John nevertheless explained that the policy of England was to give the people what they *should* have.

"We are not so daring, Sir John. We give the people what they like."

Murrow followed his plan. He arranged such oceanic tidbits as "Experiences of a London Cabby and Impressions of Americans, by Herbert Hodge" and "Saturday Night in the Spread Eagle Pub at Little Barfield, Sussex." During the dispute over Czechoslovakia he put the cabby on the air to tell America what Londoners were thinking.

NBC was represented in London by Fred Bate, a former Chicago artist, an older man with twenty years' experience in Europe as a newspaperman, a businessman, and a member of the secretariat of the Owen D. Young Reparations Commission. Bate was urbane, dapper, quietly efficient, widely acquainted, socially acceptable rather than just "social." He was a personal friend of the Duke of Windsor. Bate was Murrow's opposite number and, to some extent, his opposition.

Besides his personal advantages, Bate represented an organization with a name many Europeans regarded as being connected with the government. The notion that the National Broadcasting Company was an official agency was useful to NBC and annoying to CBS. It was encountered frequently in the early years of foreign representation. Australia, Canada, and France had national systems alongside private stations, which helped explain the im-

pression that Columbia was the outsider. NBC held a further advantage in Germany during the thirties. The Nazi propaganda ministry, hostile to CBS, extended courtesies to NBC's Berlin representative, Dr. Max Jordan, formerly a German correspondent in Washington.

On an assignment in Paris, Ed Murrow was stricken with pneumonia. Bate got him to the American hospital, nearly unconscious. The only bed available was in the lunatic ward. Murrow awoke three days later in a barred and padded room, and for a few minutes thought there must have been a good reason for his being in it.

From 1938 until the end of the war, Murrow's principal effort was a weekly program. He also made irregular reports from London. And he was a regular part of the daily "The World Today" program beginning in April 1939. Murrow's weekly broadcasts were unsponsored through the blitz and until April 1942, months after the United States had entered the fray.

In March 1938, Ed Murrow was in Warsaw to arrange a children's broadcast to be heard in the United States on a "School of the Air" program. An assistant, William L. Shirer, was in Vienna, also to arrange educational, musical, and informational programs to be broadcast by others.

Shirer phoned Murrow, Vienna to Warsaw, and said, "The opposing team has just crossed the goal line."

"Are you sure?" Murrow asked.

"I'm paid to be sure," Shirer replied.

Shirer then flew to London to broadcast his story of the Anschluss. Murrow flew to Berlin, chartered the only plane available—a twenty-seven seat Lufthansa transport—for \$1,000, and flew to Vienna. Then he rode a streetcar into the city. He had come in time for the arrival of Nazi troops. He got permission to broadcast and went on the air himself with the story. He broadcast the Anschluss story for ten days; thereafter he was on the air regularly.

Those ten days also altered the character of foreign broadcasting by American networks. Until the Anschluss, no regular broadcasters were stationed in the capitals of the world. There were only technical facilities here and there and occasional pioneer attempts to link culture to culture by some exchange of programs. Murrow had hired Shirer to assist on the continent, having his own headquarters in London. He made trips to Rome, Salzburg, and Warsaw to arrange musical programs or to attend conferences on program exchange. At first the object had not been to collect news, although Shirer was a former newspaperman.

The unexpressed hope that a foreign office would someday be a point of news gathering and dissemination may have lain in back of someone's mind, but it was not a part of radio network news policy at the time. Then the Anschluss of Germany to Austria came, Czechoslovakia was threatened, and the events of Europe loomed in importance for radio listeners in America. The Vienna Boys Choir could wait.

After the ten days in Vienna, Murrow returned to London and began building a news staff that served him in the years ahead. CBS hired Eric Sevareid, Charles Collingwood, Larry LeSueur, Bill Downs, Howard K.

Smith, Richard Hottelet, Winston Burdett, and Cecil Brown, among others. Severeid, a newspaperman working for United Press and the Paris edition of the New York *Herald-Tribune*, got a phone call from Murrow, wondering if he might like to try radio reporting instead. "I think this thing [radio journalism] may develop into something," said Murrow. "There won't be pressure on you to provide scoops or anything sensational. Just provide the honest news, and when there isn't any news, why, just say so. I have an idea people might like that." Severeid thought it might be worth a try.

Although Murrow himself had no background as a reporter, he chose reporters rather than voices to broadcast the news. When someone at CBS in New York complained that some of the voices didn't sound right for radio, Murrow replied that he was hiring reporters, not announcers. Elmer Davis later wrote about him: "We who work with Murrow are keenly aware of his excellence as a reporter of pure news; indeed some of us—having like most radio newsmen learned our trade in another medium—are perhaps faintly scandalized that such good reporting can be done by a man who never worked on a newspaper in his life."

The CBS News team in Europe maneuvered with skill and speed. They developed the news roundup. On the first broadcast, listeners heard William L. Shirer in London, Edgar Ansel Mowrer in Paris, Pierre Huss in Berlin, Ed Murrow in Vienna, and Robert Trout in New York. An average single shortwave broadcast cost about \$500 to transmit.

Six months after the Anschluss, Hitler demanded the predominantly German-speaking Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia. Ten days of crisis culminating in the Munich agreement brought Murrow to the microphone many times, sometimes to talk in his own right, sometimes to introduce or to interview, sometimes to be interviewed across the Atlantic by the chief CBS commentator, H. V. Kaltenborn.

Americans grew accustomed to hearing the cue: "Calling Edward Murrow; come in, Ed Murrow." As the trans-Atlantic transmissions focused attention on international radio, Murrow's name and voice began to assume familiar dimensions in the public consciousness. People began to feel they knew him.

The tempo reached a dizzy pace on September 28, during the Czech crisis, when he began his day at 7 a.m. with a personal broadcast. He then put on a monologue from Thomas Grandin in Paris, followed by a commentator introduced from the House of Commons, a pickup from Prague, and an interpolation by Pierre Bedard of Premier Daladier's speech. Then Murrow connected CBS with Berlin to hear William Shirer and went back to Prague for Vincent Sheean. Later, Murrow introduced the Archbishop of Canterbury, then Stephan King-Hall. He ended his day about 6 a.m. London time the following day with final summaries from Paris and Czechoslovakia.

Murrow was now contacting foreign offices, radio directors-general, and diplomatic correspondents. He lived in the air and from a suitcase. He used the long-distance telephone with the lavishness of a Hollywood film producer. When things calmed down, he carried his airplane case back to his comfortable London flat, where he had a den decorated with Navajo blankets,

tokens, tomahawks, and squaw warmers. As he turned the key in the lock, the maid cried out, "Mrs. Murrow, that man's here again."

The command from New York to Murrow was, "Give us this day our European sensation." And the network expected the program to come across the ocean with showmanly crescendo at the very moment of supreme crisis. Nor did CBS ever forget its competitor, NBC, only a dial's twist away. CBS always demanded that Murrow produce something—anything—that NBC didn't have. Murrow helped to shatter any remaining illusions in Europe that the National Broadcasting Company was in any way "official."

Perhaps Murrow's most spectacular feature in 1938 was his broadcast from the Maginot Line. Apparently no newspaperman had ever been allowed down into that cement-and-steel monster which was twelve stories deep and "invulnerable to German attack."

Murrow arranged matters through Premier Daladier. He was warned not to mention the town nearest his point of entry, the number or identity of the regiments he encountered, or several other facts of a specific military nature. Otherwise, he could say what he wanted and describe what he saw. A French colonel watched in fascination as Murrow talked freely with the master control panel on Madison Avenue. Later he commented to Murrow, "Ah, if war comes, I can sit in New York and command my regiment by radio!"

In the opinion of NBC, Murrow's broadcast was of questionable wisdom. They admitted it was showmanship, but it was done at the risk of antagonizing one country, Germany, by glorifying the military might of another. Murrow, they felt, was not making an entente between Columbia and Berlin any more likely by publicizing the subway system of the French army.

Of course, Murrow and CBS were as realistic as NBC. They recognized that a network must keep itself persona grata with the chancellories if it was to avoid being hamstrung in emergencies, but the promptings of enterprise were presumably stronger in Murrow than in his competitors, and he was tempted more frequently in the direction of the spectacular.

For a time NBC and Mutual cut back European coverage, in part to avoid the impression of warmongering and to adhere to strict neutrality among the European belligerents, but Murrow continued to feed CBS unabated.

A a journalist he depended upon personal skills beyond those strictly related to newswriting and broadcasting. An interviewer said of him in 1938:

Great and grave responsibilities rest upon Murrow. At 33 he must deal with the nations of a tense and hate-pocked continent, retaining his freedom of action and speech without forgetting there will be other days and new needs for cooperation. For his years he has an imposing front, his manner is non-abrasive. If he's no favorite in Germany, that's not his fault. . . .

Linguistically, Murrow is not dazzling. His French is capable of digesting Pertinax [a columnist] and the Parisian press. His German and Italian suffice for telephone operators, customs inspectors and head waiters. He knows enough Spanish to ask for an interpreter.



Censorship was a fact of life for newscasters as well as for the public even before war broke out. After the blitzkrieg of Poland and the declaration of war on Germany by Britain and France, censorship increased everywhere in Europe. During a broadcast in November 1939, Murrow had this to say about British censorship:

After trying to boil down and summarize the news and impressions of the day, I have the material and hand it to the censor. Only we don't call them censors, since their duty is to scrutinize our manuscripts. We call them "scrutineers." As a matter of fact, there is one sitting just opposite me now. . . .

So far, I have had very few sentences stricken out of my manuscripts. And no one in an official position has tried to convince me that any given material should be included in a talk from over here.

Murrow also pointed out that he was never censored or given editorial direction by CBS brass:

We have never been instructed to weigh or color the news, have been told only to find it and report it. It was believed from the beginning that people at home would prefer information to emotion. Sometimes the information was both incomplete and contradictory, and on one occasion, at least, I overheard an individual whose happy duty it was to listen to all our broadcasts in London make the remark at the conclusion of one my talks, "That was Murrow's contribution to the confusion of his fellow countrymen."

Of British censorship he declared:

All censorship is bad, from the correspondent's point of view, but that imposed by the British authorities is designed to protect British security. . . . I have often seen British censorship stupid, but seldom sinister. . . . I should be unwilling to broadcast from a nation at war without any censorship at all. The responsibility for human lives would be too great.

The British and French declarations of war in the fall of 1939 were followed by a war of nerves, the "phony war." There were dramatic events at sea, notably the torpedoing of the British battleship *Royal Oak* by a U-boat and the scuttling of the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee* outside Montevideo Harbor. World attention for a time riveted on Finland when Soviet troops threw themselves at the Mannerheim Line in the winter of 1939-1940. But those other two lines, the Maginot and, opposite it, the Siegfried, were quiet.

William Shirer came from Berlin to Amsterdam to meet briefly with Murrow, who came down from London. They broadcast jointly, swapped impressions, went ice skating together, and, after a large dinner, had themselves a snowball fight one night in that pleasant and peaceful city during that deceptively quiet winter.

Hitler opened his spring offensive in 1940 by invading Denmark and Norway. The Danes capitulated. The Norwegians resisted for a time. One month later Germany broke the quiet of the "phony war" in the West by crossing the Low Countries, an invasion by land, sea, and air begun without declaration of war. The sweep carried the panzer divisions past the Maginot Line and well into the heartland of France. By June it was all over. France had surrendered, and Britain thanked her stars that she could get her army off the beach at Dunkirk. The army's equipment was abandoned.

Now Britain stood alone. This was to be "her finest hour." On August 15 the Germans launched a new kind of warfare: the indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets, the "total war" long advocated by Ludendorff and the more callous members of the Junker military caste. One week later German planes launched the first mass attack on London. The date was August 22. Three days later, the British retaliated with a raid on Berlin. On September 2, 700 German planes were sent in three attempts to destroy the city of London.

Murrow's own offices in London were to be bombed three times. He broadcast in a studio littered with people sleeping on mattresses. He grew twenty pounds leaner before the last Dornier droned home. Other newsmen did their jobs under similar conditions. It was said that Murrow's distinction was that he did more than his job. Twice every 24 hours, on the appointed second, almost never fluffing a word, in a voice that meant what it said, he not only reported the news, he conveyed an actuality. American listeners actually heard the people of London going by the church of St. Martins-in-the-Fields on their way to shelters before a raid because Murrow laid his microphone down on the sidewalk to pick up their unhurried footsteps. Americans sensed the strange silence between two raids because Murrow told them how the liquid from two pierced cans of peaches dripped inside a smashed shop.

What was Murrow trying to do? To state it simply, he was trying to bring the American people closer to the British people. To say that Murrow was an advocate of American entry into war would be at once a truism and a shallow explanation both of Murrow's aims and of his rhetorical means of achieving them.

At that banquet in his honor one week before Pearl Harbor, the banquet at which Archibald MacLeish praised him so warmly, Murrow told his audience:

We have attempted to give you the hard news of communiques and official statements as well as the climate in which the news has flourished, the humor, the criticism, the controversy and discussion which serves as a backdrop for the more dramatic news of the action of war. A night spent with firemen, while flames from tender old buildings paint the silver bellies of barrage balloons blood red—a morning with a demolition squad while it digs for bodies in a pile of rubble—dinner with half a dozen cab drivers in a little shelter—things like that may be more important than the morning communique announcing the destruction of a dozen aircraft. The problem was, until recently, one of assessing the morale, determination, yes, and even the sense of humor of the world's greatest civilian army.

When reporting from Britain, Murrow spoke as a Briton. His empathy came crackling across the ocean on radio waves. Yet he was an American, with an American accent, using terms familiar to his fellow Americans. His ability translated the situation into words for home folks—the falling of bombs, the falling of men.

During his years in London, he spoke on four major issues:

1. He adapted to the British government's views, especially those of Winston Churchill, whom he greatly admired. He advocated collective security and an end to appeasement of aggressor nations.

2. He spoke of the need for logistic support in a war which began with unrealistic preparation by the democracies.

3. After American entry into the war, he emphasized the need for Allied unity, for friendly alliance, especially between Britain and the United States.

4. He considered the need for careful Allied planning to win the peace.

Let us examine briefly each of them in turn, for these four issues were the subjects of deliberative oratory of a rather high order of skill.

1. When Great Britain was faced with the crisis in diplomacy over the expansion of Hitler's Germany, Murrow praised the courage of a staunch people. His position was that of an observant intellectual, motivated by a concept of justice. His admiration of Great Britain was always an implication that the United States would do well to follow the British example. However, he always left something unsaid. He never openly presented argument for national policy.

2. Before and after American entry into World War II, the promise of material aid, and its reality, provided cause for debate. The American leaders in the argument for American isolation and against support of England, such as Burton Wheeler and Gerald Nye, were not pro-Nazi. Many of their arguments were based on the Nye investigation of the causes of American entry into World War I, which pointed a finger of blame at the House of Morgan and other Wall Street bankers, who, according to Nye, promoted and provoked American entry into the European war for their own profit. Murrow was subtly on the other side of this argument. He developed the theme many times that aid was necessary, on the side of justice, and that no matter the accounting in dollars, the aid must not cease.

3. It took a propaganda effort of the United States in wartime to strengthen its relationship with its allies. Murrow spent some time in that effort. Isolationist feelings in the United States before the war were strong, particularly in the Midwest. Some of those feelings continued scarcely diminished, at least toward the European theater, and the feelings were strengthened by strong anti-Russian feelings. (Recall Upton Close's broadcasts urging Americans to forget about Germany and concentrate on Japan.) To counteract these attitudes, Murrow often pointed to the bravery, the deprivations, the losses, and the determination of Russia and Great Britain and the volunteers, such as Poles and French, who fought for the liberation of their homes. His description, narration, and exposition made drama out of Allied efforts.

4. Nearly three years before the end of hostilities, there was some consideration by world leaders of the requisites for peace. It was known there

would be the homeless, the hungry, the harbingers of new nationalisms. Murrow spoke of them often. He referred particularly to the Poland that would emerge from the ruins, and he made clear the need for an approach more enlightened than the old narrow nationalisms. His warnings were justified by later events.

His most stirring broadcasts were of how he felt about the war. Here is Murrow on September 13, 1940, a typical report during the blitz:

This is London at 3:30 in the morning. This has been what might be called a "routine night"—air-raid alarm at about 9 o'clock and intermittent bombing ever since. I had the impression that more high explosives and few incendiaries have been used tonight. Only two small fires can be seen on the horizon. Again the Germans have been sending their bombers in singly or in pairs. The antiaircraft barrage has been fierce but sometimes there have been periods of twenty minutes when London has been silent. Then the big red busses would start up and move on till the guns started working again. That silence is almost hard to bear. One becomes accustomed to rattling windows and the distant sound of bombs and then there comes a silence that can be felt. You know the sound will return—you wait, and then it starts again. That waiting is bad. It gives you a chance to imagine things. I have been walking tonight—there is a full moon, and the dirty-gray buildings appear white. The stars, the empty windows, are hidden. It's a beautiful and lonesome city where men and women and children are trying to snatch a few hours' sleep underground.

In the fashionable residential districts I could read the TO LET signs on the front of big houses in the light of the bright moon. Those houses have big basements underneath—good shelters, but they're not being used. Many people think they should be.

The scale of this air war is so great that the reporting of it is not easy. Often we spend hours traveling about this sprawling city, viewing damage, talking with people, and occasionally listening to the bombs coming down, and then more hours wondering what you'd like to hear about these people who are citizens of no mean city. We've told you about the bombs, the fires, the smashed houses, and the courage of the people. We've read you the communiques and tried to give you an honest estimate of the wounds inflicted upon this, the best bombing target in the world. But the business of living and working in this city is very personal—the little incidents, the things the mind retains, are in themselves unimportant, but they somehow weld together to form the hard core of memories that will remain when the last "all-clear" has sounded. That's why I want to talk for just three or four minutes about the things we haven't talked about before; for many of these impressions it is necessary to reach back through only one long week. There was a rainbow bending over the battered and smoking East End of London just when the "all-clear" sounded one afternoon. One night I stood in front of a smashed grocery store and heard a dripping inside. It was the only sound in all London. Two cans of peaches had been drilled clean through by flying glass and the juice was dripping down onto the floor.

There was a flower shop in the East End. Nearly every other building in the block had been smashed. There was a funeral wreath

in the window of the shop—price: three shillings and sixpence, less than a dollar. In front of Buckingham Palace there's a bed of red and white flowers—untouched—the reddest flowers I've ever seen.

Last night, or rather early this morning, I met a distinguished member of Parliament in a bar. He had been dining with Anthony Eden and had told the Secretary for War that he wouldn't walk through the streets with all that shrapnel falling about, and as a good host Eden should send him home in a tank. Another man came in and reported, on good authority, that the Prime Minister had a siren suit, one of those blue woolen coverall affairs with a zipper. Someone said the Prime Minister must resemble a barrage balloon when attired in his siren suit. Things of that sort can still be said in this country. The fact that the noise—just the sound, not the blast—of bombs and guns can cause one to stagger while walking down the street came as a surprise. When I entered my office today, after bombs had fallen two blocks away, and was asked by my English secretary if I'd care for a cup of tea, that didn't come as much of a surprise.

Talking from a studio with a few bodies lying about on the floor, sleeping on mattresses, still produces a strange feeling but we'll probably get used to that. Today I went to buy a hat—my favorite shop had gone, blown to bits. The windows of my shoe store were blown out. I decided to have a haircut; the windows of the barbershop were gone, but the Italian barber was still doing business. Someday, he said, we smile again, but the food it doesn't taste so good since being bombed. I went on to another shop to buy flashlight batteries. I bought three. The clerk said: "You needn't buy so many. We'll have enough for the whole winter." But I said: "What if you aren't here?" There were buildings down in that street, and he replied: "Of course, we'll be here. We've been in business here for a hundred and fifty years."

But the sundown scene in London can never be forgotten—the time when people pick up their beds and walk to the shelter.

Murrow closed one of these blitz reports with the Englishmen's "So long and good luck," a forerunner of what was to become his regular closing, "Good night and good luck." The familiar pause in his opening, "This . . . is London," was suggested to him by his former speech teacher at Washington State College.

This report of London impressions should be contrasted with others given by Murrow and other newsmen of the hard news of the war: so many planes shot down, so many buildings hit, so many people killed, the last report from North Africa, the latest communique from the War Ministry. Murrow reported these facts and statistics, but he could pause on occasion to take stock of people's lives, of the enduring pleasures. "Although the ugliness of war was everywhere in view," someone wrote about Murrow, "he could yet report on the beauty of a flower in early spring. Against a backdrop of world disorder and cruelty, he took time to comment on a kind deed. . . . His reports had a certain historical perspective which less talented analysts were unable to provide. By placing happenings in large social frames, he was able to show the relation of geographically remote events to the common experiences of men and women everywhere. Without sensationalism he gave

urgency and dramatic impetus to ideas and happenings that were the common concern of peoples throughout the world.”

Murrow himself said he had realized quite early “that in reporting the death of a civilization it would be impossible to under-dramatize.” Quite clearly, he recognized that for listeners already gorged on emotional appeals, nothing could be so dramatic as restraint. *Time* said his reports contained “no bunk, no journalese, no sentimentality.”

His efforts were not wasted on his American audience. He acted his role in a fascinating theater for them. Churchill, Roosevelt, U.S. ambassador John Winant, and F.D.R.’s troubleshooter, Harry Hopkins, were among the political leaders who told him he was doing excellent work.

One day Murrow dropped by 10 Downing Street to pick up his wife, who was having lunch with Mrs. Churchill. The prime minister heard Murrow’s voice and came out of his study. “Good to see you, Mr. Murrow,” he said. “Have you time for several whiskies?”

Dorothy Thompson was not one of his fans, for one truth about Murrow was his opposition to her. Consider these remarks in his broadcast of September 12, 1940:

Miss Dorothy Thompson made a broadcast to Britain tonight. Her audience was somewhat reduced, since the air-raid siren sounded just after she started speaking. She informed the British that the poets of the world were lined up on their side. That, she said, was a matter of consequence. I’m not sure that Londoners agreed that the poets would be of much assistance, as they grabbed their blankets and headed for the air-raid shelters. I think these Londoners put more faith in their anti-aircraft barrage, which seemed to splash blobs of daylight down the streets tonight. Hitler, said Miss Thompson, wants to destroy the mental and spiritual heritage of free peoples. She promised the British that they would win. She said they had never been so beloved. She predicted that ages from now mothers and fathers would gather their children about their knees and tell them about these days. Well, mothers and fathers have their children about them tonight — underground. They’re sustained in part by folklore, the tradition, and the history of Britain; but they’re an undemonstrative lot. They don’t consider themselves to be heroes. There’s a job to be done and they’re doing it as best they can. They don’t know themselves how long they can stand up to it.

I know something about these Londoners. They know that they’re out on their own. Most of them expect little help from the poets and no effective defense by word of mouth. These black-faced men with bloodshot eyes who were fighting fires and the girls who cradled the steering wheel of a heavy ambulance in their arms, the policeman who stands guard over that unexploded bomb down at St. Paul’s tonight — these people didn’t hear Miss Thompson; they’re busy, just doing a job of work, and they know that it all depends on them.

Murrow’s love for the English is written in the lines and between the lines of his scripts. He said of them, “Often they are insular, but their deter-

mination must be recorded." He had come to admire their "muddling through," their "flying into a calm," their "dying with dignity."

Murrow said:

In reporting this new kind of warfare we have tried to prevent our own prejudices and loyalties from coming between you and the information which it was our duty to impart. We may not have succeeded always. An individual who can entirely avoid being influenced by the atmosphere in which he works might not even be a good reporter. . . . We need not agree about British statesmanship or strategy, but we must all share an increasing concern for the preservation of democracy in the United States. It is no part of a reporter's function to advocate policy. The most that I can do is to indicate certain questions facing America . . . You must supply the answers.

It would be difficult to say what, specifically, there was about the British people that attracted Murrow. Perhaps those characteristics cannot be isolated. However, he has written something on this subject:

The imminence of disaster brought no spiritual revival. And yet, at a time when most men save Englishmen despaired of England's life, there was a steadiness, a confidence and determination that must have been based on something other than a lack of imagination. As the months wore on, and the nights lengthened, and the casualty lists mounted, I became more concerned to try to understand what sustained this island people: what belief or what mythology caused them to stand so steady in their shoes. In part, it was ignorance of their own weakness; in part, it was a reluctance to appear obvious by expressing doubt as to the ultimate outcome. But at bottom this calm confidence stemmed from a belief that what they were defending was good; that Englishmen had devised a system of regulating the relationship between the individual and the state which was superior to all others, and which would survive even though cold military calculations concluded that the state was doomed. . . . They believed not only in themselves but that they were fighting against evil things and the fight was worthwhile. No democracy has been nearer the fire and survived than was Britain in that long winter [1940]. And one reason for survival was that the nation did not betray the things in which it believed.

Murrow denied on many occasions that he had any right to use his position to urge either policy or action, and yet he did just that. His distaste for everything the Nazis stood for was manifest in him from the days when he assisted refugee European professors to find new posts in the United States. He felt the need for advocacy. Murrow realized the urgency of Britain's plight, but the isolationist sentiment in America was broad, vocal, and respectable. Their argument was *prima facie* more appealing than an appeal to enter a distant war.

So here was a man with an audience to whom he could not preach, and a cause he could not openly avow. What could he do?

He chose to show the humanity of the British people. Perhaps a better term would be their "humanness." He showed their courage, their suffering, their humor. He told Americans that the British people felt that the war was forced upon them, that they were laboring in a good cause, and that they would see it through. "The flame of courage is as high and clear as it was in the days after Dunkirk when cannon were being taken out of museums and dragged down to the beaches, when most men save Englishmen despaired of England's life. It was then a Scotsman said, 'If England is forced to give in, it will be a long war.' "

Murrow was an advocate, but he was first a journalist, a reporter of events. To a large extent, the significance and the dramatic impact of these events determined their position in his news reports. A report from the North African front summarizing a major battle or an important policy statement by Churchill would necessarily take precedence over lesser news and over personal observations. Murrow was, after all, broadcasting the news. The inclusion of a minimum introduction and a strong conclusion was standard with him. Frequently, a topical piece would have a chronological order; he would tell a story, starting at the beginning. His conclusion might be a fragment of poetry, a quotation, often from an unusual source, or a statement of summary or warning or prediction. But it was invariably strong. Murrow's scripts did not peter out at the end.

Murrow was a stylist, but his first interest in language was purely functional. He wanted his words to convey an unequivocally clear, sharp impression of the meaning he had in mind. He achieved clarity partially by tricks familiar to radio and television newswriters: throwaway phrases, run-on expressions, and adjective-free sentences. When he used adjectives, they had punch: "flint-red, angry snap of anti-aircraft bursts against the steel-blue sky."

Against the direct order of CBS News executives, Murrow took personal risks to report the war, sailing on a British minesweeper in the North Sea, standing on London rooftops during German bombing raids, riding bombers over Germany.

During one B-17 raid, a special transmitter was installed so he could broadcast from the bomber. Unfortunately, he could not get it to work. To make matters worse, he felt terribly hot during the entire flight, although the crew was quite comfortable. Murrow used the pilot's transmitter for his live broadcast. After the bomber landed, a radio engineer discovered that the plug which should have connected to Murrow's transmitter had been plugged into his electrically heated flying suit instead!

He went on an RAF raid over Berlin with three other newsmen. Murrow and one other newsman got back safely, a third bailed out of his plane and was taken prisoner, and the fourth was killed.

That afternoon he concluded a shortwave broadcast to America:

Berlin was a kind of orchestrated hell, a terrible symphony of light and flame. It isn't a pleasant kind of warfare—the men doing it speak of it as a job. Yesterday afternoon, when the tapes were



stretched out on the big map all the way to Berlin and back again, a young pilot with old eyes said to me, "I see we're working again tonight." That's the frame of mind in which the job is being done. The job isn't pleasant; it's terribly tiring. Men die in the sky while others are roasted alive in their cellars. Berlin last night wasn't a pretty sight. In about thirty-five minutes it was hit with about three times the amount of stuff that ever came down on London in a night-long blitz. This is a calculated, remorseless campaign of destruction. Right now the mechanics are probably working on *D-Dog* [the bomber in which Murrow flew], getting him ready to fly again.

In London, Murrow and fellow CBS newscaster Larry LeSueur sometimes dined in a favorite Soho restaurant. They chose to sit under a large glass skylight, despite the menace.

In a broadcast from Moscow, LeSueur made a slip of the tongue and described a "teapest tempot." Murrow promptly cabled New York: PLEASE PURCHASE SUITABLY INSCRIBED, OLD-FASHIONED ENAMELED SINGLE-HANDLED TEAPEST TEMPOT AND PRESENT TO LESUEUR.

Back in the United States for a visit, Ed and Janet Murrow were invited to dine at the White House with President and Mrs. Roosevelt. The date, Sunday, December 7, 1941. After news came of the attack upon Pearl Harbor, Janet Murrow called Mrs. Roosevelt, only to be told, "We all have to eat. Come anyway." F.D.R. missed the dinner, but asked Murrow to wait. Civilian and military officials hurried in and out of the president's study. Shortly after midnight, it was Murrow's turn. The weary president invited Murrow to share his repast of beer and sandwiches, asked him questions about Churchill and the bombing of London, then said, "Were you surprised by what happened today?"

"Yes, Mr. President."

Roosevelt slapped his desk. "Maybe you think we weren't surprised!" He told Murrow about the ships sunk at Pearl Harbor and the planes destroyed on the ground. "On the ground," F.D.R. repeated, as if the idea hurt him. He again hit the desk, this time with his fist.

When Murrow left the president's study, he had the scoop of a lifetime, but he felt he could not break the story, although Roosevelt had not pledged him to silence. Eric Sevareid met him and asked, "How is it?"

All Murrow said was, "Pretty bad." He kept to himself F.D.R.'s report of the true damage of Pearl Harbor and the president's reactions.

Murrow stayed in the United States for a lecture tour. All the money he earned was donated to British War Relief and Air Force Comforts.

Upon going back to London, he began a 15-minute radio commentary on Sunday afternoons. Murrow and then other commentators would continue those broadcasts for twenty-three years.

After World War II, he returned to New York as a CBS executive, but he was not content in that job. Although he remained on the CBS board of directors, he took the microphone again in 1947 with a nightly newscast. Instead of "This . . . is London," he began, "This . . . is the news." The newscast consisted of straight news prepared by a newswriter, on-air in-

terviews, and a nightly commentary. The program closed with the announcer's "Listen to Murrow tomorrow."

While a CBS executive, he formed the CBS radio news Documentary Unit; started "As Others See Us," a radio program devoted to foreign comment on the United States; created "CBS Views the Press," a local New York program which examined the New York newspapers with a critical eye; and approved the new documentary format, "You Are There," reexamining historical events through modern news coverage techniques, with a CBS correspondent doing interviews and relating events.

Among Murrow's innovations was the year-end round table discussion by CBS foreign correspondents, first on radio, later on television. The other networks followed the CBS example. Domestic and foreign correspondents even carried their discussions to other cities on a kind of traveling road show about issues and crises. It all began with Edward R. Murrow.

He went to Korea when war broke out. As usual, he took risks. One night, walking around the front lines, Murrow and three other correspondents were challenged by a Marine sentry who ordered them to halt and give the password. They didn't know it, but identified themselves as correspondents. "I have no orders to let correspondents through," the sentry replied. "Put your hands over your heads and don't move or I'll blow you apart." Finally, a captain recognized Murrow's name and voice. He told the journalists they were lucky they were still alive because the sentries had orders to shoot anything that moved. That same night other sentries killed two Marines and wounded several.

As he had done during World War II, Murrow flew on a bombing raid. A gunner aboard asked him if combat flying was a requirement of his job. "No," said Murrow. The gunner replied, "You're getting a little old for this nonsense."

When he returned to New York, Murrow added to his nightly radio newscast a weekly documentary, "Hear It Now," produced jointly by Murrow and editor Fred Friendly, who had originally joined Murrow to produce "I Can Hear It Now," record albums of recent history using recordings of the men who made the history. Like other ideas generated by Ed Murrow, "Hear It Now" soon spawned imitations by the rival networks. Under his direction, CBS News in 1951 gave the nation its first coast-to-coast television coverage—the Japanese peace treaty conference in San Francisco. In November of 1951, Murrow and Friendly began "See It Now," which was to run for seven years, bringing weekly to millions of Americans documentary coverage ranging from an infantry platoon in the Korean mud to a genial visit with Carl Sandburg in North Carolina.

Things did not always run smoothly. On one "See It Now," the projector broke down while it was running film. The director cut to Murrow just as he was asking the technicians, "What's wrong boys?" Millions of viewers heard the reply, "We don't know what the hell's the matter, but we're working like hell to fix it." After some Murrow ad-libbing, the projector was started again. More film, then another failure. Back to Murrow for his summation; he read from the TelePrompTer: "You and I have just seen, through the magic of television, a dramatic demonstration."

Two additional Murrow programs joined the CBS lineup in 1953. One was a radio feature of the recorded philosophies of famous people, called "This I Believe," which was rebroadcast by the Voice of America in six languages and reached an estimated 39 million listeners. The other was the popular, easygoing "Person-to-Person," Friday evenings on television. By electronic hookup, Murrow "visited" two celebrities for 30 minutes each in their homes. The programs were live, not recorded.

While Murrow's star rose, so too did the star of Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. The hunt for American Communists and Communist sympathizers which McCarthy led and encouraged soon brought him into direct confrontation with Edward R. Murrow.

Several "See It Now" broadcasts drew the ire of the Red hunters. Among them were an examination of the Bricker Amendment, which had been designed to undercut U.S. support of the United Nations; a look at amphibious warfare training; an interview with nuclear physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, who was considered by McCarthyites to be disloyal;<sup>1</sup> and a study of the case of Lieutenant Milo Radulovich, who faced discharge from the Air Force because he would not disown his father, who subscribed to a Serbian-language newspaper sent from Yugoslavia, and his sister, who allegedly held leftist political opinions. Millions of Americans watching "See It Now" saw Milo's father read his letter to President Eisenhower aloud in broken English:

*"Mr. President, I writing to you because they are doing a bad thing to Milo. They are wrong. The thing they say about him are wrong. He has given all his growing years to his country. He is good for this country. Mr. President, I am an old man. I have spend my life in this coal mine and auto furnaces. I ask nothing for myself. All I ask is justice for my boy. Mr. President, I ask your help."*

Murrow and Friendly spent \$1,500 of their own money to buy an ad in the *New York Times* after CBS and sponsor Alcoa refused to advertise the broadcast. The reaction to this broadcast was tremendous, and five weeks later the secretary of the Air Force went on "See It Now" to announce that he had ordered Radulovich retained in the Air Force.

"See It Now" further offended the McCarthyites by showing how the American Legion in Indianapolis used its influence to deny the American Civil Liberties Union a place to meet and by covering a McCarthy investigation of Annie Lee Moss, a middle-aged black woman who worked in the Pentagon code room and who was accused by McCarthy of being a member of the Communist party.

The confrontation between the senator and the journalist, between the thinking they each represented and the forces they represented, culminated in two broadcasts, a "See It Now" documentary by Murrow and Friendly on March 9, 1954, about McCarthy himself (the report on Annie Lee Moss followed one week later) and Senator McCarthy's reply on April 6 over the CBS network. Some observers have held that McCarthy's career began its downward slide with the March 9 broadcast, which has also been considered

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1. This program was aired several months after the broadcast about Senator McCarthy.

the most glowing moment in Murrow's career. It has also been described as television's finest moment, a view not shared by the senator's supporters. The half-hour broadcast concentrated on film of the senator speaking. Now moralistic, now nasty, now callous, now false, Senator McCarthy appeared to be an evil presence in our midst. Murrow concluded:

No one familiar with the history of this country can deny that congressional committees are useful. It is necessary to investigate before legislating. But the line between investigation and persecution is a very fine one, and the junior senator from Wisconsin has stepped over it repeatedly. His primary achievement has been in confusing the public mind as between the internal and the external threat of communism. We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine and remember that we are not descended from fearful men, not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate and to defend causes which were for the moment unpopular.

This is no time for men who oppose Senator McCarthy's methods to keep silent, or for those who approve. We can deny our heritage and our history, but we cannot escape responsibility for the result. As a nation we have come into our full inheritance at a tender age. We proclaim ourselves, as indeed we are, the defenders of freedom—what's left of it—but we cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home. The actions of the junior senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad and given considerable comfort to our enemies. And whose fault is that? Not really his; he didn't create this situation of fear, he merely exploited it and rather successfully. Cassius was right. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves." Good night and good luck.

McCarthy, given equal time one month later, began his reply by saying, "Murrow is a symbol, the leader and the cleverest of the jackal pack which is always found at the throat of anyone who dares to expose individual Communists and traitors." He accused Murrow of having Communist ties, dating back to his days of arranging international student exchanges.

Although the broadcasts made several members of the CBS brass quite queasy, it was plain that Murrow's attack upon McCarthy had been devastating. McCarthy never recovered. He was further battered in the weeks to follow by the Army-McCarthy hearings, presented live over the television networks and culminating with attorney Joseph Welch's comment, "Until this moment, Senator, I think I never gauged your cruelty or your recklessness." In December 1954, two-thirds of the members of the U.S. Senate voted to censure the junior senator from Wisconsin. Shortly before McCarthy died in 1957 he met Murrow at a party, threw an arm around the journalist's shoulder, and said, "No hard feelings, Ed?" Murrow turned away.

In 1958, Edward R. Murrow resisted a Democratic party boomlet to run

for the U.S. Senate from New York. Before he refused he took the matter to ex-President Harry Truman, who told him he was more useful on camera than he would be in the Senate.

"See It Now" was cancelled by CBS in 1958 after seven years. Its tenure had been distinguished. More than a half century of commercial broadcasting in the United States has produced little, if anything, to match its breadth, its courage, its influence.

Murrow began a new program, "Small World," in which he filmed conversations between the people of the world in politics, literature, and many other fields of endeavor, with Murrow serving as moderator. "Small World" was more stimulating intellectually than the continuing "Person-to-Person." Murrow enjoyed doing it more, despite its smaller audience. "Small World" ran for two years.

Besides his nightly radio newscasts and his regular weekly television programs, Murrow presented occasional documentaries both on television and radio. But he was growing weary. In 1959, he took a year's leave of absence from CBS. He revisited England and other nations of Europe and the Middle East. He continued around the world, accompanied by his wife and 13-year-old son, Casey. Along the way, Murrow did a few assignments for "Small World" and appeared in a BBC television series reminiscing about World War II. He returned to spend some time at his dairy farm near Pawling, New York.

Over the years his relations with CBS executives, especially CBS president Frank Stanton, grew increasingly strained. When the new president of the United States, John F. Kennedy, offered Murrow the post of director of the U.S. Information Agency, he hesitated for a time, being rather unwilling to enter government, then accepted.

Before leaving CBS, he narrated the "CBS Reports" controversial *Harvest of Shame*, a documentary on the conditions of migrant farm workers. Shortly after becoming USIA director, Murrow made the only significant misstep of his career. He tried to pressure the BBC into cancelling the scheduled showing of *Harvest of Shame* as a personal favor. The BBC refused. Why Murrow acted at such variance to his lifelong principles was never fully explained. It was rumored that President Kennedy had asked him to halt the overseas broadcast, but Murrow denied that anyone had prompted his action.

As its most prestigious director, Murrow strengthened and expanded USIA. The director sat in the National Security Council and had a direct pipeline to both the president and the secretary of state. The USIA and Voice of America grew into sources of information rather than sources of propaganda. Murrow said he wanted "not to capture, but to free men's minds."

To the achievements of his career must be added his service as a midwife to the birth of public television in the United States. He drafted a proposal for the Ford Foundation urging support for a fourth network. In turn, the foundation offered him the post of the network's editor-in-chief. Murrow declined the offer as he had declined so many offers—from college presidencies to Senate candidacies.

His health was failing now. Lung cancer was discovered in 1963, and one lung was removed.

The lighted cigarette had been a Murrow trademark. During one of his London broadcasts he told listeners:

I don't know how you feel about people who smoke cigarettes, but I like them, especially at night in London. That small dull red glow is a very welcome sight. It prevents collisions, makes it unnecessary to heave to until you locate the exact position of those vague voices in the darkness. One night several years ago I walked bang into a cow, and since then I've had a desire for man and beast to carry running lights on dark nights. They can't do that in London these nights, but the cigarettes are a good substitute.

A week after Murrow went back to work, following the removal of his lung, President Kennedy was assassinated. The new president, Lyndon Johnson, saw the USIA as a public relations tool. Murrow could not. In December of 1963, citing ill health, Murrow submitted his resignation from USIA. He went home to Pawling. He died on April 27, 1965, of brain cancer. His ashes were scattered in a shady glen on his farm. He was 57.

Seven years earlier, in an address to the Radio Television News Directors Association in Chicago, he urged broadcasters to live up to their responsibilities. Some have called it the major speech of his career. Here is its start and end:

This just might do nobody any good. At the end of this discourse a few people may accuse this reporter of fouling his own comfortable nest, and your organization may be accused of having given hospitality to heretical and even dangerous thoughts. But the elaborate structure of networks, advertising agencies and sponsors will not be shaken or altered. It is my desire, if not my duty, to try to talk to you journeymen with some candor about what is happening to radio and television.

I have no technical advice or counsel to offer those of you who labor in this vineyard that produces words and pictures. You will forgive me for not telling you that the instruments with which you work are miraculous, that your responsibility is unprecedented or that your aspirations are frequently frustrated. It is not necessary to remind you that the fact that your voice is amplified to the degree where it reaches from one end of the country to the other does not confer upon you greater wisdom or understanding than you possessed when your voice reached only from one end of the bar to the other. All of these things you know. . . .

Our history will be what we make it. And if there are any historians about fifty or a hundred years from now, and there should be preserved the kinescopes for one week of all three networks, they will there find recorded in black and white, or color, evidence of decadence, escapism and insulation from the realities of the world in which we live. . . .

.....  
If . . . this instrument is good for nothing but to entertain, amuse and insulate, then the tube is flickering now and we will soon see that the whole struggle is lost. This instrument can teach. It can illuminate. Yes,

and it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise it is merely wires and lights in a box. There is a great and perhaps decisive battle to be fought against ignorance, intolerance and indifference. This weapon of television could be useful.

Stonewall Jackson, who knew something about the use of weapons, is reported to have said, "When war comes, you must draw the sword and throw away the scabbard during a battle for survival." The trouble with television is that it is rusting in the scabbard during a battle for survival.

One of the many eulogies to Edward R. Murrow came from Eric Sevareid: "There are some of us here, and I am one, who owe their professional life to this man. There are many working here and in other networks and stations who owe to Ed Murrow their love of their work, their standards and sense of responsibility. He was a shooting star and we will live in his afterglow a very long time."

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# ...AND OTHERS

WHO has been left out of this book? Sad to say, many able commentators who developed loyal followings. Several should be mentioned now, with the apology that space and time limitations did not permit the elaboration they deserve, an apology which they, like every journalist, would recognize.

*Frederick Williams Wile*, an editorial writer for the *Washington Star* and one of the earliest radio commentators, presented "The Political Situation" from Washington, D.C., over NBC when that network first began.

In the early thirties, *George R. Holmes*, Washington bureau chief of William Randolph Hearst's International News Service (the "I" in the present UPI), weighed in with "The Washington News."

Another early NBC journalist, *William Hard*, was, like most of his colleagues, a newspaperman and author, more reporter than commentator.

*David Lawrence*, who achieved fame as editor of *U.S. News & World Report* and as a syndicated newspaper columnist, presented "Our Government" over NBC during 1932 and 1933.

For a change of pace, *Edwin C. Hill* offered the featurish "The Human Side of the News," a popular, if somewhat oversentimental, program for a quarter century. As the years went by, "The Human Side of the News" grew more political and more politically conservative.

For a while, the former head of the NRA, *General Hugh S. Johnson*, offered commentary over the NBC-Blue Network.

*Cesar Saerchinger*, who preceded Edward R. Murrow as head of the CBS European service, returned to the United States and for some years gave a weekly NBC broadcast, "Behind the News," sponsored by the American Historical Association.

The war years brought the flowering of radio commentary. *Quincy Howe*, who deserves a chapter of his own, wrote more than any of his colleagues about the nature of radio commentary itself, expressing his thoughts in magazine articles and in a book, *The News and How to Understand It* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940).

In an *Atlantic* article in November 1943, Howe wrote: "Give government its head, and radio becomes a Federal monopoly. Give the radio industry its head and you get more and more power concentrated into fewer and fewer

hands. Give the sponsors who support radio their heads and radio becomes the voice of private American industry. Give the commentators their heads and you get either a babel of irresponsible voices or—much more likely—a concerted drive on the part of privileged groups to promote their special interests in the guise of free speech and opinion.”

Howe was one of the crop of commentators on world affairs produced by the Czechoslovakian crisis in 1939 and the Polish crisis in 1940, a magazine editor and author who decided to try broadcasting partly because he enjoyed it and partly to “try to get the intelligent people to reach conclusions by the use of their brains.” After analyzing news during the Munich crisis for Mutual, Howe joined CBS until 1950 and later spent another decade, 1954–1963, as an ABC-TV news analyst.

*John W. Vandercook* also deserves a chapter of his own. Newspaperman, photographer, painter, author, and explorer, he lived the life kids dream of. He and his wife walked across hundreds of unmapped miles of West Africa. They penetrated the jungles of New Guinea to discover a tribe of head-hunting cannibals who had never seen a white man. They explored unvisited islands in the Solomons and Fijis. Vandercook wrote articles and books on his travels, plus novels and short stories. During the forties, he presented political commentary and anchored NBC’s “News of the World” six days a week. During one wartime broadcast, Vandercook delivered this memorable blooper: “Bombs drapped on the Jops . . . I mean bombs japped on the drops . . . well, anyway, they hit them.”

Born in London, son of the first president of the United Press, Vandercook quit Yale after his freshman year because “there were too damn many Republicans.” As a commentator he was decidedly liberal. He argued that while the CBS policy of prohibiting analysts from expressing personal opinions stemmed from CBS’s desire to air only the truth, the effort was based on a fallacy, because CBS cannot judge truth from falsity. He addressed himself to all censors: “Man has been seeking to distinguish between truth and untruth ever since he began to walk. I will not deny that CBS has an entirely benevolent intention, but, since history began, all those who have sought to impose their will or their definitions of truth upon other minds have always begun at least by asserting that their purpose was benevolent.”

In the fifties, Vandercook returned to the air over ABC, sponsored by the CIO.

*Leland Stowe* did a weekly analysis for a time under CIO sponsorship, hired, said the union, “to counteract the growing imbalance in the ratio of liberal and conservative commentators on the air.”

Fellow liberal and internationalist *Robert St. John*, a former Associated Press correspondent in the Balkans, did commentary for NBC during and just after the war. When Japan surrendered, St. John stayed in the NBC newsroom for 117 hours, sleeping only 10 hours from Friday to the following Wednesday. He delivered his regular newscasts plus bulletins and specials and made television appearances.

*William L. Shirer* was hired by Edward R. Murrow as part of the CBS news team in Europe. He reported regularly to the American people from

Prague, Berlin, and other European capitals. He published a best-seller, *Berlin Diary* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1942). Listeners could hear "William Shirer and the News" on Sundays, sponsored by Sanka coffee, during and after the war over CBS radio stations. The most liberal of the CBS commentators, Shirer left the network in 1947, accusing network officials of trying to gag him for his liberal views. Vandercook and St. John left NBC about the same time. Shirer carried on for two years over Mutual, then quit broadcasting.

*Cedric Foster* was a commentator during the years of World War II over the Mutual Network.

*Cecil Brown*, a scrappy foreign correspondent for CBS, was aboard the British battle cruiser *Repulse* when Japanese planes sank it. He survived to write about it and to write a best-seller, *Suez to Singapore* (New York: Random House, 1942). Back in the United States, Brown delivered news and commentary for CBS until he resigned in anger over some criticism by CBS news chief Paul White. A liberal and a supporter of racial integration in the days when it was not popular to favor integration, Brown continued to do news and commentary over Mutual. Like most commentators who were liberal on domestic matters, Cecil Brown was an internationalist on foreign affairs, opposing moves toward isolationism.

*Major George Fielding Eliot*, the best known of several military news analysts, was heard on CBS, NBC-Blue, and Mutual stations. Born in Brooklyn, he couldn't wait for America to get into the great adventure of World War I, so he joined the Australian army as a second lieutenant. He saw action in some of the bloodiest engagements of the war, including the Somme and the Dardanelles campaigns. After the war Eliot served in the U.S. Army Reserve, where he attained the rank of major. He earned a reputation as a military writer before radio tapped him.

Newspaperman *Earl Godwin* broadcast a nightly news program, "Watch the World Go By," sponsored by Ford Motor Company, starting in 1942. He was possessed of a raspy voice, conservative political views, and what he regarded as the common touch. Godwin sprinkled his broadcasts with rural anecdotes and said, "God bless you one and all," when he signed off. He didn't like the New Deal, but President Roosevelt's death upset him so much he couldn't finish his news program from Washington, D.C. Baukhage had to complete it for him.

Two other sharply conservative commentators were *Henry J.* (for Junior) *Taylor* and *Rupert Hughes*. Taylor, a journalist, economist, industrialist, author, and ambassador to Switzerland, railed during the forties against the spenders and Socialists. Hughes, an editor, military officer, author, composer, and motion picture director, saved his sharpest barbs for home-grown Communists in weekly NBC commentaries during and after World War II.

Considerably more liberal was *Joseph C. Harsch*, who reported the German conquest of Copenhagen over NBC and later joined CBS. He happened to be vacationing in Honolulu on December 7, 1941, the only full-time foreign correspondent in the Hawaiian Islands. Alas, his credentials did him no good: "By the time I woke up to the fact that there was a war on, they

had clamped down on cable and wireless services, and I had to sit there for four days awaiting their release. By that time, there were a hundred or more correspondents there." To add to Harsch's agony, a local stringer watched the attack from his house overlooking Pearl Harbor and telephoned the news to San Francisco as it was happening.

Syndicated political columnist *Raymond Clapper* did twice-weekly commentaries over Mutual, sponsored by General Cigar. A voice coach advised him to hum before each broadcast "to get the Kansas out of my voice." Clapper tried, but his roots in the good Kansas soil proved deep.

*Sydney Moseley*, correspondent for the London *Daily Express* and for the New York *Times*, had written books on spiritualism, the stock market, and that new adult toy, television, when he began to deliver commentary based on his British Tory views. His voice reminded American listeners of Winston Churchill.

Definitely on the conservative side of the fence, *Morgan Beatty* kept up a drumfire of comment for twenty-one years, 1946 to 1967, on NBC's "News of the World," quite a contrast to liberal predecessor John Vandercook. After leaving NBC, Beatty continued his commentaries for another six years through the AP syndicated tape service.

The fifties brought a new crop of radio commentators, even as television captured the public's attention. Liberals tuned into *Martin Agronsky*. Conservatives preferred *George Sokolsky* and *Clifton Utley*. On the extreme right were a former Notre Dame Law School dean, *Clarence E. Mantion*; a fundamentalist preacher who combined religion and politics in his broadcasts, the *Reverend Carl McIntire*; and several commentators on a series called "Life Line," supported by and reflecting the views of oil billionaire, H. L. Hunt, a real-life example of Quincy Howe's unheeded warning.

Politically somewhere in the middle were *Bill Henry*, *Robert Trout*, *Howard K. Smith*, *Charles Collingwood*, and *Winston Burdett*, who were reporters rather than commentators, although many of their analyses were little different from commentators' analyses.

Smith in particular built a reputation for his lucid expositions of European affairs in the early fifties, reporting from London for CBS. In 1957 he moved to Washington and in 1961 switched to ABC, building a distinguished career as that network's leading television and radio commentator and newscaster.

Smith had been one of "Morrow's boys." So was *Eric Sevareid*. The solemn commentator from Velva, North Dakota, was a young reporter when he scooped the world on France's plans to surrender to Germany. During the war he also reported from Washington and from the China-Burma-India theater, where he and twenty others were forced to bail out of a plane into a remote Southeast Asian jungle. Postwar years saw him as chief Washington correspondent for CBS News. Although he continued to do commentary over radio, Sevareid is best known as the commentator for the CBS Evening News on television. He has won many awards and has written five books, including an autobiographical best-seller, *Not So Wild a Dream* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1946), recently reissued.

Interestingly, *Walter Cronkite*, who offers no comment as anchorman on the CBS Evening News, does a 5-minute commentary on CBS Radio. Lyndon Johnson once remarked, "If Walter Cronkite would say on television what he says on the radio, he would be the most powerful man in America." As it was, during the Nixon presidency, a poll showed Cronkite to be the most trusted man in America.

The most popular radio commentator of the sixties and seventies has been *Paul Harvey Aurandt* (he drops his last name for his broadcasts), whose distinctive delivery style is heard in two daily newscasts over some 600 radio stations plus 120 television stations, reaching an estimated 18 million listeners. And his thrice-weekly column is carried by some 300 newspapers. He has also written four books and many magazine articles. Three record albums carry his picture on their jackets.

Harvey combines conservatism and populism, which he delivers in a ballyhoo reading style all his own. He has added several words to the English language, including "skyjacker" and "guesstimate." Paul Harvey is corny but fascinating, especially in small doses.

Though he did a few broadcasts in the thirties, *Edward P. Morgan* covered World War II as a newspaperman and the immediate postwar years as a *Collier's* editor. He saw a lot of action with American troops in Italy and with Haganah fighters during the British mandate in Palestine. In the fifties he joined CBS, then switched to ABC, where he began the nightly program of news and commentary, "Edward P. Morgan and the News," sponsored by the AFL-CIO. The most moving broadcast of his career was his report of how his only child, a daughter whom he had thought killed, survived the sinking of the *Andrea Doria*.

Cronkite, Seavreid, Smith, Harvey, and Morgan are commentators of stature and renown who will no doubt have books written about their careers. Their exclusion from this book, though painful to the author, was necessary in order to limit its scope to commentators whose influence was most marked during the golden years of radio. While they began their careers during this period, they belong to a later generation.

There may be no way to sum up neatly. Newsmen and newswomen defy neat categorization. No adjective fits them all: intelligence, stubbornness, curiosity, cynicism, egotism, adventurousness, *weltschmerz*, gall. Most journalists seem to possess most of these qualities in varying measure, but perhaps so do most physicians and plumbers.

For another thing, it's hard to be neat in summing up an ongoing process. Radio news and radio news commentary are still with us, along with commentary over television, in newspapers, magazines, and books. Wherever someone can be found willing to listen, someone else can be found willing to pontificate.

An observer more given to wry thought than to scientific acumen once allowed as how a listener venturing far enough into space could hear the voice of Julius Caesar barking orders at his soldiers. The listener as he traveled

would also hear a mind-boggling babble of radio news punditry in English, and many other languages, too. Much of what he would hear is best left unremembered, although some of those broadcasts contained pearls of perception or courage or literary style or wisdom.

To us who are merely earthbound, most of those millions upon millions of words are forever lost. Saving them wasn't considered to be worth the trouble. Here and there, snatches of the old familiar voices were captured on a phonograph recording, an electrical transcription once made for some forgotten reason, then set aside. A few scripts survived the network's sporadic housecleaning and some found their way into books, like those recalling how the world slipped into war, but for the most part neither the commentators nor the networks felt that the scripts had value beyond their momentary impact.

Today it is a different story. The television networks save the newscast scripts and, to some extent, the taped newscasts. Vanderbilt University also tapes the newscasts, publishing monthly indexes and abstracts for the use of researchers. The current attitude toward news and commentary is, in a sense, more mature. And, in a sense, the thirties and forties, the Golden Age of Radio, were the growing-up years of broadcast journalism.



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