

Counting Stars

AND

Kilocycles

25TH ANNIVERSARY

WFAA, DALLAS

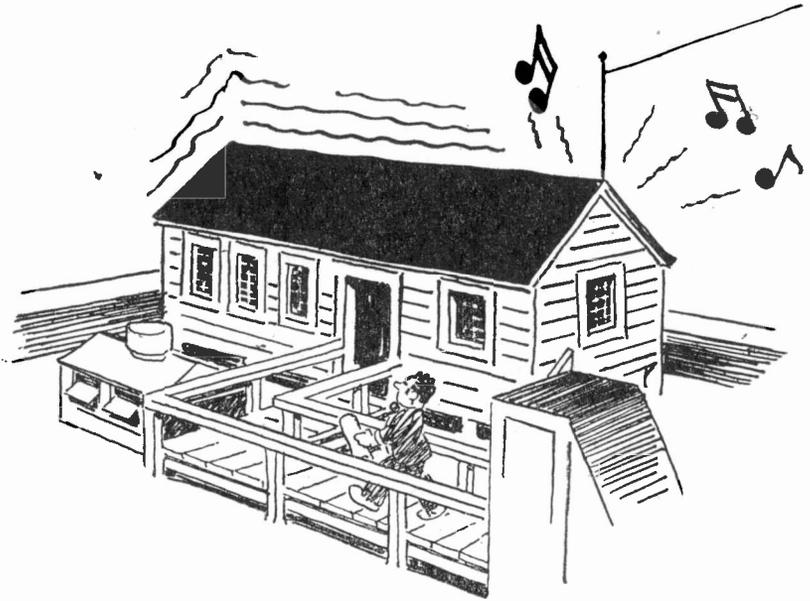
Twenty-five years in the life of an alligator is only a few fish more or less. Twenty-five years in radio is a lot of kilocycles.

Antiquity is therefore relative, but it still carries its prerogatives. One of these is the right to reminisce.

That is the reason for this booklet. From the hoary heights of our twenty-fifth anniversary we are inevitably tempted to look backward to those dim years of the early twenties when WFAA started.

We hope the young will enjoy these anecdotes as a revelation of what preceded the radio they know today; that their elders will smile with us in memory of the days of iron announcers and crystal sets.

Adam Colshoun



"First Penthouse—No Polycylindrical Diffusion"

I

PERHAPS it was a rip in a pair of youthful trousers that led to the establishment of Radio Station WFAA.

At any rate, Walter A. Dealey used to tell friends in later years that the snag on the improvised see-saw gave him a keen desire to talk faster and be heard farther than anyone ever had before. He wanted his mother to bring quick relief, and he needed speed to explain the ruination of his best Sunday suit.

The newspapering son of a newspapering family, Walter Dealey loved the printed page. He learned to letter and to read from the papers which his father published. But other, and faster, means of communication fascinated him. As a boy he toyed with telephones of taut string between tin cans; learned heliographic transmission with small mirrors. He liked to code with pencil tapping, even on a school desk.

He thrilled when Marconi spanned the Atlantic with wireless, followed closely the development of flashing news bulletins to ships at sea. When wireless brought rescue to 600 people aboard the sinking Republic, and the tragedy of the Titanic was lessened by the Carpathia's dash in answer to air-waved summons, radio became his fixed hobby.

After college, Walter Dealey became an executive of The Dallas Morning News, and as he learned the facts of newspaper publishing he made friends with those interested in the new science. Among them was Henry "Dad" Garrett, chief electrician for Dallas' police and fire departments, experimenting then with radio transmission to moving vehicles.

Out of "Dad's" efforts grew WRR, oldest municipal broadcasting station in the world, later KVP for police use. The young publisher supplied the city station with news bulletins, was a member of the commission that controlled it.

Then he persuaded his colleagues to establish WFAA.

"Dad" Garrett loaned The News L. B. Henson, whom he had trained. This competent engineer took what to everyone else was a tangled mass of wires, generators, condensers, transformers and other pieces of apparatus and built of it a transmitter with power increasable to 150 watts.

Its first hesitant signal shivered through Dallas County's ether on June 26, 1922.

Walter Dealey's dream began at that hour to take form and substance as before him, Col. Alfred H. Belo had dreamed a Galveston News into greatness and G. B. Dealey The Dallas News into a position of unique influence in Texas.

Walter Dealey did not live to see his visions completely realized, and there were times when he must have had misgivings. More than \$1,000,000 was put into the venture, which grew from his faith, before it became commercially profitable.

But he knew before he died that he was proved right—a rightness which friends know was deeply ingrained in his conviction through all those early days. And today, this radio station, as a source of entertainment and education for millions of persons, stands as a monument to his foresight.

II

THE early-day WFAA staff knew as much about poly-cylindrical diffusion* as a bullfrog does about radar.

As a matter of fact, one of the best studios the station had in 1922 was a tent.

Not an ordinary tent of course. This one was pitched not outside to ward off the elements but inside The News library to kill echoes.

Other methods had failed to stifle the play of sound waves between unyielding walls, floor and ceiling. Even letting bookshelves' glass doors stand open so the "absorbing" volumes could deaden sound helped little. Then some budding scientist suggested the tent.

It was wonderful. The only trouble was that this vast array of canvas, anchored inside a room with concrete floor and plastered walls, had all the stability of a string tied around a billiard ball.

One evening the Bel Canto quartet was singing religious numbers. As its members swung out on "Jericho", someone touched a nervous support and the tent came tumbling down. Up went the hands of these four mighty men of song and one arm of the piano accompanist.

Supporting the studio thus, they finished the spiritual without a break, closed their program with that stout old number, "We'll Stand By Until the Morning."

Just for the record, WFAA began with penthouse studios and occupies penthouse studios now. There the similarity ends. The nine-by-nine shack which was hastily erected on the roof of The News building back in 1922 would draw sneers as a mop closet for the present porter staff.

That first studio had everything a radio studio shouldn't. It trembled and shook to the vibration of heavy presses.

*Distinctive acoustical treatment pioneered by WFAA—See Chapter VI.

Traffic noise roared through its windows. Wooden walls, draped more energetically than artistically with cotton fabric, bounced sound waves crazily around. When they tired of the horizontal they played betwixt linoleum floor and bare ceiling.

The carbon mike with ordinary telephone mouthpiece, was hooded in a heavily padded box. It gave somewhat the effect of a voice emanating from an expensive casket.

Access to this barefoot urchin of scientific progress was by a route sometimes compared to Livingstone's final trek through Africa. Visitors and staff alike journeyed three floors by elevator then climbed a half-floor to the composing room level. They threaded their way through Inter-types, make-up banks and haughty printers to a steep, narrow steel stair which ultimately reached the proof gallery.

There was usually a rest here to gain breath and fight down the feeling that all should be roped together Alpine-wise before tackling the last stage, another steeper and narrower steel stair which gave onto the roof by way of a treacherous step-down. Final progress across the roof was complicated only by the necessity of avoiding clusters of ventilators, skylights, antennae guys and minor structures housing machinery of either the newspaper or the station. Studio and engineering staff lived in such close proximity that listeners were never in doubt as to the source of mechanical difficulties.

The original antennae stretched from a dizzying tower atop the three and one-half story News building diagonally across the block to a twenty-foot mast on the twelve-story Texas Bank Building.

Studios did not occupy their first penthouse long. Even the lusty infant radio might have sickened had they done so. But long after studios had moved to the library (with its tent) and on, transmitting facilities remained on The News roof.

And this transmitting equipment was a Mecca for the faithful who turned nightly to their crystal sets seeking to pluck a broadcast signal from the clamor of static. Willingly they plodded their way to the little penthouse to view its marvels.

Alas, the tiny building always proved an inadequate materialization of their visions.

Its unpainted wooden table holding the transmitter panel with its five white-faced meters, and matching row of little black knobs, did not quite bridge the gap between matter and the mysteries of sound snatched from the air. The small motor generator hummed outside so shyly that it escaped more than casual notice.

Operators began to recognize the veiled looks of disappointment and developed a technique to make it all worth while. Visitors were invited to The News basement where great generators sang and fly-wheels whirled impressively. They had no connection with the station, but after all they did supply current for operations of the building, and the station was on top of the building.

If the personnel of WFAA now may be called a staff, perhaps twig is the word to use for that first knot of addicts who devoted their hours to broadcasting. With everyone doubling in brass there were still never enough people to keep matters running smoothly.

Many a startled newspaper reporter unexpectedly found himself reading script or even adlibbing before a radio mike as an announcer, and not a few became performers.

One noon, when a speaker was delayed, Victor H. Schoffelmayer, agricultural editor of The News, rather hesitantly admitted that he could play the piano. His offer was snapped up.

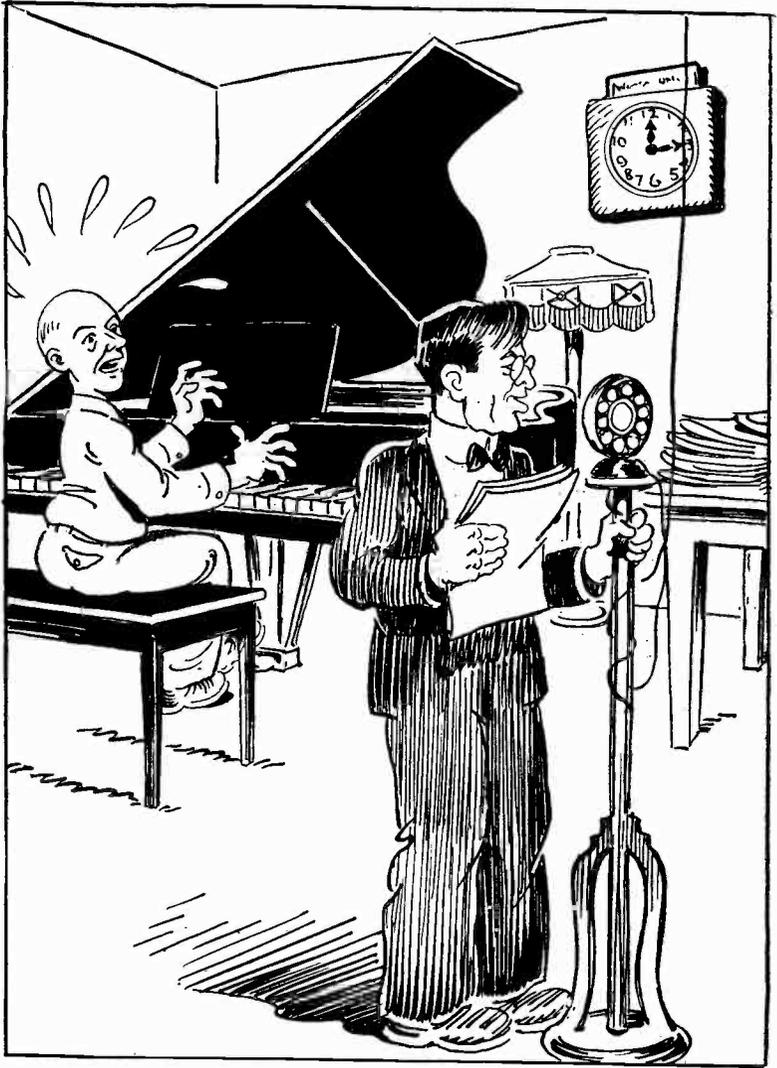
"But," he hastily stipulated, "I mustn't be recognized. What do you suppose my farmers would think if they caught me playing the piano?"

That was easy for the announcer on duty, radio having yet to develop the conscience which was to come with later years.

He promptly introduced:

"Count Rubinoffsky—a Russian refugee of the intellectuals who fled for his life from the Bolshevik realm . . ."

Count Rubinoffsky was described as tall, large and deliberate, with long black hair and a fearsome beard complete with mustachios. Victor is really decidedly Swedish



“Count Rubinoffsky—Black-Maned Refugee”

in complexion and for many years had combed his hair with a washrag.

He was so convulsed by the introduction that his sputtering acknowledgment sounded as much like Russian as anything else.

Count Rubinoffsky played for several years and developed a faithful public of admirers. His greatest difficulty was in evading fans who demanded audience and autograph.

It didn't take the early-day staff of WFAA long to learn the basic lesson that imagination is a compelling force in radio. Once an attractive lady toiled her way up to the first penthouse studios. She asked to see the announcer.

"I am the announcer," announced the somewhat less than Adonis-like staff member. "Did you wish to see me?"

"I did," replied the beautiful lady. "But perhaps I had better stick to my imagination."

The station was only two weeks old when it broadcast its first prize fight—Benny Leonard's successful defense of his lightweight crown against Rocky Kansas at Michigan City, Ind. Rounds were summarized as they came in off the wire.

Enthusiastically responded listeners:

"You could hear the 'plump' of the gloves, the shuffle of feet on the canvas . . ."

"It was easy to see the final fall and follow the count. You had a ringside seat and felt you'd been cheated because the fight wasn't longer."

And kidding was just as dangerous on the air then as it is now. One sunshiny day an announcer glanced out of the window and was struck by the gleaming copper wires of the antennae.

"A beautiful sight," he declaimed. "Eddie must have used his antennae polish. Reception should be better now that the rust has been taken off."

The next mail, and many afterward, brought requests for antennae polish. Hundreds wanted to know if it was adaptable to other household uses. An embarrassed station replied that it was all in fun.

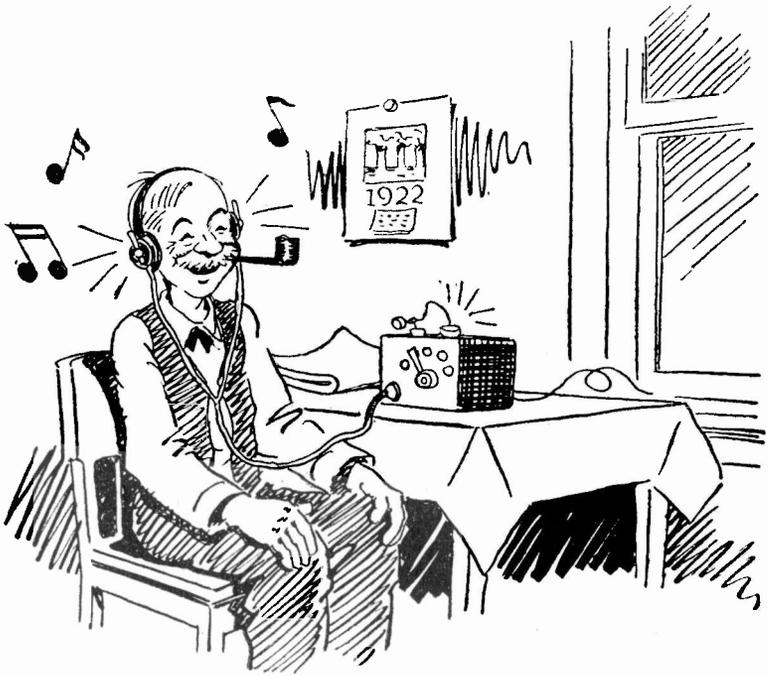
Two years later amateurs were advised by government bulletins to keep antennae polished for best results.

Perhaps the fan in Minneapolis kept his polished all along.

"You have a fine station," he wrote, "and I have a good receiver. You come in great with only a dishpan antennae."

Cracked a staff member years later:

"That guy must have produced the idea for the soap opera."



The Cat's Whisker

III

WHILE WFAA struggled with its transmitter and studio problems in those days of antiquity, thousands of individuals begged, bought and stole the items necessary to construct receivers.

Because of the early establishment of stations here, radio burst upon Dallas in its most chaotic state, as soon as, or possibly sooner, than any other major community. There was little experience to follow.

Reception of words and music from the ether had all the impact of a miracle. It was just as amazing to the average man as if his desk suddenly started talking to him. And it started fires of investigation in countless minds.

Even moral scruples fought losing battles. In the sedate Dallas News city room so many telephone receivers disappeared that proper conduct of business was threatened.

For more than a year before WFAA began, The News had conducted an educational campaign. Experts wrote of broadcasting science and methods of building receivers. Detailed designs were used with careful description of steps.

Even the mayor of Dallas, Sawnie R. Aldredge, who officiated at the formal opening of the station, had built more than one successful set.

Discussions of radio building techniques naturally were continued over the air. So many requests came in for specifications that prints were made for free distribution. Of what came to be the most popular, the "Shut 'er Down, Eddie" set, more than 20,000 prints were issued.

The craze spread like wildfire. Early in 1922, The News reported: "Dealers report that radio parts are slow moving," although "all parts (for a receiver) can be had for not more than \$7.50." On October 31 of the same year, four months after WFAA's start, a radio roundup story

said: "There is an active demand for parts. Dealers say that business is flourishing."

There was no gulf of formality between station and listener. All were members of one big, if slightly wacky, family. That's how the "Shut 'er Down Eddie" set got its name. It was a simple order to Transmitter Engineer Eddie Zimmerman to discontinue broadcasting, an honored notification to listeners that the station was leaving the air, the Star Spangled Banner of 1922.

Whereas such familiarity did not exactly breed contempt, it contributed to a perhaps deserved want of confidence in the fidelity of broadcasting. Callers often regarded their lack of reception as a personal fault of the transmitter engineer and demanded prompt attention. Sometimes they got it.

One such insisted that for several days reception had been poor, and on the day of the call it had ceased entirely. As he was a resident of a near-by apartment hotel, an obliging station engineer stopped by on his way home to investigate.

He found the complainant's homemade receiver was a flat failure until he surreptitiously attached it to the rooftop antennae of a friend. The overloaded antennae gave somewhat faulty service until another tenant mounted to the roof with a heavy wash and hung it on the convenient wires. That had fouled things up completely.

Even broadcasting stations could not deny that the accomplishment of getting something, anything, out of the air, far outweighed at first any consideration of program excellence. Perhaps it was just as well, for the beginning of program building saw no paid entertainers.

Still, at that time they seemed good.

There was the time for instance, when WFAA broadcast what is believed to be the first dramatic performance ever put on the air.

It was picked up by remote control from a meeting of the Dallas Rotary Club in one of the hotels—a play called "The Altruists"—a real tear jerker. Characters were portrayed by prominent Dallas business and professional men.

A transcription of that program might be almost priceless today—for blackmail purposes.

It was discovered very early that radio was a Godsend for the deaf and blind. In listening, the sightless were on even terms with society, while the deaf found that headsets enabled even severe cases to “feel” sound and “hear” broadcasts.

Soon there became available broadcasting talent of many kinds from these handicapped groups. One girl found a piano teaching post through her performances. A young man with ability on piano and organ teamed with an evangelist and toured the Southwest for years. Another, with only 20 per cent vision in one eye, gained popularity as a whistler, became a teacher, is now featured with “name” orchestras.

A businessman with a flair for music, devised a fiddle out of a broomstick, cigar box, bridge and one long gut string. His expert fingering brought familiar ballads in clear tones while his wife accompanied on the piano with a tinkling touch which accentuated the solo string.

A very sedate citizen was a one-man band. His favorite combination was piano, harmonica and xylophone, and he looked sometimes like a windmill in a cyclone.

One young merchant imitated wild creatures. He demonstrated and explained bird calls, illustrated toad frog courtship complete with arguments following the honeymoon. Bees were mimicked in various phases of work, mosquitoes with diverse intentions, and horseflies with variations depending on their liking for the horse.

There was the inevitable barnyard imitator. He insisted that listeners should be able to identify breeds of dogs by his bark; differentiate between the lows of Hereford and Jersey and the squeals of Berkshire or Razorback.

One volunteer even aired the sounds of traffic. He challenged the radio audience to follow him through different makes of automobiles and to tell whether trolleys were running empty or loaded by his interpretation of motor hum and wheel clatter.

Those were the days when people were invited to perform on program and there was none to complain of get-



"Poland-China or Razorback?"

ting insufficient time on the air. Life was simple and sincere. The wee broadcaster did not hesitate to ask the highest.

The station quickly obtained rights to some murder plays and put them on with effects which are still shivered over by the old timers. Compositions included the "Cross-Eyed Parrot," the "Trial of Vivienne Ware," and "The Trial of Dolores Divine."

In the casts were such figures as Edgar Witt, lieutenant governor of Texas, who came from his Waco home for many rehearsals; Robert B. Allen, veteran district court judge; William McCraw, who later was to become attorney general of Texas, and Oliver Hinsdell, then director of the Dallas Little Theater, now famed coach of stars in Hollywood.

IV

STATION WFAA had quickly passed from its original power of 50 watts through 100 to the 150 top of its original equipment. Thousands of messages had come from listeners, but none from California. So, when Walter Dealey went there for a vacation, he took a receiving set.

Early attempts to contact his station were in vain. Because of time differences, local California stations were going full blast long after WFAA had stopped broadcasting. In those days selectivity was virtually nil. Finally he wired Dallas: "Run all night Friday."

So a radio enthusiast called his wife and his Grace Methodist Church choir. Another came with her blues voice and two SMU faculty members brought violins. There were others — a banker with his wonderful Swiss music box; a dance orchestra; a pianist.

They played and sang all night.

It was about 5 a. m. when Walter Dealey's wire arrived: "Good. Got you."

He contended later he had really wired: "Good God, You!" But that same night he also telegraphed A. Frank Hamm of Western Electric: "Rush 500 watt transmitter by express."

So WFAA, on September 29, 1922, became a Class B, 500-watt station. It was assigned a wave length of 400 meters instead of the 360 formerly shared with other stations. Use of mechanical music was barred, for the station was a big boy now. The former cage antenna gave way to a flat top.

Shortly afterward the station occupied its third studio.

"We must have quiet," station personnel had insisted.

"O. K., I'll give it to you," agreed the harassed structural engineer at The News. Accordingly he requisitioned space occupied by three editorial offices and went to work.

He covered all surfaces with one-inch felt, held in place

on walls and ceiling by copper wire. A thick carpet further deadened the floor. Other surfaces were hung with yellow silk.

The carpet was so thick that planks had to be laid as tracks for the casters when the piano was moved. A casual trip from one end of the studio to the other generated static electricity so strong that sparks leaped disconcertingly.

The only opening was a doorway through which entrance was with trepidation and exit with a bound of relief. A telephone in an alcove permitted the announcer to converse with the operator. Response was via a telewriter, scrawled in the control room, reproduced facsimile in the studio. Performers were practically hypnotized by the eerie movements of the jointed finger.

It was a popular Presbyterian pastor who summed it up: "That thing makes me sympathize with old King Belshazzar whose doom was written by a moving finger on the wall."

Here sound effects came into their own.

One of the station's earliest dramatic efforts was in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the day the first railway train rolled into Dallas. Alexander Dean, then director of the Dallas Little Theater, assembled some of his star performers to reconstruct the transportation epic.

Coconut hulls on chair cushions made the clunk of horses' hooves on bois d'arc pavement. Sheets of sand paper rubbed together sounded convincingly like escaping cylinder steam as the train back-pedaled to a stop. The cluck of wagon wheels was reproduced by silver dollars slapped on paper-covered table top.

The quiet of the new studios completely silenced one performer group. It was when several owners of canaries were induced by a News employee to bring their songsters down for a bird concert. Outside the soundproof room the warblers made the walls ring. But in the studio's deadened semi-darkness not a bird would do so much as cheep.

It was one of those horrible emergencies which occurred only too often in early radio. While an announcer stalled



"The Loudest Squall Won . . ."

for time, frantic bird-owners grabbed cages and rushed for the sunlit sidewalk as an engineer dropped a hundred-foot wire from the studio.

The canaries burst into relieved song. Announcer and owners relaxed. A crowd gathered and that suggested another type of program. As far as Dallas is concerned canaries started "man on the street" broadcasts.

There is some debate among old-timers on the staff about the first commercial broadcast by WFAA. One school insists it was the baby show. Another contends it was Loline McCoy's "Little Yellow Puppy" story.

The baby show consisted of eliminations among the city's most attractive babies, which narrowed the field down to twelve. This dozen mothers and infants was then presented in a broadcast. Each mother held her little one before the mike, described its looks and traits, gave its name.

Invariably the baby at the mike cooed, laughed, burped, grunted or wept. Listeners selected the one they liked best. It was the boy who had cried loudest. A perfect example, says the baby show school, of the power of advertising on the air.

Loline McCoy used to narrate stories for the little folks in the late afternoon. Her "Little Yellow Puppy" story was about a carefree and gay little canine run down and killed by a careless driver. The tale was told with such feeling that many listeners got the idea it was a personal experience.

The next day, fifty-three sympathetic dog-lovers almost mobbed the charming relater of juvenile tales with proffers of a replacement. Hundreds of letters of solace were received.

There came three offers to sell substitute puppies. Hence the appellation of "first commercial."

Although WFAA now broadcast its signal at a power of 500 watts, it still was operating in the days when receiving sets were home grown, many of them crystal with haphazard turn of copper wire wrapped about broomstick or pasteboard cylinder. Getting a program at all was an

achievement. Getting a distant station was occasion for wild elation.

Overjoyed listeners rushed to write, wire or telephone the glad news of reception, and news of their messages was frequently carried between programs. That brought daily deluges of dainties to the staff from far and near. There was always plenty of homemade candy and cake. Texas cane syrup arrived by the gallon, peaches by the crate, strawberries by the box.

Once there was a consignment of persimmon beer, elegantly aged, which almost demoralized an orchestra.

A music company pulled probably the most distant wired response to a 500-watt broadcast. It offered six classical recordings, postpaid, to the listener responding from the point farthest from Dallas.

Before the hour-long program had ended a cablegram came from Preston, England. It claimed the record for distance, received the records of music.

V

THE power of radio was quickly appreciated by folks who approached the problems of life in, shall we say, unique fashion.

There was the gentleman, for instance, who said he had been an engineer during the Spanish-American War, produced an idea for stopping periodic floods of the Trinity in Dallas by siphoning the overflow back to the valleys of the river's headwaters.

Station personnel thought it was funny, permitted him to explain the scheme on the air. An avalanche of mail resulted, kept him so busy that he never again asked for time.

Another unusual customer brought in a pair of Texas long horns, not the cows of course, but a span with the original owner removed from in between. He had hollowed them out and attached to each a pierced brass ball. Blowing into the ball produced a weirdly undulant sound.

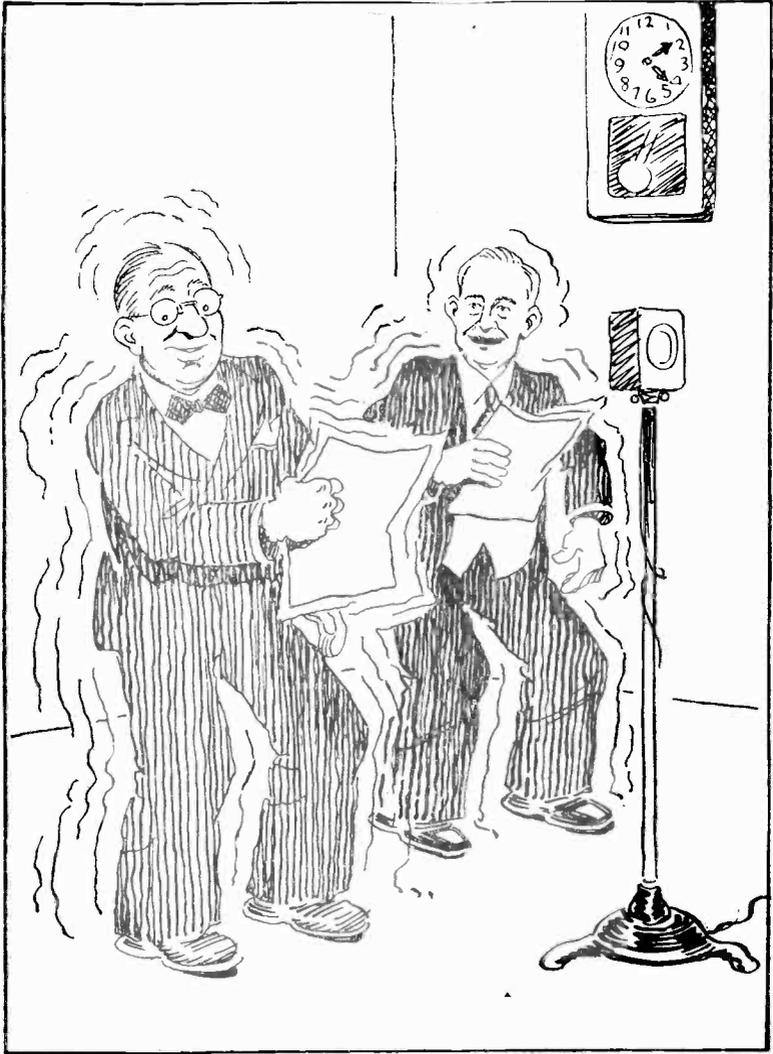
This combined with a piano accompaniment, and narrative, to make oddly different entertainment. It came to a quick end when a listener bought the horns.

Mike fright is not too common in the radio studios of today. Even though a great many persons appear for the first time, they have had years to become conditioned to radio.

In the beginning, however, it was different. WFAA's felt-lined studio, with its velvety silence, plus the unfamiliar apparition of the old carbon mike, threw many would-be performers into a state of complete collapse.

One evening a lady speaker, who had been duly tested and coached, was introduced. As she stepped to the mike a wild light came into her eyes. She announced that she would not use her prepared address.

Then she placed her 4-year-old son on the piano top and questioned:



"I Can Hold Both Papers If You Can Hold All the Legs"

"Son, who is the greatest man in the world?"

The boy, taken completely by surprise, said he didn't know. When urgings elicited nothing further, the lady answered her own question. She named a greatly beloved pastor of the city, then launched into an appeal for general repentance in a wicked world.

When the announcer tried to lead her away from the microphone, she whirled and lashed at him with:

"You should be on your knees asking forgiveness for all the things you've done, especially the misuse of this wonderful station."

That was the signal for the engineer to switch to a player piano. The lady continued praying for a half hour, desisted only when her pastor came down and agreed to meet her in the church parlors. She was ill for several months, never tried broadcasting again.

Nervousness was no respecter of persons. Ralph Budd, president of the Burlington System, agreed to an interview by G. B. Dealey during a visit here. As they approached the microphone hands and knees of both trembled.

Whispered Irish Budd to English Dealey:

"I can hold this paper steady enough to read if someone will hold my legs."

Answered the interviewer:

"I can hold both papers if you can hold all the legs."

The announcer quickly shoved a table between, chairs behind them. Thus supported they performed like veterans.

There were other performers who carried on despite all obstacles. One was a teacher of piano, a massive pupil of Leschitzky, who tipped the scales at 325 pounds. As she neared the beautiful conclusion of Wagner's "Evening Star" she reached for the treble extremity of the keyboard.

The bench, which more than once had groaned, crashed. Shocked but undaunted, Madame reached up from among her splinters to finger a faultless finish.

William Jennings Bryan found his first radio appearance highly annoying. He spoke in the First Presbyterian Church on the subject "Why I Believe the Bible", and he took advantage of the ample pulpit to roam while talking.

The station had placed two mikes to allow for some movement, but The Great Commoner kept trying to skirt end. It was frequently necessary for station attendants to gently "shoo" him back. Each such action brought a break in the talk and scathing looks.

Bye and bye the air time was over and Mr. Bryan breathed a great sigh of relief.

"Now I can tell you what I really think," he told the audience. "When they were shoving me around some of the things I thought were not actually Biblical."

Once twenty members of a ladies' choral club became more and more jittery as the time arrived for their broadcast. Then some inspired one suggested that the announcer should say this was no time to have husbands publicized and each singer should introduce herself by her maiden name.

So many had such difficulty in remembering their maiden names that merriment quickly restored confidence.

Least self-conscious of all performers were the great Dallas News presses, which were frequently called upon when programs threatened to become dull. A microphone dangled through a window of the ground-floor press room picked up their roar faithfully.

Listeners liked it and called for more. From that developed an occasional tour of the newspaper plant with traveling mike. Over the air would go all the sounds of building a great metropolitan newspaper—the measured beat of telegraph printers, the clatter of typewriters in the city room, the clinking rhythm of Intertype machine and the slap of galleys of type in the make-up forms.

Unrehearsed department heads, careful not to break the Third Commandment, described the operation of their sections. Listeners loved it, seemed to enjoy the tour time after time.

Only the business office seemed dull without characteristic sound. Wrote one listener:

"Since that is where the money comes in, and we all know money talks, I suppose it's just another case of mike fright."

On the subject of characteristic sounds—an early stunt

of the station was for an announcer to hold the mike over his heart, then ask listeners to identify the sound.

Guesses included "muffled drums," "newspaper presses," "thumping with fists on table top," "distant street car," "bass viol," "slosh of water in barrel," and a number of others.

Ultimately the demonstration was explained. Then came the prize letter:

"If you really have a heart like that, for Heaven's sake keep it off the air and substitute music. Give us more pleasure and less to worry about." It was from a doctor.

If the presses were the least self-conscious performers, Andrew Eben Menilluk was the most naive. Andrew was an Eskimo who came to Dallas at the invitation of The News and Radio Station WFAA as Santa Claus. His reindeer, capering in welcoming parade encouraged Christmas spending, and of course he was interviewed by press and radio.

Andrew confidently promised Christmas largess from the North Pole. He enthused over Dallas' lights, fountains and maidens. Color amazed him. To interviewer Ann Gough Hunter he confided:

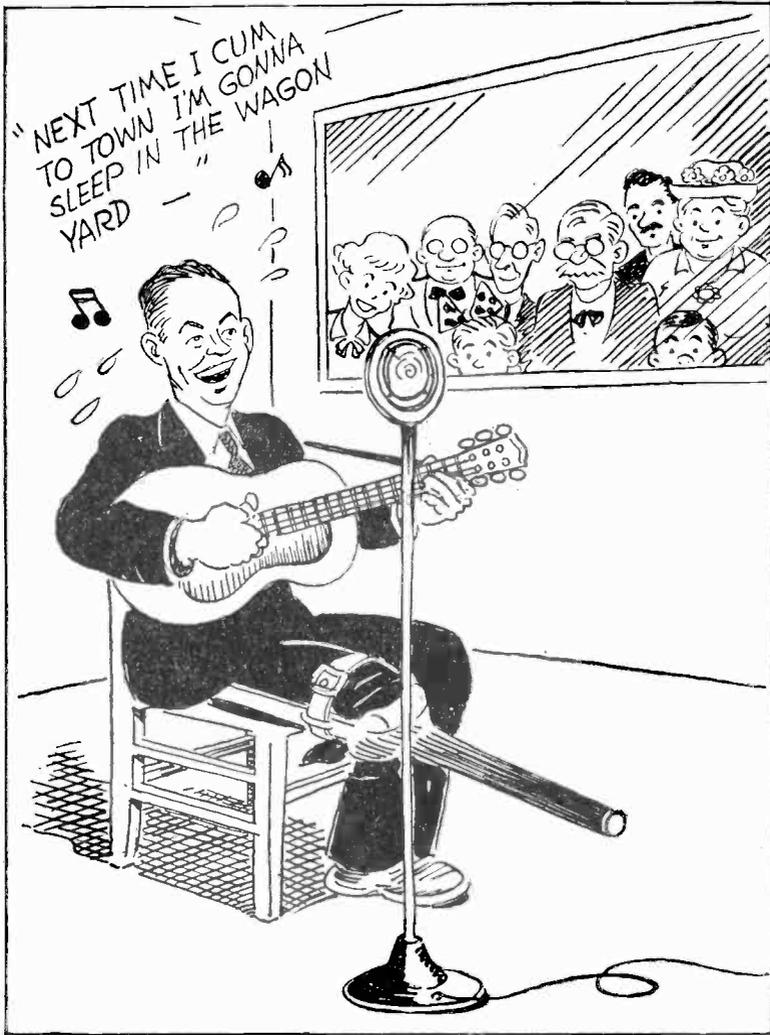
"At home everything white. Bear white. Ptarmigan white. Moss white. Sun shine all night."

Water entranced him.

"We chew snow," he said. "You turn pipe. Out come water cook egg."

Nobody in Dallas would let Andrew pay for anything. He concluded: "Everyone brother."

After twenty years a Dallas soldier serving in Alaska met Andrew. He sent regards to friends here, said he heard WFAA now and then and still wished he could come back to Texas' warmth and beauty.



"The First Plate Glass Window"

VI

UNTIL 1929, when preparations were being made to launch the Southwest's first superpowered station, WFAA moved its broadcasting antennae only once. This was when the tall mast atop the News Building was gently toppled and shifted over to the Katy office building in 1923.

On the September morning when the operation was to begin, Eddie Zimmerman, assistant engineer on duty, was stricken with appendicitis. Amidst the confusion, ambulance attendants waggled the heavy man across girders, down narrow stairways, finally to the elevator and the hospital for operation. Eddie never lived down his "elaborate plan to avoid work."

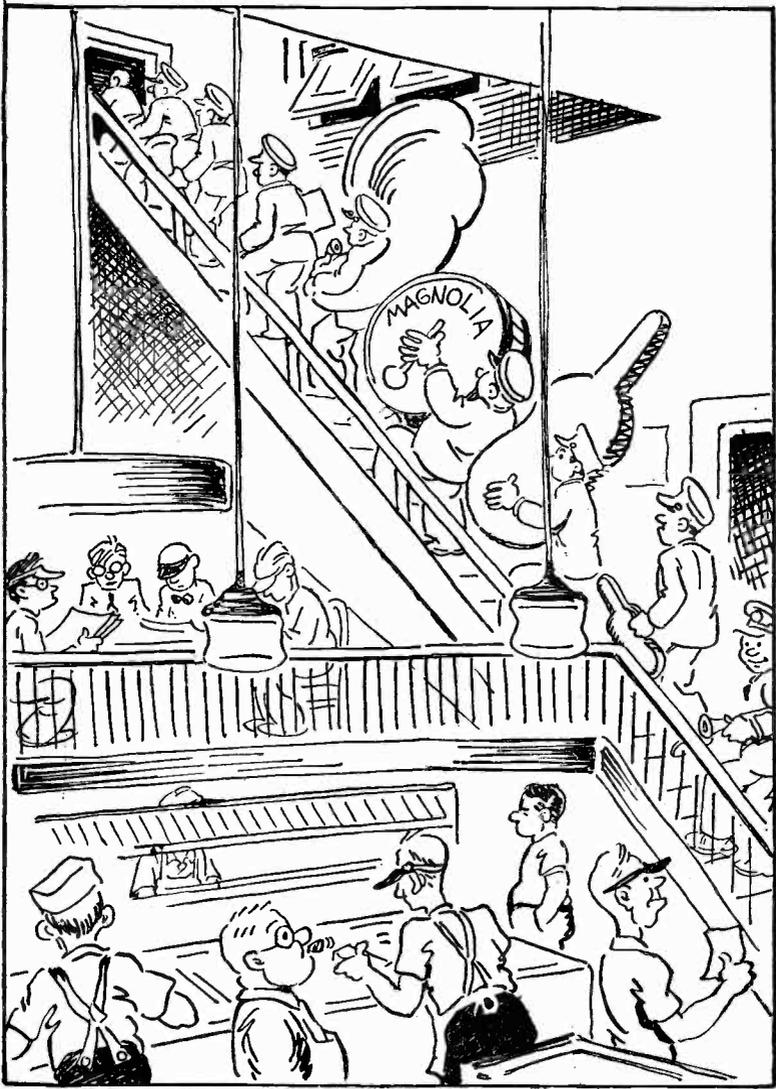
But while antennae remained the same, studios changed often. From its last felt-padded studio at The News, the station moved to the Baker Hotel's seventeenth (or top) floor. Here was installed the first plate glass window so visitors might watch performers.

One who never failed to draw a group of well-wishers to this window was Jackson A. (Peg) Moreland, the ditty singer with a tambourine. "Peg" had lost a leg, but he scorned an artificial limb and made the wooden peg a trade mark known throughout radioland.

The next move was to the hotel's third floor. This was a relatively magnificent layout with large reception room, a control room with a studio on each of its two inner sides, various offices and rehearsal rooms.

During these years of development radio was gradually assuming the form we know now. Many factors developed simultaneously, making chronology difficult. In our brief descriptions of some of the more important here, we therefore must follow one subject through, then go back in time to pick up another.

In the beginning of radio there were no networks. Perhaps President Warren G. Harding was the first famous



“The Bass Drum Barely Made It”

guinea pig in such experiments. His address at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on Armistice Day, 1921, was carried by long-distance telephone wires and amplified by loudspeakers for some 100,000 persons in New York and San Francisco. There was no broadcast. Neither of these cities had radio stations then.

The President spoke in St. Louis on June 21, 1923. Radio Stations in St. Louis and in New York broadcast the address. Soon afterward, AT&T officials set up a test national network of four stations, including WFAA. This broadcast President Calvin Coolidge's message to Congress December 6, 1923, and his eulogy of the late President Harding four days later.

Simultaneously there were developing in Texas the beginnings of TQN, the Texas Quality Network, around the Magnolia Petroleum Company's communication lines.

Magnolia had installed its own lines in 1911. In 1920, seeking a means to entertain refinery workers in Beaumont, the company organized an employee band of 40 pieces. October, 1923, brought this musical aggregation to Dallas to win the Texas State Fair's band contest and appear over WFAA.

Musicians were rushed from Fair Park to The News, mounted three floors by elevator then forty-four narrow steps to the roof. It was something of a miracle how the bass drum and horns made it. Nevertheless, they did and duly added their roars to nature's frequent thunder during the recital. At the performance's end the skies gushed. The unsheltered players and instruments were soaked. Radio listeners were so delighted with this and subsequent broadcasts that Magnolia decided to make programs regularly available from Beaumont over its private telephone wires. Experts sneered that it couldn't be done—that un-insulated and unamplified lines would not suffice for such distance.

But the company's chief of communications and station engineers disagreed. And they accomplished it with plain copper circuit and only three amplifications. This brought AT&T engineers to Texas on the double. They saw and heard, added their own refinements. During the next few

years many stations were temporarily linked together for simultaneous broadcasting of historic events. The largest number was when fifty-five joined to cover the welcoming of Charles Lindbergh home after his solo flight across the Atlantic.

The News and WFAA underwrote the first regular network broadcasting west of the Mississippi River.

The National Broadcasting Company was organized in late 1926. On February 25, 1927, telephone lines especially engineered for broadcasting were brought into Texas. WFAA was the first Texas station to become affiliated with any national network. It was expensive, but it proved sound.

Meanwhile, Texas had developed its own network facilities without benefit of AT&T. First WFAA picked up the Beaumont broadcasts, then other Texas stations were established and joined in. Soon each station was originating programs for the use of all.

Noon had been Farm and Home hour on WFAA from the second day of its existence. Victor Schoffelmayer (the Count Rubinfofsky of preceding pages) helped build these programs. Successful dirt farmers, poultry producers, cattlemen, feedmen, all co-operated to give their best thought without recompense.

There were even discussion of "The Farm Flapper," including fashions and social problems.

The long-continued Texas Farm and Home hour was an outgrowth of this beginning.

The Texas School of the Air may be traced to an equally remote inception.

Dr. Robert Stuart Hyer, president emeritus of Southern Methodist University, began weekly talks over WFAA while the station was in its infancy. They were very popular. Then came Dr. John D. Boon, physicist, to reduce astronomy to popular levels, and Professor Clyde Eagleton to discuss current history situations.

There were many others. Educators were quick to appreciate the value of radio in their field. Through it, voices of the finest teachers could be brought to innumerable classrooms.

These early educational programs gave birth to the Texas School of the Air, under direction of the State Department of Education, and conducted in co-operation with a number of colleges and universities.

Today it is the largest state school of the air in the United States in number of schools participating (more than 2,000) and in number of classroom listeners.

During the school year it is carried five mornings weekly on the Texas Quality Network, the stations of which have almost complete coverage of the state.

An outgrowth of the early hookups made with oil company lines, TQN formally came into being in 1934 utilizing telephone company equipment.

Washington is frequently called "The City of Magnificent Distances." Reference is supposed to be to its planning—wide streets, low buildings, many parks and esplanades.

Businessmen sometimes feel, however, that it is a measure of how much the citizen misses getting what he went there after.

For example, when WFAA went to Washington in 1928, it sought three things—superpower, clear channel and acquisition of another station so that it might have full time. In those days assault on Washington was made by home talent, but it was considered wise to include a few men who knew their way around the national capital.

After the exhaustive hearing and the settlement of bills, one of those genial gentlemen slapped Walter Dealey on the back and crowed:

"It's in the bag."

Decisions announced later were not favorable.

"Yes!" remarked Walter, "it was in the bag all right, but not the bag I was holding."

Nevertheless, WFAA soon afterward obtained permission to increase its signal to 50,000 watts and became the first newspaper-owned station in the United States to join the exalted superpowered field. It shared a clear channel with WBAP, Fort Worth.

Two 300-foot towers were erected near Grapevine to accommodate this maximum allowed radio power. In

1938, these gave way to the famous vertical antennae, at that time the tallest man-made structure in the Southwest. It rises 653 feet into the Texas sky.

Last major physical expansion of the station was into its ultra modern penthouse studios atop the second unit of the Santa Fe Building, on June 23, 1941.

This installation, a two-story unit with five studios, five control rooms and thirty other rooms and offices is the radio showplace of the Southwest, a monument to loyal listeners.

Radio broadcasts, prior to occupation of these penthouse studios, had emanated from quarters of exigent sizes and shapes. Here, at last, were facilities whose treatment was governed only by the needs of radio, the first studios in the world designed with the new polycylindrical diffusion treatment.

Until that time engineers had treated the surfaces of studios to muffle or absorb sound to lick the old bugbear of room echoes. Now a startling theory had been advanced. Would not it be better to break up and diffuse sound rather than trying to absorb it?

It sounded logical. Dr. C. P. Boner, head of the Physics Department of the University of Texas (an accomplished organist in his own right) was retained by WFAA to engineer the revolutionary new structures.

There were some tense moments for General Manager Martin Campbell and Technical Director Ray Collins of the station while Dr. Boner and his assistants conducted weeks of experiment. Then came the awful first day of trial.

It was a queer looking room. Walls were a series of half-cylinders. As a precaution the floor had been heavily carpeted.

But the principle proved itself thoroughly immediately. Up came the carpet and down went hard linoleum. Still it was perfect. With no echo, no muffling, a whisper at one end of the large studio was clear and distinct twenty feet away.

Other great stations and networks were quick to adopt

the polycylindrical diffusion principle. Its use is now widespread in the industry.

To its pioneer, WFAA, it gave then, and gives now, the ability to broadcast voices and music as near to complete naturalness as master scientists anywhere have been able to achieve.



“It Could Have Been a Bomb”

VII

No reminiscences of a radio station would be complete without recollection of the great names and great events which have made it a part of living history.

And they have run the gamut at WFAA, from the most hilarious in comedy to the dreadful impact of the December 7 flash in 1941: "Pearl Harbor bombed."

When G. B. Dealey spoke on the occasion of WFAA's power raise to 500 watts in 1922 he promulgated a policy which never lapsed.

"If we obtain the goodwill of our listeners," he said, "we are content. This station belongs to the people of the Southwest."

Nothing perhaps is more indicative of this policy than the Sunday service by Dr. David Lefkowitz, Rabbi of Temple Emanu-El. Dr. Lefkowitz spoke first on July 23, 1922, the fifth week of station operation. Regularly, with only breaks for summer vacations, this service has continued.

A mixed quartet sang with this Jewish Rabbi. Its members at first were a Methodist, a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian and a Baptist. The organist-pianist was a Christian Scientist. Letters from listeners have indicated all along that the audience also was interdenominational.

It was claimed, in 1923, that WFAA was the first station to broadcast news of President Harding's death. A newscast was on when The News received the flash and it was hurried to the studios only one floor below. It was on the air within a minute after receipt on the wire.

WFAA's staff will never forget Capt. William P. Erwin, daring carrier of Dallas' banner when William Dole offered \$25,000 for the first flight from the American mainland to Honolulu. Captain Erwin, World War I hero, had become known as "The Unkillable" because of his close calls in military service.

Dallas sponsored a plane for him in the Dole Race. It was built in Wichita, Kansas, and he landed it at Love Field August 6, 1927. More than 20,000 persons met him, listened while Gov. Dan Moody expressed Texas' confidence and Mayor R. E. Burt christened the ship "Dallas Spirit".

Captain Erwin expressed his gratitude, then added: "Whatever happens to me, the spirit of determination and faith will sustain me and will live long in you and this goodly city I represent."

He flew "Dallas Spirit" to Oakland, Calif., with his bride of only a few weeks. On August 16, the day of the race's start, motor troubles disqualified his ship. Others went through to win. Still others were unreported at sea. Captain Erwin offered to fly in search. Dallas, through Col. William E. Easterwood, encouraged by offering \$25,000 if he flew on to the Asiatic Coast, more if he continued around the world.

Bill Erwin took off westward over the Pacific on August 19. Cheerful messages came over his radio and WFAA relayed them to an eager Texas. But storms swirled around the fragile craft when it was 700 miles out. A sickening tailspin was reported—then progress—another spin and silence. No trace was ever found.

Several months later, in Dallas, William Erwin, Jr., was born.

A happier circumstance was the reception here of Coste and Belonte when they arrived to collect Colonel Easterwood's \$25,000 for the first plane to fly from Europe to Dallas. The Colonel had neglected to specify "non-stop", and the Frenchmen first collected a purse in New York, then flew on here.

Love Field was jammed with welcoming throng. Mounted National Guardsmen and police pressed eager spectators back from the runway. But Announcer Eddie Dunn had a microphone with long wire for planeside interview plus Interpreter Louis E. Faget, French-born member of the staff orchestra.

Eddie pushed through to the runway for which the plane was diving.

"Ils no passeront pas!" the excited guard shouted. But

Eddie was Irish and words to him were wind. He pushed his 215 pounds under a horse and the animal reared, unseating its rider. Unheeding the confusion Eddie went on, scuttling under horses' bellies like a huge crab.

He broke through into the open as the plane taxied in. Coste, seeing a wild man with what might have been a bomb, cut the engine and jammed on his brakes. Eddie dashed to the plane's side, raised the mike in a statue of liberty pose, panted his memorized greeting in French.

The fliers uttered relieved "Bon jours!" Just then Faget appeared and torrents of Gaelic welcome were translated. Another first for WFAA. The famous aviators were grandly on the air.

Chester Lauck and Norriss Goff came out of Arkansas with "Lum 'n Abner" in 1931. NBC promptly signed them up but a wait was necessary so they began tri-weekly appearances at WFAA, Dallas.

One night a program immediately preceding theirs had used a horse. The animal had been coaxed to the studio over a tortuous route, and once there refused to leave. It thus became their audience.

Possibly influenced by something familiar about the characters, the horse suddenly stamped a few times, then neighed lustily right in the middle of the show. These sound effects, of course, had no place in the script, but the quick-thinking pair extemporized:

"I reckon Uncle Hamp done come over the mounting," observed Lum. "Ain't that Ole Caesar we heered?"

To which Abner responded: "He must uv rode with rowels to make that hoss come alive that way."

Sugar lumps from the attendants kept the horse quiet for the remainder of the period.

Ruby Taylor, Amos' girl friend in Amos and Andy, was "born" in Dallas. It was back in 1925 when Charles Correll and Freeman Gosden were filling an engagement at the Old Mill Theater as Sam 'n Henry, and broadcasting from WFAA between stage shows.

The Old Mill had a colored janitor who enchanted the actors with stories of his experiences, particularly those involving his girl Ruby. They did not change their theater



"Ruby Says I'se Right Satisfactual"

routine but they began to bring "Ruby" into their broadcasts. She has been a member of the cast since.

One of the most gripping stories of all time for radio listeners was that of continuing efforts to rescue Floyd Collins, who lay for more than three weeks pinned in a Kentucky cave before he died.

Workers dug frantically toward the trapped man who could speak to them in gradually weakening voice. Newscasts described the maddeningly slow progress in minutest detail.

Listeners wrote of sensing claustrophobia. Many had difficulty eating and could scarcely sleep. When death finally came it was almost as if a great sigh of combined mourning and relief from ordeal swept the nation.

Once WFAA had a fiddle and harmonica team called "The Janitor and the Janitor's Son". They played mostly request numbers in an unrehearsed show.

One morning "Son" read a letter telling of a listener who was seriously ill.

"We've got a number all ready for this friend," said the "Janitor". "It's 'Farewell to Thee'."

For a moment there was silence as the meaning of his words dawned horribly on him.

Then he stammered hastily:

"No, no. That's the one I'm saving for my wife. Let's make it 'Wake Up and Live'."

In 1926, WFAA broadcast a shot-by-shot description of murder. It was one morning while Ralph Schultz gazed vacantly out the studio window while the piano carried on during an exercise program rest period. Suddenly he jerked erect and grabbed the microphone.

"Say, folks," he chanted excitedly, "there's a footrace down on the streets. Two grown men hitting it up.

"Hey, one's getting away. But the slower fellow has pulled a gun. There goes a shot! He missed. The leader is widening the distance."

The sound of the shot cracked into the mike.

"There's another shot. It's a hit. The man is down on the sidewalk. He had just gotten out of the street.

He's trying to get up. There's a third shot. It stopped him. He's flat on the pavement. He's not moving.

"There comes a policeman around the corner. That's one time an officer was on hand at the right time. He's taken the pistol. He's handcuffed the shooter to him. They've gone into the drug store."

He told of the crowd gathering, the arrival of the patrol wagon and the ambulance. Then he concluded:

"The live man is getting into the patrol and the other man is being put into the ambulance. But I'm afraid it's too late. That's all folks. I'll bet you never heard a murder happening before.

"Now we'll resume the exercises."

VIII

THIS was intended to be a small booklet and original space allotted has already been exceeded. But with all due respect to the paper shortage a little more must be said.

A radio station is by the very nature of things more of a public than a private institution. During the waking hours of every average individual it stands by to entertain, to inform, to educate, to warn. It beams its broadcasts on a frequency denied all others.

Radio programs mold the young, deeply influence their elders. Their language is the language of their community; their music is the music their people love; their drama both reflects and sets patterns of life.

As G. B. Dealey originally conceived, radio always has and always will belong to the people. It is potter's clay in their hands to shape as they will, at the same time the master potter, translating what is best for the most into universal acceptance.

Since radio broadcasting began in America, this vital new force has helped shape the life of every individual. It has been inevitably linked with the development of communities.

June 26 is the twenty-fifth anniversary of Radio Station WFAA. From its stumbling beginning two and one-half decades ago, through constant experimentation, trial and error, this station has become one of the giants of the radio world.

WFAA has never lagged, never followed. It has led always. It has been first to give its listeners the latest and best.

Its firsts in the provision of network facilities have been described as have its pioneerings in studio construction, Texas' initial vertical antennae. There are many others. WFAA obtained the first FCC license for experimental facsimile broadcasting—back in 1938. It established Dal-

las' first frequency modulation station—KERA—in 1946.

Many of these experiments have been expensive. Some will never pay for themselves in direct results. But they have all contributed to a listener confidence, built up over the years, which money alone could never buy.

This may be indicative. When Japanese bombs struck Pearl Harbor an angry, frightened, imperiled America needed unity as never before. WFAA offered its facilities, was made key station of the Southwest, instructed to report to the Southern Defense Command at San Antonio.

The closest liaison followed with all governmental departments. It became even closer when the Eighth Service Command moved headquarters to the first unit of the Santa Fe Building in Dallas, connected to the studios by a tenth-floor bridge across a street.

The friend—the “neighbor of the air”—in peace became the primary informant and counsellor in emergency.

Because of its location, the geography of surrounding terrain and its power of 50,000 watts on clear channel, WFAA serves the largest primary coverage area in the United States, an area rich in resources and in the go-ahead of a restless, ever-increasing population.

It will continue to lead.

MILESTONES

- June 26, 1922—WFAA broadcasts first program. Power 50 watts. Studios, nine-by-nine penthouse atop The News Building.
- July 1, 1922—Studios moved to News library (where later tent was erected).
- Oct. 10, 1922—Power increased to 100 watts.
- Dec. 1, 1922—Power up to 500 watts.
- Feb. 23, 1923—First remote broadcast—from grounds of Al G. Barnes Circus in Dallas.
- April 2, 1923—WFAA joins Wired Wireless, forerunner National Broadcasting Company.
- Dec. 6, 1923—WFAA carries President Coolidge's Opening Message to Congress.
- Oct. 1, 1925—Studios moved to seventeenth floor Baker Hotel.
- Feb. 25, 1927—WFAA affiliates with NBC, first network station in Texas.
- Oct. 1, 1929—Transmitter building at Grapevine opened. Power increased to 5,000 watts.
- Feb. 8, 1930—Studios moved to third floor Baker Hotel.
- May 10, 1930—WFAA becomes first newspaper-owned super-power (50,000 watts) station.
- Sept. 10, 1934—Texas Quality Network presents first program. WFAA a key station.
- July 2, 1935—Pack transmitter (KEGE) licensed by WFAA. Used for emergencies and special events.
- Sept. 21, 1937—Mobile transmitter (KFAA) licensed. Mounted on special 1 1/2-ton truck.
- Jan. 5, 1938—WFAA's ultrahigh-frequency station (W5XD) licensed. This was experimental, the first "short wave" broadcasting station in Texas.

- Dec. 3, 1938—Vertical radiator (antennae) completed at Grapevine. at that time the tallest structure in the Southwest—653 feet.
- Oct. 12, 1939—Volume I, Number 1 radio (facsimile) edition of The Dallas Morning News was broadcast. An eight-page "newspaper."
- Sept. 1, 1940—The News acquires half interest in Radio Station KGKO.
- June 23, 1941—WFAA's revolutionary penthouse studios atop the Santa Fe Building occupied and opened to public.
- Oct. 15, 1945—WFAA licenses W5XIC, first Frequency Modulation developmental station in Texas, forerunner of KERA-FM.
- Oct. 5, 1946—Station KERA-FM, 250 watts, first frequency modulation broadcasting station in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, begins operation.
- April 23, 1947—KERA's new antennae atop Mercantile Bank Building put in use, with 1,000 watts radiated power.
- April 27, 1947—WFAA becomes full-time station, absorbing one-half time on 570 kilocycles. Call letters KGKO eliminated.
- June 26, 1947—Station WFAA celebrates silver anniversary.

