

KGNC 30th Anniversary Booklet  
1952

WDAG

KGRS

KGNC

KGNC-TV (Coming)

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE HIGH PLAINS

This booklet is a gift of KGNC in  
appreciation of your faithful  
listening and loyal support  
over the past thirty years

# In Memoriam

GENE A. HOWE

March 22, 1886—June 25, 1952

JOHN GARLAND BALLARD

January 10, 1900—July 18, 1952

# THE WAY IT ALL BEGAN



# Birth of the Wireless

Man is in constant pursuit of the secrets of nature. As a result, the social consequences of discovery and invention continually change the pattern of daily life.

Who would have believed it if some seer in 1900 had been so foolish as to predict that in fifty years millions of people, not only in their homes, but in horseless carriages, would be listening to music and voices from across the world?

In 640 B. C. Thales of Miletus noticed that amber, after being rubbed, acquired the property of attracting straws and other light objects. The Greeks called amber "elektron" because of its sunny lustre, so Thales gave this phenomenon of frictional electricity the name "electricity."

In 1827 Sir Charles Wheatstone coined the term "microphone" for an acoustic device he had developed to amplify weak sounds.

In 1844 Samuel Morse's telegraph circuit opened between Washington and Baltimore. The first message was "What hath God wrought."

In 1867 James Clerk Maxwell outlined theoretically and predicted the action of electromagnetic, or ether, waves.

In 1872 the first patent for a system of wireless was issued in the United States to Dr. Mahlon Loomis, who in 1865 made a drawing to illustrate how setting up "disturbances in the atmosphere could cause electric waves to travel through the atmosphere."

In 1875 Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone.

In 1877 the first audible reproduction of recorded sound was accomplished by Thomas A. Edison and he applied for a patent on a "phonograph or speaking machine."

In 1882 Professor Amos Dolbear was awarded a United States patent for wireless apparatus. He stated that "electrical communication, using this apparatus, might be established between points certainly more than one-half mile apart, but how much farther I cannot say."

In 1886 Professor Heinrich Hertz proved experimentally that electromagnetic waves could be transmitted through space at the speed of light, confirming Maxwell's ether theory. He also demonstrated that the waves could be reflected and refracted.

In 1895 Guglielmo Marconi, a youth of 21, startled the world with the announcement that he had flashed and received signals by wireless. Few people believed him, but scientists, aware of electromagnetic waves, realized that perhaps Marconi was right and

they too began to test the theory.

Marconi set a fast pace as he began to experiment along the coast of England, almost daily increasing the range of his new communication system. On March 27, 1899, Marconi signaled by wireless across the English Channel for the first time. Later, he sent messages from ships to shore and from shore to ships. And, on December 12, 1901, Marconi, at St. Johns, Newfoundland, picked up the first transatlantic wireless signal, the letter "S" sent from his transmitter at Poldhu on the southwest tip of England.

In 1906 **The New York Times** received eye-witness wireless reports of the naval battle off Port Arthur in the Russo-Japanese war.

In December, 1906, Professor Reginald A. Fessenden's broadcast of phonograph music and speech from Brant Rock, Massachusetts, was picked up by ships off the Virginia coast. Fessenden received the first patent issued for voice transmission by electromagnetic waves.

In September, 1909, Robert E. Peary sent a wireless message from Indian Harbour, Labrador, to **The New York Times**: "I found the Pole, I reached it on April 6, 1909."

On the night of April 14, 1912, Cape Race and ships at sea picked up a message from the S. S. Titanic, "We've struck an iceberg. Sinking fast." And, in New York, David Sarnoff, a Marconi operator, remained at his post three days and nights handling communications with the rescue ship Carpathia.

On August 13, 1912, the United States Government began licensing radio operators and transmitting stations.

In August of 1915, David Sarnoff conceived the idea of radio broadcasting as we know it today. In a business memorandum he proposed "a radio music box . . . to bring music into the house by wireless . . . lectures at home may be made perfectly audible. also events of national importance."

In November, 1919, Station 8XK, Pittsburgh, later KDKA, started private broadcasting.

The "radio music box", developed along with the radiophone during World War I, attracted amateur wireless operators when wartime restrictions were lifted and through their efforts broadcasting began. It started in Pittsburgh and spread as a craze across the land.

In May of 1922, there were 80 licensed private broadcasters in the United States. By December of the same year there were over 500.

One of the first 80 was WDAG in Amarillo.

# On the Air in Amarillo

On May 20, 1922, the **Amarillo Daily News** reported that the first concert ever "broadcasted" from a radio station in Amarillo was sent out from a ten-watt set "last night." Before the station had been broadcasting ten minutes, four persons telephoned to report that they were receiving the program.

WDAG, Amarillo's first public broadcasting station, was licensed by the United States Government on May 16, 1922.

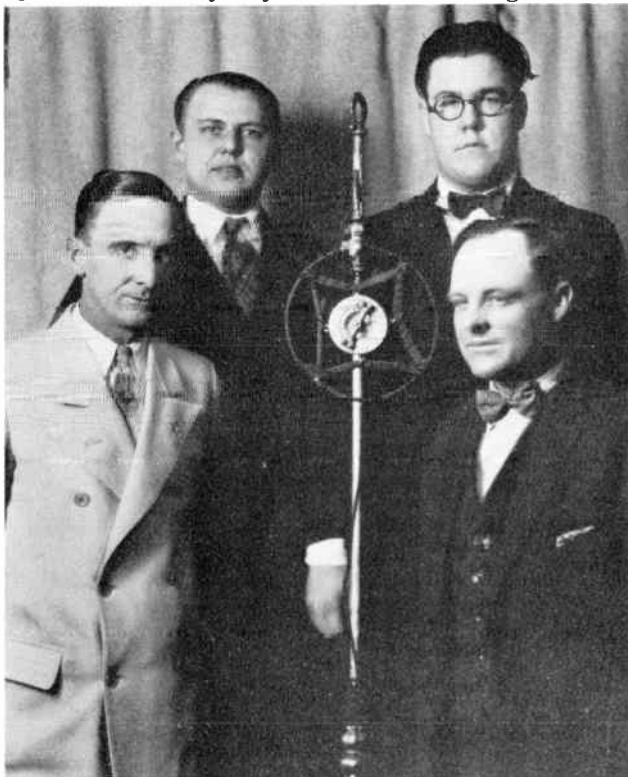
The license was issued to J. Laurance Martin, a pioneer in radio. As early as 1919, Martin was a licensed amateur, or "ham," operator, transmitting from Station 5-IF in Amarillo.

WDAG was licensed as a commercial radio station, with a power of 1000 watts, on an assigned frequency of 1140 kilocycles.

WDAG was built, from start to finish, in Amarillo. Under Martin's supervision, condensers, coils and other parts were built here at home. The studio and transmitter were both located in the back of Martin's bicycle shop at 605 East Fourth.

Resourcefulness was the most important quality in a pioneer radio man and it is still a vital ingredient in successful radio broadcasting.

Martin's ingenuity quickly won him renown and he was made superintendent of the American Radio Relay League, with authority over 54 counties. The ARRL was a government-authorized agency for the regulation of early-day radio broadcasting.



Darrell Rasco, L. A. Paulson, W. Ben Wimberly, J. L. Martin, 1926 staff of WDAG

Some months later, Amarillo's second commercial radio station, KGRS, went on the air.

KGRS was the property of E. B. Gish, who owned a filling station on the south side of Eighth, between Polk and Taylor.

The tiny building was a two-story affair. Upstairs, there was a studio . . . a low, burlap-draped room just big enough for a piano, a turn-table and about two people, if the people weren't big people. Downstairs, there was the filling station.

Listeners to KGRS were accustomed to having their radio-listening interrupted by the exigencies of Gish's gasoline business. At any moment, Gish might say, "Just a minute folks. There's a customer downstairs. If the record stops, don't go away, because I'll be back."

In a few minutes, Gish would indeed return and would report to his listeners just who the customer was and how many gallons of gasoline he bought.

Today, KGNC listeners are treated with a great deal of formality. "This is the National Broadcasting Company" . . . "Through the authority of the Federal Communication Commission" . . . "Ladies and gentlemen, the national anthem" . . . "The preceding program was transcribed."

The 1922 days were the days of personalized broadcasting. Stations were, for the most part, run by former amateur operators, men who built their own sets and began broadcasting as a hobby.

But radio tickled the public fancy. Perhaps no other industry ever developed as rapidly as radio.

In fact, it was no time at all before the filling station and bicycle shop radio stations of Amarillo were sporting elaborate hotel studios. WDAG moved into the new Capitol Hotel and KGRS into the Herring. Later, Martin moved his WDAG into still more capacious quarters in what is now the lobby floor lounge of the Amarillo Hotel and built a transmitter on the Tri-State Fair Grounds. Then the Gish family built a combination studio-transmitter-home, Spanish-style, just east of town on the Dallas highway. The building is still in use by radio station KF'DA.

In 1923 both WDAG and KGRS were assigned to the same frequency, 1410 kilocycles.



Cal Farley describes wrestling match for WDAG listeners



KGRS was authorized to broadcast each morning from 6:30 until 8 and from 10 to 12:30, each evening from 6 to 7:30 and, three nights a week, from 9 to 12. The remaining hours in the broadcast day belonged to WDAG.

The split-time situation provoked a running feud between the two stations since neither cared to stop broadcasting in the middle of an exciting event in order to turn the frequency over to its competitor. Long-time Amarillo residents recall many instances when both stations broadcast simultaneously on the same frequency.

Long-time Amarillo residents also recall local radio personalities who quickly gained a following from their early and earnest efforts on one or the other of the two stations.

Cal Farley, though not a member of the WDAG staff, was a sportscaster for many early-day sports events. He had an infectious air personality and a broadcasting style very much his own.

Of course, all the early broadcasters had distinctive styles, since there were no established patterns to follow, no heroes or heroines of the airwaves to emulate, as there are today.

Donald Bennett was a major radio personality in the early days. He announced classical music programs and read poetry. The late Dutch Mantell, Amarillo sports promoter, and Judge Landis, now owner of KICA in Clovis, New Mexico, were also early-day sportscasters. Many listeners remember Ollie Cook, hillbilly musician and announcer; J. B. Matthews, handsome and smooth-voiced; Ben Wimberly, hefty engineer at WDAG and now with WBBM in Chicago; Ivaughn Veasey, a little girl who played her accordion on many broadcasts; Mrs. Ruth Delzell, who began a series of weekly book reviews on KGRS back in May of 1928 and continued them into the 40's on KGNC.

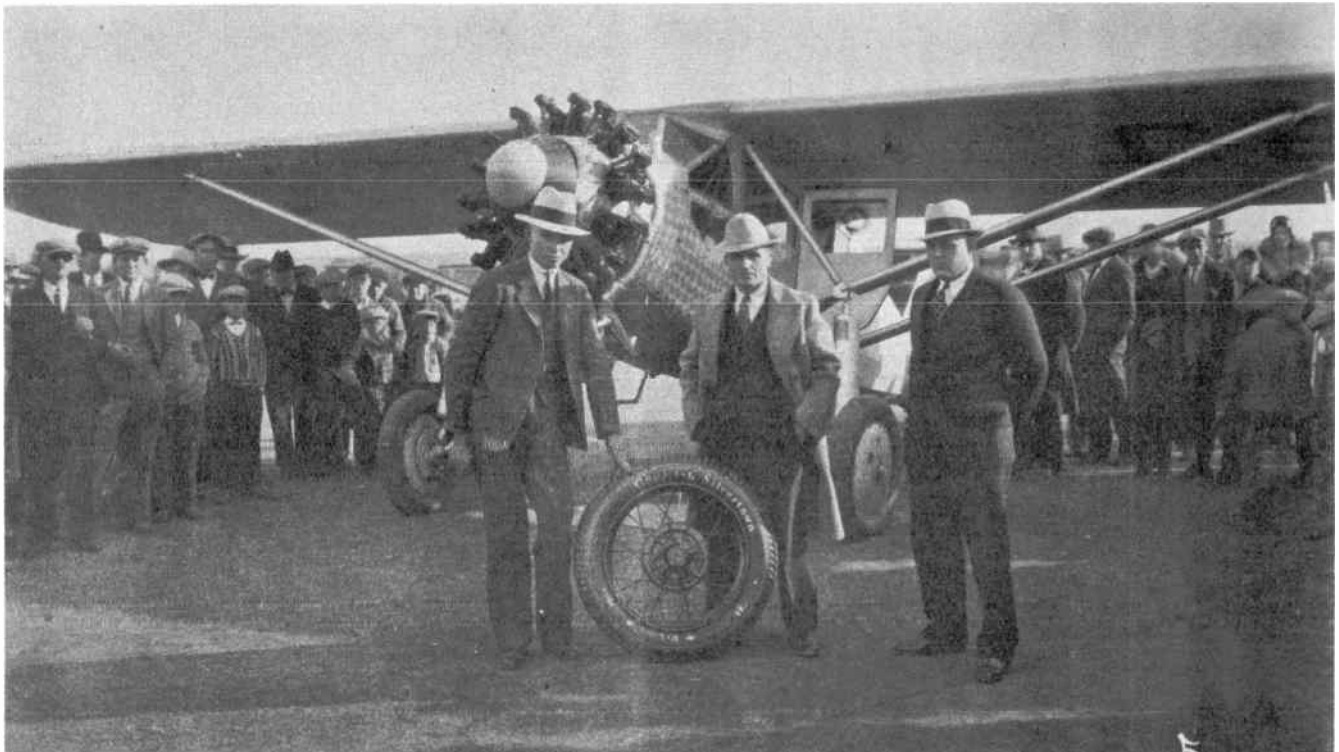
And there was Raymond Hollingsworth, asso-

ciated with Amarillo radio from 1931 until 1946.

Hollingsworth's Amarillo High School diploma was just a few months old when KGRS gave him his first job on January 1, 1931. Back in the 20's, Raymond had become fascinated with the possibilities



Raymond Hollingsworth, Ivaughn Veasey and her accordion, and Sid Veasey, Ivaughn's father



Cal Farley, center, with tire used in airplane stunt



of the wireless through his visits to friends and neighbors who owned radio sets.

Since his father was a pharmacist at the Herring Hotel Drug Store, the boy had a good excuse for his frequent trips to the hotel and the mezzanine studios of KGRS. Eventually Raymond and Jerry Hurt, KGRS announcer, staged an unscheduled late-evening air audition for young Hollingsworth. But Gish happened to be listening and when the station owner heard the high school boy fluff his first announcement his complaints were scarcely gentle.

Undaunted, Hollingsworth kept trying to get a radio job and when the station moved its operations out on East Tenth, Gish agreed to let him "hang around" and open up the studio at 6 o'clock every morning.

It was seven months before Hollingsworth got paid in anything more than experience.

Along with janitorial and announcing duties, Hollingsworth was assigned the task of answering the station's mail . . . "DX Mail," it was called.

"DX Mail" consisted of requests from radio listeners from all over the country for stamps labeled "KGRS-EKKO." For a dime, listeners could get stamps from the station proving that their radio sets had actually received programs broadcast from Amarillo, Texas. Occasionally, KGRS sent stamps to listeners as far away as Canada.

Hollingsworth's early morning announcing consisted not only of straight work but also of "farm flashes" collected from the bulletins of the United States Department of Agriculture. His "household hints" came from USDA cook books and from the pages of **The Denver Post**. And he threw in a little poetry for the ladies.

Hollingsworth made the money for a down payment on his first car by selling radio time to Jess Rogers.

And it was Hollingsworth who was escorted to jail by a policeman during a dispute between his station and WDAG about which organization should broadcast Amarillo's football game.

Ordinarily the stations abided by their split-time agreement, but with the public interest in the football season too great to pass up, both stations took to the air. Two announcers from two stations broadcast the same football game from the same Butler Field press box, on the same radio frequency. The garbled account of the game heard by listeners striving vainly to find out the score brought all manner of protests.

The school board then forbade the broadcasting of football games and when Hollingsworth ignored the order and tried to broadcast the next game he was thrown off the field by an officer.

But the public wanted to hear the games.

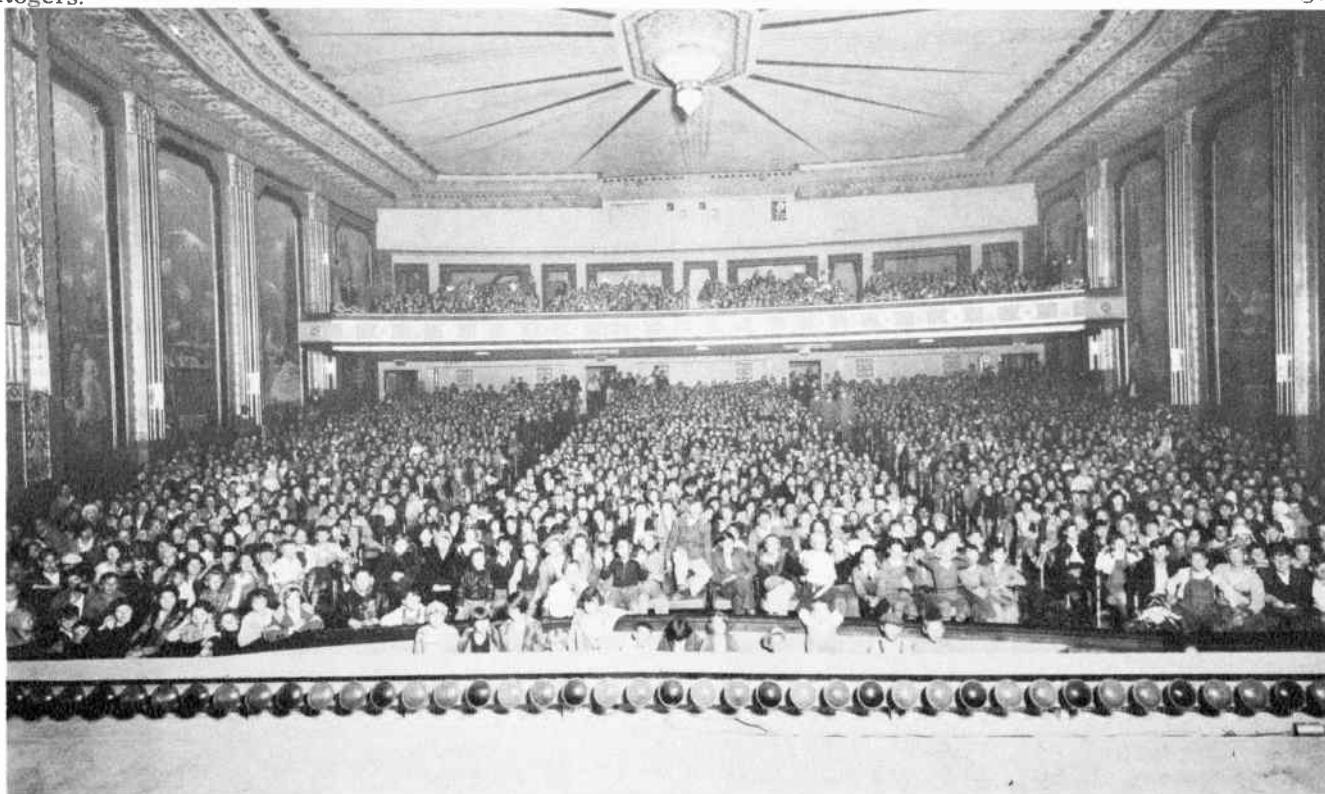
Letters to "Old Tack" pled for a settlement, some declaring that (1) KGRS should have the football broadcasts because it was the most popular station, and others arguing that (2) WDAG should have the broadcasts because KGRS was hoggish about radio time.

"Tack" settled the dispute by broadcasting the next game himself.

Things are more orderly in radio now, but the old spontaneity produced many a memorable moment.

One of the most exciting public events in the Panhandle was the appearance of the Goodrich Silver Fleet of 27 different brands of automobiles. The Fleet arrived in 1929 and Cal Farley exploited its arrival with a sales promotion stunt that salesmen still remember with wonder and envy.

Farley engaged an airplane to drop one of the then new-type Goodrich balloon tires from a height



WDAG's 1933 Santa Claus party



(1) Donald Bennett, (2) Fritz Kreisler, (3) Emil Myers,  
(4) Dr. Roy Snodgrass



Honeyboy and Sassafras at 6th and Tyler





Raymond Hollingsworth and Malcolm Clack

of 2700 feet. The test was held on a vacant field outside of town. The tire bounced some 200 or 300 feet in the air when it struck the ground, but it did not burst. Newsmen and the curious spectators who examined the tire found weeds and grass between the rim and the tire. But the tire was intact.

The test was a whopping success and so was radio, the medium Farley credited with luring the enormous crowd who drove or walked out to the prairie to see the test.

Another early proof of radio's crowd-pulling power was WDAG's Children's Santa Claus Party held at the Paramount Theatre in 1933. Nearly 3000 youngsters packed the theatre and spilled over into the orchestra pit.

People also gathered around the mike for WDAG's on-the-street broadcast of the dedication ceremony of the Amarillo College of Music in 1930. Donald Bennett did the announcing from WDAG in a ceremony which featured the world-renowned violinist Fritz Kreisler; Emil Myers, who founded the Amarillo College of Music, and Dr. Roy Snodgrass, then pastor of the Amarillo First Christian Church. It was Kreisler's first appearance on the air.

Still another early broadcast which attracted hordes of people featured Honeyboy and Sassafras in an open-air act from the corner of Sixth and Tyler.

Other memorable WDAG broadcasts include the two-way broadcast between the station and a bombing squadron which had a scheduled stop in Amarillo. The broadcasts, in 1930, were carried on between the plane and WDAG until the formation ran into a thunderstorm over Tucumcari, New Mexico. The commanding officer of the squadron later wrote WDAG that this was one of the most

successful two-way experiments he had encountered.

Martin believes that a still earlier plane-to-radio operation on WDAG was the first time radio was placed in an airplane.

Ben Wimberly, WDAG engineer, flew, equipped with radio and battery, over the city while a WDAG announcer stationed at the corner of Ninth and Polk gave directions as to the flight pattern the plane should carry out. Directions were executed exactly as ordered.

But with all its phenomenal growth and well-developed talent for showmanship, early Amarillo radio was still a little like a toy.

Malcolm Clack, KGRS engineer, and still an Amarillo resident, said "Rules were not so tight in the early days. I remember that when I was informed my house was on fire, Raymond Hollingsworth and myself simply shut off the station, hurried to the fire and were gone nearly an hour. That meant the station was 'off the air,' but nothing was said."

It was Clack who built, in 1930, the station's 1000-watt crystal-controlled transmitter. It was a masterpiece of engineering.

And, in 1929, Martin built WDAG's 1000-watt transmitter, believed to be the first transmitter in the nation to be built and completely installed on metal panels and in metal enclosures.

Amarillo's two pioneer stations made great strides in their first few years on the air. From the standpoint of engineering advances and broadcast program advances, radio, in Amarillo and throughout the nation, made such phenomenal progress that it opened a new chapter in American life.

Sports, drama, opera took to the air in sound, as did the President of the United States, the national political convention orators and election campaigners.

On November 1, 1923, Emil Myers put on a synopsis of "Madame Butterfly" over WDAG and followed this triumph a week later with a production of "La Boheme."

The WDAG log, still in the possession of J. L. Martin, shows that in the first of 1925's World Series games, Washington beat Pittsburgh 4 to 1.

And WDAG carried the National Broadcasting Company's program featuring Charles Evans Hughes' campaign speech the night before the national election in 1928.

The same sort of notable broadcasts were heard in cities across the nation as radio struggled to give its doting public greater and greater triumphs in "sounds by wireless."

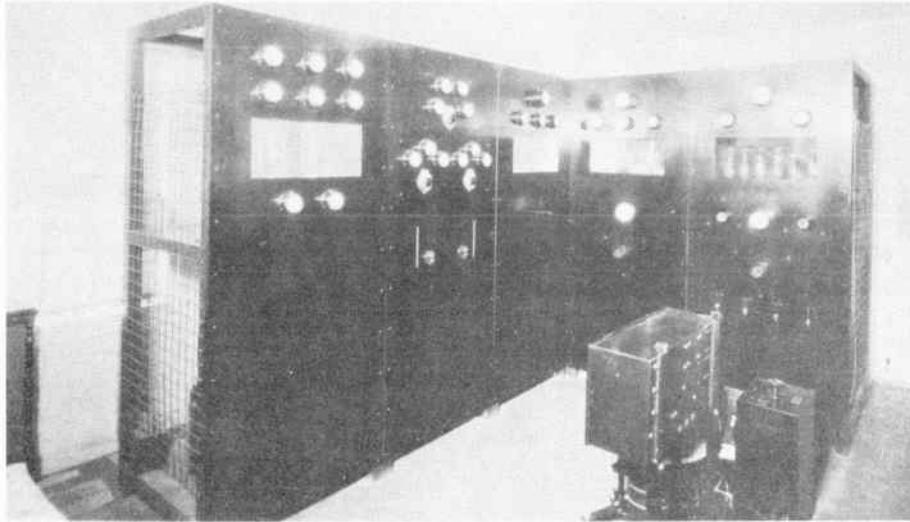
Some history-making broadcasts around the country were:

November 2, 1920. KDKA, Pittsburgh, broadcast the Harding-Cox election returns.

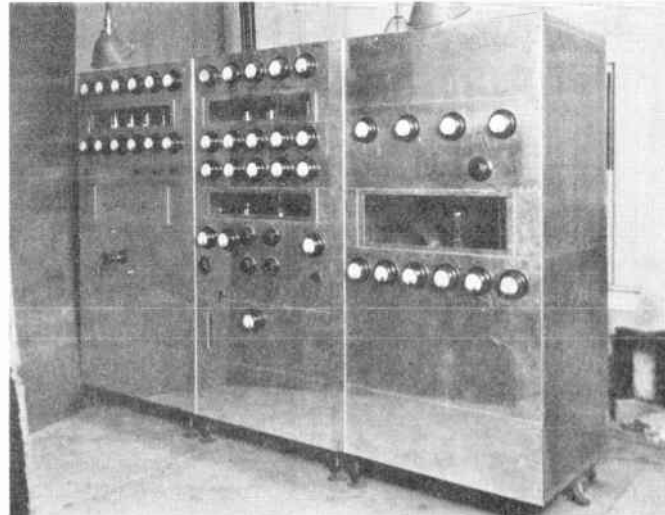
July 2, 1921. WJY, Weehawken, New Jersey, broadcast Dempsey-Carpentier fight. This was a "test case" engineered by David Sarnoff to prove the public's interest in his "radio music box."

November 3, 1924. Campaign speech of President Coolidge on election eve.

September 9, 1926. NBC organized by RCA "to produce the best programs available for broadcasting in the United States." First network broadcast, carried by 21 stations, occurred the evening of November 15, 1926, and origi-



KGRS crystal-controlled 1000 watt transmitter, 1930



WDAG 1000 watt transmitter, 1929

nated from the Waldorf-Astoria in New York.

March 12, 1933. The first "fireside chat" by President Roosevelt, speaking to the nation on the banking moratorium.

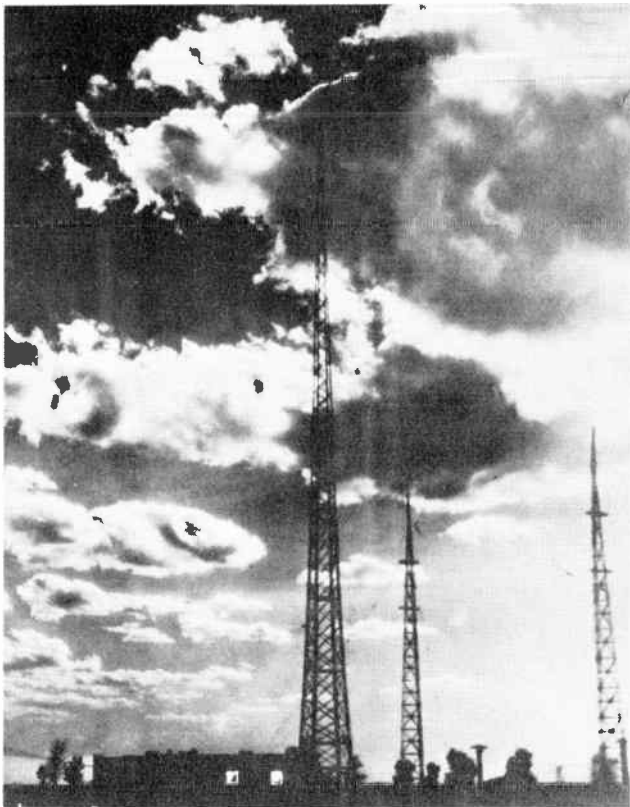
This was the opening curtain to an era in which every man, woman or child can by turning a switch and adjusting a radio dial, absorb the best the world has to offer in music and entertainment . . . hear the

voices of the great leaders of his time as they speak the words which change his world . . . learn every item of news from the result of a football game to the assassination of a king half-way across the globe. And all with an immediacy and authenticity that makes the magic of Aladdin's Lamp seem like a very simple trick.





**1935 - 1952**



Self-supporting steel tower, center, replaces old wooden towers, at right

## KGNC

KGNC, as such, came into being in 1935 when a group of **Globe-News** men headed by Gene Howe and the late Wilbur C. Hawk, formed the Plains Radio Broadcasting Company and bought both WDAG and KGRS.

Negotiations began in the fall of 1934 but because of the many technicalities involved and the necessity of receiving government approval in the transfer of broadcasting licenses, the sales were not completed until the following year. The Federal Communications Commission, however, not only approved but encouraged the sale and proposed merger of the two stations because it meant greater broadcast service to the people of this area.

The station formed by the merger of the two pioneer stations began broadcasting at 6:15 a.m., June 5, 1935.

KGNC was on the air.

The technical facilities of KGNC have changed many times since that morning in 1935.

In 1935 KGNC built the first vertical antenna in the Panhandle.

In 1939 the vertical antenna, toppled by a storm, was replaced with the highest structure in the Panhandle, the 368-foot steel tower at the Dallas highway intersection.

In 1941 KGNC raised its power from 2500 watts on 1410 kilocycles to 5000 watts on 1440 kilocycles.

In 1947 KGNC raised its power to 10,000 watts on 710 kilocycles.



KGNC's modern radio building built in 1937

Many of these changes were made under the supervision of W. H. Torrey, KGNC's chief engineer, who has been with the station since 1936.

Each of these changes required new equipment and the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars. But each meant better service to more and more people in the High Plains area.

And there were other steps forward.

On January 1, 1937—a year-and-a-half after the merger of WDAG and KGRS—KGNC joined NBC.

The official affiliation took place at 11:30 a.m., New Year's morning. Mayor Ross Rogers, Gene Howe, Ted Taylor and half the staff gathered in the studio. The mayor made a speech. Then, with the flick of a switch by engineer Jim Hill Speck, the big event came off. Over the air came the words of Everett Mitchell from Chicago—"The National Farm and Home Hour!"

It was the beginning of regularly scheduled network radio in the Panhandle.

Just four days later, ground was broken for new studios at 8th and Harrison. The building, still occupied by KGNC, was completed in June of 1937.

The man behind this rush of improvements, a young man of tremendous energy and immeasurable foresight, was O. L. "Ted" Taylor, KGNC's first station manager.

Ted Taylor entered newspaper work at the age of 17 as a linotype operator, shifting from the composing room to the business office two years later. He was a member of the Globe-News advertising staff when he was assigned, in 1935, the task of operating KGNC.

He rose, in an astoundingly short time, to a high and respected place in the national radio industry.

By 1938 the group of newspapermen-turned-radiomen who formed KGNC had established three additional affiliated stations: KFYO, Lubbock, directly connected with KGNC in the Plains Radio Broadcasting Company; KTSA, San Antonio, and KRGV, Weslaco, operating as separate corporations but affiliated through common ownership. Ted Taylor became general manager over these four stations.

Taylor now heads the O. L. Taylor Company, national sales representatives for KGNC and other radio and television stations. He also owns and operates KRGV and KANS, Wichita, Kansas.

In his distinguished radio career, Taylor has been three times president of the Texas Association of

Ted Taylor, Era Lewis, Monte Rosenwald reminisce about old times at recent KGNC Christmas party



Broadcasters; member of the board of directors and executive committee of the National Association of Broadcasters; representative of District 5 on the NBC Planning and Advisory Committee; executive secretary of the Broadcasters' Victory Council, war-time liaison organization between the government and the radio industry. In this last capacity, Taylor served as a "dollar-a-year" man with offices in Washington, commuting home to Amarillo monthly.

During these hectic years, Ted Taylor's "right-hand woman" was Miss Era Lewis, for many years Business Manager of all Taylor-Howe-Snowden stations and later associated with Taylor in the O. L. Taylor Company.

Taylor's successor as KGNC station manager was John Ballard, who also began his advertising career with the Globe-News. Ballard was KGNC manager from 1938 until 1944 when he joined a group of stations as national sales representative. Ballard returned to KGNC in 1952 as sales manager.



John Ballard

Since 1944, KGNC has had three managers:

Raymond Hollingsworth, who survived the WDAG-KGRS merger to become KGNC announcer, promotion manager, assistant manager and, in 1944, manager. Hollingsworth had served almost 16 years in Amarillo radio when he resigned to become secretary of the American Quarter Horse Association in September, 1946.

Aubrey Jackson, who rose through KGNC's sales department to commercial manager and, in 1946, station manager, a position he held until his transfer to KRGV in 1950. Jackson is now manager of KEYS, Corpus Christi.

Tom Kritser, present KGNC manager. Kritser began his radio career with KGNC in 1940, during a summer vacation between college semesters. Kritser served as a captain in the 3rd Army, Intelligence Section, in World War II, completed his education at Texas University after the war, was the first manager of KDDD, Dumas, Texas, and became manager of KGNC in 1950. Kritser is now





Raymond Hollingsworth



Tom Kritser and Ted Taylor



Aubrey Jackson

general manager of KGNC and secretary of the Plains Radio Broadcasting Company.

In the seventeen years between 1935 and 1952, KGNC developed many new radio programs and many new radio personalities. It is these programs and these personalities which come to the minds of most listeners when they hear the letters "KGNC."

## Farm and Ranch Programs

Raymond Hollingsworth's early-day KGRS "farm programs," during which he read pre-prepared United States Department of Agriculture "flashes," were a far-cry from the comprehensive farm and ranch programming heard by present-day KGNC listeners.

But they were an important beginning.

Early in his KGNC career, Hollingsworth developed "The Trading Post" and personalized the program by calling himself "Uncle Ray." He was the first of the public personalities which have become so integral a part of KGNC's early morning line-up.

It was Hollingsworth who helped young J. B. Linn, while Linn was still an Amarillo High School and Amarillo College student, to become a mike personality.



Raymond Hollingsworth and 4-H Club Boys, 1934

J. B. became, at the age of 19, KGNC's "Uncle Jay."

At the time no one worried over the discrepancy between Uncle Jay's mellow philosophical bent and J. B. Linn's extreme youth, because no one foresaw that Uncle Jay would become an institution of amazing scope and proportion.

"After I started making personal appearances," Linn remembers, "it took about three years to merge the age and the character so that people didn't react with a shock upon seeing Uncle Jay for the first time."

It was Raymond Hollingsworth, too, along with John Ballard and others of the original KGNC staff, who put KGNC "on the road" and made the station's staff part-and-parcel of each of the hundreds of communities, towns and cities KGNC serves. Hollingsworth, Ballard and others not only invited mayors, newspaper editors and county agents from Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado to come to the KGNC microphone, but they took the microphone and KGNC's staff of entertainers out into the area. They visited pie suppers, cake walks, rodeos, pioneer celebrations, school spelling bees and football games, civic and farm events, holiday parades and pageants throughout the Five-State KGNC area.



Bob Watson, right, looks on as Tom Kritser gives J. B. Linn "going-away" gift from KGNC staff

In 1950, J. B. Linn's last full year with KGNC before re-entering the Air Force, he made 146 appearances in five states, before audiences totalling nearly 200,000 people. His trips covered an area, roughly a circle around Amarillo and KGNC, with a radius of 250 miles.

Linn's remarkable travelling average is equalled, if not exceeded, by KGNC's present farm editor, J. Garland Smith.

Widely known as "Cotton John" because of his spirited reporting of the protests made by Plains cotton farmers over reductions in government acreage allotments, Smith has one of the most intensive

and extensive farm news backgrounds of any radio farm editor in the Southwest.

An East Texas farm boy who's turned West Texan, "Cotton John" was a teacher of journalism at East Texas State College, Commerce, Texas; teacher at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism; writer for the Army Public Information Service; free-lance writer for **Western Livestock Journal**, **Progressive Farmer**, **The Christian Science Monitor** and other widely-read farm and general publications; farm editor of the **Amarillo Daily News and Globe-Times**; editor of the **Western Livestock Journal**, Denver, Colorado. He is still a regular contributor to the Amarillo newspapers and to farm and cattle magazines.

For his work with FFA boys, he has been awarded the Lone Star Farmer Degree by the Texas Association of Future Farmers of America.

"Cotton John" currently makes from two to five trips each week, averaging about 175 trips a year.



"Cotton John" at KGNC mike



Stuart Condon in KGNC announcers' booth



These trips have two purposes. Smith gets acquainted with his listeners and helps out with their community celebrations. And he helps the communities get acquainted with each other by reporting the news and events of each place he visits to his Five-State air audience. Through the use of KGNC's two Mini-Tape recorders, "Cotton John" is able not only to report events, but to capture the personalities of communities and personages throughout the High Plains area for his radio listeners.

In addition to "The Trading Post," still a Monday-through-Saturday morning feature of the Amarillo Livestock Auction Company, "Cotton John" handles the Southwest Neighbors program and the Markets and has instituted, on Saturday afternoons, the Southwestern Farm and Ranch Round-Up, immediately following the National Farm and Home Hour.

Other members of KGNC's farm staff include Stuart Condron, a KGNC farm staff member for almost ten years and himself a dairy farmer, and Keith Loyd, son of a High Plains wheat farmer.

KGNC's early morning hours are devoted to giving the High Plains farmer or rancher the information he needs to operate his farm or ranch to his greatest financial profit and at his greatest convenience.

But there's also plenty of time for fun.

Along with such vital services as weather news, the markets, Texas Employment Commission harvest news and cattle trades-and-sales, KGNC entertainers take to the air.

The hillbilly or western band, now nationally recognized as America's most popular musical group, has long been a part of KGNC's entertainment line-up.

Raymond Hollingsworth's early-day "Barn Dance," complete with cowbells and hogcalling, was the first of a long line of locally produced hillbilly shows.

KGNC now has three staff western bands.



Billy Briggs, J. S. Williams, G. W. Allard

Billy Briggs and his XIT Boys have been with KGNC for almost fifteen years and have gained a national reputation in the folk music field for "Chew Tobacco Rag," which Briggs composed, and other recorded hits.



Billy Starr at the guitar with, left to right, Keith Loyd, Bernie Rogers, Lewis Blankenship

Billy Starr, who calls himself "Mrs. Starr's littlest youngun" and who begins his day at the mike each morning at 5:35, came to KGNC from WSM and the "Grand Ole Opry" in Nashville, Tennessee. Starr, who headlines the All-Starr Revue, is nationally known as a Columbia recording artist and as a member of the "Grand Ole Opry" troupes touring the nation.

Keith Loyd's Ranchhands are the third KGNC staff band heard in the 5:30 to 7:30 a.m. period.



Keith Loyd at the guitar with, left to right, Bernie Rogers, Weldon Bright, Lewis Blankenship

The spirit of camaraderie among the boys in all three of the bands is so great that they frequently appear on each other's programs. Listeners call them the "KGNC Family."

Among the most distinguished of KGNC's farm-and-ranch broadcasters is Miss Laura V. Hamner whose "Light and Hitch" has been a KGNC favorite since 1941.

Miss Hamner, who is very probably the oldest active regular broadcaster in America, has lived in the Panhandle of Texas for more than 60 years. She is an expert on the history and spirit of the High Plains. Her "Light and Hitch" programs, which she both writes and broadcasts, are concerned with the past and present history of the people who've made the Panhandle great.

Miss Hamner is the author of "No Gun Man of Texas," a biography of Colonel Charles Goodnight; "Short Grass and Long Horns," the story of the Plains cattle industry; and countless magazine articles on High Plains progress and personalities.

In addition to her weekly Sunday morning KGNC broadcast, she writes a Sunday *News-Globe* column and a daily newspaper feature, "Tri-State Scrapbook."



Laura V. Hamner

A High Plains celebration just isn't official until Laura V. Hamner arrives. She travels tens of thousands of miles yearly by automobile, train, plane and—to the constant amazement of her legions of listeners—by bus.

Miss Hamner, "Cotton John," KGNC farm staff members and the bands of Briggs, Starr and Loyd make countless appearances throughout the Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado area yearly.

Amarillo is the business, legal and medical center of this mammoth Five-State area, an area larger than most of the States in the Union. KGNC is the only radio station that serves all this far-reaching Amarillo trade area.

Amarillo merchants and businessmen give KGNC and its "on-the-road" policy credit for establishing the fine feeling of regional cooperation which exists among the hundreds of towns and cities which make up the fabulous High Plains Empire.

## We Interrupt This Program

The KGNC tradition that only trained newsmen give the news began when Wes Izzard gave his first newscast in 1928 over WDAG.

The carbon mike and dry cell amplifier were set up on a kitchen table in the circulation department storeroom on the second floor of the Old Globe-News Building. There was no clock. Martin would call Izzard on the office phone and say "You're on the air in 45 seconds."

Izzard would watch the office clock, then dash back to the storeroom and start talking.

Sometimes he was on the air and sometimes he wasn't.

Some months later, Izzard added a newscast for KGRS. Relations were somewhat strained between the two stations and neither Gish nor Martin would permit the other's equipment to be involved in his broadcast in any way. So a second carbon mike and a second dry cell amplifier were placed on the kitchen table.

Around 1930 or 1931, the famous Associated Press suit barring use of AP news on the air was filed. This restricted the wire news available and Izzard abandoned his own newscasts for a time, although the station announcers kept reading news from the papers.

Izzard went back on the air about 1934, reading "The Monitor Views the News" scripts supplied by *The Christian Science Monitor*, over KGRS. When the stations were merged in 1935 to form KGNC, he began a regular schedule of newscasts, including the 12:30 noon Phillips Petroleum newscast, which, in 1952, achieved a record of more than 7000 consecutive newscasts sponsored by the same company.

And there's another KGNC staff member who well remembers "The Monitor Views the News" scripts. Bob Watson, now assistant manager and program director of KGNC, got his first radio job by passing a news commentary audition.

He applied to Wes Izzard, then production manager of KGNC, and was given a *Monitor* script and told to come back in the afternoon for an audition. Watson went without lunch and almost memorized the script. After he had read about five minutes, Izzard told him he was in. And he's been "in," except for his service with the Navy in World War II, ever since.

Wes Izzard and Bob Watson were also intimately associated with another KGNC tradition: that radio communication must be maintained, whatever the cost.

Something new in emergency set-ups—a barbed-wire program circuit—was devised by KGNC when the Texas Panhandle was engulfed by a rip-roaring ice storm late in November, 1940. After stringing emergency program lines on a seldom-used telephone line and running a mile-and-a-quarter of copper wire across a shallow prairie lake bed, KGNC engineers found they still had a three-quarter mile gap between the end of the supply line and the antenna "doghouse."

Taking the most expedient course, engineers Scott Bledsoe and Elmo Taylor tapped the top strand of a barbed wire fence and made connections, although it involved a tedious job of bridging 150 twisted, rusty connections with copper wire.

The only incident marring operation of the novel circuit was an attempt by some kids with commercial aspirations to run off with the long stretch of copper wire. The effort was nipped in the bud and, for three days, the unique hook-up supplied programs to the station with a cowboy patrolling the line on his





Wes Izzard

Now, as in 1928, all newscasts of KGNC originate in the newsrooms at the Globe-News building. Newscasters are first, last, and always, newsmen. They write their own newscasts, using the local and regional reportorial facilities of the **Amarillo Daily News** and **Globe-Times** and the world-wide facilities of Associated and United Press.

The KGNC news staff is still headed by Wes Izzard, the dean of High Plains radio newsmen. Izzard is heard daily at 12:30 and 5:45 p.m. and his weekly news commentary, instituted in 1940 and broadcast without interruption since, is heard weekly on Monday nights at 8:30.



Bob Izzard

Newsman Bert Stafford handles KGNC's first newscasts of the day, beginning his day with the 5:30 a.m. Monday-through-Saturday broadcasts. In order to deliver this newscast, Stafford goes on duty in the KGNC newsrooms at 3 a.m. each morning. Stafford also writes and delivers the 6:15, 6:55, 7:30 and 8:45 a.m. newscasts and, later in the morning, collects tape-recorded on-the-spot local and regional material for KGNC's early evening newscasts.

Newsman Bob Izzard, KGNC's first second-generation staff-member, begins his newscast with the 1:30 p.m. broadcast, followed by the 6:45 and 10 p.m. broadcasts.



Bert Stafford



Ralph Henry

Relief newsman Ralph Henry gives the local Sunday newscasts.

In addition, KGNC carries the 6:30 and 10:15 p.m. NBC network newscasts of Morgan Beatty and the 6:15 p.m. news commentaries of Richard Harkness and H. V. Kaltenborn.

An integral part of all locally-originated newscasts are the weather forecasts direct from the United States Weather Bureau at Amarillo Air Terminal.

The Amarillo Weather Bureau is headed by H. C. Winburn whose voice, along with the voices of his weathermen, is familiar to hundreds of thousands of High Plains listeners.

Weather forecasts are of vital importance to everyone, not only for the protection of human life, as in the case of tornado, flood or hurricane warnings, but in the protection of property. The farmer and the cattleman's financial security, and through them the financial security of the entire High Plains region, depends on accurate and immediately-rendered weather warning service.



H. C. Winburn

For this reason, the broadcast facilities of KGNC are always at the command of the Weather Bureau. KGNC will interrupt any program, day or night, in order to give listeners "News of the Weather."

The same policy of service to the public governs the broadcasting of other types of news.

But whether a bulletin tells of split-second disaster or the all-night returns from a presidential election, KGNC's news credo is the same: "Maintain freedom of expression, but guard against inaccuracy, unfairness and partiality."

## Variety Shows

There are no cut-and-dried dividing lines between what is and what is not "public service" in radio.

Certainly no one would underestimate, in these days of high-tension living, and in this period of crisis in world affairs, the value of "the lighter side" of radio.

Laughter is a thing of the past in many, too many, parts of the world. But Americans can still laugh and they love the people who make them laugh.

And there are all kinds of laughs. The quiet chuckle is as warming, in its special way, as a belly-laugh.

Master of the heart-warming chuckle is KGNC's Monte Rosenwald, an active KGNC broadcaster since 1936. Though Rosenwald is now a partner in Southwest Advertisers he is still heard, everyday, on KGNC in a wide variety of locally-originated programs.

One of these, "White's Man on the Street," is a Panhandle institution.

Monte originated the program back in 1936, very shortly after he joined the KGNC staff.

At its inception, the "Man on the Street" went on the air at night, from in front of the Paramount Theatre. Monte's roving mike was attached to a long cord let down from the second-floor of the theatre building where the KGNC studios were then located.

At first Monte could hardly get passersby to stop and talk with him. The mike in those days was a strange instrument . . . so strange that a husky range rider asked to "say a few words, sir," was likely to turn pale and mutter "H - - -, no!" as he made a wide swath around Monte and that devilish microphone.

"I almost had to throw and hogtie them to get them to talk to me," Monte recalls.

Because children never seem to have mike-fright to the extent that adults do, a large number of Monte's early interviewees were boys and girls. They still are and the youngsters account for some of the most delicious of the unrehearsed comedy passed along to the radio audience. Monte's gentle handling of children has earned him a special spot in the hearts of thousands of mothers and fathers.

Just three months after Monte went on the air, White's Auto Stores signed a contract for the program and it was moved to the 12 noon period. The company, a regional-wide organization, has sponsored the show, without interruption, for 16 years.

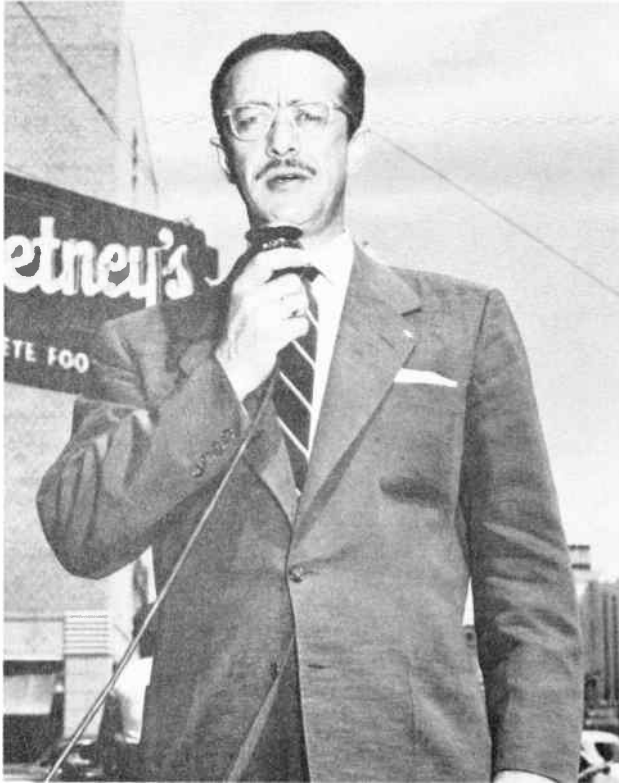
Monte was the "Man on the Street" until, in 1941, he joined the Russell M. Seeds Agency in Chicago to emcee Wings Cigarettes' network program, "Wings of Destiny." He remained with Seeds until he was called into the service in early 1943. When Rosenwald was discharged in December of 1945, after 31 months in the Army Air Force, he returned to Amarillo and again took up the mike for White's.

Neither Monte nor the mike are frightening to present-day Amarillo mainstreet strollers.

People go on the air to make appeals for lost purses, lost children and lost husbands, to plead for jobs, to advertise civic shows and community fund drives. Out of town shoppers use it for quick messages home.

Monte is by now not at all surprised when a woman shopper slows down just long enough to fling into his mike, "Meet the 5 o'clock bus, honey."





Monte Rosenwald at "The Cretney Corner"

"The Man on the Street" is not the only early KGNC program with which Monte Rosenwald was associated. He was, for some years, the poetry reader on "Night on the Prairie."

Monte read poems from "Prairie Nights and Yucca" and "Wind in the Cottonwoods," anthologies of John L. McCarty, over a background of soft organ music played by Eddie Baumel, KGNC's first full-fledged music director.

The program was launched from a local undertaker's chapel because the funeral home possessed the only electric organ in the Panhandle. When KGNC's new building was completed, in 1937, it was, of course, equipped with a Hammond Organ and the boys moved into the studios.

But romance bloomed in the funeral parlor. In addition to Rosenwald and Baumel, the program offered listeners the songs of "The Sophisticates," a girls' trio. One of these girls was Marion Stewart who very shortly became Mrs. Rosenwald.

Still another of Rosenwald's early shows was the "Professor Twigleaf" series. Monte, as the professor, conducted a class in radio dramatics. Class members were chosen from the studio audience and "lessons" were aired in the form of a dramatic show produced and broadcast on the spot, without rehearsal.

Also produced on the spot were the scripts for "Professor Twigleaf." They were wild and woolly affairs written by Wes Izzard while the show was in progress and delivered to Rosenwald and his students a page at a time.

Wes Izzard turned out a prodigious amount of dramatic material for use on KGNC while he served the station as production manager.

The most ambitious of these, and one which the dignified editor of the **Amarillo Daily News** remembers with pardonable pride, was an out-size radio epic called "The Story of the High Plains."



Oma Link Rowley, Barney Ogle, Eddie Baumel, Wes Izzard, Charlie Belfi, Monte Rosenwald, rehearse "Story of the High Plains," 1938

It was billed as "The Saga of the High Plains from the Trek of Coronado across the Great Southwest to the Present Day." The present day, in this case, was 1938.

"The Story of the High Plains" was directed by Oma Link Rowley, then, as now, the dynamic director of the Amarillo Little Theatre. Stars in the show included Izzard, Rosenwald, Baumel, program director Charlie Belfi and Barney Ogle, a new KGNC announcer back in 1938 and now manager of KRGV, Weslaco.

There has never been a time in the history of KGNC when the management did not feel that the current staff members were the most talented and most remarkable people ever to belong to the KGNC family.

This feeling has never been stronger than it is today.

Among the entertainers who are especially outstanding, in addition to those already mentioned, are Weldon Bright, Gordon Suits, Phyllis and Pat O'Keefe, Al Evans and O. J. Johnson.

Bright, as musical director of KGNC, continues in the tradition of versatility and virtuosity established by Eddie Baumel and Bernie Howell. A multi-instrument man, Weldon plays piano, organ and other instruments; writes and broadcasts a week-nightly disc jockey show which is long on musical thinking and information and short on chatter; is "Orgie" on the long-established Sunday morning "Funnies" session; is very much a part of the Sunday afternoon "Words and Music" program; is heard week-daily on "Your Hour of Worship" and is generally available for all local programs requiring fine musicianship.

Bright has a well-rounded classical music background, as well as years of experience in the pop music and entertainment fields. He is a graduate in music from West Texas State College.

Gordon Suits is another college-educated musician-entertainer, having graduated with a degree in public school music from Baylor University at Waco.

Suits landed his first radio job with WFAA in Dallas in 1938 and remained with WFAA, except for four years as a lieutenant in the Medical Administration Corps, until 1947. Gordon was featured on WFAA's "Imperial Sugar Quartet," "Dr. Pepper," "Early Birds" and other programs which were broadcast statewide.





Weldon Bright at the Hammond



Gordon Suits

One of Suits' most popular novelty innovations is his "Gordon Suits Quartet."

The "quartet" is a tribute to Suits' ingenuity and musicianship and to the miracle of the modern tape-recorder. Suits first sings, and has recorded, the melody of a song. He then sings, in succession, each of the three harmony parts, each time re-recording his own voice singing along with himself. The result is a record featuring the four voices of Gordon Suits singing in harmony with each other.

Once, for a lark, and at the instigation of newspaper columnist Lewis Nordyke, Gordon carried this technique to the Nth degree and made a record which featured the "Gordon Suits Glee Club."

When Suits takes his "quartet" recordings with him on personal appearances, he surprises audiences by appearing, by virtue of a little garage-carpentry, with three additional heads sprouting from his shoulders. All four heads, the real one and the dummies, mouth the words as the record gives forth with the "quartet."

Suits, too, has a busy broadcast day, with "Your Hour of Worship," "Borden's Song Shop," "The Gordon Suits Show" and, on Sundays, "Holiday Land."

"Holiday Land" to as great an extent as his "quartet," is a tribute to Gordon Suits' limitless imagination. "Holiday Land" is a fictional land created by Suits and inhabited by a number of very loquacious characters, among them Buster Bronco, Henny Penny, Croaky the Frog, Mutt the Dog. Suits is, of course, all these characters in succession and, it sometimes seems, simultaneously.

Immediately following "Holiday Land," Pat and Phyllis O'Keefe give High Plains youngsters their interpretations of the weekly doings of the very real people who live in the comics section of the Sunday Amarillo News-Globe.



Uncle Pat and Aunt Phyllis read the funnies

Pat and Phyllis, who are known to their young listeners as "Uncle Pat and Aunt Phyllis," are widely known in Panhandle dramatic circles for their scores of roles in Amarillo Little Theatre plays. Both have professional theatre backgrounds and both put everything they've got into their characterizations of L'il Abner and Daisy Mae, Superman, Blondie and Dagwood, Joe Palooka and Prince Valiant.

The O'Keefes' enthusiasm for their comic characters stems partly from their love of acting and partly from their respect for their young audience. The O'Keefes' are, in real life, Momma and Daddy to four youngsters of their own. David, a junior in high school, and Sidney, almost four years old, have already made their Amarillo Little Theatre debuts and are, potentially at any rate, a future "Uncle David and Aunt Sidney" comics-reading team.

A vital part of the 45-minute "Funnies" session is the studio audience, which gobbles up Lane's Ice Cream, gets to spank Uncle Pat when one of its members has a birthday, and gurgles with glee when Orgie the Hammond, under the capable hands of Weldon Bright adds violent and various sound effects to the O'Keefes' oral portrayal of the latest episode of Superman.

Al Evans is another KGNC entertainer with a professional theatre background. He spent several years in New York drama schools, on the New York stage, and touring with East and West Coast stock companies before settling down in his home state in front of a microphone. Just to keep his hand in, he occasionally does a role in a Little Theatre play.

He is most widely recognized by KGNC listeners for his perceptive handling of poetry on "Words and Music." Evans has read poetry for study groups and women's clubs throughout the area, but his favorite weekly session is at the Veterans Hospital where he reads from the Bible to patients throughout the hospital over the medical center's intercom system.

No account of KGNC air personalities would be complete without a mention of O. J. Johnson. O. J., long the pet of all other KGNC staff members, has been KGNC's porter for ten years. In his domain, he so thoroughly rules the roost that KGNC's early morning men-at-the-mike were unable to keep him to themselves. Some years ago they started sharing O. J. and his own private brand of humor with their



Al Evans

audiences by engaging him in off-the-cuff but on-the-air conversations.

His "bourbon pill" cold cure and "coon oil" rain-making mixture quickly won him an ardent listening audience.



O. J. Johnson

O. J., too, has joined KGNC's "on-the-road" entertainers. He made his first personal appearance at the Gruver, Texas, rodeo this May. After being repeatedly assured that he wouldn't have to ride

any "Bremmer" bulls or "Dominecker" steers, O. J. accompanied "Cotton John" Smith to the rodeo and was presented with what he called his first "Studson" hat since he got married.

## Front-Page News

Personalities, whether they're celebrities or just plain people, make news.

KGNC, with its own staff personalities and with a distinguished roster of guest artists has, many times since 1935, made the headlines.

The station has often, for instance, been instrumental in bringing NBC stars to Amarillo for the Tri-State Fair celebration each fall.

Just last year, the Fair's headliner was NBC's Tommy Bartlett and his "Welcome Travelers" troupe.

Other Fair Week stars whose coming was brought about by KGNC include the "Grand Ole Opry" troupe with Red Foley, the Duke of Paducah and Minnie Pearl and the "Our Gang Comedy" kids, complete with snaggle-toothed Alfalfa and the wonderful dog with the black eye.



Bob Watson and "Our Gang"

One of KGNC's most ambitious Fair Week undertakings was its "Preview of TV." KGNC put on a full-scale exhibition of television, in actual studio operation, 'way back, as TV-history goes, in 1947. The station brought in special TV screens, cameras, projectors and other equipment, along with TV cameramen, producers and make-up men and installed them in a specially-constructed booth on the Fair Grounds.

KGNC staff personalities and local shows were televised and the images flashed on four separate screens within the KGNC booth. Also televised were local young women in style shows, local dancing and singing talent and any-and-all fair visitors who wanted to know how it feels to be in front of a TV-camera.

KGNC's front-page-news shows have not been limited to the Fair.

One of the fanciest special events in the history





TV cameraman and Guydell Ekelund  
at 1947 Tri-State Fair



"Man-on-the-Street," a TV attraction at the Fair

of the High Plains area was the observance of Mother-in-Law Day, back in 1938.

Mother-in-Law Day was the brain-child of Gene Howe, publisher of the **Amarillo Globe-News**. The idea of thanking the gals who've been the butt of so many bad jokes caught the public fancy, or sense



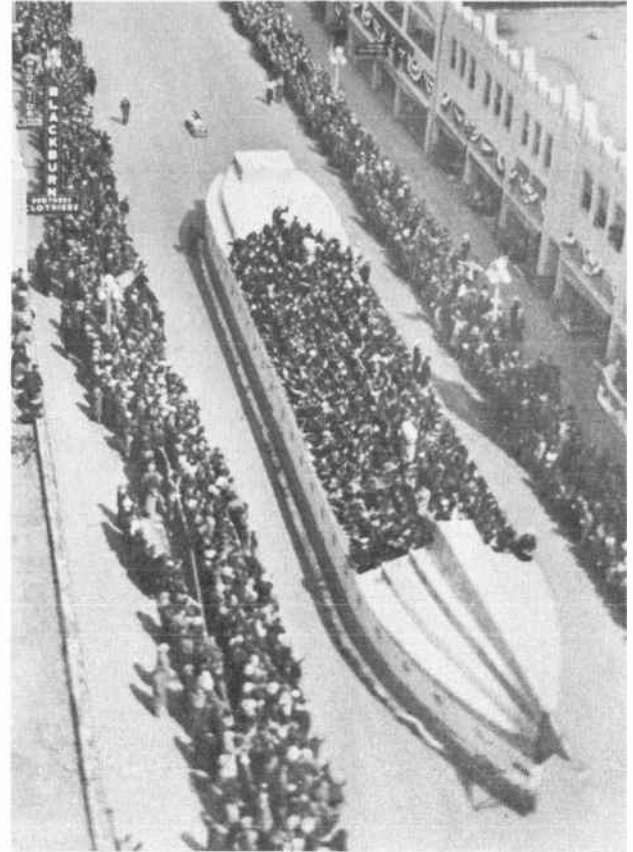
For Mother-in-Law Day celebration, Jimmy Allred, Marvin Jones, Ernest O. Thompson, Mrs. Elliott Roosevelt, Lawrence Hagy, Tom Connally, Elliott Roosevelt, gather in KGNB's main studio

of justice, to an extent that amazed even Howe, an old hand at promotions of all kinds.

Mother-in-Law Day attracted nationwide attention and on the big day, the city of Amarillo and the people of the Plains put on a spectacular parade and played host to some extremely distinguished guests.

Guest of honor was Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, who was accompanied by her son Elliott and Elliott's wife; Senator Tom Connally; Congressman, and now Federal Judge, Marvin Jones; then-Governor of Texas, Jimmy Allred; and Colonel Ernest O. Thompson.

Festivities were broadcast to the nation over NBC, in a program originating from Amarillo's Polk Street.



Mother-in-Law Day float, one of biggest in world

Wes Izzard, who produced the complicated network broadcast, recalls that everything went off without a hitch until the very last minute. Izzard looked at his watch, and in his anxiety to be finished with his exacting task, mis-read the time. He signed off from Amarillo 45 seconds early. He still remembers, and probably always will remember, his agonizingly long wait for the three tones of the NBC chimes.

One of the most outstanding celebrity-events of the past few years was the visit of Bob Hope and his NBC network program gang on February 6, 1949. Hope, Jerry Colonna, Clark Denis, Vera Vague and others of the Hope aggregation put on two shows from the stage of the Municipal Auditorium.

The morning after, the **Daily News** reported on its front-page that the auditorium was packed with

"a regional crowd, with folks from the far-flung reaches of the Tri-State area slapping their thighs and stomping their boots on the auditorium's sturdy old concrete floor."



Clark Denis, Vera Vague, Jerry Colonna, Bob Hope  
at KGNC mike

Just this spring, KGNC again packed the 2500-plus seat Municipal Auditorium when it brought in, as a public service, Matt Cvetic, author of "I Was a Communist for the FBI" and for many terrifying years an FBI-informer within the Communist Party hierarchy in the United States. Cvetic's appearance not only filled the auditorium but, for the first time in many years, the big hall overflowed and an SRO audience of hundreds stood in the outer lobby for more than two hours.



Bob Rogers, Matt Cvetic, Tom Kritser

## In the Public Service

Those not connected with the radio business may not realize that out of every week, certain periods of time are marked "not for sale." This time is reserved for those programs which come under the general term of "public service."

The national religious programs of the three major faiths in the United States are given regular time on KGNC. In addition, the local Ministerial Alliance has for many years broadcast the Sunday morning services of Amarillo churches on KGNC's

"Sunday Morning Sanctuary" program. Especially produced programs are broadcast, without charge, on the occasion of special ceremonies in Amarillo and High Plains area churches. For instance, KGNC has broadcast the dedication of a new church in Panhandle, Texas; the installation of a bishop in the Episcopal Church; the message of a general moderator of the Presbyterian Church.

The facilities and the professional services of the KGNC staff are always available to the churches of the area.

Time for educational programs, as such, has been given, through the years, to West Texas State College, Amarillo College and Amarillo High School. Special programs are broadcast for National Education Week, National Music Week and other yearly or seasonal observances. And whenever any need arises in any school that can be met by the services of radio, KGNC is indeed happy to be able to meet that need.

Government agencies, the Armed Forces, civic clubs, municipal organizations all call on radio to inform the public of their particular desires. Each month, KGNC gives to these authorized organizations thousands of dollars worth of radio "time."

Among the public service broadcasts of which KGNC is particularly proud are the yearly concert-series broadcasts of the Amarillo Symphony Orchestra. Through these broadcasts, which are tape-recorded as the orchestra plays its regular concerts in Municipal Auditorium, thousands of area listeners are able to enjoy the finest music of the ages, played by an orchestra whose members come from every part of the High Plains area.

The quality of the broadcast music represents a triumph on the part of KGNC's engineering staff. The engineers, headed by W. H. Torrey who has been with KGNC since 1936, except when "on loan" to other stations with engineering problems, worked long and hard to find just the right spots for the best possible pick-up from the auditorium. The degree of their success may be measured by letters from listeners who are surprised to find, at the end of a two-hour concert, that they are listening to a locally-originated symphony broadcast.

One of the most elaborate of KGNC's public service programs is "Quizdown," broadcast each Saturday during the school year.

In September of 1950, KGNC and the Globe-News began the co-sponsorship of this weekly broadcast for, and by, boys and girls in the 4th, 5th and 6th grades.

Teams of six youngsters from each of two competing schools meet Saturday mornings in KGNC's Studio A to answer, in spelling-bee fashion, questions submitted from boys and girls in the same grade as the youngster of whom each question is asked.

Seventy-two to 80 schools participate on the actual broadcasts each year and about 15,000 questions for use on the program are submitted to KGNC by school children yearly. Participating schools are awarded sets of the **Britannica Junior** and **Rand-McNally World Globes** and every child who submits a question used on the program receives a special "Quizdown" mechanical pencil.

Teachers throughout the Tri-State area have written to say that "Quizdown" has been, in many



cases, the one stimulus that provoked a particularly book-resistant student to careful study.

"Quizdown" broadcasts handled by Quizmaster Monte Rosenwald and Bob Watson, are unrehearsed and are often full of spontaneous humor.

Other KGNC "public service" programs have a lighter side, too.

Staff members and listeners will never forget the marathon Christmas Eve programs on behalf of the Salvation Army. The cause was a dedicated one, but the means to that serious end were as funny as a bunch of very dignified people, off their dignity, can be. And that's very funny, indeed.

For a small contribution to the Salvation Army's Christmas Fund, KGNC listeners were able to request that almost any High Plains dignitary perform almost any sort of frenetic act the listener could conjure up.



Wes Izzard renders "Love in Bloom"

Especially hilarious were Wes Izzard's annual and even-worse-than-Benny fiddle versions of "Love in Bloom;" Mason King's always tearful vocal renditions of "White Christmas," for Mason is a sentimental fellow; Dixie Dice and Byron Singleton's hectic histrionics during the balcony scene from poor Mr. Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet."

The programs lasted as long as the listeners' money and the unprofessional performers' energy held out and the result was always an over-subscribed Salvation Army Fund.

KGNC's public service policy is based on a very broad interpretation of the term. The station's aim, always, is to broadcast whatever the public needs for its physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare.



Byron Singleton and Dixie Dice in Shakespeare's "Balcony Scene"

## Breaking New Trails

With broadcasters, as with men in other industries, it's a point of pride to be a leader.

And, since an up-and-coming radio station doesn't hide its light under a basket, the listening public is aware of many of the factors responsible for making a station outstanding.

But there are factors, involving behind-the-scenes radio operation, of which even the most loyal listener is never fully aware.

KGNC listeners in the mid-30's heard, and applauded, such programs as "The Open Forum of the Air." What they didn't know was that the program, featuring local, county and state officials and civic leaders, in open discussions of public and controversial events, was unique in the nation at that time.

KGNC's pioneer forum and town meeting-type programs were forerunners of a now widely recognized radio public service. They were not only duplicated by other radio stations but, broadened in scope, were adapted as network program ideas.

KGNC was also one of the first stations in the nation to utilize the "listeners' panel" for the purpose of consulting with station management on programs of general educational import.

A KGNC "first" of another kind, which rapidly attracted attention in the industry and very soon became an American radio trademark, was the "jingle" or singing commercial.

Singing commercials were an outgrowth of efforts on the part of John Ballard, Raymond Hollingsworth, Leon Krupp, Eddie Baumel and other early staff members to make radio commercials interesting and



horse to insure against further sabotage.

In the midst of the storm, WBAP, Fort Worth, sent its mobile unit to Amarillo for a remote pick-up. Although sunk to its axles in the spongy KGNC lawn, the WBAP unit was used to feed a program to the nearest telephone line still in working order which was at Clarendon, Texas, 60 miles away. This was the first on-the-spot report of the storm received in downstate Texas.



Wes Izzard gives news during 1940 ice storm

The nation was told about the great ice storm by Wes Izzard. With all electric lines down the station generated enough power with a gasoline engine to remain barely on the air. With the help of the mobile unit from Fort Worth, Wes Izzard went on NBC to tell the world what it's like to run a radio station in a town isolated by ice.

Amarillo's great ice storm of 1940 made national news, but only after a prodigious amount of work and an almost unbelievable kind of ingenuity on the part of KGNC staff engineers, announcers and newsmen.

Announcers Bob Watson, J. B. Linn and Barney Ogle virtually lived at the transmitter house during the three-day period. They were sustained almost entirely by coffee and food brought in by the listeners.

The programs the boys concocted reminded listeners of the old days in broadcasting when they heard phonograph records reproduced from a mechanically-wound victrola. The first records broadcast were put on the air simply by placing a mike in front of the phonograph speaker. That's exactly what the KGNC staff did after Irving Tolzien lent them a portable, hand-wound machine. Before the timely loan of the old-style Victrola, Watson, Linn and Ogle talked about how cold they were, read stories from magazines, reported whatever news of the storm conditions they were able to garner.

The piano programs heard during the hectic days were played by Dixie Dice on an old upright piano rolled in from the Elmo Taylor living quarters at the

transmitter. Fortunately, the piano had been tuned only a few days before.

News in the early days of radio took relatively a small percentage of broadcast time.

But as the 30's drew to a close, international broadcasting had achieved such progress that the voices of Roosevelt, George V, Chamberlain, Mussolini, Hitler and others echoed around the world, along with the novelty sounds of Mount Vesuvius, voices from the zeppelin Hindenburg over the Atlantic, broadcasts from a balloon in the stratosphere. All the world heard Edward VIII as he dramatically renounced his throne. The first broadcast of a coronation of an English King and Queen was heard here. Roosevelt's fireside chats made front-page news.

With Hitler's march into Poland the proportion of news broadcasts to other programs changed. In 1940, news broadcasts jumped, reaching an all-time high of over 20 per cent in 1945, and since then the proportion of news to other programs has never dropped below 15 per cent.

Day after day, almost hour by hour, broadcasts from around the globe told of one crisis after another as pleas for peace failed and declarations of war were broadcast from nation after nation.

Some radio news highlights from that critical period:

September 1, 1939. Radio announced German invasion and bombing of Poland.

September 3, 1939. England and France declared war on Germany. Prime Minister Chamberlain broadcast the declaration, followed by Daladier of France.

June 17, 1940. Marshal Petain broadcast the French surrender to Germany.

December 7, 1941. News flashed by radio at 2:19 p.m., EST, that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbour, Hawaii, at 1 p.m., EST.

December 8, 1941. President Roosevelt's message to Congress asking for a declaration of war on Japan was broadcast as it was read in the House and Senate and was followed by an announcement of the vote for war at 4:10 p.m., EST.

From the very hour of the radio newsbreak of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the ether pulsed with news.

Historic messages by Roosevelt and Churchill were broadcast to every corner of the earth. Every day communiques from Eisenhower's headquarters, from the African desert, from Anzio beachhead, from MacArthur in the Philippines were broadcast on almost every wave length.

Who can forget the shock of the message which told of the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, April 12, 1945? News of the President's death at Warm Springs, Georgia, reached the nation and the world at 5:51 p.m., EST, as NBC made the first announcement.

The news flashes continued, at the level of crisis, right up to May 7, 1945, when radio carried the news that Germany had surrendered unconditionally, to the news of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and to August 14, 1945, when President Truman broadcast to the world that Japan had surrendered and World War II had ended.

In war and in peace, radio never relaxes its 24-hour effort to cover the news.

different. They were, in effect, an effort to apply the light touch of radio entertainment, which the public so greatly approved, to radio advertising. The KGNC staff wrote dozens and dozens of novelty commercials. Copies of these "jingles" were requested by other stations and the "singing commercial" was on its way to becoming a major factor in radio advertising.



KGNC old-timers Monte Rosenwald, Calvin Handy, Leon Krupp, Ted Taylor, Raymond Hollingsworth, W. H. Torrey, Marvin Armstrong

The KGNC "first" which has attracted the most attention within the radio industry during the last few years is its "School for Announcers."

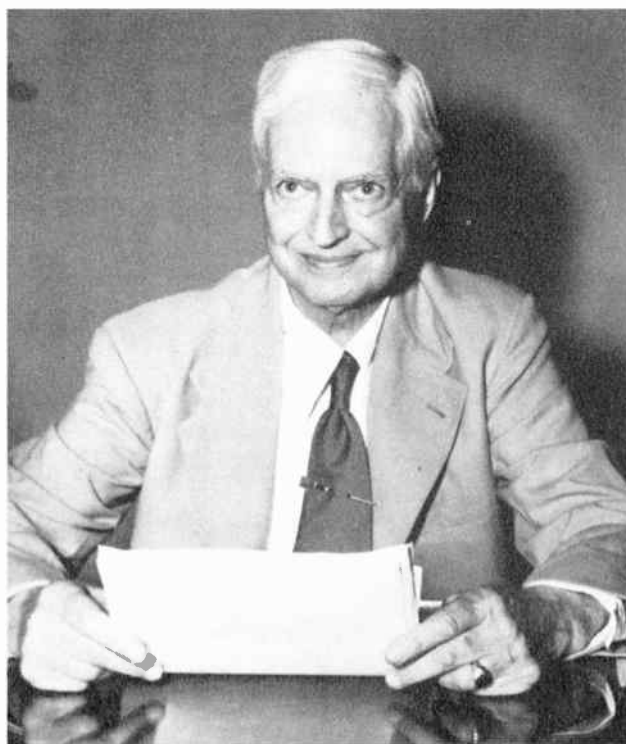
As the "voice" of the station, the announcer is, of all staff members, in closest contact with the listener. His responsibility, to the public, to the advertiser and to the station, is great. Yet, because radio is still comparatively an infant industry, the announcer ordinarily receives little help in discharging that responsibility. There are no industry-accepted schools for announcer training, as there are colleges of medicine, engineering, law or education.

Tom Kritser, KGNC general manager, and Bob Watson, assistant manager and program director, were long aware of this problem.

In the summer of 1950, they engaged Dr. Wallace R. Clark as KGNC's director of announcer education, an entirely new position in the radio world.

Dr. Clark is a man with a very wide background in classical studies and voice technique. He studied at Texas Christian University, the University of Wisconsin and Ffrangcon-Dur in London. He headed the voice departments of the University of South

Dakota and West Texas State College. He was a founder of the Texas Association of Music Schools and is the author of books on voice and music subjects.



Dr. Wallace R. Clark

Dr. Clark was given just one goal: general improvement at the microphone.

To this end, Dr. Clark daily monitors the work of each KGNC announcer and newscaster. He holds two weekly classroom sessions in which all KGNC announcers and newscasters participate. One is devoted to discussing the deficiencies discovered during the course of his monitoring periods, together with ways of overcoming those deficiencies. The other is a class in general background studies in music and the arts related to broadcasting, together with general word study and pronunciation practice.

Last summer, Dr. Clark spoke to the University of Oklahoma radio conference on the result of his first year's work as head of KGNC's "School for Announcers."

His work and KGNC's trail-breaking in the field of announcer education are being carefully watched by broadcasters throughout the nation.

The entire intra-station education program is just one more in a long line of KGNC efforts to give the listeners the best in radio broadcasting.

# TELEVISION, MARVEL OF THE MODERNS



Television development for civilian use came to a standstill with the start of World War II.

At the end of the war, civilian television again came to the forefront.

As far back as 1923 Dr. Vladimir K. Szorykin, now technical consultant of RCA laboratories, through his invention of the iconoscope and development of the kinescope, or picture tube, laid the groundwork for subsequent TV engineering miracles.

Given the green light in 1945, the research men and engineers picked up the challenge and worked with the same ingenuity and intensity that their predecessors had in turning dot-and-dash wireless into radio broadcasting.

KGNC applied for a television channel and a construction permit. But the "age of television" had dawned. People everywhere wanted to be eyewitnesses to the world, from the vantage points of their own living rooms.

The rush was so great that the FCC, the government's broadcasting-and-televising licensing agency, invoked a "freeze" on construction of new television outlets.

Because of the unprecedented demand, the FCC had lagged in its approvals far behind the requests for new television stations. And because of this same demand, the FCC feared that the channels available for television broadcasting would be so quickly used up, if first requests for them were granted, that

smaller cities with smaller financial resources would find themselves forever unable to enjoy the benefits of the new medium.

The freeze was invoked on behalf of more equitable distribution of the limited number of channels then available and to give engineers time for further research in search of additional channels.

The FCC ban on new station construction and new channel allocation was lifted April 14, 1952. KGNC has again filed for a television channel and station construction permit.

If the FCC is able to process applications as quickly as is hoped, KGNC-TV could be an actuality as early as 1953.

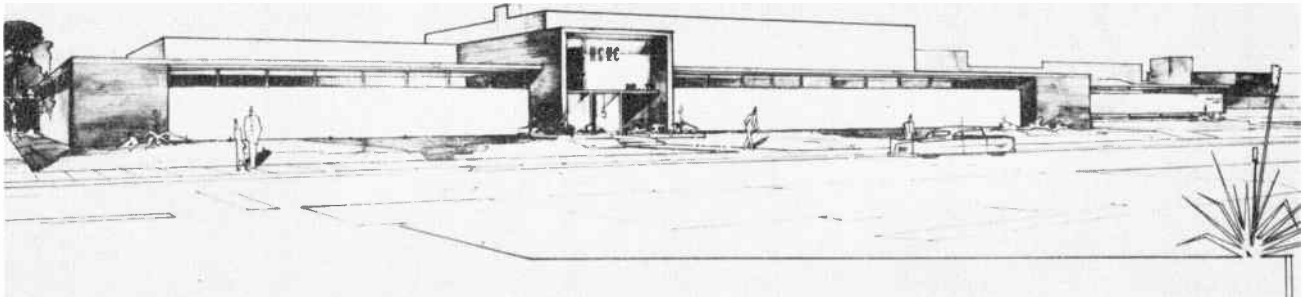
Lands for the large studios and transmitter required for TV broadcasting have already been purchased by KGNC and the architects have already submitted plans for the proposed new buildings.

It is expected that the cost of equipment, lands, buildings and the 833 foot tower will be in excess of \$700,000.00.

Television marches at double time; new ideas of today are commonly accepted accomplishments in a month. The new wireless dimension—sight plus sound—has widened horizons earlier than had been expected.

Through television, radio is proving more and more its kinship to light.

Through television, in this modern age, man may soon be able to see around the world.



Architect's drawing of KGNC's new radio and television center to be constructed at 1800-2200 North Polk

## KGNC'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY PLEDGE TO YOU

KGNC pledges itself to bring to listeners the news, information, opinion and discussion they must have to cope with modern living: the spiritual strengths and comforts of religion so needed in a war-torn world: the pleasure and serenity afforded

by fine music, the best in contemporary and classic drama, the humor and broad comedy which characterize our America in contrast with the dictatorships throughout the world.

# KGNC STAFF

## **OFFICERS OF PLAINS RADIO BROADCASTING COMPANY**

B. E. Walker, President  
Parker Prouty, Vice-President  
Tom Kritser, Secretary-Treasurer  
Grady Camp, Assistant Secretary

## **KGNC STAFF**

### **General Manager**

Tom Kritser

### **Assistant Manager**

Bob Watson

### **Accounting Department**

Calvin H. Handy, Chief  
W. D. Duckworth  
Ruth Flenniken  
Dorothy Ratliff  
Clydeen Reed

### **Announcing Department**

Ralph B. Henry, Chief  
Stuart H. Condron  
Al Evans  
Keith Loyd  
Gordon Suits  
Bert Wayne  
William T. Wylder

### **Continuity Department**

Anita Gee, Chief  
Marianne Johnson  
Betty Jane Webb

### **Engineering Department**

William H. Torrey, Chief  
Marvin Armstrong, Transmitter Chief  
Robert J. Armstrong  
Glover Claycomb  
William B. Curbow  
Victor Gaede  
M. K. Moore  
Max Moulder  
James Murphy  
Robert D. Natho  
James Pierce  
Joe Ratcliff  
Keith Stagg  
Bedford Teague  
Henry H. White, Studio Chief

### **Farm Editor**

J. Garland Smith

### **Maintenance**

O. J. Johnson

### **Music Director**

Weldon Bright

### **Musicians**

G. W. Allard  
Lewis J. Blankenship  
Billy Briggs  
Roland Herring  
Billy Starr  
J. S. Williams

### **News and Special Events**

Wesley S. Izzard, Director  
Charles Crudgington  
Ralph Henry  
Robert Izzard  
Bert Stafford

### **Promotion Manager**

Peggy Williamson

### **Receptionists**

Carol Cleek  
Virgie Muckelroy

### **Sales Department**

Noel E. Thompson, Sales Manager  
Burt W. Manning  
David G. Scribner  
Robert Zellermayer  
Bill Clarke, on leave for TV study

### **School for Announcers**

Wallace R. Clark

### **Secretary to Management**

Vera Lantzy

### **Traffic Department**

Datie Vaught, Chief  
Marcella Edwards

### **TV Program Director**

Kelly Maddox

The KGNC Anniversary Booklet was prepared by the late John Ballard, KGNC Sales Manager until his death in July, and Peggy Williamson, KGNC Promotion Manager. Mr. Ballard did the initial research and served as an invaluable advisor. The book was written by Miss Williamson. She is co-author of "Fire and Friendship on the High Plains," published in the Empire Magazine of the Denver Post, and soon to be re-printed by Reader's Digest.



