

The Education of a Broadcaster

Harry Bannister



Harry Bannister's gossipy, funny, nostalgic memoir re-creates the palmy days when Amos 'n' Andy, Rudy Vallee and the A & P Gypsies held millions of Americans glued to their radio sets—and continues right into the thick of present-day television.

When Bannister first entered the broadcasting world, radio was still flying by the seat of its pants. Radio meant barbershop quartets, amateur hours, corny piano players—and 30 commercials in a 45-minute period. There were no radio stars, no network shows—in fact, there were no networks. There were only two things: air time, and a handful of men of genius—like Harry Bannister — who were literally to build commercial broadcasting from scratch.

(Continued on back flap)

\$5.95

(Continued from front flap)

The Education of a Broadcaster is his enthralling and extraordinarily candid account of those years, starting with his first job as a time-salesman for a 100-watt radio station operating out of a shabby hotel room, through his twenty-two years with Detroit's elite Station WWJ, to the culmination of his career in television — when, at an age when most men are getting ready to retire, he came to New York and rose to national prominence as Vice-President of NBC.

The Education of a Broadcaster is informative, racy, studded with inside-radio stories and highly personal opinions—a book that insiders will devour and that everyone else will enjoy for its wonderful evocation of a fascinating American era.

Booklet design by Isadore Selzer



NBC PHOTO

HARRY BANNISTER spent the first twenty-three years of his life in New York City. He joined the U.S. Army in 1917, spent two years in France and was honorably discharged in 1919. For the following eleven years he was a traveling salesman working out of Pittsburgh, Kansas City, Cleveland and Detroit. His "lines" ranged from auto accessories and advertising to paint and popcorn machines. After a brief apprenticeship with radio stations WMBC and WJR in Detroit, he became a salesman for WWJ, which is owned by the Detroit *News*. During his twenty-two-year association with WWJ he rose from salesman to general sales manager to general manager. In 1952 he returned to New York as Vice-President of the National Broadcasting Company in charge of Station Relations. Mr. Bannister lives in a penthouse apartment in midtown Manhattan with his wife and two cats.

HARRY BANNISTER

THE

EDUCATION OF A BROADCASTER



NEW YORK

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To my wife, Frances, who prodded and goaded me into writing this book, then stopped talking until it was finished.

My thanks also to Leon Morse, a one-man editorial board, who chewed off my ear with advice and guidance which invariably was helpful.

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PART ONE



RADIO

SIGN-ON

● I STEPPED INTO broadcasting over a dead body. The corpse was Jerry Buckley, a radio announcer for WMBC, a 100-watt station in Detroit with studios in a second-rate hotel on the edge of a garish night-life district. Even for 1930, Buckley's program was unorthodox. He was interviewer, advice giver, political commentator, muckraker, disc jockey, newscaster, poetry reader and homely philosopher, with a style that was always offbeat and irreverent.

On July 23, 1930, in the small hours of early morning, Buckley came off the air after announcing election returns all night. While he sat alone in the lobby, three men entered. One stood by the door as the other two walked over to Buckley and emptied revolvers into him. Fifteen bullets lodged in his body. He died instantly. The gunmen left as suddenly as they had arrived, no one making any attempt to stop them. They were never identified or caught.

The lengthy investigation produced a spate of rumors and theories. There were allegations that Buckley lived the life of a Jekyll and Hyde, that while he earned his daily living as a broadcaster he made additional monies by being involved with gangsters and rumrunners. There were hints that tunes on his program contained cued in-

formation for the speedy boats that nightly crossed the Detroit River with prized Canadian liquor for the Prohibition-dry citizens of Detroit. There was testimony that he was the philanthropist behind an extensive personal charity program which unobtrusively dispensed large sums of money to Detroit's poor. None of this was ever proved. None of this ever went beyond hearsay. Hundreds of suspects were questioned, but no light was shed on the killers or the reason for the killing.

There were 50,000 uninvited mourners at his funeral, which was held in a pelting rainstorm. The next day I came to work at the station, imagining that I could smell gunpowder in the lobby.

For eleven years I had been a traveling salesman. My lines included drugs, candy, paints, popcorn machines, automobile accessories, advertising and whatever else came my way. I was on the road so much that often the country seemed just one big railroad station. I had one constant problem, amusement and relaxation, so that I could remain sane and normal. If I couldn't find a bridge or poker game among the other travelers at my hotel, I would sometimes spend the evening playing billiards. I believe that practically every good billiard parlor in every city in America had at some time or other enjoyed my patronage. One of my haunts—in Toledo, Ohio—was run by an ex-pool champion, Hughie Heal.

One night in 1930 I walked into Heal's place. As on most previous occasions, a character jumped up and said, "Hi, how about a game of three-cushion?" Then we went to it. But this time there was a difference. Before when we finished, we paid the tab, settled our bets, and went separate ways. Now my companion asked, "How about a bottle of beer?"

I said, "Great," so he took me to a speakeasy, we sat down and, for the first time, got to know each other.

He asked, "What do you do for a living?"

I told him, "I sell drugs and pharmaceuticals." I was working on a commission and drawing account for a small New York drug house. The Depression was getting progressively deeper. My job was rapidly blowing up under me. My sales were reasonably good, but this meant nothing. All the customers owed money for previous shipments; little of what I sold was being shipped out. My commission checks were dwindling alarmingly, and I desperately needed a new job if I was to go on feeding my family, and myself.

I asked him, "What do you do?" and he said, "I sell broadcasting time." I asked him to explain, which he did. Selling broadcasting time sounded good to me. I made an immediate mental note to look into it as soon as I got home to Detroit.

A few days later I was in the office of Lou Cavanaugh, sales manager of WJR, Detroit. Cavanaugh heard me out, then laughed. "I guess all the salesmen are running for cover; I get five or six in here practically every week. I feel sorry for them, but I can't do anything about it. However, Bannister, I'm kind of interested in you. I'm sure you can sell, but you don't know anything about broadcasting, and I haven't got time to teach you. I'll tell you what to do if you're real serious about this business. Go over to one of the small stations—like WMBC. Tell them the same story you told me. They'll hire you, because they'll hire anyone. They come and go over there. Stick it out for six months, learn the broadcasting business, then come back here. I'll give you a job, if you're still alive. But I warn you, you may starve to death in the mean-

while. It will be a rough six months, but that's the only way you'll learn."

I replied, "Okay, it's a deal. I'll be back."

So I went over to WMBC, and as Cavanaugh had predicted, they hired me on the spot, and I wired my resignation to the drug house. I spent a few hours studying the literature, then went out to sell WMBC. At the close of that day I had an order. Not much, but enough to earn me about \$10 in commission, which, at depression prices, would feed my family for several days. So I felt pretty good.

Soon I was knocked off my perch. The sales manager looked at my order and said, "We can't give you credit for this, Bannister. That's a house account."

In the lingo of salesmanship a "house account" is one on which no commissions are paid to any salesman. Some accounts come into the "house" without any solicitation by a salesman. Presumably this one was in that category. Nothing had been said about "house accounts" when I was hired. I knew I was in trouble if in addition to battling prospective customers I also had to battle the home office for earned commissions.

I went home feeling pretty low. After dinner I sat up for hours pondering my situation. Already I had seen enough to know I liked broadcasting. My problem was how to beat the situation and survive.

The audience for this small independent station was minimal, and the quality of its advertisers reflected the size and type of audience—shoe repair shops, beauty parlors, advertising dentists and dollar-down-and-dollar-a-week credit houses. I searched for a plan which would insure my commissions, and eventually I found it. I decided to stay away from the type of advertisers then us-

ing WMBC and go across the railroad tracks to solicit only the best advertisers in town, those whom no previous salesman from WMBC had dared to call on.

In the morning my first prospect was Chevrolet Motors. I had to wait, but finally got to see the advertising manager, a man named White. After shaking hands, he said, "WMBC? Isn't that where they just shot Jerry Buckley?" I answered in the affirmative and added that this might be his last chance to talk to me, because I was going back to the station and they might knock me off. That got a laugh, and we were off.

We had both been in the army in France, and we re-fought the war, as old soldiers will. When I left White, I had an order for three 15-minute programs weekly, for 13 weeks, a total of 39 programs in all. One of the earliest commercial program recordings was "Chevrolet Chronicles," a series of stories which dealt with American exploits in World War I. This was Mr. White's WMBC program choice. My commissions would be about \$40 weekly. The sales manager was stunned when he saw the order. There was no talk about a house account. By the end of the week I had brought in several more, not as good as the first, but enough to raise my weekly earnings to about \$60.

On Saturday morning I was back in Lou Cavanaugh's office. He looked at me in surprise. "What do you want?"

I replied, "I want that job you promised me."

"You're crazy. I told you to come back in six months; you were just here yesterday."

"Mr. Cavanaugh, I was here one week ago yesterday. I don't need six months to learn this silly business. Here's a list of what I've sold this past week."

He looked at it. "Did you sell Chevrolet? I heard about that and wondered who had done it."

Anyhow, he hired me on a most peculiar assignment. I could go anywhere in the world—north, south, east or west—and sell radio time for WJR, on a 15 per cent commission basis, except in the city of Detroit. That was off limits for me.

Then Cavanaugh gave me an hour's indoctrination into the intricacies of broadcasting, talking steadily about the mechanics of radio. Neophyte though I was, it was apparent to me that my new boss had no interest in programming and regarded everything as something on which to hang a commercial. He made no serious reference to any broadcasting function other than sales. It was my first introduction to an attitude I was to encounter frequently in later years.

Cavanaugh explained the network-affiliate relationship, which of course was all Greek to me and remained so even after his explanation. He explained government regulation. The Federal Radio Commission, later to become the Federal Communications Commission, was the governing power, and it licensed all radio stations to "operate in the public interest, convenience and necessity." All Cavanaugh's references to regulation were pithy and scornful. He impugned the character, integrity and motives of all who sought to interfere with 100 per cent commercial operation. It was quite an education.

I went home, loaded down with literature about WJR's sales, promotion and programming and spent the weekend studying the business of my new employer, attempting to develop a workable *modus operandi* within the prescribed limits.

On Monday morning I boarded an interurban trolley

for Flint, 50 miles northwest of Detroit, then as now a major production center for Chevrolet and other General Motors products. Normally, when the auto business is good, Flint is a hustling, bustling, roaring community, but it slows down to a crawl when it isn't. Like most factory towns in 1930, it was dirty, dull and drab. The intervening years have improved it some, but it still is no garden of roses.

I spent a whole day just walking around, getting the feel of the town, and gradually an idea took shape in my mind. I decided that WJR was ready for a "Flint Hour." The city and its numerous factories had many glee clubs, choral groups, bands and theatrical societies. It was a comparatively simple matter to line up talent for thirteen programs. Then I persuaded prominent citizens, beginning with the mayor, to appear as special guests. Having arranged the talent, I went out and sold ten announcements on each program to the businessmen of the city. In two weeks the job was done. It would yield about \$50 in weekly commissions for 13 weeks.

Eventually I became king of the various Flint, Pontiac, Jackson and Saginaw "Hours," a reign not known for its duration. When the initial cycle of programs ended, I found renewals difficult, if not impossible, to get. The programs were essentially novelties. Since they were not sufficiently entertaining, the audiences soon got bored.

I sold a different kind of program to Windsor, Ontario, a stone's throw across the river from Detroit. Windsor and adjacent Canadian communities wanted the patronage of American tourists. I assembled the Board of Commerce, the Automobile Club and Windsor's leading hotel, the Prince Edward, and they sponsored a program designed to attract this kind of business. Named after the major

roads in Canada, "The King's Highway," a weekly half-hour program of orchestral selections, was broadcast from the main dining room of the Prince Edward. We planned to use the WJR staff orchestra, but the Windsor musicians' union stepped into the picture. It did not matter that the Canadian border cities as a unit did not have enough first-class musicians for the assignment. We had to use Canadians, or else. This was my first encounter with union restrictions, and it was disastrous. The music was simply awful, and so, despite the sponsors' enthusiasm and the program's potential for attracting American business, when the 13-week commitment expired, there was no renewal. Badly as I felt, I couldn't blame the sponsors. In Windsor I also got my first experience at announcing. Several times the scheduled WJR announcer failed to reach the hotel on time, so I handled the mike. To my embarrassment, the hotel manager asked for me permanently, which the station, properly, refused.

The National Broadcasting Company then owned two networks, the Red and the Blue. Now these are distinct entities—the former owned by the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and the latter by the American Broadcasting Company (ABC). At that time, however, of the two networks owned by NBC, the Red Network had most of the audience and revenue and the better programming. The chief competition was furnished by the Columbia Broadcasting System's radio network. NBC's Blue Network lagged far behind the two leaders.

Nevertheless the Blue Network schedule included one program that, during its heyday, was the most popular in the country. For almost a decade "Amos 'n' Andy" dominated American broadcasting. Five nights weekly, from 7:00 P.M. to 7:15 P.M. Eastern time, people refused to answer telephones or doorbells so as not to be dis-

tracted from the priceless dialogue of the Kingfish, Madame Queen, Miss Bloom or the business of the Fresh Air Taxicab Company.

Reading the scripts of "Amos 'n' Andy" today leaves one wondering about the sophistication of our people of that time. Here and there the dialogue is mildly amusing but hardly ever hilarious. Yet one could walk through the residential sections and be deafened by peals of laughter in the quarter hour following seven o'clock; last night's quips were tomorrow's linguistic idiosyncrasies in households throughout the nation.

As might be expected of this new medium, radio programming was, to say the least, rudimentary. The piano was the great mainstay of WJR—honky-tonk, Dixieland, semiclassical and classical piano selections filled the ears of station listeners. Also featured were barbershop quartets, nasal tenors, children's hours, household hints, and amateur hours. Commercially WJR was the most successful operation in Detroit. Radio was still new enough to most people so that low-caliber programming was no deterrent to audience interest. The station's 10,000 kilowatts made it so powerful that in the comparatively uncluttered airways then prevailing, its signal covered greater distances in all directions than any other Detroit station. This meant that radio listeners in cities far from Detroit could receive the station. The station manager was Leo Fitzpatrick, one of radio's pioneers. He had won national prominence before coming to WJR as the "Merry Old Chief" of the "Kansas City Nighthawks," one of broadcasting's earliest programs, which featured the Coon-Sanders orchestra. This was back in the days of home-made crystal radio sets, known in the jargon of the trade as "cat whiskers."

At WJR I encountered what I believe was the first sat-

irizing of commercials. Since 1930, this form of comedy has spread widely; comedians such as Henry Morgan, Stan Freberg, Bob and Ray and others have made it a common type of commercial that wins attention by disarming critics. For Detroit listeners one of the most popular programs for years was Joe Gentile's early-morning show on CKLW in Windsor, Ontario, on which every announcement was an elaborately worked-up spoof. As far as I know, however, the first radio personality to kid his own commercials was Frank Gill, a brash youngster who arrived at WJR in 1930, before I did.

Many viewers and radio listeners today complain about the heavy load of commercials. In the early days of radio, however, they really piled them on. After each of three songs sung by a blind tenor, Harold Kean, on WJR's "Dinner Hour" would come the reading of ten consecutive announcements. In 45 minutes, 30 announcements would be presented. Sometimes while the announcer was going through his stint, a salesman would tiptoe into the studio and sneak another announcement on the bottom of the waiting pile.

Naturally, the heavy plugging was quite a load for the poor announcers. One night one of the three announcers on the show got sick, and at the last minute the recently hired Frank Gill was substituted. His first announcement was for a finance company. It went something like this:

"Do you need money to pay your bills or to make that long-deferred purchase you've been talking about with your wife? The Blank Finance Company offers you a simple way to get three hundred dollars immediately, without embarrassment and without fuss, and you can have twenty months to repay the loan in easy payments," and so on.

That's the way it was written, but here is how fearless young Frank Gill put it on the air:

"Need money? Who doesn't? Listen, kids, and I'll tell you an easy way to get yourself three hundred bucks. Go down to the Blank Finance Company, put your name on a piece of paper, and they'll hand you three hundred dollars. Jump on a train, leave town; it's a big country. Let them try and find you!"

In the same vein he knocked off the rest of his assigned announcements. The engineers and program people in the control room were convulsed with laughter, but elsewhere it was another story. Apoplectic sponsors shouted imprecations by telephone to the station brass at home, threatening lawsuits for damages or, at the least, cancellation of all broadcast schedules. When Gill came off the air, the producer, under strict orders, fired him immediately.

By next morning the irate sponsors discovered that of all their previous advertising ventures, nothing had ever created so much word-of-mouth comment and called so much friendly attention to their business as the good-natured spoofing of Frank Gill. One by one, they phoned and not only asked to reinstate their advertising but specified that only Frank Gill was to handle their copy. He became an important attraction, a premium buy at special rates. But Gill didn't last too long on WJR, because an advertising agency nailed him for a network show. As a radio comedian he was no great success, but after that he went to Hollywood and became a high-priced gag writer for the movies.

All this time I was carefully studying radio broadcasting in Detroit. I was not sure I wanted to remain at WJR. I fixed on WWJ, a station which I believed had a great future, as yet unrealized. I saw an opportunity for myself

there. Owned by the *Detroit News*, WWJ was the class station of Detroit but it had almost no commercial business. Its owners thought that its primary function was to promote their paper.

In their view a good radio station had to be run at a loss. Commercialism, they believed, would impair the entertainment value of programs and lose audiences. Naturally, WWJ standards were higher than those of other Detroit stations, and perhaps even the highest in the country.

Sponsorship of the news was not permitted. Nor was it permitted to precede a commercial announcement by the lead-in phrase so often used in broadcasting, "Here is news about . . ." To WWJ if it was a commercial offer, it just wasn't news. No pharmaceutical advertising was accepted; no comparison-price advertising permitted. An advertiser could not claim, for example, that today he was offering a \$10 value for only \$5.95. WWJ maintained that if the price was \$5.95 today, it was a \$5.95 value. There were many other taboos which did not win business for the station. This was ethical and principled broadcasting at its most illustrious.

I made an appointment to see Jeff Webb, the manager of WWJ. At the time of the First World War, Webb was sales manager of his brother's lumber business. He was a fluent and witty speaker, so during the war he became a "Minute Man," a salesman of war bonds to workers in war plants. In the course of his bond-selling duties he made the acquaintance of Dr. Fred T. Murphy, one of Detroit's wealthiest citizens, the builder and owner of the Penobscot Building, the city's largest office building, and the chief angel of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

Jeff's love of fine music established a bond between him

and the wealthy philanthropist. Not long after the war Dr. Murphy suggested that Jeff take over the management of the symphony. Jeff was reluctant. "I know the lumber business," he said. "I've got a family to think about and I'm not sure I could do as well running a symphony orchestra."

They continued to talk about Jeff's coming over to the symphony. Finally one day Dr. Murphy asked Jeff, "How much money do you need in the bank to feel secure?"

Jeff pondered for a moment and answered, "Fifty thousand dollars."

Without a moment's hesitation, Dr. Murphy replied, "Okay. I'll deposit it to your account tomorrow, if you take the job."

So Jeff became the manager of the Detroit Symphony.

Another man watching Jeff Webb was W. E. Scripps, president of the Detroit *News* and son of James E. Scripps, the founder of the paper. (It was E. W. Scripps, a brother of James E. Scripps, who left the Detroit *News* early in its history to go to other cities and begin the newspaper chain now known as Scripps-Howard.)

After Jeff Webb had been managing the orchestra for several years, W. E. Scripps called Dr. Murphy and Webb to his office. He pointed out that running the symphony was hardly a full-time job for Jeff and suggested that he take over the management of the radio station. "The station," he added, "can also help promote the symphony." Both Dr. Murphy and Jeff Webb agreed, so Jeff took on the dual assignment.

Some years later Dr. Murphy died, and his heirs had little interest in the symphony. Management of the orchestra became more difficult. W. E. Scripps noticed this. Once again he made Jeff Webb an offer. "You carried out

your pledge to Dr. Murphy," he declared. "You did a great job. But now he's gone and you're free to do as you see fit. Why not give up the symphony? Why not come over to the *Detroit News* as its manager of advertising, too?"

That is what Webb was doing when I came over to see him.

Jeff was tall and broad-shouldered. His jaw was firm, his chin square, his forehead high and wide, his profile almost classic. There was strength and intelligence in his face. His speech was positive and decisive. He often flashed one of the friendliest grins I've ever seen. Along with a razor-sharp brain, he had a deep understanding of people and an all-pervading gentleness. He was an unusual combination of sharp businessman, efficient executive and scholarly gentleman of taste and discrimination.

In my interview, I pointed out that without any loss of audience it was possible to make the station profitable by becoming a little more commercial. The increased revenue could then be used to promote the newspaper. I talked to him for about twenty minutes; then he phoned Ty Tyson, assistant manager and sports announcer. When Ty entered his office, Webb said, "Ty, shake hands with Harry Bannister. He's just gone to work for us." And that was how I joined WWJ.

Jeff gave me only one bit of instruction, which more than anything epitomizes radio's early struggles. He said, "Don't ever sell WWJ to anybody if the money to pay for what you sell has to come out of an appropriation for newspaper advertising. If I hear of you being responsible for cancellation of newspaper advertising in any newspaper—not just the *Detroit News*—don't bother coming to work any more. You're through."

Of course, I was responsible for much loss of newspaper

advertising in subsequent years, but J. Edgar Hoover, the Pinkertons, and Sherlock Holmes, combined, could never have pinned it on me.

I spent the next twenty-two years at WWJ, first as a salesman on commission, then, starting in 1934, as general sales manager. In 1940 I became general manager. WWJ was one of a group of stations which in 1926 formed the National Broadcasting Company, America's first network. I left WWJ in April, 1952, to join NBC as vice-president in charge of Station Relations. So of my thirty-five years in broadcasting, thirty-four of them have been spent at WWJ and NBC.

When I came to WWJ, the station occupied one corner of the top floor of the News Building, and its total volume was under \$200,000 yearly. When I left, we had a building of our own, which was being replaced by a larger edifice. Our combined television and radio billings were over \$5 million annually.

FLASHBACK

● BEFORE MY ENTRY into broadcasting, I had known hard times. The world and I seemed to be going down two different roads. I would put in a year or two of fine work, sometimes bordering on the inspired, then destroy it all by months of carelessness, irresponsibility and insubordination. I was always aware of the fact that my abilities weren't being fully used. Often I would find myself subordinate to men of low intelligence. I would become resentful and bitter. Naturally none of my jobs lasted very long.

I was appalled by much that I encountered in the competitive commercial world, but I closed my mind to what I disliked. I took refuge in the casuistry that survival was paramount and that it was in the nature of things for the strong to overrun the weak. Still I suffered agonizing hours when my sophistries turned around, as they frequently did, and bit me. This inner conflict must have been reflected in my uneven performance of eleven years.

Nothing had troubled me more than learning to be a salesman. I thought all salesmen took to it easily. This was far from the truth; the vast majority find it hard to learn to sell. My first efforts were like a nightmare. The very

idea of walking up to a stranger and starting a conversation was simply frightening. I would get as far as the front door, then turn around and walk around the block before trying again, all the time thinking, "Maybe he died yesterday, or at least is sick in bed with a cold today." Then, after nerving myself for the inevitable, I was aware of my flushed face, my thick tongue and awkward manner.

Because of all this, and my repeated self-flagellation, I swore to myself that I would master my weakness and become the greatest salesman alive. I damn near made it. In organization after organization later on, I was generally recognized as top man. However, this alone was not enough to offset my faults and defects. Sooner or later, generally sooner, I came to the end of the line.

I learned in a tough school. My first job after leaving the army was as assistant sales manager for the American Druggists Syndicate of Long Island City. It was a glorified title for a clerk's job. I kept sales records and wrote inspirational letters to a corps of two hundred salesmen who covered the United States.

The sales manager, T. F. Cannon, was a six-foot-three-inch towheaded Irishman with squinty pale eyes behind heavy glasses, and a loose-jointed gangling body. His chin stuck out half a city block and proclaimed the essence of the man. He was hard, unyielding and always on the muscle. If he owned a conscience, he never showed it. He would rip a man apart with criticism, then watch the reaction, hovering over him like a prizefighter poised to deliver a knockout blow. He had the fastest brain I have ever encountered, plus an overwhelming power of persuasion. To my immature mind, this appeared sufficient to convert an archbishop into an atheist, or at least an agnostic.

He was one of the last of the great salesmen. Advertising was beginning to expand. Selling methods were changing. Soon most of it would be done through the printed word, then by radio and ultimately by television. These channels of communication minimize the need of strong personal salesmanship and convert most salesmen into order-takers.

Cannon went after me right from the start. He would give me an assignment, then later disavow his instructions. After he had done this twice, the next time he stopped at my desk to bark out an order, I was ready for him. As he turned away, I said, "One second, please, Mr. Cannon." I had a sheet of paper in the typewriter, and rapidly I typed out a few words, summarizing his instructions, whipped it out and said, "Initial this, please." His smile was evil, but he signed. Watching him, listening to him and being browbeaten by him were a priceless but painful experience. In my naïve yet obstinate way, I fought back desperately and gradually he grew to respect me, although his savagery never lessened. After a few months he began giving me sales assignments, and I started on the long learning process.

For me it was a fine university. The American Druggists Syndicate made two thousand items, all unadvertised, all designed to compete against known brands, in order to yield larger profits to the druggist. For example, a tin of twelve Bayer aspirin tablets retailed for fifteen cents and cost the druggist eleven cents. He could buy A.D.S. aspirin for five cents a tin and sell it for the same fifteen cents, thus making more than twice as much profit. But this required salesmanship by the retailer, by the A.D.S. representative, and a degree of deviousness by both.

While all A.D.S. products were of good quality, the

company's record with its customers was spotty. Complaints were constant. On almost every call, my first job was to listen to a tale of woe and do what I could to create an atmosphere in which business could be transacted.

I must have done reasonably well, because soon Cannon offered me one of the company's prime territories, Pittsburgh, and I accepted.

A week or so before, he had stopped at my desk and asked to see what sales letters I had written that day. As usual he was critical of the output and said, "Why don't you write a letter about sanitary napkins? We make one of the best on the market and sales are most unsatisfactory." So, from the catalogue description, I wrote a stirring three hundred words about sanitary napkins, despite the fact that I hadn't the foggiest notion of what they were, or what purpose they served. It was months later before I learned.

In trying to make a salesman out of myself in Pittsburgh, I assumed that every call should bring a sale and that the fault was mine if I did not get an order. I would go over and over every unsuccessful interview in my mind. What had I said that I should not have said? What hadn't I done that I should have done? Gradually my percentage of sales improved.

Each of the two thousand items we sold had a catalogue number. I have always had a good memory, so I memorized each number. This simplified the business of writing up orders and also created an impression of knowledge about drugs and pharmaceuticals which I was far from possessing. Most of my customers took it for granted that I, too, was a pharmacist, and I was not about to disabuse them.

Two incidents stand out in my education. One taught

me an object lesson which I have never forgotten. The moral: Don't show off to a simpleminded customer. As I was writing up an order one day, the customer and I got around to bulk pharmaceuticals. They were usually quoted at a per-gallon price, with a fifteen per cent discount for five gallons. I told the man, "Seven dollars a gallon, with fifteen per cent off for five gallons." Laboriously he started to multiply seven by fifteen and I became impatient and said, "Let me show you a fast way to do that." In two simple operations which took about five seconds I gave him the answer, then triumphantly tossed down the pencil. He looked at the numbers, looked me over carefully, then said unpleasantly, "Say, you figure too fast." He walked away and never came back, and there went my order.

Never anywhere did I figure too fast again.

Through the other incident I discovered that indirection could often do more to overcome customer resistance than the direct approach.

My list of calls in Pittsburgh included a small drugstore in the middle of a block in a low-income neighborhood. It was the dirtiest store I had ever seen. Dust, grime and disarray were everywhere. From the back of the store came a paragon of untidiness. His fingernails were black; only faint traces of white could be discerned through the layers of dust and dirt on his once-white shirt; he had a three-day growth of beard; his coat was stained with grease spots; in every way he was filthy and repulsive. But looking around the store, in the five minutes or so before the proprietor appeared, I could see the A.D.S. label everywhere. He seemed to have in stock all the two thousand items made by A.D.S., so, dirty or not, I had visions of a juicy order.

When I told him who I was, he immediately began ask-

ing all sorts of questions which revealed an intimate acquaintance with the company and its products. After about thirty minutes of preliminaries, I got down to business, reached into my portfolio for an order pad and in my best "come hither" manner said, "I suppose there are a few things you'll be needing."

"Oh yes," he replied, "I need lots of stuff, but I'll mail in my order. I never give orders to salesmen. The company doesn't really need salesmen. If they saved that expense, they'd pay bigger dividends."

The American Druggists Syndicate had started out as a cooperative, selling stock to druggists who presumably would enjoy preferred status, but it had long ago departed from this concept and now sold to anyone at its regular prices. Yet out of the fifty thousand or so drugstores in America at that time, about one-half owned stock in A.D.S., purchased years before. Somewhere along the line the president and founder of A.D.S., Charles Goddard, had dreamed up the idea that all the stockholders should mail in monthly orders, thus eliminating the need for a sales force and making possible bigger dividends. The idea died aborning, but it stuck in the mind of this dirty little man who right now needed "lots" of my merchandise but would not give me the order.

I said, "Why, that's fine with me if you send in your order. You see, I get credit for everything shipped into Pittsburgh whether I sell it or not. The only one who loses on this deal is you." Meanwhile I had replaced the order pad, buckled the strap on my briefcase and moved toward the door. "Go ahead, mail in your order," I said.

I had my hand on the doorknob when he shouted, "Hey, wait a minute! What do you mean, I lose on this deal?"

So I came back about halfway and said, "Oh, don't you know? Every month we have big specials, usually on the best sellers. If you buy six dozen of this, you may get two dozen free, or if you buy a gross of that, you may get three or four dozen free. Of course, if your order is for a little less, just because you didn't know about it, you get no free goods, which makes the cost much higher. And even if you happen to order the required amount, unless the order so specifies, those dumb warehouse clerks won't know enough to give you the free goods. But go ahead and mail in your order." And again I moved toward the door.

And again he yelled, even louder than before, "Wait a minute! What are the free goods deals this month?"

Again I came back, this time all the way, before I replied, "I told you that I get credit for all you buy, but at the same time, it makes me look like an awful dope to report that I've been here and got no order, if the company then receives one in the mail. If you're so stuck on ordering by mail, why don't you write the company and ask about the monthly specials? By the time they get around to answering you, this month will be over, and you'll be in trouble all over." Again I moved toward the door, but when I got there, I turned around and looked at him.

We stared at each other for a long minute; then he finally said, "You win. Take out that order pad." It was a huge order.

After a year in Pittsburgh I was made district manager over some dozen salesmen covering western Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia. One of them was Charles Robinson, a kid of about twenty-one or twenty-two whom I'd found jerking sodas in a drugstore. I made a fine salesman out of him by passing along my recent self-education.

He covered a territory of some six counties adjacent to Pittsburgh. When I worked with him, at the close of a day, if we had a few minutes to spare between trains, we used to shoot pool. When we finished, either he would owe me sixty cents or sixty-five cents or else he would collect about that much from me. It was always less than a dollar. I was certain that if we had more time, I would whip the socks off him, and I know he felt the same way about me.

At that time, in our business, the average salesman sold about \$100 daily; \$150 was a real good day. Any more was highly unusual. One time I met Charley in Pittsburgh and we drove to Donora, a grimy coal town, directly south of Pittsburgh, where he had an appointment at 9:30 A.M. When we finished his first call, I had an order for about \$500. Charley was in seventh heaven, because although I did the selling, it was his account and he got the credit for it. He looked at me and said, "What do you say if we declare a holiday and shoot pool the rest of the day?" I said, "Okay." So we hunted up the village pool hall, which was just opening up, and started to play. We played all day, sending out for occasional sandwiches and coffee. When the fellow closed up shop about 10:30 P.M., while we owed many dollars for the use of the table, I had won seventy-five cents. I guess that proved we really were neck and neck.

In the fall of 1923 A.D.S. decided to close its branch in Kansas City, which was jammed to the rafters with a \$2 million stock. They transferred me there to direct about twenty salesmen and unload the inventory. For the first time I encountered the Ku Klux Klan, which was just starting to spread in the Midwest. One of my salesmen, in Iowa, gave me a terrific pitch one night. He ended by

handing me an application, on one corner of which was his Klan name, "King Kleagle." Several times customers took me to Klan meetings, which I found slightly amusing and highly baffling. How grown men could make such fools of themselves never failed to jar my faith in the human race. In the next few years I was to run into the Klan frequently.

The A.D.S. went through several changes of management, including a replacement for Cannon, and I didn't react too well. When, in late 1924, I got a call from Cannon, who was now general sales manager of Park & Tilford, offering me a job, I gladly took it.

Park & Tilford was an old New York house, originally in the fancy grocery business. In the early years of the century, when the American distribution system was taking shape, P&T acquired national rights to Havana cigars, French wines, Scotch whiskey and other fine lines. Somewhere in its history it also went into the candy business. By 1924 it was making and marketing one of the best lines of chocolates then available.

My territory was Ohio, Indiana, Michigan and West Virginia. My job was to establish distributors who would set up and supply retail outlets for Park & Tilford box candy. It was quite a transition from working for a hard-sell, aggressive company which sold unbranded merchandise whose sole appeal was based on larger retailer profits. Now I was handling one of the best products in its category for a company steeped in respectability but slightly run-down.

Most of the existing distributors of P&T were candy jobbers. After calling on wholesale candy houses for a week without a sale, I decided to switch signals. Candy jobbers already carried lines of box chocolates; it was necessary

for me to persuade them to give up their existing brand before they would contemplate buying mine, a rather difficult task.

A simpler solution occurred to me. Why not ignore candy jobbers altogether and call on wholesalers in kindred lines, such as cigars, drugs and groceries? We could put them into the candy business. By offering them an opportunity to expand, Park & Tilford would get the full benefit that an established but new channel of distribution would place behind a new venture.

It worked like a charm, and soon I was opening two or three new distributorships monthly, which was considered little short of phenomenal in the home office.

In Mansfield, Ohio, I called on the Kern Cigar Company. It had some eight to ten men traveling in a group of counties in north-central Ohio. After several calls Mr. Kern became a Park & Tilford distributor, but imposed one condition: "The way for me to sell this candy is to have one salesman sell it exclusively. He must travel with the territorial men who will introduce him to the customers. If you will hire me such a man and train him for a few weeks, you've got yourself a deal."

So it worked. I hired a young fellow named Keith, who had a car, and we started out. We would make three or four towns a day. I would look them over, then say, "That's the Number One spot, that's Number Two," etc. I would go in and invariably sell the first or second choice. It looked like soft picking to Keith. Then we ran into trouble.

In Galion, Ohio, a railroad center with seven or eight thousand people, there were three drugstores and a couple of confectionery stores. One drugstore seemed particularly outstanding. It had shiny fixtures, new tables, neon lighting (then a rarity) and in every way was the best

in town. We went in and I gave the druggist my pitch. He heard me for some fifteen minutes, then said, "No, I don't want it, but when you get back to the factory, send me a catalogue and a price list."

This certainly sounded like strong interest, so I gave him the "B" version of my pitch, a little shorter, a little punchier, with one or two new points. Again he heard me out, for some nine or ten minutes, then said, "No, I'm not buying. But, Mr. Bannister, remember to send me a catalogue when you get back to New York."

Still positive interest, so I started on the "C" version, and this time he wouldn't let me go on. "Look, Bannister, you're wasting your time here. All I want from you is a catalogue, and that's all."

Well, I had encountered an occasional tough cooky like this with A.D.S., and had developed a technique: I assumed that when there was some obvious roadblock obstructing a sale, there was no use in attempting a straight pitch. The thing to do was to identify and isolate the roadblock first. Moreover, I had learned that the prospect would seldom volunteer to explain what bothered him. He had to be shocked into revealing himself. So I said, "Mr. Jones, there's something going on here between us that puzzles me. You've told me three times that you want a Park & Tilford catalogue. You seem interested in my merchandise. And with great finality, you've also told me three times that you won't buy Park & Tilford from me. What's the matter, Mr. Jones, don't you like me?"

I could see him flush slightly and I knew I had scored. He glared at me for a long interval, then finally pulled himself together and remarked, "Bannister, you have about your person a supersaturated odor of cigarette smoke which is extremely offensive to me. Why anyone

who looks, talks and acts as if he ought to know better—why anyone who sells such a nice thing as box chocolates, especially Park & Tilford chocolates—would come into my store reeking of stale cigarettes is more than I can understand.”

We had driven a long way in Keith’s small coupé with the windows closed. I realized that tobacco smoke must have impregnated my clothes. I could feel my neck getting red; and I could sense Keith’s panic. But in fighting the battle for A.D.S. I had developed a working theory about such situations: 1) Don’t argue (there’s no sense in saying, “I don’t stink”), and 2) Don’t justify yourself (he wouldn’t accept the obvious fact that he sold cigarettes and thereby shouldn’t be offended by their use). To solve the problem, I had to change the atmosphere and instantaneously build a bridge between me and my recalcitrant prospect, a bridge on which he would eventually cross over to my side.

He had no more than completed his castigation when, ignoring the druggist, I turned to Keith and said, “Do you hear all this, Keith? I’ve lost a sale here because I smoke cigarettes. I’m an old dog (I was thirty-two at the time) and it’s hard to teach tricks to an old dog. But you’re young, and you’re just starting out. Don’t ever learn to smoke cigarettes. Never, never!”

I looked at the druggist, and for the first time his face softened a little. “I don’t know for sure whether you mean it or not, but that’s damn good advice you’re giving this boy.”

“I certainly do mean it,” I replied. “You see, I’m charged with the duty of teaching him how to sell, and I want him to learn from my mistakes, just as he learns from what few things I do right.”

“Your attitude is very good, I must say.”

I modestly disclaimed any credit, and then looked at my watch. "Look, Mr. Jones, it's almost noon, and it must be close to your lunchtime. While you eat, I'm going out and look for a barbershop because I need a haircut, and while there I'm going to have the barber decorate me with his sweetest-smelling perfume. After I get thoroughly deodorized, I'd like to come back and see you again."

He grinned amiably. "Okay. Do that." So I came back and got my order, and I never did tell him that Keith was already smoking two packs daily.

Again there were management changes; T. F. Cannon left the company, and I started one of my periodic skids. Soon I was out of a job. I drifted for a year, during which I sold motion picture advertising, popcorn machines, and automotive products, with rather indifferent success.

I lived in Cleveland, and while selling automotive products for a company now out of business, I worked in and around Columbus, the state capital. I used to leave Cleveland on Monday morning and return Friday night. During the week I lived at the Deshler Hotel in Columbus.

One evening I sat on a davenport in the lobby, reading a newspaper. Next to me sat two strangers, talking in low tones. After a while a third man approached and said, "Well, I've called Jim and Ed and Howard, and I just can't get a fourth, so I guess it's off for tonight."

Unconsciously I had looked up, at his voice. When he finished, he looked at me and grinned. I said, "I'm no Sherlock Holmes, but it sounds as if you're trying to organize a bridge game."

He answered, "I sure am. Do you play?"

I responded, "I love it, and I'm free as the birds."

He stuck out his hand and said, "I'm Senator Gray from Cleveland. This is Representative Rubinstein from

Cincinnati.” The fourth man was another state senator from Cleveland, whose name I cannot recall.

We played all evening. And that started it. From then on, for several months, my room became something of a gambling headquarters for people in the state government, so much so that I had to change from a small \$3-a-day room to a much larger one at \$7.50 a day.

I made enough money out of the bridge game to pay the difference. Any night, on the first four days of the week, there would be several bridge games going, and sometimes a poker game. It was during Prohibition, and the legislators had a problem: they didn't want the hotel maids picking up a load of empty bottles. Frequently my phone would ring at 2:00 A.M. or 3:00 A.M. and some big-shot politician would bring in three or four dead soldiers and deposit them in my wastebasket.

A cousin of President Harding's, who was lobbyist for the rubber industry, would sometimes bring in a full bottle late at night which we drank while we discussed Prohibition. He believed firmly in the Volstead Act, and I did not. I remember a long argument on the day after President Harding died. He thought that the ceremony in which Calvin Coolidge was administered the Presidential oath of office by his father in an isolated New England home was on a par with Washington crossing the Delaware or Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. He was furious at me because I was unimpressed. Although I was a staunch Republican, had voted for Hughes and Harding and was yet to vote for Coolidge and Hoover, I had vague feelings of uneasiness over the low caliber of most political big shots. I also was beginning to experience dissatisfaction with the obvious inequalities and injustices of our social structure. While it didn't occur to me to look anywhere

but within the Republican party for correction, I just didn't like the look of things. This obvious Tory who thought the status quo was great rubbed me the wrong way. But he was a fine drinking companion.

The Ku Klux Klan was very powerful in Ohio then. In the previous Republican primaries a Klan-backed candidate whom I remember only as "Joe" almost won the nomination for governor, losing by a whisker. Winning would have meant little because the Democratic candidate, Vic Danahey, was unbeatable. Danahey served several terms, even though Ohio went overwhelmingly Republican for the Presidency. The Klan, however, controlled a considerable bloc of votes in both houses of the State Legislature, and this Joe was supposed to be their leader.

My bridge-playing pals used to tell me how Joe worried about me, because he couldn't figure where I fit in. He finally decided that I was either a private detective watching him for his estranged wife or else a secret agent spying on him for the Imperial Wizard of the Klan.

One night, after the bridge games had broken up, Joe showed up with a briefcase full of bottles. It was soon apparent to me that he was determined to get me drunk. He was pouring two for me to each drink he took. I knew that if he kept that up, I would put him under the table. He kept drinking and I had to put him to bed, but before he lost consciousness he remarked, "Harry, if you and me can get together, we'll run this goddam state as it's never been run before."

In late 1926 I went to work for duPont. Some years earlier as a by-product of its gunpowder processing, the company's chemists had developed the Duco finish for automobiles. DuPont saw the product's possibilities if sold directly to the consumer and, as a consequence,

moved into the paint business. With some of its profits from the First World War, duPont purchased many paint companies. Eventually it became one of the largest companies in the paint industry, second only to Sherwin-Williams.

I moved into duPont as a sales supervisor to assist in the administration of the large sales force created by its rapid expansion into the paint field. They hired me to direct a group of salesmen in the Northwest. My territory stretched from Wisconsin clear across to the Pacific Ocean. I reported for work in Chicago to the Midwest head, Bernie Wilson. As I was in the first group of "outsiders" hired, there was no plan yet in effect for training me. Bernie suggested that I start by spending the morning in the paint factory, meet him for lunch, and we'd play it by ear from then on.

When we met at noon, he asked, "What did you learn today?"

I answered, "Nothing." He looked at me in surprise, and I explained, "The man said, 'We put this in and mix it with that, and this comes out,' but frankly, I didn't know what the hell he was talking about. Knowledge of that kind comes awfully hard to me."

"How are you gonna learn the paint business, then?" he replied, impatiently.

I answered, "I've been thinking about that all morning, and I'll tell you how I can learn, easily and quickly. Give me a price book and a catalogue and a list to call on. Let me go out and sell. In the process I'll teach myself all I need to know, or find out what else I need to know and then will ask questions."

Bernie thought a minute, then said, "I like your idea, but it has one great drawback. While you're getting ex-

perience in the paint business, you might lose us some good accounts.”

I saw his point but replied immediately, “Isn’t there some place in America that’s virgin territory for duPont, a place where there is no business for me to ruin?”

He replied, “You’ve got something. Let’s go back to my office after lunch and look.” When we did, he pointed to a map of Wyoming without a pin or flag on it. “There’s your happy hunting ground,” he declared.

I took the train for Sheridan, Wyoming, that evening and arrived two days later. I was checking into the hotel, late in the afternoon, when I heard a big booming voice, “Harry Bannister! Where did you pop from?” I looked and it was an army medico whom I had known in France as Captain Soper. Now a colonel, he was in charge of a hospital outside Sheridan where they had a lot of World War I patients. In France, Soper and I had played cards together.

After a fast handshake and explanations, he said, “There’s a couple of fellows at the Elks who beat my ears off last night, but you and I can take them easy. What are you doing tonight?” I had nothing to do, so we went to dinner, played bridge until dawn, and I won about \$50. He was right.

When the game ended, one of our opponents drove me to my hotel where he was also staying. We stopped for something to eat on the way there. As we sat in the restaurant, he commented, “So you’re with duPont paint. That’s strange,” and he went on to explain. “My brother and I own a string of commissaries which sells just about everything to the isolated mines in this state. But we don’t sell paint. We have been talking about selling it, however, and we need some advice.” He suggested that the three of

us—he, his brother and myself—meet that afternoon and talk about the paint business.

After a few hours' sleep, we met for three hours. By the time I saw Colonel Soper for the evening's entertainment, which included bridge, I had an order for \$40,000 worth of duPont paint to be spread out in twenty locations.

I still wasn't home free. I sold colors we didn't make and sizes that didn't exist; I had mixed up the order completely. Still I wasn't going to let those fellows know it was my first order and that I actually knew nothing about paint. Nevertheless, there was no doubt that the order was genuine. To make my triumph even greater, they went to the bank to get a cashier's draft for the full amount because they didn't like to owe money.

So I played another night of bridge and won some more money. Then, after breakfast, we got the cashier's check and I called Bernie Wilson. I had trouble convincing him that I was neither drunk nor crazy, but finally I made it. He sent out his right-hand man, Bill Miller, to straighten out my order. Waiting for him, I played more bridge and won more money. When I was finally leaving town, Colonel Soper and his wife drove me to the station. Just before I got on the train, he remarked, "I've been talking to my maintenance engineer. The hospital needs a paint job. Here's a little order for you." It was for about \$1,000 worth of paint. That order alone would have more than paid for my first course in the paint business.

When I returned to Chicago, I found Bernie Wilson waiting for me, together with his boss from Wilmington, Delaware. They had a special assignment ready.

DuPont had an unusual problem in Nebraska. It had an exclusive and prosperous Duco distributor in Omaha, but had no paint business anywhere in the state. My mission

was to study the state without the Omaha distributor's knowledge in order to estimate whether we could develop sufficient business without him if we terminated relations. I was warned, however, that under no circumstances was I to do anything to lose us the Duco distributor prematurely. How I did this was up to me.

After considerable thought, I had some cards printed which read:

H. BANNISTER
NATIONAL SURVEYS, INC.
New York, N. Y.

I also had two hundred questionnaires printed, each containing about twenty questions, most of them a smoke screen for the two or three payoff questions such as "Are you satisfied with your present paint line?" and "What is your annual volume?"

My story was that my company, "National Surveys, Inc.," had been hired by the Paint and Varnish Makers Association to make a comprehensive survey of the industry in Nebraska. It hoped to increase the per-capita paint consumption from the present figure, one of the lowest in all the forty-eight states.

I went to Omaha, then to Lincoln, then to Hastings. Just about everywhere everyone answered my questions, but I had uncovered nothing worth while in either Omaha or Lincoln.

In Hastings there was a most unusual wholesale hardware company—named Dutton, as I recall—whose large force of salesmen covered not only all of Nebraska, including Omaha, but also portions of surrounding states. I went to see Mr. Dutton and told him my story, and he answered me fully and frankly. It was late in the after-

noon, and he asked, "How'd you like a drink?" So he poured a couple and then he said, "You've asked me a lot of questions, some of them pretty personal, I might say even impertinent, and you must admit that I pulled no punches. I gave you full and complete answers. I did this deliberately because now I've got some questions to ask you, and I expect the same frankness from you that you've had from me."

I said, "Go ahead. Shoot." I discovered that he and his managers had been talking about going into the paint business. And as a matter of fact, he had in his desk a proffered contract from one of the big paint companies; he told me all about his business, his sales force, their methods, and so on. Finally he asked, "Knowing all this, and knowing what you know about paint, if you were me, what line of paint would you take on?"

There it was. I backed away immediately, saying, "Look, Mr. Dutton, I told you my company works for *all* the paint manufacturers. I can't answer a question like yours. No, sir!"

Followed a real cute game of cat and mouse as he persisted verbally, and I got coyer and coyer. Finally after about four drinks, which apparently loosened my tongue, I let him drag some information out of me. I said, "Insiders have been watching one company with admiration and respect," and when he pushed and pushed, I finally named duPont.

He was delighted, and told me he had been much taken with duPont advertising. Then he said, "Could you have someone from duPont come to see me?" And I told him that while this was highly irregular, I would take care of it. He asked me to dinner, but I begged off on grounds of catching the last train to Omaha.

Again Bill Miller came out, and of course it was like

shooting fish in a barrel. The Dutton Company made a fine duPont distributor.

I did a lot of troubleshooting for duPont paint in the next few years, but increasingly I ran into difficulty over organizational restraints, the filing of endless reports, and the need to conform. I found myself growing more and more unhappy with my daily routine and my mode of life. The duPont company was a splendid and progressive employer but, naturally enough, one that expected constant top-notch performance. I was a maverick, unsuited to the corporate harness and incapable of long remaining an “organization” man, in any organization—including even duPont. It was a feeling difficult to define, but looking back on it later, I think it stemmed from a vague disquiet over what life demanded of me, plus a sense of impatience. Desperately, I wanted to raise my head up above the mob. Yet, at the same time, I was intolerant of restraint, especially by those I regarded as my intellectual inferiors.

In 1929 I reached the end with duPont and was again out of a job. I went through a number of so-so jobs and then, as the Great Depression spread its pall over American life, I was in real trouble.

For the first time, I faced up to the fact that maybe it wasn't the world that was at fault, but that my difficulties were the result of my own shortcomings. It took a while to penetrate, but eventually the light dawned. I vowed to myself that on my next break, which I was certain would come sooner or later, I would never again flag or waver.

Eventually I drifted back into drugs and pharmaceuticals, and then an idle encounter in a low pool hall opened a new gateway to hope. When I came to WWJ on January 2, 1931, oddly enough, everything appeared to jell. All

my past blunders suddenly seemed to be of great value, a factory of error out of which I could forge a successful life's work. Every time I had senselessly knocked my head against a stone wall, every time something had happened to me, good or bad, some extra little bit of knowledge had penetrated my skull and been filed away for future use. Now that future was upon me. For one thing, I could earn my living without shutting my eyes to many things I didn't like to do. For another, I saw in WWJ an instrument for practical altruism, a symbol of capitalism at its best, an organization that earned substantial profits while benefiting millions of people. Almost from the first day I had a feeling of sureness and of purpose, a sense of belonging which I had never before known. In a world in which most men seldom get a second chance, in which I had wasted opening after opening, broadcasting gave me still one more opportunity. Lucky me!

SPONSORS

● IN 1932, on the ballot for the fall election in Detroit, there was a proposal to authorize a bond issue for the purpose of raising money with which to build a pipeline to northern Michigan, where natural gas had supposedly been discovered. This issue was promoted by Councilman Johnny Smith, who spent most of his adult life as either councilman or mayor, his main campaign issue always being opposition to the public utilities.

Political announcements were highly desirable, because in those days all broadcasters doubled their commercial rates for them. It was their theory that speeches and announcements devoted to politics caused listeners to tune in elsewhere. Consequently the station was entitled to extra compensation to make up for this loss of audience.

So I scouted around to find the owners of this natural gas field in northern Michigan and learned that their headquarters were in Saginaw. I had very little money to spare, but this looked as if it might pay off. I went to Saginaw, spent two days and \$50 of my money, only to draw an absolute blank. The promoters of natural gas were just promoters and nothing else. They had no money, no credit, and it was even doubtful that they had any natural gas.

On the train ride back to Detroit, I was sick at heart over my wild-goose chase. That night I was so worried I couldn't sleep. Most of all, I tried to figure out how I could extract some good from the \$50 I had tossed down the drain. I kept thinking of a remark attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte that "the difference between victory and defeat is the use which one makes of the situation at hand." What would Napoleon have done to convert this defeat into victory? For hours I pondered the problem. When I finally got the answer I turned over and went peacefully to sleep.

In the morning I went to see William Woolfolk, president of the Detroit City Gas Company, the company which stood to lose most if natural gas did come to Detroit. I told him about my trip to Saginaw and my discovery that there was little or nothing there. I said, "I know it, and I'm sure you know it, but the voters don't know it. If you try to tell them that there is no natural gas to be had, they won't believe you, in the face of what Johnny Smith keeps telling them. But I've got a plan."

In the City Council, the chief opponent of Johnny Smith was a Dr. Phillip A. Callahan. Anything that Smith was for would immediately draw opposition from Callahan. My plan was for Woolfolk to buy three 15-minute periods weekly for the four weeks before election, and put on Dr. Callahan to speak against the natural gas proposal. Callahan, I was sure, would do this for two reasons: (1) he would relish the publicity; (2) he would do it to beat Smith.

Woolfolk immediately went for it in a big way. "Why limit this to WWJ?" he said. "Let's put it on WWJ, WJR and WXYZ. You set it up and act as my agent."

In those early days, FCC rules about identifying political broadcasts were pretty loose, and the gas company

was never involved. It was Callahan versus Smith. The proposal for natural gas was decisively defeated, and Woolfolk gave me much of the credit. In fact, he offered me a job, which I declined, but I more than got back my \$50 in earned commissions.

1931 and 1932 were lean years. I just about managed to eat. But I felt that I was building something that would pay off sooner or later. I never worked harder in my life, nor more enthusiastically. Sometimes I would make twenty or more calls on a client or advertising agency, at intervals of two or three weeks, before I developed any interest. I threw the book at them, using every trick I had learned in my eleven years of knockabout selling.

Early radio sponsors were haphazard, especially on the local level, where the buying of radio advertising was impulsive, unsystematic and usually personal. Radio time was often bought because the boss or the advertising manager "liked" a show or the star or the announcer. Conversely, chances to buy were turned down because somebody didn't "like" something connected with the program.

Many established concerns were suspicious of radio advertising. They regarded it as undignified and unworthy of identification with a reputable company. Often the owner of a business or his officials would refuse to even talk to me. I called on many potential advertisers for months before I got the opportunity to make my first pitch. It is very difficult for people now in broadcasting to appreciate how hard it was to sell radio in the early 1930s before the medium had won a legitimate place in the advertising picture.

As is frequently the case with innovations, the use of radio advertising started at the lower levels of business

and worked its way up. Consequently the medium was faced simultaneously with the problem of proving itself and the task of upgrading its clientele.

Early announcement copy was pretty low-grade. The hard sell, repetition and blatancy were standard. Advertisers vied with one another to draw attention to their messages. Sirens, gongs, even pistol shots frequently introduced announcements. I had gotten used to this at both WMBC and WJR, but WWJ would have none of it. The rule was that all announcement copy was delivered in normal reading style, without extraneous sound effects, and if the copy was too repetitive, it had to be changed or cut. This made for good listening and it also made selling much more difficult. Yet I liked it. I would rather put in the extra effort in making a sale, even lose a sale now and then, but retain my pride in my employer and my own self-respect.

A serious handicap in selling radio was the lack of funds. Most businesses had advertising budgets with so much allocated to newspapers, billboards, direct-by-mail, etc., but not one in a hundred allotted money for radio. When I did make a sale, the question inevitably arose: "Where can I get the money to pay for this?" It would end up usually in the very thing Jeff Webb warned me about: the prospective radio time buyer robbed Peter to pay Paul. He took the money out of existing allocations, frequently from his largest single budget, the appropriation for newspapers. But I always refused to be drawn into such decisions, never forgetting Jeff's warning that I would lose my job, pronto, if as the result of my efforts there was any loss of newspaper advertising.

Despite the low caliber of radio announcement advertising, it produced results, sometimes exceptional ones.

Many a business owed its success to the use of radio announcements. Inevitably, as more and better businessmen became announcement users, the quality went up. A contributing factor was the growth and development of local advertising agencies. Almost as soon as a business decided to use radio, it found a need for an advertising agency. Prior to 1930 only a few of the larger Detroit concerns had dealings with agencies. By 1932 or 1933 almost every business of any size had an advertising agency. As a rule, this improved announcement advertising. At least, it insured better grammar and syntax.

In my first few weeks I had quickly learned that WWJ's standards were real. Despite a meager income that could have been augmented by a little shading here and there, Jeff Webb never compromised. It was most painful to me, needing money so badly, to bring in an order and have Jeff turn it down, but I soon learned not to test the taboos. I remember especially one sale which would have netted me about \$40 weekly for a series of religious recordings by Jehovah's Witnesses. I had never heard of them and thought it was just easy picking. Jeff turned it down cold without even a playback. I thought he was being a bigot until, some days later, I heard this record on another station. Then I realized how right he had been. It was nothing more than a series of abusive statements about other faiths. Definitely not for WWJ.

Then in early 1933 came the closing of the banks, which found me with exactly six dollars in my pocket. The next few weeks were the toughest of my life, but they were eased a little by a few of my retailing friends who took in some cash daily and who now and then slipped me five or ten dollars.

On the evening of the day when the banks closed, the

police commissioner of Detroit went on the air over WWJ. He exhorted the populace to remain calm and not to dive off tall buildings or slit their throats just because all of their money was locked up in closed banks. He made a most solemn and dramatic plea for normalcy, ending on a high note of "Faith, Hope and the Red Badge of Courage." When he finished, the engineer in Master Control nonchalantly cut from Studio A, where the commissioner had worked, to the Announce Booth, and the echoes of the stirring pleas were still reverberating, when out of the Announce Booth emerged the dulcet tones of the announcer on duty: "Need money? The Regal Finance Company offers immediate service on loans by your own signature." The show must go on!

After the banks reopened in the late spring of 1933, activity suddenly spurted. My own individual business shot up even more spectacularly than the general level, and my commissions zoomed. For more than two years my weekly commissions never had exceeded \$75 and sometimes had dropped below \$30. Now they rapidly climbed to \$200, then \$300 and sometimes \$400 or over. For 1933 this was the wealth of Croesus.

That summer Jeff Webb offered to make me sales manager, at a reasonably good salary but one below my weekly commissions. I pointed out to Jeff that I had taken quite a beating for over two years and that I was really entitled to a little more gravy before being cut back. He agreed, and said nothing more about it, although he was under constant pressure from the nickel-and-dime boys. Voluntarily I reduced my rate of commission on many accounts, but still the money rolled in. All the hard work that I had done in plowing up the ground, in many places, now began to yield plentiful fruits. Where formerly I felt encour-

aged to get one new account each week, now I was getting two and three daily, some of them involving more money than my total weekly business had been a few months earlier.

I knew this could not go on, delightful as it was after the long lean Depression years, so early in 1934 I called a halt and told Jeff that I was ready for the sales manager-ship if he still wanted me. He did, and so ended one of the most satisfactory periods of my life, when after some three years of constant discouragement despite my intensive effort, finally I hit the jackpot to the point of making more money for a while than anyone else in the entire organization.

When business began picking up, I quickly discovered that I needed lots of show ideas. Advertisers whose first radio ventures consisted of announcements soon wanted something more. The normal progression was from announcements to five-minute shows, then to quarter hours and sometimes to half hours. Five- and ten-minute shows were hard to put together; there is not too much in the way of programming that can be done in that time. There was little precedent to guide me, and there was no one on our small staff who combined program knowledge with an understanding of advertising and merchandising requirements. So I was driven to be my own planning board. I used to talk to the announcers and actors and encourage them to dream up show ideas. They were not too productive, so I got little help at any time beyond what I could cull out of the trade papers.

I also did a lot of writing, again driven by necessity. I sold Ty Tyson in several daily sports shows and each carried a fee for writing. I had originally tried to get people in the sports department of the *News* to do the writing,

but when they turned up their noses at the thought of writing for that inferior medium, radio, I went ahead and wrote the shows myself. Most of my writing had to be done at night or on weekends. For almost ten years I was in the station daily, Sundays and holidays included, without respite, except when business called me out of town, and then I had to put in extra hours in advance to cover the shows for the days when I would be away. Never before had I worked this hard, and never before had I been as content.

Because I needed much special information for the sports writing, very early I began haunting the *News* sports department, searching through the record books. H. G. Salsinger was sports editor and chief writer. Harry LeDuc was executive head of the large department, which used about a dozen reporters, each a specialist in one or more forms of sport. The first time I came into the department, LeDuc almost chewed off my head. He was a little guy and extremely bumptious. My six-feet-plus must have annoyed him, because he sure let me have it. Most of the others took their cue from LeDuc, and I was *persona non grata*. But I kept coming and smiling and bowing and scraping, and, little by little, I wore them down. Eventually they all became my pals. They were really nice guys who, naturally, resented a strange bloke from radio barging in on them.

After I became sales manager, Jeff Webb leaned heavily on me to run the station. His health was failing rapidly, and in less than a year he died, to my profound grief. Few men I have met had my respect, admiration and affection to the degree that Jeff had. My feeling for him might have originated because he had confidence and trust in me when I was severely shaken by the Depression, but it

persisted after I had day-to-day dealings with him for several years, and had ample opportunity to evaluate him under many circumstances.

As WWJ's business kept growing, we kept increasing the rates charged to advertisers for programs and announcements. Every time rates were increased, several old advertisers would drop off the station, but immediately their places would be taken by new accounts. Usually those that dropped off were local accounts, and as a rule their replacements would be national accounts. In broadcasting parlance, a "national" account is one which advertises throughout the country by using local stations, as distinguished from those national advertisers who use the networks and hence are classified as "network" advertisers.

In time this process shifted the weight of our dependence on local business. Prior to 1935, over one-half our revenue came from local advertisers. The network supplied about 20 per cent and national advertisers gave us about 25 per cent of our total revenue.

Later a new pattern evolved so that each of the three categories—network, local and national—yielded about one-third of our revenue. This pattern continued until TV came along.

Because of our increased dependence on national business, most of which was placed in New York and Chicago, I found myself spending more and more time in those cities. Also, I went to other places where national advertising originated, such as Cincinnati for Procter & Gamble, Louisville for Brown & Williamson, Minneapolis for General Mills, Battle Creek for Kellogg's, etc.

Industry affairs involved me more and more, causing still more travel. Having had my fill of travel as a sales-

man, I had cherished my freedom from dependence on railroads and hotels. Now I was heading back to the road, and it was not pleasant. However, one incident had amusing consequences. A trip to Chicago resulted in the following exchange:

PALMER HOUSE
Chicago

September 1, 1937

Mr. Harry Bannister
Detroit News
Detroit, Michigan

Dear Mr. Bannister:

Upon making the customary room inspection immediately after a guest's departure, our housekeeper advises that two brown woolen blankets, replacement value of \$8.00 each, were missing from the room you occupied.

May we respectfully ask that when unpacking your luggage should this article be noted, we will appreciate it if you will return same at once. Guests frequently, we find, in their haste inadvertently place such items in their effects and, of course, return same when discovered.

Allow us also to emphasize our appreciation of your patronage and we trust we may have the distinct pleasure of serving you often in the future.

Yours very truly,
L. E. KAFFER
Assistant General Manager

LEK:LM

To which I replied as follows:

September 7, 1937

My dear Mr. Kaffer:

I am desolated to learn, after reading your very tactful let-

ter of September 1, that you actually have guests at your hostelry who are so absent-minded as to check out and include such slight tokens of your esteem as wool blankets (replacement value of \$8.00 each) when repacking the other necktie and the soiled shirt.

By the same token, I suppose that passengers on some of our leading railroads are apt to carry off a locomotive or a few hundred feet of rails when disembarking from the choo-choo on reaching their destinations. Or a visitor to a big city zoo might conceivably take away an elephant or a rhinoceros, concealing same in a sack of peanuts—after removing the nuts (replacement value of \$0.05).

In this particular case, I may be of slight assistance to you in running down the recalcitrant blankets. It happens that when I checked in, I did so with the intention of remaining a week or so, which I actually did, and as I had a lot of baggage with me, I needed all the drawer space you so thoughtfully provide in each room. The blankets in question occupied the bottom drawer of the dresser, and I wanted to place some white shirts (replacement value of \$3.50 each) in that drawer, so I lifted said blankets and placed them on a chair. Later, the maid came in and I handed the blankets (same blankets and same replacement value) to her, telling her in nice gentlemanly language to get them the hell out of there.

If you'll take the trouble to count all the blankets in your esteemed establishment, you'll find that all are present or accounted for. At any rate, they should be—unless other absent-minded guests have been accommodated at your emporium in the meanwhile.

That's the best I can do.

Yours very truly,
HARRY BANNISTER

P.S. Have you counted your elevators lately?

Kaffer then wrote as follows:

PALMER HOUSE

Chicago

September 14, 1937

Dear Mr. Bannister:

I wish to thank you for one of the most delightful letters it has been my pleasure to read in my entire business career. It would take a radio executive to compose a letter that would cause Damon Runyon, Mark Hellinger, and a lot of writers radio might hire, to blush with futile envy. My sincere congratulations to you. Yes, Mr. Bannister, we do a lot of counting around here. I've counted the elevators—and they're right where they should be, and operating, every one of them. What I want to count now is more important to me. I want to continue counting you as a friend of the Palmer House.

You, in your executive capacity, must of necessity supervise countless counts of so-called "listening audiences," "program polls," and all the bothersome promotions that annoy countless people in the middle of their dinner, or get them out of bed on cold nights to answer telephone queries. I shall assume, therefore, that you have naturally realized that you were most unfortunately a victim of a machine-like routine that is made necessary by the very vastness of an organization so well operated as the Palmer House.

When your station representative annoys a family by telephoning and inquiring, "Is your radio turned on? If so, to what program are you listening?" a lot of people might get angry and never "tune in" WWJ again. I hope they don't, but it's a risk you must run. Likewise, our checkup system is a risk we must run, and I'll tell you why, Mr. Bannister.

There are a lot of folk in this merry world, as your Mr. Eddie Guest can tell you, that would, as you naively put it "carry off locomotives, hundreds of feet of rails, and pack away an elephant or a rhinoceros." Just put a few ash trays, towels, blankets, pillows, glassware and silverware in your public studios and reception rooms and see what happens. And, Mr. Bannis-

ter, you would be surprised at the “replacement value” of the “tokens of esteem” carried away by “absent-minded” members of the audience.

Twenty-five thousand dollars worth of silverware (actual auditors’ “replacement value”) is carried away annually by our “absent-minded” guests. A similar total (in replacement value) is cherished annually by sentimental guests who like our linens as a memento of their visit to the Palmer House. They even go religious on us and take along the Gideon Bibles to the number of several thousand yearly. Nothing is sacred, it would seem. I’ll wager many of your artists have been induced for “sentimental” reasons to leave your station; likewise, lots of “smash” program ideas; and perhaps (I really hope not), several cash-paying accounts may have been weaned away from WWJ by persons who wanted you not to forget their esteem for you and WWJ.

And so it goes. We are sorry, Mr. Bannister, that you were bothered as a result of a maid’s mistake. Her lapse of memory started a giant wheel of routine in motion. In time, therefore, a letter was laid on your desk. You answered it, and quite truthfully and very frankly, your reply was the only good thing about the entire mess. I am, in a way, happy the incident happened, because it gave me a chance to read your letter. It was a swell missive.

As the song says, and WWJ has no doubt played it “countless” times, “Let’s Call the Whole Thing Off.” And there’s another song you also use, “Can’t We Be Friends?”

Very sincerely yours,

L. E. KAFFER

Assistant General Manager

LEK:MRM

On my out-of-town trips to drum up WWJ business, I was frequently accompanied by our national representative, George P. Hollingbery. In both radio and televi-

sion, when advertisers or advertising agencies with offices in New York, Chicago, or any other place require information about a broadcasting station, they get in touch with the national representative of that station, a firm which usually has offices in all places where national advertising may originate, primarily, New York City and Chicago.

George Hollingbery performed this service for WWJ for almost twenty years. George, who had been born and raised in Kansas, came to Chicago seeking fame and fortune. He got a job selling advertising for the Hearst newspaper the *Chicago Herald & Examiner*, and in a few years was the local advertising manager. By 1934 he had saved up some \$10,000. One day he took his courage in his hands, quit his job and went into the business of representing radio stations. WREN, Lawrence, Kansas, was the first station to hire him; WWJ was the second. Today he is one of the giants of the business, representing some ninety stations in both radio and television, with annual billings in the multimillion class.

When he was still directing the local advertising salesmen, one time the *Herald & Examiner* decided to run a special butchers' page with a few news items pertaining to the butcher business, and a lot of butcher ads. Newspaper advertising salesmen usually worked in pairs. After a few weeks, Hollingbery noticed that the *Herald & Examiner's* large sales staff was selling very little butcher advertising, except for one pair, Tom Hart and his partner Bob Ellis, who were responsible for almost all the ads on the butchers' page. So like a good sales manager, Hollingbery called them in and said, "Look, our butcher page is a bust as far as most of our men are concerned, but you two guys are doing great. You've got almost the entire page sold

out. How do you do it?" The two heroes were embarrassed, and mumbled something about hard work, lucky breaks, etc. Hollingbery said, "Nuts! Come on, talk. Tell me what the magic formula is." When they continued to act coy, George said, "Okay, I'll have to see for myself. On what day of the week do you work the butchers?"

They told him, "Tuesday." So next Tuesday, George went with them. Their first call was on a little Polish butcher, Steve Scelzusi, on Chicago's South Side. All the way out, Hart and his sidekick tried to get rid of Hollingbery, but no dice. As they parked the car, Hart said, "Okay, George, you asked for this. You may not like what you see. But remember it's been keeping your goddam butcher page filled up, and no matter what you see, stay the hell out of it and leave us alone."

Ellis remained in the car, while Hart and George went in. "I'm Hart from the *Herald & Examiner*," and he went into his pitch. The butcher wanted no part of it, saying with perfect logic that he had only a small store with a limited clientele all living within a block or two of his store, so why buy a city-wide circulation of which 99 per cent was pure waste?

While they were talking, the door opened and Bob Ellis entered, carrying a cane. Nobody paid any attention to him, and he started tapping the wall and baseboard with his stick and muttering under his breath.

Then Ellis looked up and yelled, "Tom Hart, what the hell are you doing here?"

Hart responded, "Bob Ellis! Gee, it's good to see you."

Soon Ellis asked, "What are you doing for a living?"

"I'm with the *Herald & Examiner*, selling advertising. What about you?"

"Oh, I'm with the city building inspection. This town

has some awful buildings in it. Look at this.” He tapped the wall with his stick. “This will have to be condemned. It’s a real menace to public safety.” He walked rapidly around the store, poking his stick here and there, and shaking his head.

The other three watched him silently, with the butcher wearing a most worried look.

Then Hart spoke up. “Look, Bob, Scelzuski here is only a little guy, but he’s got a wife and kids, and this meat business is all he knows; if you condemn this joint, he’ll be flat. Do you have to report this? Can’t you just forget you’ve ever been here? Give the guy a break!”

Ellis looked at Hart, then at Scelzuski, then back to Hart. “Well, it’s so good to see you after all these years, that for you I’ll do it. Give my love to the old gang if you see them. So long.” And he went out.

Naturally, Hart got an order for the butchers’ page, but that was the last such page. Hollingbery killed the whole thing.

When WWJ was struggling along on a minimum of commercial business, it never cut prices. Sales were made according to the rate card or not at all. The total amount of business was so small then that it didn’t make much difference, but after I became sales manager and volume began to increase, we were often offered unusually large chunks of revenue providing we would give some special inducement, over and above the regular discounts. Repeatedly I turned down these “deals.”

Real fast talkers used to occasionally come out from New York, preceded by advance fanfare, such as a letter two weeks before, another letter a few days before and a telegram or long-distance call the day before, specifying the time of his nibs’s advent in our benighted city. In the

meantime I was supposed to practice genuflection. Then he would arrive, enter and immediately attempt to overpower me by grandiloquently unfolding what he had planned for the nation, for Detroit, for WWJ and for me, ending up with, "Now, what can you do for me?" Sometimes they were incredulous when I told them we never made a sale excepting as per the rate card. Invariably they left, either in indignation at my presumption or shaking their heads in disbelief.

Outside of the professional "deal" boys, we lost little or no business because of our firm policy. As a matter of fact, reputable advertisers prefer to do business on this basis, as then they know, for sure, that no competitor will ever get any advantage or special treatment. Both advertisers and agencies respect the station that prints a rate card and forever abides by it.

After six years as sales manager, I became general manager, which merely made it official that I was head man. By this time WWJ was a huge successful business, commanding the largest audience in Detroit, and rapidly gaining national recognition. Broadcasters came from everywhere to study our operation, and while attempts to emulate us were rare, all paid us honor and respect. It was a swell way to make a living.

As radio expanded and blossomed into a major advertising medium, there were a number of national advertising agencies which concentrated their efforts on programs and never made any recommendations to clients involving the use of radio announcements. These agencies developed into vociferous critics of announcements and constantly exerted pressure on the networks to stop the stations from running announcements around their programs. Traditionally, at the end of each nighttime half

hour the network stopped broadcasting long enough for each station to identify itself, and in these few seconds the station managed to also get in a chain break.

The term "chain break" sounds like Samson pulling apart links of steel, but in reality it was so named because it came as a break between two chain (network) programs. The weird announcement vocabulary also included "cowcatchers" and "hitchhikes." To illustrate, a company marketing three products—C-Weed Cigarettes, Sweet Timothy Smoking Mixture and El Whiffo Grande Cigars—would buy a program for C-Weed to run from 8:00 P.M. to 8:30 P.M. At 8:00 P.M. sharp would come the cowcatcher, an announcement for Sweet Timothy, followed by a fanfare, and then C-Weed was on the air, to run until the show signed off at 8:29 P.M. Then, still within the sponsor's time, would come the hitchhike for El Whiffo Grande. Finally, at 8:29:40 the sponsor was all through and the station would identify itself and sneak in a most profitable chain break before the next network show repeated the entire process.

Years later, when television sent radio into such a state of fragmentation that sponsors no longer bought time in solid blocks of 30 minutes or a full hour, there was no further need of cowcatchers and hitchhikes. They vanished, to be replaced by a new announcement jargon. There is the "billboard," which started out as a roll call of the program cast but now frequently lists the sponsor's products; the "trailer," which tells of goodies to come; the "I.D.," supposedly a quickie for station identification, which, however, also manages to get in a few seconds of commercial announcement; the "crawl," a tiresome catalogue at the end of a show which lists all who made real or imagined contributions to the program, down to the

third assistant carpenter's mate; and worst of all, the "piggyback," which like the amoeba splits in two: the advertiser buys an announcement presumably for one product, then divides the announcement into two parts, each for a different product.

Sometimes these "anti-announcement" agencies would buy an entire hour for a client who sold more than one product. They would devote the first half hour to one product, then switch in the second period to another program for a different product. When the order came through from the network, instead of being for two contiguous half hours, it was for the full hour with a proviso stating, "No break at the half-hour," thus attempting to deprive the station of a spot for a profitable chain break. This was a steady bone of contention between stations and networks, as the revenue loss to stations was too great to be borne silently. Constantly, the station's use of chain breaks was attacked as "overcommercialization," especially by the agencies which so strongly opposed announcement advertising.

To some extent I agreed with them. However, I knew, as apparently they did not, or else they chose to ignore the fact, that without revenue from announcements no radio station could flourish. In a very real sense the listener who in patient tolerance sat through even the most repetitive and annoying announcement was by that act making it possible for the station to bring him beautiful music, news, educational programs, and many other services. Since such programming is unable to support itself economically, its financial sustenance is mostly derived from the despised and abused announcement.

Yet there was merit in the criticism of announcements, per se. Especially, I felt that a sponsor had some reason on

his side when he complained that announcements fore and aft of his program diluted the impact of his sales message. I thought this over carefully for many months, and finally decided to try an experiment.

We took a three-hour block in the afternoon and cleared it of all announcements, leaving only solid programming, with no chain breaks, no cowcatchers, no trailers. Our loss of revenue was substantial, yet I attempted only a partial return of our loss by placing on this three-hour block a 25 per cent premium over the rate card. We made it a point to notify the heads of all advertising agencies about our policy, assuring them of positions for their clients' programs where they would not have to compete for listener attention with announcements.

We waited six months. During that period not a single program sale was made within this clean block. Time and again we were queried about available program time by the very agencies which had screamed so loudly about the announcement evil, but each time they shied away from the 25 per cent premium and bought time in other periods. After six months, and considerable loss, we gave up.

However, I became more and more concerned about the increasing trend toward overcommercialization in both radio programs and announcements. Widespread use of transcribed announcements and endless singing commercials seemed to me to have exacerbated the problem, bringing about more and more "hard sell," blatant, repetitive, irritating.

Along with this internal condition in radio, criticism of the medium within and without government circles was rising steadily. More and more I felt that a dramatic

move—that all broadcasters might hear—was needed in order to sound a warning about much tighter self-regulation. So, suddenly, without prior notice, we announced that WWJ would accept no more singing commercials or transcribed announcements, and that in the future all announcement copy would have to be “live,” delivered by our own announcers, in normal reading style, without extraneous attention-calling devices.

If the roof on WWJ had suddenly caved in, the resulting hubbub would have been nothing in comparison with the storm our announcement created in advertising circles. Even those agencies which dealt only with programs, and whose basic client interest would be served by a de-emphasis on announcements, decided that a declaration of independence by station management, such as WWJ's, struck at the vitals of the advertising structure, so they all lined up against us. In numerous telegrams, long-distance calls and statements in the trade press, I was condemned and ridiculed.

At that time the income from announcements was more than half our total revenue, and about 60 per cent of all announcement copy was transcribed. So if the advertising I was tossing off the air was not replaced by “live” copy, WWJ stood to incur devastating losses. Almost every important space buyer and many account executives threatened summary cancellations, perpetual boycott and eternal damnation. I refused to budge, telling all that they could take it or leave it, but if they wanted to deal with WWJ, it would have to be on our terms.

A few days after establishing this policy, I got a telephone call from an important Chicago advertising executive. He wanted to know if I would come and speak at the monthly luncheon of the Chicago Management Club,

made up largely of advertising people, and explain my stand on singing commercials and transcribed announcements. I said, "Sure."

An hour later George Hollingbery called and said, "You must be out of your mind. These guys are laying for you. They're going to murder you. Call them and say you've got to go to the hospital. Tell them anything, but don't come out here next week or you'll be in real trouble."

I said, "Nuts to you, don't worry, I'll be there and we'll both survive."

I kept my date and told my story, built up around the fact that I was trying to save free enterprise and our broadcasting system from censorship or outright government operation.

I warned them that they would have to work much harder at self-regulation or run the risk of destroying our system by severe compulsory regulation. Finally I asked that both advertisers and agencies cooperate in this endeavor, because my objective was the improvement and salvation of a democratic system, *not* its replacement by inefficient bureaucracy.

When I finished, there was no applause. Neither was there the barrage of criticism that some had expected. A few men came up and shook my hand and commended me. Two weeks later I repeated the performance before a similar group in New York. The reaction was the same as in Chicago.

Oddly enough, after the first few weeks the shock to advertisers had worn off, and they got accustomed to submitting "live" copy instead of transcriptions. Total business on WWJ, instead of going down, went right on climbing higher and higher, despite repeated rate increases which eventually made our advertising charges the high-

est in the country for a 5,000-watt station. For years advertisers waited in line to broadcast on the station. The line never seemed to slacken, because our audience domination never diminished. Our on-the-air product was so good that advertisers who sought Detroit acceptance for their wares or services just could not afford to ignore WWJ.

There were no complaints from advertisers about the sales effectiveness of "live" copy, as against the former transcriptions. To my sorrow, however, I was forced to note that our example failed to spread. More and more, Detroit radio thundered with transcribed "hard sell" and jangled with jingles. WWJ was an oasis of calm in a pandemonium of clatter, but we were all alone, not only in Detroit but practically in the nation.

I was a hero to Detroiters. My mail and telephone gushed with congratulations. People I had never seen before would stop me on the street to call down benisons on my head. All this might have bothered me, were it not for its accompaniment of ever-increasing business. As it was, I enjoyed it.

A constant bone of contention between agency people and me was the extent of WWJ coverage. Like all stations, we had engineering maps which showed by a heavy line just how far a listenable WWJ signal extended in all directions, including over Lake Erie, where presumably the lake trout and whitefish tuned us in on finny antennas. Almost every station I knew claimed everything in sight. If, by some atmospheric or stratospheric phenomenon, a station signal penetrated into some dark cave where a lone hermit bunked and the station got an inkling of it, up went the coverage claim. Knowing this, I early decided to take the opposite tack and to consistently and flagrantly understate our coverage.

An agency man in my office, map in hand, would ask, "How far out does WWJ really cover?"

Without any reference to the map, I would answer, "Draw a circle 40 miles around where you're sitting, and you've got it."

He would look at me in amazement and say, "You're crazy. I drove in here from Chicago yesterday, and I started getting WWJ here," and he would point to a town about 100 miles away. "Then here, and here and here"—pointing to places 70, 60, 50 miles off—"all highly satisfactory."

I would wave my hand airily and say, "You may call that coverage, but I don't. Anyway, I refuse to have my coverage inflated by your optimism. Forty miles is what I got and 40 miles is what I sell. Anything over that is bonus. You're welcome to it."

In a world of unabashed claim agents, I was Mr. Caspar Milquetoast himself. Naturally enough, after that, no statement I made about WWJ was ever doubted. Sometimes a hard-boiled advertiser or agency man would buy a program over the telephone, without hearing or knowing anything about it other than my assurance that it was worth while. In such cases they made it clear that my recommendation was the reason for their action. That was how I wanted it.

We had a disc jockey who handled a late show from one of the better-known night spots. He did a good job, but his lack of judgment eventually caused trouble. A *cause célèbre* at the time involved an accordion player, Dick Contino, who had skyrocketed to prominence while very young, but who, when drafted for the army, ran for the hills. Of course Contino was caught and did a stretch in prison. On the night that he was released, our disc jockey took it upon himself to play a Contino record. He intro-

duced it by eulogizing Contino, implying that he had been persecuted. He also absolved him of his sins and welcomed him back into society. The Korean War was on, in full swing, and I could just hear thousands of fathers and mothers and sisters and brothers and uncles and aunts and friends and neighbors of all men in uniform gritting their teeth and swearing. Apparently it never occurred to this chap that while he was on the air, he was the voice of WWJ, and to countless thousands the disc jockey's words were not his own but those of the station. He was setting station policy, which he just had no right to do on his own. I decided it was too dangerous to permit this chap further access to our microphones, unedited and unchaperoned.

A few nights later I was viciously attacked in New York by another disc jockey doing a similar show from a night spot. He labeled me a Hitler, a dictator and worse. Also he raised the issue of free speech and censorship.

All performers in broadcasting who play records and augment the recordings with their own commentary, and all who conduct interviews, will on occasion get into situations similar to that of this disc jockey. The only reason a performer brings a guest to his show, either in person or by recording, is that he hopes to improve and bolster his program. He thinks only of his own popularity and continued prosperity. The public interest means nothing to him. The best interest of broadcasting and the welfare of the station mean nothing to him. He has a perfect right to do this, but when in pursuit of his own aggrandizement he impinges on other interests and gets pulled up short, he inevitably screams "Censorship!" The press is always in his corner because it makes juicy copy.

Actually, censorship is rarely involved in such mat-

ters. What is involved is a whole chain of values and forces about which the performer is either unaware or knows little or nothing. There is first the provision in the station license to “operate in the public interest,” a very real injunction, with accountability required at every renewal of the license. The “public interest” has never been defined, leaving wide latitude in interpretation, but—and this is the heart of the matter—it is the licensee and only the licensee who must show that his operation has been “in the public interest.” What a disc jockey or a comedian or a newscaster or a newspaper reporter may think is or is not in the public interest has no weight. The licensee alone is responsible; he must stand or fall by his own interpretation and his efforts to live up to his concept.

Sometimes national foreign policy is involved. A visitor to the United States may be *persona non grata*, and as has happened, the State Department may ask broadcasters not to give opportunities for propaganda to such a visitor. Station management, aware of its responsibilities, will back up the government, but there are always some performers who are more interested in the notoriety and extra audience attracted by sensationalism than they are in what is good for the country.

Station policy aimed at maximum community service may be flouted by some interviews. The performer is ignorant of the many facets of community life in which the station is involved. He chooses his guests only on the basis of what is good for his show. He is avid to step outside his purview, for his own advantage. Yet if he is checked or stopped, he yells “Censorship!” He, and all who yell with him, fail to take into account that any time any program on a station schedule can build extra au-

diences, that is very good for the station, just as much so as for the performer. Only a compelling reason will cause management to forgo an opportunity for greater audiences. This is elementary, yet in most cases it seems to be unrealized. Almost every program is surrounded by influences and pressures that no one can know much about except top management. Yet everyone, and most of all performers and press, wants to make vital program decisions which actually they are not qualified to make.

One of Detroit's principal retail establishments bears the prosaic name of Sams, Inc. It has quite a history. Some forty years ago, Sam Osnos opened a cut-price cigar and tobacco store on the shoddy fringe of the downtown shopping area. Right from the start it prospered, and soon it began adding work clothes and other lines, all appealing to the masses rather than the classes. Sam had three sons, one of whom, named Max, was a merchandising prodigy. As Max's influence increased, the business grew and grew until it reached some \$35 million yearly, all cash-and-carry, no charge accounts, no deliveries, the most profitable and desirable type of retail business to own, but one that appealed to only the most price-conscious shoppers.

About the mid-1930s, Sams discovered radio advertising and began using the small 100-watt stations with transcribed announcements, loud, insistent, repetitive hard-sell copy. One day assistant sales manager Harold Priestley came into my office and asked, "Would you take Sams on WWJ?"

I replied without hesitation, "Hell, no!"

Some weeks later he came in again and asked, "Would you take Sams if they used live copy and allowed us to edit it?"

I thought a moment and said, "Yes, if you personally will supervise the editing." So Sams got on WWJ.

Many months later Priestley came in again and triumphantly announced that Sams would sponsor a program, in addition to their announcement schedule. Some time later Priestley came in again and said the “boys” over at Sams wanted to come and see me. A few days later they arrived en masse.

Jack Kellman, who as I later learned did most of the talking in that organization, opened the discussion. “Mr. Bannister, we came over here to find out from you what you think of our program on WWJ, and how we might improve it.”

I looked around the room and five pairs of eyes were fixed on me. So I, looking directly at Max Osnos, said, “As long as you ask me, I think your program stinks, and nothing can be done to improve it.”

Five chins hit the floor, and then Max looked up and there was anger in his face. “What the hell is wrong with it?”

I said, “I’ll tell you. But first stop being mad. Remember, you asked me a direct question. If you expected anything else except a direct answer, you’re in the wrong office, and you might as well stop wasting your time and mine.”

His face softened into a smile. “Of course, you’re right. Please go on.”

So I went on, “When I said ‘it stinks,’ I mean not just your program but your entire concept of WWJ’s use to you. You’ve been spending a lot of money on my station for almost two years, and in my opinion your money has been wasted—gone down the drain. You people have forgotten more than we here will ever know about how to sell five-dollar items for three-sixty-nine, or one-dollar items for seventy-nine cents, or twenty-five-cent items for nineteen cents, and as far as I’ve been able to ascertain, that’s

all you've been using WWJ for. And your program quality is geared to that same purpose. Contrariwise, you have failed utterly to understand the function that WWJ can fulfill for you better than any other vehicle. It can endow your business with respectability and upgrade your clientele so that my wife or your wife's friends will shop there. I'm sure that they don't do it now. It looks to me as if you've about reached your limit in the field of appeal which has made you big. If you want to grow even bigger, you must broaden your field, and upgrade. That's what WWJ can do for you, something you haven't yet touched. Furthermore, if I were you and were spending the kind of money you've been spending, I'd plan to spend even more—much more. I'd quit fooling around with this low-grade stuff you've been buying and instead I'd sponsor only the best—the very best programs procurable. Go up to Ann Arbor and get a professor of political science and put him on the air discussing world affairs. Sponsor the University of Michigan football schedule. Sponsor a symphony orchestra. That's what you should be doing!"

There was dead silence for a long minute. Then Max arose and smilingly said, "Harold Priestley told us that if we could get you to talk, we might learn something. Mr. Bannister, you've given me much more than I expected, and it's plenty of food for thought." So they left.

A few months later they started sponsorship of Professor Preston W. Slosson of the University of Michigan, who had helped Woodrow Wilson at Versailles and done many special assignments for the State Department. That fall they bought the University of Michigan football schedule, and two years later they started a five-year-sponsorship of the 100-piece Detroit Symphony Orchestra for one hour, every Sunday night, with known conductors

as guests, and with no commercials of any kind. Just a plea to buy war bonds. This was clearly the most ambitious, most expensive, most cultural single program to ever be scheduled on any single radio station. It was on a par with the best network shows, yet confined solely to Detroit.

After Sams began sponsoring the symphony orchestra, I used to make periodic trips to New York to engage conductors. One booking agency, which operated under two names, had under contract most of the top-notch conductors in America. Arthur Judson and Columbia Concerts were both run by Bruno Zirato, a big bluff hearty extrovert who once had been Toscanini's manager and who spoke rapidly in the kind of English used by comedians burlesquing an Italian accent. The only important conductors not in Zirato's stable were Toscanini, Koussevitzky and Bruno Walter. He had about all the others. We hit it off famously and soon he was calling me "Aarree" while I called him "Bruno." He had a long printed list of conductors, and I went down the line saying, "I'll take Erich Leinsdorf for three, Reginald Stewart for two, George Szell for three, Pierre Monteux for three, Eugene Ormandy for three," etc.

When I got all through, Bruno said, "But, Aarree, you haff leave out two biggest young genius in American music."

"Who?" I asked.

He pointed to the names of Leonard Bernstein and William Steinberg.

"No," I said, "my people are not too hep about the newest stuff in music. I want only big names."

He shook his head sadly and said, "You make beeg mistake."

When I got back to Detroit, I read in my Sunday *New*

York Times that Leonard Bernstein had conducted at Lewisohn Stadium and had drawn rave reviews. I decided that if I was wrong on one, I'd probably be wrong on both, so I called Zirato and said, "Bruno, I've been thinking it over and I decided that you know so much more than I do about conductors, I should really be grateful for your advice. So I'll take Bernstein for three and Steinberg for two."

He said, "Aarree, you verry, verry smart man."

After the symphony got going, I was constantly importuned by friends and boosters of every potential and budding conductor in Detroit and environs to give their favorite musician a shot at the symphony. I steadily refused all such requests. I took the position that this program was big enough and good enough to attract the best, and that it would employ only conductors of renown whose reputations were already made, rather than be used as a stepping-stone to fame and fortune by someone looking for a reputation. I lost some friends and even made some enemies, but that was my stand, and I never budged.

Never—well, hardly ever! One time Max Osnos came to me, somewhat embarrassed, and explained that on behalf of some national philanthropy in which he was involved, he had just put the arm on Julius Rosenwald, then head of Sears Roebuck, for a large contribution, and after kicking in, Rosenwald put the arm on Max, on behalf of a relative, Efrem Kurtz, a conductor I had never heard of. He wanted to know if Kurtz could be included in the list of conductors on the symphony program. Max had promised to take care of it. Under the circumstances, I didn't even argue the point with Max, but left

it that on our next trip to New York we would go to see Kurtz, which we did in a few weeks.

He lived in a ritzy suite in the Waldorf Towers. The door was opened by a man in a smoking jacket. I stuck out my hand and said, "Mr. Kurtz, I'm Harry Bannister." It turned out I had shaken hands with the butler. Somehow the story got around Detroit, and for months I was asked, "Have you met any new butlers lately?"

About a year later Jack Kellman came over to see me and told me another sad story about a relative. This time it was Max Osnos who had a sister, married to a cello player who had ambitions to be a conductor. I immediately interrupted to read Jack a long lecture on the evils of nepotism and how we were going to compromise our excellence if we started to deviate from the high standard I had enforced. He heard me out, with a long face, then sadly told me that he agreed with every word and had himself said the same thing to Max months earlier when the sister first started agitating. He and Max had been fighting this battle for some time, and finally he had come to me because Max's life was being made miserable. . . . So the cello player got his chance to wield a baton over a major orchestra. He was fairly good.

I was in Chicago for a meeting in early 1946, and sat in the hotel dining room having breakfast when I walked Fred Gamble, the personable president of the American Association of Advertising Agencies. He sat down at my table, and naturally we talked shop; somewhere along the line he either said something or else asked a question which made me pop off on the subject of advertising agencies. When I got through, he said, "Our annual meeting in New York in April includes an important ses-

sion of the executive council, which is the *crème de la crème* of the advertising agency business. Would you consider telling them what you just told me?" I said that I would, and I did.

Sig Larmon, chairman of the board of Young & Rubicam, in introducing me, said, "Harry, I understand you've got some strong stuff to hit us with. I want to assure you that no matter what you say, there'll be no cancellations for WWJ."

This is what I told them:

"Broadcasters say that advertising agency people lack a sense of public responsibility. Too many agency people think that sponsored programs are designed only to sell something, period. Broadcasters with a sizable stake in radio worry constantly about regulation, about agitation against overcommercialization, about the threat of government operation. Broadcasters feel that most agency men are no help in these respects, that agency people minimize these fears and worries not because they think the fears are unfounded, but simply because they recognize in the state of mind engendered by these fears a barrier to full exploitation of their broadcasting ventures.

"Broadcasters feel that the average agency man would much rather make his account, his job, of today, secure for tomorrow than to worry over or even to consider the fact that day after tomorrow the entire edifice may be in danger of collapse.

"Broadcasters resent the patronizing attitude of many agency people. The Manhattanite, swinging around the country for his client, is apt to feel that he brings a breath of Broadway to Podunk. But the guy who runs the Podunk station may well be much more of a cosmopolite than the transplanted farmer boy who left Kansas a few

years ago to seek fame and fortune on the Main Stem. Too many New Yorkers try too hard to impress the lads in the sticks with a superiority that smacks of omnipotence, and, of course, all they get is the raspberry.”

There was more of the same; then they let me have it, and I counterpunched. Altogether a delightful fracas, with lots of give-and-take. Maybe it did some good.

There has always existed a certain amount of distrust between advertising agency people and broadcasters, each group seeing shortcomings, real or imaginary, in the other, and ignoring the same in its own. There are men without standards in both groups and also men of the highest principle. The advertising business, by its nature, attracts brilliance, as it requires intelligence, imagination and talents of a high order. Sometimes men with such attributes are apt to overlook moral or ethical considerations. Yet in their ranks I have encountered character and integrity far beyond the picture of advertising presented by writers who actually know little about it.

Many years ago one of the top men at N. W. Ayer & Son was in Canada on a fishing trip. There, for the first time, he encountered Canada Dry ginger ale, then unknown in the States. He was so taken by it that he brought back a supply for his colleagues to sample, and as an up-shot N. W. Ayer proposed to the Canada Dry management that its output be expanded, and distributed in the United States. It was a small company, doing a modest volume. While its management was flattered by the show of interest from a big American advertising agency, they begged off on the conservatively sound ground that they lacked the required capital for expansion, so—no, thanks!

The managers of the Ayer agency were so sure that they were right that some of them personally offered to

finance the needed growth, and so Canada Dry ginger ale crossed the border. It was an instantaneous success and, guided by N. W. Ayer, went on to grow and prosper as the years rolled by.

Eventually came Prohibition, and after that disastrous era repeal followed. With the return to sanity, there was a rush to get into what was sure to be a lucrative liquor business. Canada Dry, by now solidly established in the States, decided that its distributing organization would be ideal for whiskey, so they bought a distillery.

A dreadful problem was now posed for N. W. Ayer & Son. Running through the agency was a traditional Puritanical strain and a strong aversion to the liquor traffic. In the struggle of business interest against the corporate and individual pull of conscience, Ayer eventually concluded that rather than forsake principle and go into the liquor business, they would give up the account.

While I have always disagreed with the judgment exercised in this case, I have nothing but admiration and honor for any business conducted and governed by such uncompromising principles. I have been fortunate in knowing many such in the field of advertising.

When one thinks about the practicalities involved, it must be this way. Advertising agency people act as top-level advisers to American business, and in the climate of our economic system, all muckrakers to the contrary, most businessmen discovered years ago that truth and honesty in both manufacture and advertising are essential ingredients of a successful business venture.

There are slickers and sharpies everywhere, including big business, but by and large, the bigger the business, the greater is its stake in continued existence and growth. The heads of such a business don't have to be too bright to

figure out that it will cost much more in time, effort and money to rebuild a shattered reputation than it ever will cost to maintain it pure and unsullied.

The same type of occupational incompatibility which exhibits itself between agency people and broadcasters also pops out between the same agency people and clients. Just as broadcast station people feel frustrated by agency viewpoints, clients frequently drive their advertising counselors to distraction.

There is an old story which, though obviously apocryphal, is in its application generic and timeless. One of my newscasters, Lee Smits, told it to me years ago.

A famous advertising agency decided to make a pitch for the account of a big successful company. For months the marketing specialists went out into the field and studied dealer reactions, press relations, consumer acceptance, etc. Meanwhile specialists were studying the product itself—packaging, color, shape, size, etc. Then the analysts took over and dissected, bisected and trisected all findings before collating them. Then it went to the chart and graph boys who after much study figured out how to tell the story pictorially. When all was ready, they invited Mr. Big with his right bower and his left bower to the lush client's room, seated them in extra-comfy chairs, with thick yielding carpets underfoot, suffused in low, glowing, sympathetic lighting, while the senior partner—the magical pitchman—made the presentation, previously rehearsed for countless hours before a mirror.

He gave his all for ninety minutes, now rising to carefully graduated crescendos, now descending to intimate, revealing, whispered sibilation. He had a beautiful resonant delivery, with a change of pace which Sandy Koufax

might envy, now staccato-sharp, now spaced and measured in its lyric cadences.

His peroration ended, he stopped, and silence reigned in the room as all eyes turned on Mr. Big. He, impassive as Buddha, sat unconcerned, chewing his unlighted cigar, which with tantalizing slowness he shifted from the extreme right corner of his mouth to the far left; then, finally, he spoke. His words were decisive. "Yeah, there's one thing you boys can do for us. Get us a good slo-ginn."

BY-LINERS

● THE DETROIT *News*, like *The New York Times*, covers a lot of news, maintains a huge reportorial staff and boasts that no matter what kind of story may break, there is someone on the *News* staff qualified by experience to handle it. Also, like the *Times*, it avoids outside columnists and sensationalism. Editorial policy never invades the news columns, which, to an unusual degree, are objective and impartial. A great deal of classified and display advertising is carried regularly from which the Detroit *News* makes much more money than the *Times*.

Many men who later attained fame have passed through the Detroit *News* organization—Clarence Budington Kelland was a *News* reporter; General S. L. A. Marshall, the War Department historian for World War II, was on the Detroit *News* staff for many years before the war and is still there. Some of its writers have been syndicated, but many refused syndication because, as Harry Salsinger, sports editor and baseball writer, once told me, “The way it is now, I write as I please. If I had a syndicated column, I’d have to worry about pleasing a lot of publishers and editors and a variety of readers. That would cramp my style.”

The *News* political cartoonist, Burt Thomas, repeatedly turned down syndication for substantially the same reason. Sterling Bowen, who had a lot to do with the early history of the *Wall Street Journal*, came from the *Detroit News*. Paragrapher Harry Wade, the creator of "Senator Soaper Says," once a widely used syndicated feature, spent most of his life on the *News*, eventually becoming its editor.

In the years of the Coolidge administration, the Washington correspondent of the *Detroit News* was Jay Hayden, whose son Martin is now editor of the *News*. A contemporary of Hayden's on the Washington beat was the *Kansas City Star's* Roy Roberts, later president and publisher of the *Star*. One day Hayden and Roberts went together to interview Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce. They spent an hour or more with him and adjourned to a speakeasy to digest what they had picked up. Somewhere along the line, one or the other said—and neither one today is sure which—"This Hoover is a terrific guy. He ought to be the next President of the United States." The sentiment was immediately echoed, and right then and there began a campaign to win the Presidency for Hoover. They started by making Hoover privy to their plan, and he, needless to say, approved. Then these two energetic young reporters began working on their confreres on the Washington beat, with the result that the American people suddenly began reading a lot of pieces emanating from Washington, singing the praises of Herbert Hoover. That was the start of the process by which Herbert Hoover came to be President. He has acknowledged the debt to both Hayden and Roberts.

In the early 1930s, while Hayden was the senior Washington correspondent for the *News*, a younger man

named Blair Moody came along to help him. Moody had worked a local beat in Detroit, and after reaching Washington he quickly developed a reputation as an unusual reporter. He was of medium height and build, gray-eyed, with a shock of coarse black hair and a countenance which changed expression with every change of mood. His speech was blunt, decisive and somewhat didactic without, however, being offensive. The same words from others might have been cause for resentment, but Blair Moody's personal charm softened any displeasure produced by his words. He and Hayden seldom saw eye to eye, Hayden being conservatively Republican and Moody leaning strongly to the left-of-center democracy of Franklin Roosevelt. Between the two, the *Detroit News* got complete coverage of the Washington scene.

When the 1936 political campaign for the Presidency was under way, with Franklin Roosevelt running for a second term against Alf Landon, the *Detroit News*, as was its wont, gave both candidates an even break in its news pages and editorially.

About a month before election, Jay Hayden made a sudden trip to Detroit to persuade the editor, Doc Gilmore, and the publisher, W. E. Scripps, that Landon was going to win. He urged an open endorsement of Landon. Moody heard about this and immediately flew to Detroit to ask for continued neutrality, predicting that Roosevelt would murder Landon in the election. Moody's viewpoint prevailed. As it turned out, Landon carried only two states and gave Jim Farley the opportunity for his classic quip "As Maine goes, so goes Vermont."

Moody and I had been friends when he was still in Detroit. This feeling ripened and continued until his death. In mid-1935 I went to Washington to see him and sug-

gested that he start a weekly radio program to be called "Meet Your Congress." It was to feature either two or four senators or congressmen, or both, equally divided between the two major parties. They would discuss pending or suggested legislation. Each program would originate in Washington and be carried "live" over a leased line, to WWJ.

Programs of this kind have become common, but as far as I know, that was the first show on the air of this nature, and it became famous, politically and among broadcasters. Most of the leaders of both houses of Congress from 1935 on appeared on "Meet Your Congress," and Moody was finally shipping recordings of this program all over America. The fact that what a senator or congressman had to say would be heard by his own constituents over stations in his own community was Moody's chief gimmick in lining up talent.

"Meet Your Congress" made such a name for Moody back home in Michigan that he eventually became a United States Senator himself. He made no bones about his debt to radio, because had it not been for his program, he probably would never have reached the Senate. On a campaign tour of northern Michigan, seeking election, he met an unexpected death. His loss was a marked one to many, and certainly to me personally, despite the fact that politically he and I usually differed.

The Detroit *News* has a cafeteria where just about everybody in the organization eats lunch, one of the few company restaurants I know where the president and the office boy eat together. For many years I sat at a table with cartoonist Burt Thomas, columnist H. C. L. Jackson, financial editor George Hassett, feature editor Walter Longley, feature writer Russell Gore, travel editor—later war correspondent and brigadier general—S. L. A. Mar-

shall, horse race expert George Krehbiel. Occasionally others joined, but these were the regulars who were there almost every day.

Newspapermen are a clannish bunch, especially within their own organization. As a rule, there is a sharp line between “editorial” and “business”—usually imposed by the editorial people, who seldom have any truck with the vulgar commercial side of the newspaper. Even among the elite minds at whose luncheon table I sat, much of the cross talk consisted of digs and jeers at the poor slobs on the business side, their most recent gaucheries, their fractured syntax and other linguistic atrocities as revealed in current interoffice memoranda. Acceptance of me was a gradual process, interesting to observe.

It started by my blunderingly putting down my luncheon tray at the sacred table, because at that moment it was the only vacant spot in a crowded dining room. While everyone was cordial enough, I could see that my uninvited presence puzzled them. I aroused somewhat the same reaction that a Kalahari Bushman might encounter on meeting a group of Harvard anthropologists. They included me in the conversation in a rather sly manner. The talk flowed with apparent naturalness, but every now and then an opening was deliberately aimed at me. My ear told me it was a trap into which I was expected to tumble, thus providing some material for their future delight. So whenever I was offered an obvious chance to contribute, I contented myself with one or two brief comments, just enough to prove that I could pronounce small words. While I was somewhat awed by my proximity to men whose names appeared daily in the paper, and who were known throughout the community, I tried to carry it off with nonchalance. It gave me no end of in-

ner satisfaction to note that they found me at least partly as fascinating as I did them, though for different reasons. I left before wearing out my welcome, and H. C. L. Jackson, tall, gracious and friendly as befitted a man who wrote a daily column titled "Listening In on Detroit," said, "Nice of you to join us. Do it again." The next day, as I turned away from the food counter with my loaded tray, Jackson was motioning me to a seat. From then on, I was in. It wasn't exactly reciprocal, as I received much more than I gave. From my luncheon companions I got a complete education about the *Detroit News*, its lines of command, its mores and taboos, and about journalism in general. From me they learned a little about radio. Yet I noticed as time went on that, much more than radio, what they wanted to hear from me was reminiscences of my traveling-man days. Time and again I would be asked to repeat a story already told several times. That part of my life was another world to them.

Because our table was a focal point, most of the upper editorial echelon sat with us at one time or another. I got to know many men whom I would otherwise never have encountered. Over the years it turned out to be most valuable, as frequently I would dig into this reservoir of talent for WWJ programming. Also, on the editorial staff of the *Detroit News* I formed most of my friendships of the next twenty-odd years.

The *News* editorial staff was so big that for every man I met at our table there were two or three who never sat with us. Many I came to know in other ways, but there were some with whom I never got beyond a nodding acquaintance. In fact, when I left WWJ in 1952, there were still a few members of the *News* staff whose proud boast it was that they had never set foot in "that goddam radio

building.” With them, another hundred years would have made no difference. They were the troglodytes, who acted as if there were no such thing as radio and, later on, stubbornly refused to buy a television set while living in a forest of antennas.

Despite my status, first as salesman, then sales manager, and finally general manager of WWJ, my luncheon pals came to regard me as “editorial” rather than “business.” I think this stemmed from first, their recognition of the fact that on a radio station the line between “business” and “editorial” is not nearly as sharp as on a newspaper, and second, that despite my obvious business training and background, my attitude toward radio was largely editorial. While I worked hard at selling, my chief interest gradually became programming. Once I attained the decision-making level, I concentrated on trying to put the best-possible programs on the air, worrying about their sale after and not before the planning of the program, and never permitting salability to influence program structure.

Because of my dual role I became to my friends on the Detroit *News* staff both a confidant, as one of them, and a mentor, due to my status in the world of business. During luncheon we would laugh together at the most recent *faux pas* of some big shot in the business office; then later on one of my tablemates might come to my office with a problem, personal or business, on which he was flattering enough to seek my advice and counsel.

Over the years I got to know a considerable segment of the editorial staff somewhat as a psychiatrist might. It was in many ways a new experience for me. After years of association with salesmen and businessmen who were too intent on moneymaking to relax with intellectual pursuits

and too busy getting ahead to permit cultivation of any thirst for theoretical knowledge, it was sheer joy to know people who treasured learning above all else.

At first they impressed me as superior beings from another world. Little by little I discovered not only that they had hands and feet just like mine but that quite often their feet were of clay.

There is a sort of law of compensation at work here. The hard-driving ambitious businessman slights or neglects his cultural and intellectual development as he chases with single-minded determination the elusive chimeras of success. In the process he sheds or wards off a lot of decency, gentleness and kindred human qualities. Meanwhile, the studious, introverted writing man withdraws from the hurly-burly of life to observe and chronicle the passing scene. In the process he often becomes petty, spiteful, envious and captious, to an incredible degree.

The businessman usually wears his crassness and vulgarity out in the open for all to see, because he either doesn't know how to conceal them or is so sure of himself that he doesn't bother. Whatever good qualities he has become apparent only after a lot of digging and mining. The writer, however, reveals publicly his better side only. His erudition, literary ability and high-mindedness are discernible in most of what he writes. One has to dig and mine to find the man behind, and often the revelation is disappointing.

All this and much more I learned in over twenty years of daily life under two hats, as a businessman and as an intimate of much of the *Detroit News* editorial staff. I enjoyed and cherished the friendships, but when, as often happened, my friends appeared on WWJ programs, and

I had to regard them through official eyes, they were often a strain and a trial, and took a lot of handling, though the result was frequently well worth the cost.

If I developed a special pal at the luncheon table, it was feature writer Russell Gore, who seemed to take a shine to me. Gore, in his youth, had worked in Chicago with Charles McArthur and Ben Hecht, then spent most of his adult life on the *News*. He was slight of build, almost cadaverous, and looked as if a strong breath would blow him over. Yet he would take off on the darnedest assignments, enduring all sorts of discomfort, and come back looking no better and no worse. I remember his return from a long trip abroad in the course of which he interviewed, among others, the Pope, Joachim von Ribbentrop—then riding high as Nazi Foreign Minister—and finally the Emperor of Japan, one of the few prewar occasions when a Western newspaperman was accorded such an honor. His most interesting report was about Ribbentrop, who it seems was quite frank with Gore and said, “You know we Germans have always been behind Western Europe, never quite able to catch up. We were outside the influence of the Roman culture, and this got us off to a bad start. By comparison with our neighbors, we’re still savages.”

Gore, like most writers, was somewhat of a procrastinator and was often quite a trial to his boss, Walter Longley, feature editor. At lunch one day, following a period of several weeks when Gore had written nothing for the paper, he blandly stated to the table in general, “It’s hard for me, right now, to even think of eating. My brain is buzzing with ideas. I’ve got three swell stories running through my mind.”

Longley looked up from his plate, regarded Gore

steadily for ten seconds, then mildly and softly said, "Yeah? Please write *one*."

Walt Longley was always soft-spoken, mild-mannered, and retiring, but he ran an excellent Sunday feature section. His life at home was dominated by Mrs. Longley, who made all the decisions. She told Walter what to wear, where to go, etc., and he seemed to like it. But one year in the very early 1930s, a strange thing happened in the Longley household, which was ultimately recounted to us in dribs and drabs over a period of months.

Normally Mrs. Longley would start talking about summer vacation plans as early as January, and by the time Walt's vacation rolled around in June or July, every second and every foot of the way had been carefully planned in advance. Mrs. Longley always did the planning. But this year Longley refused to talk about it. Every time his wife brought up the matter, Walter changed the subject or else clammed up. This had never before happened, and something warned her not to press the matter. The result was that when his vacation started in the middle of June, she didn't have the faintest idea of where they were going or what they were going to do. On the morning when his vacation started, Walter took his shiny new car out of the garage, parked it in the driveway and began stowing suitcases. Mrs. Longley had asked him what to put in her suitcase but he gave her only general answers which contained no clues. Finally they had the car loaded, and took off with Mrs. Longley still in total ignorance. They crossed the Detroit River, drove across Canada to New York State and then turned north to the lake region. For the first time, Mrs. Longley got a glimmer of their destination. Longley had been born and raised in the northwestern corner of New York State, and she thought to herself, "How cute.

He's going home to visit his folks and it's a surprise to them and me." So he drove on for several hours and finally came to the little town where he was born; but Walter never stopped. He went right by the street on which his father and mother still lived. Outside the town about a mile away, he climbed a very long and steep hill. When he got to the top, he stopped the car, turned to Mrs. Longley, smiled a big broad smile and said, "There! Ever since we decided to buy this car, I've wondered whether it would take this hill in high gear. I just had to know. Now, Mrs. Longley, where would you like to go on your vacation?"

On the mezzanine of the News Building there was a small cubbyhole, "the critics' den," where movie critic Harold Heffernan, drama critic Russell McLaughlin, and book reviewer Clyde Beck were quartered. The room had one desk and two chairs. If all three occupants were ever there simultaneously, one had to stand up. On December 24, 1933, at about 5:00 P.M., Heffernan and McLaughlin were seated when Clyde Beck came in. As he hung up his coat and hat, he noticed many gaily wrapped packages lying about.

"What's the occasion? Is it somebody's birthday?" he asked.

They both looked at him unbelievably and said nothing.

"What's the big idea?" he said, somewhat indignantly. "What are all the packages for?"

Heffernan was first to realize that maybe Clyde Beck really didn't know that Christmas Eve was upon him. "Don't you know what day this is?"

"No," answered Clyde. Then suddenly it dawned on

him. "Hell, tomorrow is Christmas, isn't it?" He looked frantically at his watch. It was now almost 5:30. He grabbed his hat and coat and started out the door, but returned in a minute. "My God, I've only got six dollars! You guys got any money?"

Those were dark Depression days. Both Heffernan and McLaughlin had already finished their shopping, but between them they managed to wring out about ten dollars. And that is how Clyde Beck went Christmas shopping for his wife and two daughters.

Malcolm Bingay had been managing editor of the *Detroit News* before my time. Then he moved to the *Free Press* as editorial director, a post he held until his death. He was perhaps the best newspaperman Detroit has ever produced, yet much of his reputation within the profession rested on a by-product. In 1934 Detroit was in a dither over its first pennant-winning ball club in a quarter century, causing each of the three newspapers to greatly amplify its baseball coverage. Bingay created a character known as "Iffy the Dopester." Iffy was a combination of one of Snow White's Seven Dwarfs, Father Time and Nostradamus. A sketch of Iffy appeared on the masthead of a sprightly column which ran daily on the editorial page. Writing in the argot of the professional diamond, Iffy commented on current doings, reminisced philosophically about bygone days, interpreted dreams and pierced the fog of the future with intimations of things to come. To the hackneyed trade of reporting the national pastime Iffy introduced imagination and enchantment.

Like most top-notch reporters, Bing loved alcohol, and from middle life on, his drinking developed a periodic cycle. He would stay cold sober for a month or two, then

go on a binge for a week. In the late 1920s he got a telephone call one day from Dr. Adolph Studer, then executive secretary of the YMCA. Studer wanted Bing to be the speaker at a luncheon which would kick off the establishment of a Detroit chapter of the National Council of Catholics, Jews and Protestants, later known as the National Conference of Christians and Jews, an organization which has functioned well in fostering religious tolerance. Bing accepted, but on the day of the luncheon he happened to be right in the midst of a swell toot. Nevertheless, he had not forgotten. However, because the invitation had come through the YMCA, Bing got his locations confused and instead of showing up at the Book-Cadillac Hotel, where the luncheon was being held, he appeared, somewhat late, at the central YMCA.

He weaved his way across the lobby and said to the young man behind the desk, "Whersh this luncheon?"

"What luncheon?" asked the clerk, somewhat haughtily.

In rather thick accents Bing explained, "You know, this luncheon for Jews, Baptists, Holy Rollers, Romans, you know. Love thy brother. Where ish it?"

Haughtier than ever, the clerk said, "I don't know what you're talking about, and besides, you're drunk. I wish you'd leave."

Followed an indignant denial from Bing, and after ten or fifteen minutes Bing walked over to a telephone booth and called his secretary. She was not at her desk. It took some time for him to learn that the luncheon was half a mile away at the Book-Cadillac. Bing decided to walk, feeling the fresh air would do him good.

Meanwhile at the lunch the time had passed when the speaker should have risen to his feet. Somebody was man-

fully trying to fill the gap and keep the diners from walking out, when suddenly Bing appeared. He slowly shuffled to the microphone, and after a quick introduction he took over, somewhat improved by his walk in the fresh air. "My apologies for being so late. But I have been unnecessarily delayed by the freshest young man I've ever known, at the YMCA, and I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that in my opinion, next to the Roman Catholic Church, the YMCA is the biggest racket on earth."

If he could only have worked in the Jews, his score would have been perfect. Thus religious tolerance was launched in Detroit. It speaks much for the high regard in which Bing was held and for the forbearance toward his weakness that his outburst left not even the slightest scar. To some lesser man the result could have been ruinous.

S. L. A. Marshall was travel editor of the *Detroit News* before World War II, a post for which he was well suited since he had spent most of his early years floating from one job to another all over America. In the First World War, he had done a stint as instructor at the infantry school at La Valbonne, some 20 kilometers outside Lyons in southeast France. Just as he left, I came to the school as a candidate for a commission. This we both learned as we rehashed the war at lunch in the *News* cafeteria. We also learned that both of us had a keen interest in history and owned extensive libraries of military books.

Occasionally we met in the cafeteria for an early morning cup of coffee and would spend an hour fighting over the First Battle of the Marne or Château-Thierry. Sometimes he would pop into my office during the day for more of the same. Russell McLauchlin, the drama critic, was

also a walking encyclopedia of military history, and sometimes he joined us. While McLaughlin and I put up a good battle, Marshall was usually the winner.

When the Germans marched into the Sudetenland in 1938, clearly foreshadowing larger events to come, I went to Doc Gilmore, editor of the *Detroit News*, and said, "Doc, now that the soldiers are moving, I'd like to have a military expert on WWJ who is all our very own, who can explain the movements of armies and fleets in simple language and can point out which are the danger areas that may be involved in war, etc."

Doc replied, "It's a fine idea, Harry, but who can you get to do such a job well?"

"You've got just the man for it, right on your staff, and he's not only a military shark but is also a good broadcaster. I'd love to have him—Sam Marshall."

"That's right," said Doc, "he is a kind of nut about military affairs. It's a good choice. Go ahead."

That's how S. L. A. Marshall got on the air, and he was an overnight sensation. While his voice was not melodious, it was staccato-sharp and incisive with excellent diction. His material was scholarly, yet easy to absorb, and though his manner was pontifical, it was warranted. He predicted all the shots with unerring accuracy. In those days, his was the voice of doom. Most of our people were not aware of the power of the German war machine nor of Hitler's grandiose scheme for world domination. Sam Marshall said the Munich Pact was a phony and would accomplish nothing, even as Chamberlain was proclaiming "peace in our time." Marshall accurately foretold that Germany would overrun Poland in a few weeks. Most Americans actually believed that Poland would hold out long enough for England and France to come to her

aid. He said that the British Navy could not stop Germany from grabbing Norway and that the British Expeditionary Force in Norway was in an untenable position where it was certain to be destroyed or forced to withdraw. Everyone else thought differently. Marshall was right. In the light of subsequent events, Britain's venture into Norway looked amateurishly ill-conceived. Marshall then predicted that the Wehrmacht would overrun the Maginot Line whenever it decided to do so, and destroy the "incomparable" French Army. By that time S. L. A. Marshall was just about the hottest thing in town. He was doing three broadcasts weekly on WWJ, and, now relieved of his former chore as travel editor, he was writing a front-page feature piece daily for the paper.

Then Washington grabbed him, and eventually he got a general's star as one of the world's leading military writers. He has written numerous technical books and studies of all phases of modern war. He has been most generous in acknowledging my role, usually inscribing the books he sends me "To Harry Bannister who started me on my career of military criticism."

Rex White was one of the most imaginative writers who ever filed a story in the *Detroit News*, or anywhere else. His by-line on a piece was assurance of large readership. Sometimes, in the interest of high drama and suspense, he twisted a few facts, a not uncommon failing among writers, but nobody ever minded. He was so readable!

In the late 1920s, before I came to WWJ, Jeff Webb had taken White away from the paper and made him station continuity writer. He started doing a series of dramatizations called "Tales of a Reporter" which ran for years and enjoyed unusual popularity. But, in doing this

show, Rex almost drove Wynn Wright out of his mind. Wynn, the program manager, was responsible for putting the show on the air. He could never get Rex White to write a script far enough in advance to insure a smooth rehearsal. In fact, once or twice, Rex didn't finish his script until just before air time, and portions of the show went on cold, with no rehearsal at all. Poor Wynn died a thousand deaths, yet it always went off okay.

Rex White's sloppy ways carried over into the commercial side. Few clients or prospective clients had advertising agencies then. When I sold announcements, the client expected WWJ to furnish the copy. The first time I asked Rex to write me a 100-word announcement, he sat down at his typewriter and banged out a piece of copy that ran to 165 words. On WWJ, a 100-word announcement meant just that. Ty Tyson counted every word, and if the total came to 101 words, he would toss the copy back to me and tell me to cut it to 100 words. To cut 165 words down to 100 took longer than it would have taken me to write a new piece of copy. After that, I wrote my own.

Despite his careless ways, Rex White was a delightful chap, warm, witty, gay and convivial. He was anything but handsome and this bothered him a lot. Like many unattractive men, he lived in a world of fancy, peopled by beautiful women who constantly threw themselves at him. He always had a fund of remarkable amorous exploits which invariably ended in a boudoir or reasonable facsimile thereof.

He used to tell one yarn which, true or false, is worth repeating.

The *Detroit News* once ran a beauty contest, and the winner was used for much promotion and many public appearances. Rex was assigned to cover her activities. Both

ended up in her apartment and were in a state of undress when the downstairs bell rang. "My God," she cried, "my husband!" He was supposed to be out of town. They both jumped out of bed and dressed quickly. As a key turned in the door, Rex, bewildered and scared, just stood there while the door opened and friend husband walked in. But the girl had the hall closet door ajar; she grabbed an armful of coats and dresses and, piling them into White's arms, said, "This to be cleaned, this just press, and I must have this one back tomorrow."

Rex quickly picked up the cue, clutched the clothes, repeated the instructions, said "How do you do" to the husband and walked out.

Don Slutz, now managing director of the Traffic Safety Association, spent many years reporting city and state politics on the *News*. In his cub days, he was once given an assignment by city editor Art Hathaway to interview Joe Schmo, a correspondent in a sensational divorce suit. He got to the address, rang the bell, and when a great big brute of a man, rough and unkempt, came to the door, Don said, "I'm Don Slutz of the *News*," whereupon the big gorilla grabbed him and threw him ten feet to the sidewalk, then slammed the door. Don picked himself up, thought a moment, then walked to the back of the house and rang the kitchen doorbell. The door opened and it was the same big ape, who, without saying a word, grabbed Don and threw him down again. Don limped to the corner drugstore, went in, put a nickel in the telephone slot and called the city editor. "Mr. Hathaway, this is Slutz. I just tried to see Joe Schmo and he threw me ten feet from the front door, then I went around to the rear, and he threw me again from the back door." Uncon-

sciously a note of indignation crept into Slutz's voice, but it was quickly dispelled by Hathaway's nasal interruption, "Donald, have you tried the side door?"

George Krehbiel was racing editor of the *News* and a syndicated handicapper. He was an ex-marine officer who wrote with a flair and had a resonant voice. He did a weekly show for years on WWJ called "Tales of the Turf."

Perhaps the best one was the story of Black Gold, winner of the 1924 Kentucky Derby. Here is how he told it:

Long ago an aged Cherokee Indian named Hoots loved a horse with a love so strong it led to Hoots' disbarment from all racetracks. But his dying request eventually produced Black Gold, a thoroughbred possessed of great speed and even greater courage.

Early in the 1900s Hoots and his wife lived on a tiny farm they owned in their native Oklahoma. The land was poor, but the couple worked hard and managed to eke out a living.

Besides his farm, Hoots' only possession was a little thoroughbred mare named Useeit. Useeit was an extremely fast mare and Hoots often took her to county fairs in Oklahoma, there to race her against quarter horses on the half-mile tracks.

Proud of his mare and her accomplishments, Hoots finally decided to try racing her over one of the big recognized tracks, where, he was told, purses were much larger than the pitifully small ones he was winning at the fairs.

Hoots took Useeit to a mile track at Juarez, Mexico. He entered her in a cheap claiming race, not realizing that in a claiming race his horse could be taken from him by anyone who owned a horse at the track merely by paying the claiming price listed in the conditions of the race.

Useeit won that race, but another owner put a claim in for her. The Indian, knowing nothing about claiming rules, had

taken Useeit back to his barn, and when the claimant came after her, he refused to give her up.

The stewards sent for him, explained the rule, and told him he must surrender the mare to the claimant.

"She is my mare," Hoots replied. "I love her. I don't want to sell her, and I am not going to give her up."

The next day the stewards disbarred Hoots and Useeit.

Hoots and his beloved mare left the racetrack, never to be seen on a racecourse again. They went home to the dingy farm in Oklahoma.

After a few years the aged Indian became seriously ill. Realizing that he was dying, he called his wife to his bedside and made a last request.

"Take my little mare to Kentucky," he said. "Have her mated with one of those great stallions. I want her blood carried on so her foal will one day run in the Kentucky Derby. That has been my desire ever since I came to know my little Useeit."

His wife promised to try to fulfill his wish. A few days later, Hoots was dead.

Back in Kentucky, Colonel E. R. Bradley, at that time one of America's most successful throughbred breeders, heard of the strange request, which had been written up, and offered—without charge—a season to his great stallion, Black Toney, one of the most famous sires in the land. Bradley also offered to pay all expenses for the trip from Oklahoma.

So Useeit was sent to Kentucky and mated with Black Toney. A jet-black colt was the result.

Shortly after the colt was foaled, oil was discovered on the little Oklahoma farm, and Hoots' widow became wealthy almost overnight. Appropriately, she named the colt Black Gold because of the black wealth that was gushing from her land.

Black Gold, raised at Colonel Bradley's famed Idle Hour Farm, grew into a husky, fleet two-year-old. That was in the winter of 1923.

Then Mrs. Hoots took the colt to the Fair Grounds Racetrack in New Orleans. Black Gold started in a maiden race a few weeks later and won by five lengths.

A year later, now a three-year-old, Black Gold won the Louisiana Derby at New Orleans.

A great three-year-old named Chilhowee had developed that year, and Mrs. Hoots' friends advised her not to go to Kentucky with Black Gold because of the presence of Chilhowee.

"I promised my husband on his deathbed that if Useeit had a foal he would start in the Kentucky Derby," she said. "I intend to keep my promise."

So Black Gold went to Churchill Downs and won the Derby. The great Chilhowee was second. In third place was Beau Butler, owned by Colonel Bradley, the man who had befriended Mrs. Hoots when she was penniless and distraught.

There, in the winner's circle, with the traditional wreath of roses around his neck, stood Black Gold—his black coat gleaming from the sweat and the sun.

Beside him stood a little Indian woman, tears streaming down her cheeks. She turned to Colonel Bradley and said, "I know my husband saw this triumph, Colonel, and I thank you for him."

Four years later, Black Gold—then a seven-year-old—was back in New Orleans, preparing for a start in the New Orleans Handicap. Two weeks before the handicap, he was entered in a tune-up race.

Black Gold got off to a bad start and was shuffled to the rear of the field of struggling horses. As they neared the head of the homestretch, he began to run.

Through the field he pounded, passing one horse after another. The speed of Black Toney and the heart of Useeit were racing through the pack. Black Gold had reached third place when he was seen to falter suddenly and drop back as the others swept past him.

He had snapped a foreleg, just above the ankle. Only the heart of his little mother, Useeit, kept him going to the finish line, hobbling along on three legs.

A few minutes later, he was destroyed.

The next day Black Gold was buried in the infield at the Fair Grounds, just inside the rail at the point where the New Orleans

Handicap is started each year. A small marble shaft marks the resting place of one of the most courageous of thoroughbreds.

Each year when the winter racing season opens in New Orleans, thundering hoofs once again sound taps over Black Gold's grave.

One day at noon, in the *News* cafeteria, George Krehbiel passed up his usual place and sat at the same table with Sue Eyster and Dorothy Spicer, both attractive and bright. Sue was a secretary and Dottie did a woman's show on WWJ, and was an ardent horse race enthusiast.

What's more, she knew a lot about horses. There were then two seasons yearly at the Fair Grounds, each lasting about forty-five days. Dottie went out every day and was one of the few people I've known who consistently stayed ahead of the bangtails.

On this particular day both girls decided to accept Krehbiel's invitation to drive out with him. Naturally, they asked the great expert for some inside dope. George said, "I'll tell you what to do. When we arrive, I'll get a card and mark it for you. It won't be an exciting afternoon, but you should make a little money. Not much, but a little." He marked the card by selecting the most probable winner in each race, which the girls were to play to come in third. As he said, not exciting, but fairly sure.

There were seven races, and each of the girls decided to bet \$2 on every race, a total pot of \$28. After six races, by following Krehbiel's conservative plan, their stake of \$28 had grown to around \$45.

So the two beautifuls put their heads together and decided to blow the bundle on the seventh race. But when the horses paraded to the post, by a freak of circumstance, there were seven horses in the race. Six of them were of

varying shades of black, while one was light gray. The horse chosen for them by Krehbiel was one of the six black horses. The two heads went together again, and they decided that if they followed George's instructions, it would be very difficult to identify their horse among six black horses. Instead they selected the gray horse who stood out like a headlight. Furthermore, they decided that inasmuch as they were throwing away expert advice, they might as well go whole hog, so they played the gray horse, on the nose, to win, for all \$45.

Well, he turned out to be the longest-priced gee-gee in the race, and in a driving finish he won and paid about \$30 for a \$2 ticket, giving the girls some \$675 in all—the biggest winnings they had ever had. And to the day that George Krehbiel departed this earth, he would get red in the face if anyone reminded him of how by shrewd management he had nursed a \$28 stake into big dough for two dumb dolls.

Krehbiel came to Detroit from Cincinnati shortly after World War I. He married the daughter of John Robinson, co-owner of the Robinson Bros. Circus which sold out to Barnum & Bailey. When the sale was made, the Robinson family held out two elephants, born in captivity, both family pets, who were retired to a life of luxury and ease on the Robinson farm in Kentucky. One of them had been a special pet of Mrs. Krehbiel. When she was a small child on the circus lot, she would run away from her nurse and get under the elephant's belly, and nobody could touch her; there was always a warning trumpet from Jumbo, which plainly said, "Hands off."

Long after the Krehbiels came to Detroit, the Shrine Circus played the town, and on the way in, two of the elephants were hurt in a railroad accident. Circus men al-

ways know the whereabouts of all elephants. Someone remembered the two on Mrs. Robinson's farm, not too far from Detroit, so a telephone call arranged the temporary loan. Then Mrs. Krehbiel got a call from her mother, telling her that Jumbo, whom she hadn't seen in several years, would be in Detroit. Opening night, the Krehbiels sat in a box and pretty soon the elephant act came on, opening with the traditional daisy chain, which passed about 100 feet from the Krehbiels. When Jumbo came by, he suddenly stopped in his tracks, broke the chain, moved his trunk in circles, then took off at a trot, straight at Mrs. Krehbiel, pursued by trainers and circus attendants, and causing a near panic among the spectators. He stopped at the edge of the box and began running his trunk gently all over Mrs. Krehbiel's face and body, trumpeting softly all the while. When others realized that no one would be hurt, this became the best part of the show. Finally Mrs. Krehbiel had to leave her seat, take Jumbo by the trunk and lead him out of the arena so the circus could go on.

Krehbiel always owned one or two horses, and in a race at the Detroit Fairground which George was broadcasting, one of the entrants was his horse. He called the race, normally, until the horses rounded into the stretch, then suddenly as his own horse started to move up, he forgot he was a broadcaster and reverted to being a racing fan. "Come on, baby," he yelled, "come on, you little darling, one more jump and you've got it. Oh, you sweetheart." Then realizing what he had done, he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm terribly sorry I goofed this race. I don't know who came in second or who came in third. All I know is my horse won."

One day my telephone rang and it was George Krehbiel calling from Lexington, Kentucky. A famous yearly auction

of young horses was in progress, and there was one he had fallen in love with: of excellent lineage, big and strong, with an accumulation of all the good points treasured by lovers of horseflesh. George coveted this thoroughbred. He could be bought for \$1,200 (this was in 1936), and George thought that maybe Ty Tyson and I would come in with him for equal shares. So, holding George on the line, I called Ty on the intercom and he enthusiastically agreed. In my office at the time was Harry Betteridge, later general sales manager of WWJ. Getting the drift of the conversation, he hurriedly scribbled a note which he stuck under my nose saying, "I'd like to come in, too." I told George to buy the horse and that a check for \$900 would be in the mail immediately. George no sooner hung up the phone than a call came in for Betteridge from Chicago. It was George Hollingbery, who represented WWJ nationally. Harry told George about the horse, then turned to me and said, "He wants to talk to you." When I got on, he asked, "Can't I get in on this, too?"

So we formed a five-man syndicate and we named the horse "Lyner," a composite word made up of the last letter of each owner's name. "In the history of American thoroughbred racing," said Tyson, "Lyner is the only horse with a stable of owners." Later we all got enlarged pictures of Lyner with Eddie Arcaro up, in the first race he won, his fourth time out. As a two-year-old, he ran third the first time, then second twice, then won, and then got hurt. As a three-year-old he won his first race, then was claimed away from us. It cost us each \$100 monthly to keep him, the total of which amounted to more than his purses; but we got a million dollars' worth of conversation and fun out of it.

The Detroit *News* public letter box was run by Dennis Kennedy, familiarly known as "Dinty." He sat at our table frequently, and always brought along a tray holding soup, meat, apple pie and coffee. He would first eat the apple pie, then soup and finally the meat. This being highly unusual, we furtively watched him and sometimes talked about it when Dinty wasn't around. But one day H. C. L. Jackson could restrain himself no longer, and as Dinty started in on the apple pie, Jack said, "Dinty, everybody I know eats the pie last. How come you always eat it first?"

Dinty smiled and said, "Jack, that's a good question. It's this way. I have a small stomach, despite my big belly. I always have more food on my tray than I can eat, and most of all, I like apple pie. I want to be sure that if I leave anything, it won't be the pie. So I eat the pie first."

Every newspaper has to have a Dinty Kennedy to read the pile of daily letters received from readers and to winnow out the few that find their way into print. They're selected for timeliness, pertinence, style, and human interest. The public letter box of any newspaper is also a graveyard of lost causes. After every election, adherents of the winning party do little or no writing, but the losers cry copiously into their typewriters. The same thing happens when an important piece of legislation is passed or rejected. Always those on the minority side fill the public letter box. Rarely does a letter uphold the viewpoint of a majority. It's a great outlet for the frustrations of defeat.

Harry G. Salsinger was sometimes regarded by other sportswriters as on a par with Grantland Rice, Damon Runyan, Paul Gallico and the other greats of sports writing, but he preferred to write only for the Detroit *News*

and so never won national recognition. About his only venture outside the *News* was to ghostwrite a Ty Cobb autobiography in the 1930s. He turned out an immense number of words daily, all cogent, perceptive and interesting, with an intellectual quality that set him apart. His readership in Detroit was enormous. He steadily refused any suggestion that he go on the WWJ schedule, shunned all public appearances and violently disliked anything that smacked of self-promotion or publicity. Going to a ball game with him was like going with a mummy. He never said a word. When he wasn't covering sports, he was an omnivorous reader who collected rare books and first editions, a lover of good music, and all in all, a kind, gentle, shy man who spoke evil of no man.

Harry was of German extraction. Although Nazism and Teutonic chauvinism never obsessed him, he tried hard to find some good in the feeling of national pride, absent for so long, which Hitler's early years in power brought to Germans everywhere. Later on when the Nazi brutality became apparent, Salsinger was repelled. When he went to Berlin for the 1936 Olympics, however, he was trying hard to see only what he wanted to see. Already we were getting stories about concentration camps, anti-Semitism, Gestapo activities, etc., so I buttonholed him almost immediately on his return and asked him to tell me what was happening in Germany. He was full of praise and admiration. The Olympics had been conducted better than ever before. Everything went like clockwork. Seating arrangements, traffic control, hotel accommodations—all were perfect. Everywhere there was neatness, order, fairness, etc.

“What about the concentration camps and the persecution of minorities?” I asked.

“Nothing to it,” he replied. “I looked everywhere to see signs of discrimination or injustice and found nothing. It’s all propaganda. Don’t be fooled by it.”

Well, I was really shook up, because he was an experienced reporter in whose observations I had full faith, yet his report certainly didn’t jibe with others’.

By coincidence, at just about the same time, another *Detroit News* staffer came back after a trip abroad. He was Clifford Epstein, editorial writer and also an old friend whose ability, knowledge and objectivity I respected. He had been to the Near East, including an extra stay in the British mandate of Palestine and another in Egypt.

I promptly buttonholed him, too, to pick his brains. “What’s with the Jews and the Arabs?”

His answer lasted almost an hour, with many anecdotes and personal experiences, all meant to drive home his total conviction that the Jews and the Arabs got along like twin brothers. He suggested that if there was friction between them, it was the deliberate result of British machinations, and that if the British would just get out of Palestine and let the Jews run it, any difficulty with Arabs would immediately disappear. Subsequent events proved how wrong he was. He, too, shook me up.

Here were two professional observers, both intellectually honest, both truthful and decent, and yet both totally blind to reality, each seeing only what he wanted to see. Is that how history is written?

In 1929 Detroit had a mayor named Charley Bowles. After serving about one year of his four-year term, the voters recalled him on one of the rare occasions when the electorate exercised this proviso in the city charter. The re-

call was promoted chiefly by the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*, and I think both papers were surprised by the overwhelming victory they won at the polls. At any rate, they were unprepared, because once Bowles was recalled, another election to choose a successor for the remainder of his term was immediately necessary, but no candidates for the job had even been mentioned. Hurriedly the two papers got together and decided to support a little-known, rather colorless character named Engle. That brought the third newspaper, the Hearst-owned *Detroit Times*, into the act. The *Times* had pretty much stayed out of the recall campaign, but once the *News* and *Free Press* agreed on Engle, the *Times* sensed his weakness as a candidate. It looked around for someone to support, who could win, and chose an obscure county judge who turned out to be one of the great political glamour boys of his era, Frank Murphy. He easily beat Engle, then went on to be governor of Michigan, governor general of the Philippines, attorney general of the United States, and finally a Supreme Court justice.

In his campaign for mayor, he referred to his candidacy as bringing to Detroit "the dew and sunshine of a new morn," and the voters ate it up.

Frank Murphy never married, apparently had no women friends or interest in girls, and seemingly his attitude toward life was much like a priest's. While he was mayor, there was constant speculation by the reporters on the City Hall beat about Murphy's love life, these things always holding a special fascination for the members of the fourth estate.

There was a big party in Detroit one night to mark some notable civic event and Murphy was one of the guests of honor. Also present was Irene Bordoni, who was

appearing at a Detroit theater. Bordoni was then at the peak of her fame. Some of the gentlemen of the press corralled her and said, "Look, here's your chance to have some real fun. Frank Murphy, our mayor, is coming here tonight, and although he is very much of a man, he doesn't seem to like girls—any girls. But he's never been up against a girl like you. How about doing a real seduction job on him? Give it to him, but good."

Irene needed no urging. When Murphy appeared, she immediately went into action and never has a siren pursued a man with greater zest or poorer success. She made no progress at all. But she almost drove poor Frank out of his wits. Finally, after a chase that lasted almost two hours, Murphy figured out what was going on, and he called together the City Hall newsmen and said, "If you guys expect to get another story from me, ever again, you'll call off this dame right now. If you don't, I'm off limits to all of you, forever." That settled it.

My day-to-day association with the editorial staff of the *News* served as a steady counterweight to all the commercial influences to which a broadcaster is normally exposed. Sponsors, advertising agency people, members of the station staff trying to augment their incomes with ideas for exploitation, salesmen for the various broadcasting services, all pulled at me constantly to think of WWJ in terms of money. Much of each day was spent doing just that. Yet always the hour or two that I put in with my luncheon pals served to tilt the scales away from dollar values and toward appreciation of broadcasting as an art and a service. They never lost an opportunity to poke fun at me, or at last night's programming, to point out instances where some previously uttered high-minded pre-

cept of mine had been flagrantly violated on WWJ or some other station. They were wonderful traffic cops, keeping me alert and saving me always from apathy and smugness. While they were not always right, they were right often enough to make endless my debt to them.

PROGRAMMING

● ONE AFTERNOON in 1935, shortly before 3:00 P.M., my telephone rang. It was Spike Briggs, vice-president of the Detroit Tigers, son of president and owner Walter Briggs.

“Are you listening to your goddam radio station?” Spike asked angrily.

“Of course not, I got work to do.”

“Well, you’d be lots smarter if you listened. Do you know, Mr. Bannister, who’s on your lousy air right now?”

Something in his voice warned me this could be serious, so I quietly asked, “Who?”

“Eddie Cicotte, that’s who!”

It was like dropping a bombshell in the room, but first things first. So I told Spike, “Let me quick get that sonofabitch off the air, then I’ll call you right back.”

I called Main Control and had the show summarily cut off, then called programming for a quick fill.

I knew what was bothering Spike, and it bothered me even more. Eddie Cicotte had been one of baseball’s greatest southpaw pitchers, who if he had stayed straight would probably have made the Cooperstown Hall of Fame. Instead he became the brains of the 1920 Chicago “Black Sox” conspiracy which threw a World Series to the Cin-

cinnati Reds, shook organized baseball to its foundations and brought in Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis to the newly created job of commissioner. One of Landis' first acts was to bar forever the eight White Sox players charged with bribery from entering any baseball park. And now WWJ had interviewed Cicotte directly before a play-by-play broadcast of a Tiger ball game. I knew we were in deep trouble, but first I had to get Spike off my neck.

I told him, "Look, Spike, I don't want Judge Landis to get a report on this from anyone else. My Chicago representative, George Hollingbery, is in the same building with him. I'll have George go right in to see him, tell him all about it and make a date for me to see the judge as quickly as he is available, either tonight or tomorrow morning." That satisfied Spike for the time being, so I called Hollingbery and thirty minutes later I had a date with Judge Landis for 9:30 next morning.

That evening I flew to Chicago, and at 9:30 sharp next morning, I opened a door which had one word on it: **BASEBALL**. No mention of Landis or commissioner, just "Baseball." I found myself immediately in the judge's office, no anteroom, no secretary, but the biggest office I had ever seen. At one end was a very long table piled high with newspapers and magazines, and at the other end sat Judge Landis behind a mile-long desk. In between was enough room for a basketball court.

I told him who I was, we shook hands and he motioned me to a chair. In ten minutes or less I told my story. My defense was that we had a 15-minute program immediately before the game, called "Tiger Talk," which had rather a loose program plan. It could be a rehash of yesterday's game or of any notable occurrence anywhere in

the Big Leagues, or it could be an analysis of the pennant race, or it might be an interview with a player, coach, manager, scout, writer, fan, or it could be anything else that in any way might pertain to baseball. An advertising agency man and one of our producers set up the show. It had been on the air for some years and had always been run well, until yesterday. By a queer coincidence, everyone connected with yesterday's show—agency man, producer, announcer, engineer—was young. The 1920 scandal was ancient history to them, and the name "Eddie Cicotte" meant nothing other than that he had once been a ballplayer. The blame was mine for not setting up stricter controls, but it had never occurred to me that such a thing was possible. Locking up the stable after the horse's flight wouldn't undo the damage, I told him, but I had now set up a control system so that nothing like this could ever happen again. Then I mentioned the reputation of the *Detroit News* and WWJ, our constant coverage and support of the Tigers, the reputation of Ty Tyson among baseball men. Beyond that, I threw myself on the mercy of the court.

Then the judge took over. He started talking at about 9:45 and he talked steadily, without pause or interruption, until 11:45. He told me about his boyhood, his youth, his young manhood, his early career, his life on the bench, always stressing his constant battle for right and justice and his uncompromising opposition to the dark forces of evil. He went into great detail about the trial of Standard Oil and the pressures exerted on him to let the company off easy.

The company was charged with conspiring to obtain special railroad rebates. There were some 120 separate counts in the indictment, each one punishable by a vari-

able fine. He found it guilty on all counts and fined it the maximum permissible amount on each count. The total came to \$29 million. No one had ever heard of such a fine, and especially for Standard Oil, which the average citizen regarded as untouchable.

He told of the bank teller who came before him charged with having stolen \$20,000 from the bank, a charge to which he pleaded guilty. In sentencing him Landis said, "Under the law I must send you to prison, but I regret that you are going to prison all alone. With you should go the president of your bank, the vice-president, and all the other officers, including all of the board of directors, because they are even more guilty than you are by reason of the fact that they hired you and then paid you a miserly \$125 a month, on which you must support a wife and kids, and asked you to daily handle great sums of money, expecting you to remain honest." For 1910, the judge's opinion bordered on revolution.

Worried as I was about the possible consequences hanging over me, I couldn't help at this point from reflecting that everything Landis said to the bank teller was applicable also to the Chicago "Black Sox." After the story broke, it turned out they were the most underpaid team in baseball, some of them getting little more than the bank teller. They were subject to crowd adulation, newspaper headlines and finally to bribery by gamblers. Here also the employer should have shared the guilt. But I kept my thoughts to myself.

Eventually the judge got around to baseball; he recapped for me what a sorry mess had been handed to him and how he had made baseball greater than ever by endowing the national pastime with character and integrity. He recounted all the various steps he had taken to ensure

the honesty which everyone now took for granted. Finally, getting down to WWJ and me, he stated that our action in putting Eddie Cicotte on the air tended to undermine and destroy this vast structure of uprightness which he had so laboriously built up. Then came his peroration:

“Yes, I know all about your Detroit *News* and your Harry Salsinger [sports editor] and your Will Scripps [publisher of the *News*—both fine men. I know all about WWJ and your Ty Tyson. But what you’ve done is irreparable and unforgivable. I ought to throw you out of baseball just as I threw out all those ‘Black Sox’ crooks. I ought never to let you broadcast another game. I ought never to allow your microphones into another ball park. I ought to do this, but”—and here for the first time he smiled—“I won’t. Instead, I’m going to forget it, because I think you’ve learned your lesson. And if you’ll wait fifteen minutes while I look over my mail, I’ll take you to lunch.” Needless to say, I waited.

We became friends. The judge insisted that I telephone him every time I came to Chicago. Frequently he would take me to lunch, and in the baseball season he would take me to the ball game. Once he called me in Detroit and invited me to go to a World Series game with him. Occasionally he would call me to ask questions about the intricacies and mechanics of broadcasting.

His equal will be a long time coming. He was flamboyant in appearance, with his shock of snow-white hair which he carefully trained to hang just so. He had piercing eyes which actually gleamed, a gesturing finger which pointed like the hand of fate. He was a real ham, knowing every attention-getting advice and mannerism, employing all the dramatic arts for his own purposes. But if he used artificial expedients to get his own way, there was

nothing artificial about his principles and code of conduct. He preached violently and ostentatiously, but he practiced what he preached, and he lived by the same rules that he sought to impose on others. Never have I met anyone who impressed me more. He was one of the few great men I have ever known.

My encounter with Judge Landis was a sharp lesson in the problems of broadcasting. Here was a wide variance between original motivation and ultimate effect. The advertising agency man and the WWJ producer who, between them, planned the show could see in Eddie Cicotte only a former Big League pitcher whose comments and reminiscences should prove interesting to an audience settling down to an afternoon of baseball. To Judge Landis, however, putting Cicotte on the air was an act of defiance, directed at his constant effort to keep baseball honest and free of all nefarious influences, and at his insistence that everyone connected with baseball be above all suspicion.

To those unfamiliar with the mores of baseball it might seem that the ex parte action of Judge Landis in exiling forever all members of the "Black Sox" smacked of the drumhead court-martial, and that my eagerness to comply with the judge's dictum was an acceptance of lynch law. However, the baseball fan understands and approves. To countless millions, baseball is not only a sport but an intrinsic and vivid domain in our way of life, often competing for attention with business and family. Men have come out of battles, out of operating rooms, down from airplanes and up from submarines, wanting to know, first of all, "What's the score?" Professional baseball's appeal is unique, and the rock on which it is founded is total honesty. Even a breath of suspicion touching any facet of the sport could be cataclysmic, taking joy out of the lives

of millions. Too intricate to be regulated by law, organized baseball has evolved its own law. The office of Commissioner of Baseball combines executive, legislative and judicial functions, with no appeal. It has the complete approval of all participants as well as of those who love, patronize and enjoy baseball. This I knew, hence my attitude toward Judge Landis. An event which had occurred fifteen years before was now a factor in our program policy and would continue to be so.

The full import of this lesson extended far beyond baseball. The responsibility of station management touches every phase of our national life. Many times a broadcaster must decide what to put on the air and what not to put on, not as a censor but in fulfillment of his responsibility to serve the public interest. His judgment may be faulty. He may make mistakes. Unfortunately, the phrase "public interest" is open to many interpretations, often conflicting with one another. Yet the broadcaster must try, and keep on trying, to do what he thinks is best. He cannot abdicate this responsibility, and regardless of criticism, he must not shirk it.

Baseball was the biggest thing on WWJ, other than the top NBC nighttime shows. There were no night games in Detroit, the Tigers being one of the last Big League clubs to install lights. The games were carried without commercial sponsorship through the 1933 season. That winter I sold them to the White Star Refining Company, which became a subsidiary of Socony-Vacuum. The famous "Flying Red Horse" was originally the symbol of White Star. Now it is used all over the world by Standard of New York.

The games were broadcast by Ty Tyson, assistant manager and operating head of WWJ, a man beloved by the

entire community. Ty was one of the earliest of all radio announcers, and in my opinion was probably the number-one baseball announcer of all time, superior to anyone now handling a microphone in either radio or television. This was because he recognized and respected the drama inherent in every baseball play, and made no effort to inject artificial excitement by voice or manner or extraneous language. He concentrated on calm accuracy and instantaneous identification of every play, so that the listener always had a mental picture of the game at least equal, and probably superior, to what he would have seen had he been in a good seat at the ball park. And Ty combined his knowledge of baseball with a pixie sense of humor. His witty comments constantly were repeated everywhere.

One day in 1934 the Detroit Tigers were playing the Boston Red Sox. Hank Greenberg was at bat, in the midst of a Tiger rally which had chased the Boston pitcher to the showers. The pitcher was replaced by Swede Wahlberg. On the first pitch, Greenberg fouled one off which hit Rick Ferrell, Boston catcher, on the finger. Ferrell went out of the game, to be replaced by Moe Berg, linguist and intellectual, who made his living as a catcher.

It was all too much for Ty, and he couldn't resist quipping, "So we have Greenberg batting, Wahlberg pitching and Moe Berg catching. I wonder where's Ginsberg?" Not too funny but good for a chuckle in some quarters. It was certainly not meant to arouse animosity, but the next morning I had a two-page letter from one of the prominent Jewish lawyers in town. He claimed that Ty Tyson had insulted the entire Jewish race and demanded a public apology. I was flabbergasted. Then I reflected that centuries of discrimination and persecution could well make a people "sensitive." I called the lawyer and ex-

plained that Ty Tyson was without an ounce of intolerance or prejudice but an incorrigible wag who could never forgo an opportunity for a wisecrack. Further, I suggested that he come over and have lunch with Ty and me so he could judge for himself. He did, and like everyone else he was captivated by Tyson.

In retrospect, this incident was another bench mark in my broadcasting education. With startling force it brought home that radio, along with its positive power, had an equal power to destroy. Here was an intelligent and sophisticated man who insisted that he and his people had been wronged by a chance phrase which had no motive other than to produce a smile. This taught me that the broadcaster's motive was unimportant. What counted was the effect on the listener. The two could be far apart. A few idle words tossed into a microphone emerged from a speaker fractions of a second later, no longer as innocent invitations to merriment but as symbols of contempt and hatred.

The longer I thought this over, the more awed I was by the power of broadcasting and the realization that the possession of this power imposed on its owner a never-ending sense of deep responsibility which could not and must not be evaded.

Another time, Tyson was covering a University of Michigan football game, sponsored by Chevrolet Motors. In the Michigan backfield that year there was a sophomore halfback named Gerald Ford, now nationally known as a Republican congressman rising in the party hierarchy. There was a scrimmage, a hard tackle, and out of the mass of players there dribbled a loose football which halfback Ford scooped up. He tucked it under his arm and galloped down the field for a touchdown. Again, it was too

much for Ty. As he called off the line markers on the touchdown run, he interjected, "Here's a sight, ladies and gentlemen, that nobody may ever again see. Just imagine, a Ford running on a Chevrolet program." Somehow or other, at General Motors, they didn't think that was a bit funny.

The programming at WWJ was quite different from WJR's. Most of the schedule was made up of NBC programs, which meant that much of it was noncommercial, or, as they say in the trade, "sustaining." NBC had a good commercial schedule in the evening, a few scattered commercials in the afternoon and almost all sustainers in the morning.

The station opened at 7:00 A.M. with an hour's local show called "Frank and Ernest," a pair of rapid-fire patter boys who used to sit up and read Joe Miller's joke-book before going on the air. Fortunately for them, most of the old jokes were as yet unknown to many American families. As with "Amos 'n' Andy's" mispronunciations and fractured grammar, their old chestnuts were on many tongues for days.

The early-morning offerings on the network were a little better. I especially remember a program I listened to for years, because it coincided with my breakfast time. Introduced as being "conducted by one who calls himself 'Cheerio,'" it was a blend of homely philosophy, whimsy, poetry, an occasional song, feeble humor and what have you, all broadcast against a background of chirping canaries. It enjoyed quite a following, but my recollection is that it never did get a sponsor.

Compared to what it achieved later on, daytime programming, both local and network, was rudimentary, but here and there diamonds could be found. The best day-

time show on NBC was "The Woman's Radio Review," a daily feature using noted women from all walks of life, most of them new to radio. There was good ensemble music and, now and then, a fine dramatic offering. The United States Marine Band was also a weekly NBC feature.

Locally we had the inevitable homemakers' program, noontime melodies, dinner music by the station orchestra and a varied assortment of special programs featuring members of the *Detroit News* editorial staff.

Although WWJ was owned by the *Detroit News*, the schedule when I came had only two newscasts daily, at 12:30 P.M. and at 6:30 P.M., both done by C. C. Bradner, a former *Detroit News* reporter. Just about everyone in town listened to Brad, whose standing with the audience, as revealed by his ratings over a ten-year period, has, as far as I know, never been approached by any newscaster anywhere.

His network contemporaries, men like Lowell Thomas, Edwin C. Hill, Gabriel Heatter, were all miles behind Bradner in popularity. Brad lacked all their physical qualifications. Of average height, he was broad-shouldered and stocky, with a great shock of iron-gray hair combed in a pompadour. His diction was not too good; he had ill-fitting false teeth which clicked audibly; he was short of breath and wheezy, totally lacking in a sense of timing; yet the man was phenomenal. Every broadcast contained a phrase, or a sentence, or an observation, worthy of repetition and remembrance. Everybody hung on Brad's words, so as not to miss any of his gems. One Decoration Day he did his usual show, covering all the news of the day: murders, robberies, fires, political happenings, etc. But into every single story which was in the news that day

he put a special twist which related to Memorial Day. It was an impressive performance.

Brad's schedule made his life rather disorderly. When he went off the air at 12:45 P.M. he had nothing to do until late afternoon. At about 4:30 he would start to write his 6:30 stint. Having lots of convivial friends, Brad would do some imbibing to while away the hours, but as he got older his tolerance for alcohol lessened. A few times he went on the air in the evening not altogether master of himself. After one flagrant incident, Jeff Webb warned him that if it happened again he would be off the air for good. Jeff left positive orders that Bradner was to be summarily cut off the air if he ever again showed any effects from overindulgence.

A few weeks later, it happened. We cut him off. We gave out a story that Brad had "throat trouble," and someone else replaced him, though not very well.

Soon the mail started to come. At first five or six letters daily, then fifteen or twenty, and finally by the hundreds, all condemning us for keeping Brad off the air. I tried several times to get Jeff to relent, but he was adamant. Brad had been off the air about six weeks, and the mail count was up to several thousand weekly, when one day my intercom buzzed and it was Jeff Webb.

"What are you doing?" he said.

"Nothing that can't wait."

"Will you please come down here?"

I did, and Jeff handed me a letter he had received that morning. I reproduce it verbatim:

Dear Mr. Webb:

I have heard that the story you have given out about Mr. Bradner having throat trouble is untrue, and that the real reason

why he is no longer on the air is because he drinks. I am a past President of the Detroit Chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and I have fought the demon rum all my life. However, in Mr. Bradner's case I must say that I disagree with your action. After all, C. C. Bradner is a genius, and we lesser mortals must be charitable with the faults of genius. Remember also that the Good Book tells us to hate the sin but to love the sinner.

Respectfully yours,
CAROLINE WILLIAMS

Jeff said, "How do you like that?"

I answered hesitantly, "Yes, I know, we've had hundreds in this vein."

Jeff replied, "Yeah, but this one really gets me. I guess we'll have to put him back on, but remember, you promised me that you personally would inspect him before his broadcast."

So Brad got back on the air. He did learn his lesson, because until his death, some six years later, he gave us no more trouble.

About a year after Brad's return to the air, Jeff Webb died. Just before his death, I gave him what might have been his last laugh on earth by telling him that the letter from "Caroline Williams" which clinched Bradner's return to the air was a phony. I had written it.

Almost from my first day at WWJ, I was importuning Jeff Webb to permit the commercial sponsorship of Bradner's two programs. In late 1933 he finally capitulated, and then the problem of source material arose. WWJ had no news service other than the facilities of the *Detroit News*, and since most of the news in the paper, other than local, was from the Associated Press, we were in a real bind. The AP was strongly opposed to radio and per-

mitted no use on the air of any AP dispatch. While Bradner had been sustaining, he got away with a fair amount of pirating. He would take an Associated Press story from the paper, partially rewrite it, while retaining all the facts, and put it on the air. Nobody ever complained, but when he got a sponsor, I was worried about this technique. I asked Brad to spend more time on the rewrite job in order to thoroughly disguise it. But I still worried.

Our problem was pretty general throughout the radio business. There was no news service then available for radio. Therefore, news was a comparatively minor factor in radio programming. Most radio stations depended on the networks for news, made arrangements with newspapers, or pirated what news they could from published papers. Even when a newspaper supplied one of its staff to put on a newscast, the material had to be rewritten and disguised, because both the chief wire services, Associated Press and United Press, served only newspapers.

It was a rare radio station that had on its staff a trained reporter and editor like C. C. Bradner, who could cull out the important daily stories, then rewrite to disguise his sources. Yet I was pretty certain that what Bradner had gotten away with on a sustaining basis might get us in lots of trouble after we had a commercial sponsor. In fact, Jeff Webb had raised this point with me and I had promised that Bradner's newscasts would cover only those items in the paper which were written by Detroit *News* staffers and that we would not touch AP material. This, of course, made the newscast pretty lopsided. While I badly wanted sponsorship for our news, I could see nothing but trouble ahead.

Then United Press stepped in with a life-saver. In 1933, for the first time, they offered a wire service to radio, and I immediately sought and got approval to buy it. From then on, news started to blossom on all stations. United Press did not merely send through a mass of news dispatches; they supplied complete newscasts, fully edited, of five-, ten-, and fifteen-minute duration. However, now Bradner's ability to rewrite became more valuable than ever, as I didn't want our newscasts sounding just like those on all other stations. Every story we used was therefore rewritten. This rule was never broken.

By 1934 we had added two more newscasts daily, which I immediately sold, one at 7:30 A.M. and one at 11:00 P.M. For those days, it was a most ambitious news schedule. In fact, WWJ was the first station in Detroit to have an 11:00 P.M. newscast, a custom that rapidly spread to all stations.

About two years later the Associated Press finally woke up to the facts of life and started a radio news service. The sales manager came in to see me, and with an almost regal air of condescension offered me the privilege of buying it. I knew, of course, that AP was the leading news service and that a radio station devoted to high standards simply had to have the AP. But I was still smarting from the effects of AP's former stiff-necked attitude and had already decided that I would punish them by making them wait at least a year before WWJ subscribed. So I coldly told the AP boss man that we had a feeling of loyalty to United Press for enabling us to develop a good commercial operation in news, and that we just did not need AP at this time. Instead of playing it smart and attempting to wear me down by tactful persistence (to which I would have been most susceptible,

because I really wanted AP) he got very haughty and took himself off across the street to the *Detroit News* and editor Doc Gilmore. Doc was the wisest of men, one of the few top newspapermen I have known who had an understanding and respect for broadcasting. He had a faculty for simplifying problems and reducing them to understandable terms. Yet, with all his wisdom, he had one blind spot, politics. He was incorrigibly Republican. He once told me in all seriousness that during a Republican administration the crops were better, because the farmers, having confidence in their government, tilled the soil better and with more zest, thus producing higher yields. Another time, in railing about Hollywood, he told me, "Harry, out in Hollywood they pay plumbers and prostitutes a million dollars a year, and that's just like giving money to Democrats."

Anyhow, Doc phoned me a few days later and told me about the visit from the AP man. I went over to see him and explained frankly what my reasoning was and what I intended to do. While he probably did not agree with me, he accepted my judgment. Doc Gilmore was like that.

In the early days of radio, most of the programs consisted of orchestras, which often became known by their sponsors' names, such as the A&P Gypsies, the Cliquot Club Eskimos, the Lady Esther Serenade, etc. Programs of this nature filled the peak hours of the evening. Then after 11 o'clock at night as long as the network stayed on the air, all music consisted of an endless succession of pickups of hotel bands.

Even in those days sponsors and advertising agencies were studying audience reactions. Some smart guy came up with the discovery that while music was entertaining, it had a tendency to lull the listeners into a

semisomnolent state, causing them to either miss the commercial or fail to get its full impact. One night on an orchestra program some genius put on a pair of comedians, George Burns and Gracie Allen, for a five-minute bit of patter and comedy. Having thus awakened the audience, he threw the commercial at them. It created a sensation in advertising circles. A couple of weeks later the same genius decided that in a thirty-minute program this might as well be done twice, thus creating two high spots for commercials.

It didn't take long for them to figure out that two comedy teams or two special acts were better than one, and that three were better still, and that is how the variety program was born. Quickly the orchestras disappeared entirely except for occasional use in furnishing background music.

From then on, radio featured variety shows and dramas, and music almost vanished. However, when television came along years later, radio went back to music in the form of numerous disc-jockey programs, but by that time the great radio audiences were gone, never to return.

When most of radio consisted of music, it was exactly to my taste. I especially enjoyed Monday night on NBC when Firestone and Bell Telephone were back to back with a solid hour of great music. I also liked Sunday night following the "Chase & Sanborn Hour" when the "American Album of Familiar Music" and "Manhattan Merry-Go-Round" broadcast another solid hour of music. If radio programming had been tailored to suit me personally, there would never have been a word spoken except for news, sports and special events. All else would have been music—popular, classical, light opera, vocal or

instrumental, longhair or jazz; I loved it all. Unfortunately, I was in a hopeless minority. Most people preferred anything but music. Drama, comedy, variety, and audience-participation programs all attracted much larger audiences. As radio programming advanced through the 1930s, music increasingly became an unwanted commercial commodity. This was especially true of classical music. It was always difficult to get commercial sponsorships for symphonic programs because of their low audience appeal.

Analysis of this condition reveals in sharp focus the complex nature of broadcasting. Despite the fact that almost all other types of radio programming consistently outdrew music, radio did more to create and foster appreciation of fine music than anything else previously known.

One statistic will suffice. NBC presented the first symphony concert in 1926. Serge Koussevitsky conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and at that time it was estimated that the program attracted almost a million listeners. Twenty-eight years later, when Arturo Toscanini conducted the NBC Symphony Orchestra in his final appearance in 1954, it was estimated that about 22 million listeners heard that program. Even allowing for the increase in population, this rise in listeners to classical music is phenomenal. Radio was largely responsible.

A well-remembered musical program, on NBC for years, was Phil Spitalny's all-girl orchestra, featuring "Evelyn and her Magic Violin." She was Spitalny's wife and, according to the prevailing scuttlebutt, the real brain behind the show. As befits fine musicians, they were both difficult to get along with. Phil's brother Leopold, one of the house conductors at NBC, was another fine musician who made severe demands on the orchestra.

One day in rehearsal, Leopold Spitalny was having a terrible time. Spitalny spoke English with a heavy guttural Russian accent. On this occasion he was quite annoyed and kept muttering at the musicians that they were "a no-good, goddam bunch of foreigners." His particular target was one of the bass players. At one point Spitalny walked off the podium, stood in front of the bass player, and, wagging his finger at him, said, "You chust a no-good, goddam foreigner."

That was the straw that broke the back of the bass player. He placed his bow gently on the floor, laid his fiddle alongside, stood up to his full five feet two, placed his arms akimbo and said to Spitalny, "And you, I'm supposin', are a Indian!"

One of the great musicians of the twentieth century was Sir Thomas Beecham, who besides his accomplishments in music was also a man of erudition and widespread interests. He was short, stocky and wore a goatee long before beards became fashionable. When he spoke about something that interested him, his eyes would flash, his face would light up, and in no time at all he would dominate a roomful of people. I once saw him perform an unusual feat of ad-libbing.

Few people I have encountered have been able to ad-lib well. Some of the glibbest commentators, newsmen and even comedians are absolutely lost without a script. I have seen men with years of experience and nationwide reputations who, when they are called upon unexpectedly to say a few words into a microphone, stumble and stutter and show total inability to organize their thoughts. Many a reputation is founded on words written for the famous one; without the scriptwriter, there is little or nothing.

In radio's early days, mike fright used to constantly

afflict those going on the air for the first time. Several times during political campaigns we had to carry out of the studio some candidate trying to address the electorate. They would pass out cold. Sometimes they would remain conscious and upright, with jaws and lips moving but no words being spoken. Therefore, my memory is vivid of the best ad-lib job I had seen or heard anywhere.

Beecham came to Detroit to conduct a number of concerts. His presence there happened to coincide with a destructive flood in western Pennsylvania, where periodically the Monongahela River overflowed its banks. This particular flood was the worst ever, and the Red Cross asked me to make a public solicitation for funds. So I put on a flood-relief program, starting at about 10 o'clock at night and running into early morning. As is usual in such cases, I gathered just about every bit of talent that happened to be in town, to either entertain or solicit pledges. Russell McLaughlin, the music critic on the *Detroit News*, offered to work on the program and suggested also that Sir Thomas Beecham would undoubtedly like to appear. I accepted gratefully. At about midnight, little dapper Tommy Beecham, then about sixty-five years old, walked into my office, shook hands and said, "What do you want me to do?"

I looked through the plate-glass window down on the stage and showed him the act that was then on the air and said, "How would you like to go on right after these people and ask for money?"

Five minutes later Sir Thomas Beecham was on the air, and he talked for twenty minutes without any notes, with no preparation, with full knowledge of the flood and its effects, never at a loss for a word, every thought dovetailing perfectly with the preceding thought or phrase.

His plea was by far the most eloquent one, not only of the evening, but that I have ever heard. He was magnificent, and when he finished, the money just rolled in. There were more pledges in the next fifteen minutes than we'd gathered in the previous two hours.

The difficulties we had in radio with classical music carried over years later into television. Perhaps the prime example was the "Firestone Hour," which, after being kicked around on all three networks, finally folded up and went off the air, to the accompaniment of weeping and wailing from all music lovers, myself included. I cannot think of a program in both radio and television which for so many years gave me as much pleasure. But it was always a minority choice, and network broadcasting in prime time is not a minority medium. It was first on NBC-TV, held over from radio, and it used to ruin the audience, both preceding and following its beautiful music. I remember being in the office of Pat Weaver, then president of NBC, right after Pat had spent the better part of a day with the Firestone brass, trying to persuade them to move the program from Monday night to Sunday afternoon. I will never forget Pat's tag line. He said, "Harvey Firestone says that Sunday afternoon is no good. At that time everybody is out playing polo."

On WWJ, I had a musical director, Mischa Kottler, who is still there. Mischa is one of the finest pianists in the country, as I have been repeatedly told by conductors who worked with him. Frank Black told me after conducting the Tchaikovsky First Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, with Mischa as soloist, that he would have a difficult time recalling three better performances anywhere. Mischa was born in Russia and came to the United States as a boy. I have always been convinced that he still thinks

in Russian and then translates into English. I remember during a rehearsal Mischa's sticking his head into the control room and inquiring, "How long are we short?"

One time Paul Whiteman came to Detroit to do an outdoor concert at the University of Detroit stadium. In those days Whiteman's ways were rather free and easy. It was quite obvious to those who knew him that he was slightly inebriated when the concert started. Throughout the evening he was cutting capers, especially when he played the Gershwin *Rhapsody in Blue*. There is a passage where the music builds up to a crescendo, and when it reaches the top, everybody in the orchestra gives out with all his might. Whiteman sidled up to the microphone, and as the orchestra hit the top of the crescendo, he yelled, "Timber!" In the audience was Mischa Kottler, and these monkeyshines gave great offense to his sensitive Russian soul. At a party later that evening which I attended, Kottler was holding forth in great indignation about Whiteman's behavior. In his imperfect English he told how the orchestra hit this crescendo, and when the high note came, "Whiteman yelled into the microphone, 'Lumber!'"

On WWJ for many years I had a chamber music program, a worthy rival of the Budapest String Quartet. People who heard it said that it was the best. It had three regulars—Mischa Kottler at the piano; Ilya Scholnik, the concertmaster of the Detroit Symphony, on the violin; and Georges Miquelle, first cellist of the Detroit Symphony, on the cello. The fourth man was variable. Sometimes as many as fifty hours of rehearsal went into a half-hour broadcast. Never did they rehearse fewer than thirty hours, and the music was glorious. Fine musicians yearn to play chamber music, and they work themselves to the bone just for the love of producing beauty. Some of

the best music in the world's literature has been written for string trios and quartets. Although it is longhair, it is so beautiful that you don't really have to be a music lover to appreciate it. I remember sitting in the *Detroit News* cafeteria after a rehearsal with Kottler, Miquelle and Scholnik. We were joined by Herb Ponting, general manager of the *Detroit News*. After a while Mr. Ponting said to Kottler, "Why don't you play Victor Herbert on your program?" I will never forget the look of disgust that came over those three faces. Of course, they didn't know that month after month I had a hard time with Mr. Ponting justifying the cost of this program. But I kept it on the air for years, regardless. In the 1940s when the *Detroit Symphony* was undergoing a reorganization, I was instrumental in hiring away from NBC the concertmaster of Toscanini's orchestra, Mischa Mischakoff. One of the stipulations that Mischakoff made before coming to Detroit was that he could play in the WWJ chamber music group, a request which, of course, we were delighted to grant.

For sixteen years, beginning away back in 1930, one of radio's top shows, season after season, was the "Rudy Vallee Hour." Originally the program featured popular music, with Vallee singing every chorus, but gradually the show shifted to variety—still, however, leaning heavily on the Vallee nasal tenor. His weekly "Heigh-ho, everybody" became one of the best-known trademarks on the air. Some peculiar chemical or metaphysical quality in his voice set feminine hearts from sixteen to sixty a-fluttering while at the same time also attracting substantial male audiences. His recordings of such disparate numbers as "Lover, Come Back to Me" and "Maine Stein Song" made musical history.

A funny thing happened on one of Vallee's shows in

1937. It was the night after Joe Louis had won the heavy-weight championship. That morning I got a call from NBC, New York, asking me to try to get Joe's mother, Mrs. Barrow, who lived in Detroit, to do a guest shot for Vallee. Without too much trouble, I got her. Vallee in New York was to ask questions which Mrs. Barrow, in WWJ's studio, would answer. It was all rather tame until Rudy asked, "Mrs. Barrow, what do you cook for Joe?" and she replied, "I has to be very careful what I cooks for Joe. He's a delicate boy, you know."

Besides Rudy Vallee there were many other perennial favorites who had astonishingly long runs, despite regular weekly exposure. Jack Benny started in 1932 for Canada Dry with the Ted Weems Orchestra. He lasted until television came along, then successfully performed the difficult transition. The same is true of Bob Hope, who landed regularly on the NBC Network, two years after Benny, in 1934. He, too, went on to become an even greater star in television than he had been in radio.

Not too many of the top radio attractions were able to maintain their eminence in television. The man whom I regarded as radio's top comic, Fred Allen, and whom many professionals picked as a surefire natural for TV, was never able to make it, despite the fact that before his entry into radio he had been an acknowledged vaudeville star on the Keith circuit. Also, one of the top comediennes of the theater, Beatrice Lillie, was never able to really find herself in television.

Fibber McGee and Molly started in 1935 for Johnson's Wax and went fifteen years without a change of sponsors, with constantly rising audiences for a dozen years or so. They slipped as radio yielded the mass audience to TV. Few conversational topics of the thirties were more sure-

fire than Fibber's cluttered closet or his repeated efforts to do something beyond his capabilities. This was one of the best writing jobs in the business, creating a perfect illusion, which was superbly directed and played.

Burns and Allen started on radio in 1932, went all the way to TV, then did fairly well for a few years. Gracie retired eventually but George Burns went on doing guest shots with skill and dexterity. A very funny fellow.

Audience fickleness, which has sounded the death knell for so many fine television performers, also evidenced itself in radio, once the audience got over the first thrills of broadcasting and began developing standards of judgment. Many programs shot up to peaks of popularity, but failed to stay there. Jack Pearl's characterization of the Baron Munchausen was an instantaneous hit. "Vas you dere, Sharlee?" was heard everywhere for two or three years, then, finis. Raymond Knight's "Cuckoo Hour" had about the same history. Joe Penner with his "Wanna buy a duck?," Ed Wynn's "Fire Chief," Phil Baker and his many hats, all hit the top briefly, then disappeared.

Back in 1933 the University of Chicago "Round Table" went on the air for the first time. It ran, weekly, for a stretch of twenty-two years, with straight talk, no showmanship and a minimum production staff. Often it was disorderly and argumentative but always enlightening and entertaining. On a wide variety of topics, it set a pattern of intelligent discussion which to date is unmatched. The television moderators who preside over the current pale copies of this program would do well to study recordings of the "Chicago Round Table" and learn how to wear the mantle of erudition without making it look like a Sunday suit, and how to refrain from loading questions with the bullets of bigotry and ignorance.

The changing taste of audiences also affected popular music. On the network schedules of CBS and NBC in 1931 were bands under the leadership of Abe Lyman, Ben Bernie, Harry Reser, Guy Lombardo, Leo Reisman, Nat Shilkret, Buddy Rogers, Paul Whiteman, Rubinoff and his violin, Wayne King, Sammy Kaye.

Ten years later, in the season 1940–41, only four of the foregoing were still regularly scheduled. They were Abe Lyman, Guy Lombardo, Ben Bernie and Wayne King. In place of the others there were Bob Crosby, Charley Spivak, Fred Waring, Glenn Miller, Phil Spitalny, Harry Salter, Tommy Dorsey, Horace Heidt, Xavier Cugat. Where are most of them now?

On WWJ for many years, in the late hours, we had a dance band of top quality. It was Seymour Simons', which played at Detroit's Tuller Hotel and broadcast nightly over WWJ. Frequently we fed this show to NBC, it being on a par with the best anywhere. Simons would have had more network exposure were it not for the fact that throughout the thirties and early forties the supply of hotel dance bands was greater than the network demand.

Seymour Simons was also a successful composer, with many hits to his credit, among them "Honey," "Tie a Little String Around Your Finger," "All of Me," "Breezing Along with the Breeze." Although he played his last tune almost twenty years ago, meeting an unexpected death while comparatively young, I hear his music still being played. Some months before his death, I spent a delightful evening with him in the club car of the "Detroiter," the overnight train between New York and Detroit. We met by chance and it was a happy meeting. Long before, I had discovered that Seymour Simons was an educated, informed and interesting conversationalist, not only on

music and show business, but on a wide variety of topics. His death came as a shock to me.

The Michigan Central's all-Pullman "Detroiter," which left Detroit at 7:00 P.M. and arrived in New York at 8:00 A.M., in the golden era of railroading, was one of the lushest in America. Before the days of flying, everyone who was anybody rode the "Detroiter." Although it was one of the longest of all passenger trains, demand for space was so great that frequently it ran in two sections, fifteen minutes apart.

I sat in the club car one night, nursing an after-dinner drink, when I walked Frank Scott, vice-president of N. W. Ayer and account executive on the Ford Motor Company account, then as now one of the great prizes of the advertising business.

"What are you drinking?" asked Frank, and when I told him, he said, "I learned a new drink the other night—Scotch-and-milk. I don't like milk ordinarily, but with Scotch it's great. Want to try it?"

Naturally I said, "Okay," and it was good. Very good. So good, in fact, that we sat there for hours, drinking Scotch-and-milk until we drank the club car porter clean out of milk.

But long before that, the car door opened and in came a character I had known for years as "Sam." He was the fitter at my tailor's establishment, and many a suit had he pinned and chalk-marked on me. Sam sat down with Frank and me, and we introduced him, too, to Scotch-and-milk. After a while the car door opened again and in came a fellow Detroiter, Fred Spangler, whom both Frank and I knew. He was with his wife, but he stopped briefly for a handshake, and noticing the fitter, he said, "Hello, Sam." He, too, went to the same tailor.

After Fred and wife had taken seats at the other end of the car, Sam leaned over and whispered confidentially to Frank and me, "Mr. Spangler is a 38-stout, but the right sleeve must be half an inch longer."

In WWJ's sports coverage, next to baseball, the biggest feature was the football schedule of the University of Michigan. During the ten weeks of the college football season, interest and enthusiasm reached a pitch which Big League baseball could equal only during a World Series or perhaps in late-season competition which would decide a pennant winner. Almost every man I knew in Detroit and many of the women were gridiron fans. This derived from the fact that early in the twentieth century the University of Michigan had made a national reputation for itself by repeatedly thrashing the famous football schools of the East whenever they were reckless enough to take on Michigan, which was not too often. Before the days of huge football stadiums, the traditional schools were very choosy about their opponents; they were extremely careful not to cross the railroad tracks and lose caste or to take on antagonists who might be too tough. However, this finicky attitude quickly evaporated once a school mortgaged itself to build a great bowl, which, to keep going, required lots of money at the box office. From then on, considerations of "face" or easy pickings gave way to the need for big attractions to fill the bowl and bring in the dough. Many old traditional rivalries were shoved into the background by opponents who were better box-office.

In addition to the University of Michigan, Detroit cheered Michigan State College at Lansing, an agricultural school which eventually grew into a university, and the University of Detroit, a Jesuit institution.

Between the three, with U. of M. predominating, Detroit became a fiery furnace of pigskin furor from Labor Day to Thanksgiving.

People who have not lived in a football-mad region such as Detroit, Columbus, western Pennsylvania, or most of Texas have no idea of the frenzy which annually grips these communities. No matter where you go or whom you meet, the talk is all of football. Every player's life is an open book; in fact, the real buffs can rattle off vital statistics about any promising member of the matriculating freshman class and even of some future stars still in high school. On the night of victory over a traditional rival, pandemonium breaks loose without a semblance of restraint. At home, sometimes unbidden in your own home, in bars, in restaurants, and on all the main streets, there is cheering, shouting, revelry, most of it by graying, portly near patriarchs, any one of whom would look much better asleep in an armchair with a puppy or a kitten in his lap.

After years of involvement in what may be called the "inside" of college football, I long ago concluded that winning football teams don't just happen; the innocent notions held by most alumni of famous schools that *their* Alma Mater is lily-white are only naïve examples of gullibility. No school, anywhere, ever won at football consistently without subsidizing the game in one form or another; it just can't be done otherwise. Of course, the athletic boards and faculty committees and college presidents all go through a lot of soul-searching and breast-beating and make up all sorts of involved rules and procedures. But, in one way or another, any boy with football qualifications—passing, blocking, running, tackling—will find it is comparatively simple for him to enter and graduate from almost any college.

It is a vicious system because it teaches young men at an early formative period that the way to get along in the world is by wangling some form of special privilege. In supporting it, colleges and universities abdicate their prime function—regardless of the sophistry which points to countless material benefits resulting from athletic prominence.

Many of my friends in Detroit were involved in perpetuating the winning tradition of their Alma Mater on the gridiron. A few acted as scouts among high school players, and some were actively helping to support some deserving and speedy halfback or some praiseworthy bruising tackle at one of Michigan's schools or elsewhere in the Big Ten. I didn't know of a single instance among my well-to-do friends where a budding mathematician or future physicist was being helped through school, but I could almost have made up a complete team among the football players supported by my close acquaintances.

The man who put the University of Michigan on the football map was Fielding Yost, whose famous "point-a-minute" teams tramped down all opposition for years. Yost probably coached more All-Americans and more subsequent coaches than anyone before him or since. He placed a championship stamp on Michigan football which still persists.

I ran into him unexpectedly on a train in 1936, and of course he immediately began talking football. Warming up to his subject, he insisted that I stand up in the aisle while he demonstrated several key tackles in important games of the past, and while at the time I was forty-three years old and he was in his sixties, he hit me so hard that it was weeks before I recovered.

One of the best and smartest players ever coached by

Yost was All-American Dan McGuigan. Not only did McGuigan absorb football lore from Yost, but he also fell in love with and married the head coach's sister. So, as a good brother-in-law, after graduation Yost got McGuigan a coaching job and, later on, the job of head coach at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. In those days Vanderbilt was small potatoes in football, and, determined to assist his young brother-by-marriage, Yost put Vanderbilt on the Michigan schedule, which was roughly equivalent to an elephant dancing with a squirrel. Then to the amazement of the football world, itty-bitty Vanderbilt proceeded to hold the great Michigan team to a tie, which brought more fame and headlines to Vanderbilt than ever before. At the end of the season, when the New York sportswriters held their annual banquet, they named McGuigan "Coach of the Year."

Introducing Dan, the toastmaster said, "We know that your Vanderbilt team is not in a class with the great Michigan team, and that their showing in that game of games was more of a tribute to you than to their own ability. Will you please tell us what you did or what you said to your boys to make them play so far over their heads?"

McGuigan arose, smiled and then rather hesitatingly said, "You know our stadium at Vanderbilt is built in a sort of hollow, surrounded by hills, and is historic ground fought over bitterly in the Civil War. On the day before the game, I scheduled a signal practice, but when the squad was ready, I called them together out on the field and said, 'Boys, turn around and look at those hills behind you. Do you know what's up in those hills? I'll tell you. Up in those hills are the graves of your grandpappies and great-grandpappies. And do you know who put your grandpappies and great-grandpappies in their graves? I'll

tell you who. It was the grandpappies and great-grandpappies of the boys you play tomorrow, that's who. Squad dismissed!' ” So, with a brand-new cast they re-enacted the Civil War!

WWJ carried the U. of M. football games as sustainers until 1932, when for the first time the University was gracious enough to accept money from an advertiser in return for sponsorship rights. The amount charged by the University was determined by sealed competitive bidding, and WWJ kept on retaining the sponsorship rights by making the highest bid. Then in 1936 our chief competitor, WJR, determined to take away the games from WWJ, and submitted an offer much beyond the current price. As a result, they got the games and proceeded to take a hefty loss as the sponsorship eventually went for a price considerably below WJR's break-even point. While I was somewhat gratified by the result, it did not make up for our disappointment at being without Michigan football after some fifteen years of continuous broadcasting. At the end of the season, I suggested to Leo Fitzpatrick, WJR boss, that we stop this foolishness of sealed bids, and that we jointly see Fritz Crisler, who was head football coach and athletic director, with a plan which would bring in more money to the University without causing any station to lose its corporate shirt. The plan was extremely simple, namely, to allow any radio station, anywhere, to carry the games on payment of a fee based on its own hourly rate, then let them compete for audience. Fitzpatrick liked the plan because it would give him the games at a price which would enable him to make a neat profit, even though he knew and I knew that WWJ would have the bulk of the audience. And Crisler liked it because, being a shrewd businessman, he saw immediately that, in the

end, he would get more money this way than by one exclusive sponsorship over one station. This plan eventually spread over the Big Ten and worked very well everywhere.

Another WWJ sport, which is not a sport at all because it involves no contest, but is in reality an exhibition, was wrestling. As early as the 1920s, sports promoters discovered that wrestling, when indulged in honestly, is tedious and boring. Two evenly matched contestants may stand each other off for long periods and eventually put the spectators to sleep. So they decided to jazz it up with histrionics, fake savagery, artistic anguish and soon eliminated all semblance of combat, at the same time converting a scientific but dull performance into something resembling the old-time ten-twenty-thirty melodramas.

Wrestlers are a breed all their own. They differ from prizefighters in several respects; while fighters usually live high and fast when they're in the chips and sometimes require "benefits" to care for them in their declining years, wrestlers usually are family men who save their money, have bank accounts and are respectable members of the community. The chief reason for this difference is that prizefighters go for long periods without earning anything, and then, suddenly, there is a bonanza which oozes right through their fingers. Wrestlers on the other hand usually get no part of the gate receipts but work on weekly salaries. So it is easier for them to have a normal life.

Wrestlers travel in troupes from engagement to engagement. After committing artistic mayhem and simulated murder on each other in the ring before the palpitating populace, they retire to the dressing room, between falls, to have a nice friendly game of cards.

One day Don DeGroot, then program manager of WWJ-FM, came to me with an idea. He wanted to broadcast wrestling, once a week, and what's more, he wanted me to announce it, along with scriptwriter Charles Gussman, who once used to wrestle professionally. Furthermore, it was DeGroot's idea that we should satirize and spoof it. That really appealed to me, so I agreed to handle the assignment.

For several months we did this and the promoter never tumbled to the fact that we were kidding his star attractions. As the gate receipts kept climbing, he became more enthusiastic over our efforts. Naturally, he was quite disappointed when we stopped separate FM programming and instead duplicated the entire WWJ schedule. That was the end of wrestling.

Without my knowing it, the engineers used to record an occasional wrestling match for their own private amusement, and one day they presented me with a transcript of one of the openings:

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Once again we greet you fondly from Fairview Gardens at 11,000 Mack Avenue in Detroit—"we" meaning your two inquiring reporters, Chuck Gussman and Harry Bannister, who customarily spend every Thursday evening inquiring "What are we here for?" And, sad to relate, nobody ever tells us.

But, ah yes, I remember now. We're here to describe a wrestling match for you. And what is wrestling? you ask.

Wrestling is a state of mind. Wrestling is one of the physical phenomena. Wrestling is a grunt and a groan and a hunk of hair.

They wrestle, you know, each Thursday evening here at beautiful Fairview Gardens, and always a good time is had by all, especially by the coppers who get in free. Come out some

evening and bring the kiddies. It's elevating, so by all means bring the kiddies. But don't bring the baby. Who knows? You might get excited and elevate the baby into the ring.

This evening, the main event, which we will presently describe for you in all its lurid details, brings together two of the better-known gentry who manage to avoid the onerous chore of earning a living by masquerading under the guise of athletes. One, a wretched-looking fellow with an evil cast in his eye, bills himself as Nangho Singh—the Cobra.

His opponent is another eminent exponent of the art of grunt and groan, one Sammy Kohen—a villainous and pusillanimous-looking character who appears before the tremulous multitude draped in long red tights and looks for all the world like Mephistopheles after a tough night at the Hades Glee Club.

I'll say this much for Sammy, however. He no doubt was born Sammy Kohen and looks as if it might have happened on Rivington or Ludlow or Orchard Street down on the lower East Side of New York. And he makes no bones about his ancestry or identity. But this Nangho Singh person, who claims to be a high-caste Indian, probably never came any closer to India than the time he flunked geography in the third grade in school.

I'd judge that he is as Indian as Hamtramck and as Oriental as West Hoboken. His right name is probably Piatrowski or Michalski, or maybe even Demetrioropolus.

But he says he's a Cobra from India, though I think he's a pick-and-shoveler from Scranton, Pennsylvania.

That's the way of these wrestlers, though. For some reason or other, it's assumed in the profession that the good old American stock is decadent and soft, and that in order for a guy to be able to sock and tug, to heave and breathe deeply, he must be a Turk, or a Greek, or a Polynesian, or an aborigine. Anything but American.

In his last appearance here, Nangho Singh was cast opposite a sandy-haired Greek god, whose classic profile he proceeded to squash, to the great distress of all present, including the Greek god. Nangho Singh's delineation of the role was marvel-

ous. His crescendos were a trifle faulty, but his pizzicato was *wonderful*.

And I well recall the last time Sammy Kohen appeared before the footlights here. It was some six weeks ago and he gave a performance that will be long remembered by all those fortunate enough to crowd their way into Fairview Gardens on that auspicious occasion. Sammy ran the gamut of emotions in the best traditions of the histrionic art. His interpretations of his lines left little to be desired. His diction smacked a trifle of herring, but his resonance was superb, and his gesticulations reminded me of Sothorn and Marlowe at their best. How old Bill Shakespeare would have loved that night. But poor old Bill ain't wrestling no more. He's been laid among the daisies, where I hope that either of these hunks of flesh that are now leaving the dressing room will lay the other tonight. That would be a fitting climax.

The boys are now entering the ring, as you all can gather from the mounting chorus of boos rising from two thousand throats, so I'll turn over the microphone to my colleague, Chuck Gussman, who will describe the first movement in his own inimitable style. Come in, Chuck.

In the early 1930s radio engineers began talking about ultrahigh-frequency radio, and this eventually led to the establishment of FM radio, "FM" standing for "frequency modulation" as opposed to the general system of radio which is called "AM," or "amplitude modulation." FM uses much higher frequencies and differs in many ways from AM, but to simplify it, the essential points of difference between the two systems are that FM is relatively free of static and is much more faithful in reproducing tones; AM, however, puts out a much steadier signal so that once a dial is set to an AM frequency, it can stay set, whereas with FM the signal will waver, requiring periodic adjustments in the dial settings. It sums up to the

fact that the FM signal is somewhat better in quality, covers less territory and is more difficult to manage; the AM signal is somewhat inferior in quality, covers much more area and is simpler to handle.

In order to make sure that we were overlooking no bets, WWJ established an FM station around 1938. Then the problem arose of what to do for programming. In those days we were not allowed under FCC regulations to duplicate our AM broadcasting on FM, so we played a lot of records and did what we could to develop a schedule until, later on, duplication was permitted.

After carrying the Tiger baseball games exclusively for many years on WWJ, a new sponsor switched baseball to another Detroit station, WXYZ, in order to get outside coverage over the Michigan radio network—a statewide hookup of Michigan radio stations—for which WXYZ was originating station. The announcer was Harry Heilmann, who had once patrolled the Detroit Tigers outfield alongside Ty Cobb and had also become one of the game's immortals. Heilmann learned much of his broadcasting technique from Ty Tyson, supplementing it with a multitude of anecdotes and the expert knowledge of an outstanding ballplayer.

If Tyson was the best baseball broadcaster to ever handle a mike, Harry Heilmann was a mighty close second. Heilmann and I were friends, even though he worked on a competing station. In 1940 I went with him to Cincinnati to see the World Series in which the New York Yankees swamped the Reds. Seldom have I spent three more enjoyable days. Harry entertained me constantly with baseball yarns, most of which were new to me, chiefly because most of them could never be told on the air or printed on a sports page. A great many concerned Babe

Ruth, who always was marvelous copy, and who took a great shine to Heilmann while they were both outfielders.

During a Tiger-Yankee game in New York, as the teams were changing sides and Heilmann met Ruth going out, the Babe said, "What are you doing at noon tomorrow?"

Heilmann said, "Nothing."

Babe then said, "I'll pick you up at your hotel at 12 o'clock sharp."

He was as good as his word, and without telling Heilmann where they were going, he grabbed a cab and directed the driver to a certain road within Central Park. Although puzzled, Harry made no comment. Inside the park, the Babe dismissed the cab at a lonely spot where a bridle trail ran near the roadway. Then, still with no explanation, he led Heilmann along this bridle path for a good quarter mile, until they came to a huge tree. There they stopped and Ruth searched the ground and picked up half a dozen pebbles, about the size of a quarter, looked at his watch, then pulled Heilmann behind the tree while he gazed sharply down the bridle path. Soon a couple of figures appeared who turned out to be women on horseback, cantering leisurely. Babe waited until they were abreast of the tree and just beyond, then stepped out and threw the pebbles, each with unerring accuracy hitting a horse so that the two women disappeared down the road in a cloud of dust and a clatter of hoofs, whereupon the Babe doubled up with raucous laughter as he explained to the bewildered Heilmann, "It's the wife. She's learning to ride."

Heilmann also told me a number of Ty Cobb stories, but without the obvious affection he had for Babe Ruth. When Ty Cobb managed the Detroit Tigers, he was still active as a ballplayer and, of course, while he could play,

he was the greatest. One time he got spiked and was out of the game about three weeks. In the meantime, the Detroit outfield consisted of Heinie Manush, Bob Fothergill and Heilmann. All three went on a batting spree at about the time when Cobb was ready to resume his place in the lineup. They were each hitting around .400, getting two or three hits apiece daily, and Cobb, as manager, just couldn't take out any one of the three, no matter how much Cobb, the playing fool, wanted to get back into the lineup. So, all healed and ready to go, Cobb sat on the bench and stewed, while this hot streak persisted. It was two weeks before he dared to reinsert himself into the lineup, by which time he was almost out of his mind.

By the end of the 1930s almost every American home had a radio set, and around it the family gathered to listen to Arthur Godfrey, Jack Benny, Eddie Cantor, Fred Allen, Bob Hope, Major Bowes, Charley McCarthy, Baby Snooks, Bing Crosby, and many others. Audience loyalties were strong, many of the programs running without change year after year.

Every weekday afternoon soap operas pursued one another in endless succession over all the networks. Although each program ran only for twelve minutes, millions of women followed from twelve to sixteen stories daily, never confusing the many characters who were plagued with all the ills that flesh is heir to.

This type of entertainment reached audiences which never exceeded 20 million, but it was these 20 million housewives who bought most of the nation's soap. Uninspired and uninspiring, the soap operas were, nevertheless, well written, well acted, well produced. To the homemaker bogged down in domestic routine, they

brought escape into vicarious romance and adventure.

The characters in the stories were so real that thousands of letters addressed to them were received by every station, the perfect example of radio's power to create an illusion.

LABOR PAINS

● PRIOR TO THE ADVENT of the New Deal and the Wagner Act, work assignments in radio stations were flexible. On WWJ everyone on the small staff doubled in brass. We had no announcers who just announced. Everyone did it as a sideline. Today the average staff announcer works a straight eight-hour shift. On WWJ, Ty Tyson, whose regular job was assistant manager, also covered baseball and football, and between seasons he worked as a staff announcer, taking station standbys and reading announcements. Wynn Wright, program manager, also worked at announcing and acted in many shows. Harold Priestley, traffic manager, worked weekday afternoons and evenings as an announcer. Herschell Hart, radio editor of the *Detroit News*, wrote continuity and helped out with occasional announcing. I, a salesman, wrote copy and sometimes handled the mike on remote pickups.

For a brief spell I broadcast wrestling and boxing matches. Once I helped with a Harmsworth Trophy Race. This was run on the Detroit River, over a long course that taxed WWJ's small staff to the utmost. It took about a dozen men to cover it. About all I got in was "Here they come. There they go." Those boats really traveled.

All through the decade of the 1930s, the Harmsworth

Trophy Race for powerboats was one of Detroit's top sporting events. A Detroiter, Gar Wood, usually drove the American boat, which always won against the English challenger. But there was one year, 1934, when the English entry driven by Kay Don was clearly the faster boat according to the early trials. All those in the know were sure that Gar Wood was finally due to get his comeuppance. But they reckoned without the fact that in addition to his genius at design and powerboat racing, Wood was also a wily competitor who knew every trick and ruse of a tough sport.

Wood habitually entered two boats in each race, permissible under the rules, just in case anything happened to his number-one entry. He drove one, and his brother Phil drove the second boat. The race was run in three heats on three consecutive days. In the first running the English boat clearly demonstrated its superiority by decisively defeating both of Wood's boats. In the second race there was considerable jockeying for position. The result was that Phil Wood crossed the line just ahead of the gun with Kay Don dead even with him, and both boats were disqualified, quite properly under the rules. Gar Wood in the remaining boat went leisurely around the course in solitary splendor. He repeated the performance on the third day, and was judged the winner in what actually was a solo performance.

The holler that went up from the British Empire bounced from Scotland to Singapore, to Sydney, to Saskatchewan and back to Salisbury and Suffolk.

Loud were the cries about "Yankee trickery," "poor sportsmanship," "dollar duplicity," etc., but the record books show only that Gar Wood's boat, driven by his lonely ingenuity, won the race.

In 1933 a funny thing happened. I had sold an an-

nouncement preceding the race for a premium price to Harry Glick, who ran a vast business for cleaning watches at 89 cents, which, even for those days, was quite a bargain. The average price for cleaning a watch was then \$3 or \$3.50. Of course, Glick always managed to find one or two parts that needed replacement, so the ultimate bill seldom was only 89 cents, but he did do a thorough cleaning job for that low price, with the result that he employed twenty or thirty men regularly who did nothing but clean watches.

That year WWJ was asked by NBC to feed its coverage of the Harmsworth Race to the network, and somewhere along the line, either at the WWJ Main Control or at the AT&T board which put the broadcast on the transcontinental line, there was sloppy work, and Harry Glick's \$100 announcement went on the network, from Maine to California. For weeks afterward, as he jubilantly told me, Glick was getting watches from every state in the Union. It was probably the greatest advertising buy of the year, maybe of the century. But my commission was only \$15!

Ed Rigby, an engineer, always worked the New Year's Eve shift, and as the station remained on the air until 4:00 A.M., we dispensed with announcers and Rigby took all the standbys. Since it was a long night and Ed worked all alone, he brought a bottle with him. One could tell by listening to his station identifications how much of the bottle was gone. By two or three in the morning, he was wishing Happy New Year to the governor of Idaho, to the mayor of Amarillo, to the head of the School Board in Berkeley, California, and to many creatures of his imagination. But the sharp definition of job categories which came in with the Wagner Act abolished all doubling in

brass, and some of the fun went out of broadcasting.

I have always been grateful for the fact that I was born too soon to grow up in a unionized world. Had I been born twenty years later, and as a lowly youngster started to fight my way up in the world, I might have had to join a union in order to find employment. This would have posed a terrible problem.

I have always been a lone wolf, shunning anything that smacked of gregariousness or regimentation. I have never joined a club, despite strong urgings from close friends. If I had been confronted with the choice of joining a union or not getting the job, I might have starved to death, because never, never would I join or run with the pack. I just couldn't.

Yet I have always sympathized with and tried to understand those who felt impelled to become unionized to protect their economic status. All workers learned their lessons in a tough school from generations of employers who abused their employees mercilessly, selfishly. The list of injustices perpetrated upon workers by their employers became compounded with the beginning of the industrial revolution. It is a shameful blot on civilization, a prime example of what Bobby Burns called "man's inhumanity to man."

By the twentieth century, intolerable conditions were the rule rather than the exception among most people who worked for others. Economic inequalities cried aloud for relief. The dribs and drabs of corrective legislation in the early 1900s culminated in an avalanche of new laws which marked the first years of the New Deal. Much of that legislation will endure forever. Primarily it was aimed at re-establishing "liberty and justice for all." Unfortunately, however, people being what they are, the pendu-

lum has never yet managed to swing just far enough to correct a wrong. Always it overswings, and though it rights one wrong it usually creates new injustice.

In the thirty years that have elapsed since labor unions in America acquired muscle, they have been repaying with interest the wrongs of past decades. Although labor had centuries of oppression for which to seek restitution, the pace of life is so much faster and the scope of life so much greater today that I dare say the accounts should be quitted.

The first union at WWJ was the American Federation of Musicians. In over twenty years of dealings with the Detroit AFM, I found them most understanding, and, barring a few aggravations, their conduct was usually conducive to running a good broadcasting station. Whatever trouble we had with them stemmed not from the Detroit local but from national headquarters, which for years enforced contracts that resulted in blatant featherbedding. By and large, however, relationships with the musicians were good. Many of them were my friends.

The next union to appear was AFRA—the American Federation of Radio Artists, which included announcers, actors and vocalists. This Detroit chapter was well run, set up high standards of performance, took pride in its work and contributed mightily to WWJ's excellence. One incident will illustrate the point.

Before World War II, WWJ had an exceptional announcing staff. After the war started, most of this staff either joined the armed forces or went to the networks. Bob Stanton, for years "Mr. Television" on NBC, came from WWJ. So did Bill Wendell, Hugh Downs and many others who made names for themselves.

During the war announcers came and went. We would

get a new one, and we'd be lucky to keep him for six months before his draft number came up; steadily the overall quality went down. I would get sick at heart comparing them with what we used to have.

Then the war ended, and I could hardly wait for good announcers to become available again. One such came into my office in 1946. A brief audition convinced me that the boy had what it took, so I hired him on the spot and planned to let a man go who had only been with us as a brief wartime replacement.

The discharged man, at best a mediocre announcer, chose to make an issue out of it and went to the union secretary, who felt impelled to back him up. After weeks of fruitless discussion the case went to mediation. The mediator was a schoolteacher obviously opposed to anyone trying to run a business or to make a dollar. He even lacked the grace to disguise his prejudice. The union lawyer just sat back and enjoyed it as the mediator took over, judge and prosecutor all in one. It was a travesty on mediation, which according to Webster means "an agency between parties at variance, with a view to reconciling them."

The finding was to reinstate my low-grade wartime replacement to a staff which I was trying earnestly to rebuild to its former high place. I was fit to be tied. Fortunately, after winning his case, the poor announcer found another job. Then I asked the WWJ unit of AFRA, including its paid executive secretary, to a meeting.

I told them what they all knew, namely, that I had only one aim in life, which was to so run WWJ that it would be the greatest radio station in the world. To this end I subordinated everything, including my family and my comfort. I had no friends unless they were friends of WWJ.

I had no enemies except those who opposed or interfered with WWJ. I further told them that if all of them collectively or any of them singly owned WWJ, they would want it run exactly as I was running it. This, too, I knew that they knew. I also told them that as members of the WWJ staff, given their daily bread through its operation, each one had the same feeling of pride and satisfaction which I had in its preeminent quality.

Then I got down to the recent case which had been mediated. I pointed out that the mediator had ruled against me on a technicality; the contract between AFRA and WWJ stated that men could be discharged only for "drunkenness, dishonesty or neglect of duty." This phrase, inserted in the first AFRA contract by a union negotiator, passed the scrutiny of the labor lawyer of the *Detroit News*, because it was a common clause in newspaper shop contracts, though totally inapplicable to broadcasting. A station might want to change its voices on the air, even though there was nothing wrong with them, just like a theater changes the show. All subsequent contracts retained this clause.

I then told AFRA that I could not run a first-class station if my hands were tied by such a clause. I wanted freedom to constantly upgrade my staff, regardless of "drunkenness, dishonesty or neglect of duty"; I asked them to take this clause out of the existing contract, and in return I would give them any kind of reasonable job protection they deemed necessary.

I had made a trial run of this pitch on the lawyers beforehand, and they told me I was wasting my time, that AFRA would never voluntarily take out that clause.

Yet, when I got through and left the room, they had a long discussion. Then a delegation came to my office and

told me that if I gave four months' notice, with pay, to anyone who was to be replaced, they would take out the objectionable clause. I immediately agreed. Nobody got hurt and management got unshackled, yet, to this day, labor negotiators look skeptical when I tell them this story.

Until the end of World War II, the WWJ announcing staff had always consisted of Gentiles who were white. There were then in Detroit some 250,000 colored people and about 100,000 Jews. I felt that both groups were numerically large enough to merit representation on my announcer staff. As part of an overall plan to rebuild the staff to greater heights, I sought three qualified, experienced men to become announcers; I wanted a Jew, a Negro and a disabled veteran who had lost an arm or leg or both. I wanted the latter to set an example to the community, to show employers that disabled men are fit to be something more than watchmen or doormen.

The easiest one to get proved to be the Jewish announcer. I found a real crackerjack, with a fine voice and more than his share of brains. He turned out to be the best man on the staff.

Then I engaged a colored announcer with a master's degree in music from a Midwestern university; he had five years' announcing experience on the university station, and his accent and diction were perfect. Adding him to our staff suddenly made me a hero in the Negro press. WWJ, I guess, was the first major radio station to hire a colored staff announcer. The Negro press came from far and near to interview me. I had a tough time shooing away the reporters, because I wasn't looking for that kind of kudos. Unfortunately, this chap did not work out. His new-found affluence went to his head, despite my admon-

ishings. He ran up bills all over Detroit, created scenes in public places, and finally quit his job and left town, one jump ahead of the sheriff. I never heard from him again, but, undaunted, I replaced him with another colored chap who fitted in much better.

My toughest search turned out to be for the disabled vet. Although the Red Cross, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Veterans Bureau were helping me, it just seemed that nowhere in America was there a qualified, experienced radio announcer who was minus an arm or leg on account of the war. I finally settled for a Canadian who had lost an arm in the raid on Dieppe. He turned out to be great. As far as I know, he is still at WWJ.

The third most important group of WWJ workers to be unionized was the engineers. Originally they had a version of "company union," although the station management had nothing to do with its formation. They did it themselves. Then they couldn't decide whether to retain their own union, join NABET (National Association of Broadcast Electrical Technicians), or join IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers). The indecision lasted for several years, and gradually it became a standoff between NABET and IBEW. The feeling was so bitter between them that conflicting groups would sabotage each other. The station suffered, and I suffered with it.

Despite the fact that many of the engineers were old drinking companions and buddy-buddies of mine, the engineers as a body constituted the only group of WWJ employees who were untouched by the *esprit de corps* which characterized the station and which was the envy of other managements.

Yet a few individuals did unusual things. There was the time around 1935 when we opened our new building across the street from the *Detroit News*. Everything was finished and we were scheduled to do our first broadcast in ten days, but when we made the first test run there was no sound. All day and all night the construction people went over blueprints, traced lines, yet the building was totally dead. We put on double shifts using every engineer available, of whom there weren't too many, as they had to keep the old building on the air while getting the new one ready. Western Electric flew out troubleshooters who worked around the clock. Still no sound. Seventy-two hours before our scheduled opening, I asked the chief engineer, "How about Ed Rigby?" Rigby, over the years, had proved to be the best troubleshooter on the engineering force. But for some reason he had been doing regular duty during this crisis. Now, coming off a full trick in Main Control, he too went to work in the "dead" building. This was around 5:00 P.M., and by early morning, through some secret known only to him, which I always suspected was more of a sixth sense than anything technical, he had narrowed down the problem to one studio, and started to go over every inch of wiring—a monumental job in itself. Some three hours later, he found it. One microphone had on the back a short piece of wire—not more than two inches—held by two set screws, none of which belonged there. This was setting up a short circuit which deadened the entire building. So we got it back to life, via Ed Rigby. Several years later, when the job opened up, I made him chief engineer.

Then there was the time, in the midst of the union controversy, when most of the engineers were snarling at each other and at management, when I had to get two of

them out of jail. The previous night, drinking with a group of engineers from other stations, it seems that one of the outlanders had said, "Harry Bannister is a no-good sonofabitch," and one of the WWJ men slugged him. This started an all-around donnybrook and landed two fine WWJ technicians in the cooler. While I suspected that alcohol had more to do with this pugnaciousness than any feeling for me, nevertheless I liked it.

Anyhow, they finally joined NABET, much to my relief. But then more than ever they were apart from the mainstream and never again a real cog in the WWJ organization. And they did some silly things. For example:

Down in West Virginia the coal miners had been on strike for about six weeks. The *Detroit News* was sending Jack Carlisle, one of its best reporters, down to the West Virginia hills, to talk to miners and miners' wives and find out how they were making ends meet. I heard about it, and told Carlisle to take a tape recorder with him, and if he came across a real good human-interest story, to tape it. I would pay \$25 for every fifteen minutes he turned in. That was good money for those days, and he was delighted.

Then the engineers heard about it. The shop steward told me that under the contract the engineers had sole jurisdiction over tape recorders; if a tape recorder went to West Virginia, an engineer had to go with it. I pointed out that the reporter might never find use for the tape; he was taking it along in the event he could find interesting material; besides, he might use it only once or twice a week, which would make the cost of an accompanying engineer utterly prohibitive. The shop steward was adamant about observing the letter of the contract. So I said, "Let's forget the whole thing," and had to deprive 3 mil-

lion people of any opportunity to catch a glimpse of what then was a significant event in the American scene.

Scarcely a week went by without some untoward incident in our relations with the engineers. It was one of the most aggravating periods in our history. Finally, right in the midst of what seemed to be a routine contract renewal negotiation, NABET went on strike, the first strike in the history of the station. The date they chose was significant. The strike began at midnight on August 19, as an anniversary date was dawning; WWJ had begun operations on August 20, 1920, first commercial station in the world. The strike was a complete fiasco, a total flop. NABET had succeeded in thoroughly alienating AFRA, so our own announcers kept on working, but without crossing the picket line. They just moved into the station and stayed there. All the numerous mechanical unions at the *Detroit News* ignored the NABET pickets and accepted our contention that the strike was illegal. The early days of doubling in brass paid off, because many of the men in managerial and supervisory jobs had once had engineering training. So we kept the station on the air, which NABET had not foreseen. In forty-eight hours the pickets disappeared, the men came back to work, contract negotiations resumed and things got much better, although never as good as they should have been.

I fought the unions hard whenever I thought that they were overstepping their rights or infringing on management's prerogatives. But I fought equally hard with anyone who sought to infringe on the rights and privileges of all connected with WWJ. Many mighty influences, including churches and ministers, people high in business and civic affairs, heads of powerful groups, tried at various times, for their own selfish purposes, to swing station

policy this way or that. I fought them all, to the left and to the right. I was like the Irishman at the fair. Wherever I saw a head, I hit it, if in any way it was against WWJ. And I insisted with everybody that all my people be fairly dealt with, at all times and under all conditions. Maybe this was paternalism, but it was also my concept of intelligent management. Frequently the most rabid unionists would come to me with their problems when they were bogged down in the regular channels. I always tried hard to give everyone a fair shake. I think they all realized this. Constantly, I reviewed in my own mind each day's decisions, especially when they concerned my people. I weighed every factor carefully to make sure not only that I had been fair and understanding, but that I had not unnecessarily bruised anyone.

I had a fantasy about Jeff Webb, the WWJ manager who had hired me, supported me, made me sales manager, and then died. Just as I did, Jeff loved WWJ above all else, and on his deathbed he charged me to "be good to my baby." After that I had the feeling that Jeff was always in back of me, watching. I wanted his approval of everything I did. Frequently, when a problem puzzled me, I asked myself, "What would Jeff want me to do?" Maybe it was childish, but it always helped.

WHOOPEE—AND WAR

● I BECAME INVOLVED in industry affairs early in my broadcasting career. As the thirties gave way to the forties, more and more demands on my time and energies were made beyond the realm of immediate WWJ business. Yet they were matters of importance to the industry and therefore to my station. I served a term on the board of directors of the National Association of Broadcasters, several terms on the NBC Station Planning and Advisory Committee and carried out many special assignments. Most importantly, however, I was a member of the “Rump” group, so christened by Niles Trammell, president of NBC. He pinned it on as a term of disdain, but I learned years later when I joined NBC that it was disdain not unmixed with apprehension and concern. The Rump was made up of:

Walter Damm	WTMJ	Milwaukee
Stanley Hubbard	KSTP	St. Paul
George Burbach	KSD	St. Louis
Joe Maland	WHO	Des Moines
Dean Fitzer	WDAF	Kansas City
George Norton	WAVE	Louisville
Johnny Gillen	WOW	Omaha

Jimmy Shouse } or Bob Dunville }	WLW	Cincinnati
Harry Bannister	WWJ	Detroit

Not many in numbers, when one considers that there were then some 175 stations on the NBC Network, but the influence of the Rump group came from the populous centers it represented, and from the fact that every other big-city station on the network was sympathetic to it. Our aims were nebulous and indirect. We sought to guide rather than to drive. Actually, we met only to exchange views and to adopt common positions, which we then individually passed along to the network brass.

We had no schedule and no agenda. We would usually meet in Chicago, that being a central point, three or four times a year, or if we all happened to be at a general industry meeting, such as the annual convention of the National Association of Broadcasters, we would get together, on the call of almost any member of the group. Despite its informality and lack of planning, the Rump group had an influence in shaping policy, not only at NBC but throughout the industry, that was great, even greater than we, at the time, suspected.

Because most of the members played gin rummy, much of the discussion and business of the Rump was conducted over cards. George Norton of Louisville and George Burbach of St. Louis played no gin, but both courteously put up with the rest of us when we broke up into pairs as soon as the group assembled. A special continuous rivalry over the gin table involved Walter Damm, Dean Fitzer and me. We spent thousands of hours playing at Rump meetings and elsewhere, and meanwhile ranged over most of broadcasting's problems.

Gin rummy and radio were almost inseparable. Just about everybody who was anybody played gin. So did most of the people who dealt with broadcasters. So did most of the talent. Consequently a great deal of business, of every description, was transacted between deals. I particularly recall one session which resulted in a reorganization of the National Association of Broadcasters, the master trade association of all broadcasting.

There are few lines of business in the country which need a strong efficient trade association more than broadcasting. The nature of the business is such that it has numerous relationships, abutments, contiguities and interests which no single station or group of stations can handle properly. Such matters as relations with the Federal Communications Commission, both houses of Congress, various departments of government, the church, women's organizations and PTA groups, educators, music publishers, movie producers and recording companies, electronics manufacturers, political parties, and many other segments of our complex nation are all much too difficult to be handled by the individual stations. They must be dealt with by a single group representing all broadcasting.

Yet few trade associations have had as rough going as the NAB. There are several reasons for this. The divergences within the industry are quite sharp; WWJ has altogether different problems from the three local Detroit stations unaffiliated with a network; the six Detroit stations have different problems from a small-town station in the wheat belt or in the Rocky Mountain area, and in turn all these points of view vary considerably from that of a big station in New York City, which in turn differs from a big station in Los Angeles. In each case the audience is different, the programming is different and the

sources of revenue are different. There are many other lines of demarcation among stations, accentuating the internal difficulties of NAB. To a Midwest station, or a Pacific Coast station, the biggest single operating problem is the change in time zones, and this gets much worse when daylight saving comes. When New York City goes on daylight time, the big night network shows scheduled for 8:00 P.M. come to standard-time stations in the Midwest at 6:00 P.M. and to the Pacific Coast at 4:00 P.M. This requires rescheduling, juggling and sometimes presents problems that defy perfect solution. In the Eastern time zone, where more Americans live than in any other zone, this problem doesn't exist.

Another reason for dissension among broadcasters is the fact that most of them are rugged individualists. Certainly the pioneers were. Such men do not work well in groups. The members of the NAB board of directors on which I served had such divergent views on everything that little was ever accomplished. It was a frustrating experience because while I personally enjoy spouting off as well as the next man, I also crave action. Being a member of a debating society had no appeal to me.

I felt strongly that NAB needed someone at its head who towered over the membership, in order to keep in line all the strong personalities. Years after the era I am describing, they finally got such a man in Governor LeRoy Collins of Florida. He stayed only a few years, but he did a great job. President Johnson asked him to come back into government service, and so broadcasting lost him.

Throughout its existence the NAB would encounter periodic crises which threatened its life. Dissatisfaction among the membership would bring on resignations, loss of dues, and finally chaos. One such crisis arose in early

1942; as a consequence, one day I had a wire from Jimmy Shouse, president of WLW, Cincinnati, stating that NAB was progressively disintegrating and that rapid and drastic action was required. He wound up by asking that I attend an immediate meeting at the Ambassador East, Chicago. He had sent the same wire to about a dozen station managers, on all three networks, who were supposed to be the cream of the crop. When we assembled a few days later, it developed that nine men had responded to Jimmy's call, making ten in all for the meeting. After Shouse had opened proceedings with a succinct statement, couched in his usual precise and scholarly terms, and had made the main point that what we needed most was a great public figure for president of NAB, the meeting promptly broke up into five games of gin rummy. Then it went like this:

Someone would say, "What about Wendell Willkie? He ran Commonwealth and Southern, and ought to be a good manager, and now that Roosevelt whipped him he's liked equally well by Democrats and Republicans."

Immediately an answer came: "I don't like Wendell Willkie although I voted for him. I'm against him now because he's too wishy-washy. I'll take that ace, and spread for seven."

Another would say, "As long as the goddam Democrats are running the country, why don't we get smart and hire someone like Jim Farley? I've got a gin!"

This, too, got an immediate retort from a far corner: "Farley is no good. Sure, he's a Democrat and a great guy, but he's the wrong breed of Democrat. He can't even get into the White House by way of the chimney. What we need is a wild-eyed New Dealer. Can you beat six?"

So it went for most of the day. When I left to catch a

plane back to Detroit, I had won several hundred dollars, and we had appointed a three-man committee to scour the country for a new president for NAB. It was this committee which took Justin Miller from the Federal bench and made him head of NAB, a job he held for years. He was not great, but he was a vast improvement over his predecessors and NAB did receive a new lease on life.

Dean Fitzer, for years, ran WDAF and WDAF-TV, Kansas City. Once at an NBC meeting, held in the Drake Hotel, Chicago, Dean and I sat together at the front table during a dinner which concluded with entertainment. As the dinner was ending, just before the show started, Dean cleared off a small space between us, whipped out a deck of cards and dealt. We played through the first couple of acts, then on came Milton Berle. We left the two hands, face down, to watch Berle, until he spied the cards. Then he jumped down off the stage, grabbed the cards, made a few pointed remarks about gin players, and for the next few minutes entertained the dinner with card tricks, performed with our cards. All impromptu and very good.

The men who were my principal competitors in Detroit, George Storer, Leo Fitzpatrick and Allan Campbell, are excellent gin players. Both Fitzpatrick and Campbell like to gamble for high stakes, but I always refused to play for more than a cent a point. Oddly enough, George Storer, who is probably the wealthiest man in broadcasting, is content to play for half a cent a point, which is more to my liking. At WWJ, I played frequently with members of the staff, usually for one-tenth of a cent a point. Even at that, W. E. Scripps, publisher of the *Detroit News*, was horrified to learn that I won money from my own employees. And I usually did.

Regardless of stakes, I always play gin the same way, coldly, impersonally and totally. Most men play gin haphazardly, with bluff and bravado, meanwhile carrying on a running conversation, part raillery, part hope, part complaint, part smoke screen for whatever devious design is in store. They pick up a card here or there, frequently on speculation, and most of the time they try to gin. I believe that guys who constantly try to gin end up sleeping in the gutter. I play in silence and complete concentration, memorizing each card as it falls. Before I make any discard, I rapidly calculate the chance of its being used in my opponent's hand, and I always make the discard with the lowest percentage possibility of being picked up. All this sounds like hard work, but I have always enjoyed problems in mental arithmetic, and so I find this type of play stimulating and refreshing. If I played any other way, it would bore me. However, this mathematical play, against normal opposition, is hard to beat, so I usually end up a winner. Fortune being a fickle dame, sometimes a pigeon will give it to me right between the eyes, but it usually turns out to be bread cast upon the waters. If we play often enough or long enough, I nail my opponent in the end. As a matter of fact, I like gin rummy and enjoy playing it so much that I prefer not to win too much from my friends, as I don't want to discourage anyone from playing with me. So I always suggest the lowest possible stakes. I would rather play and lose than not play at all, but when I play, I try my damndest to win everything in sight. I've never played "customer" gin with anyone, and never will. With most men this really is not an issue, because—the male ego being what it is—no man ever admits that he is inferior in any respect. A fellow's ears may be beaten off time and time again; he will either attribute it to hard

luck or feel that it presents a problem which he will ultimately solve, but no man can beat an analytical, mathematical, concentrated gin player, unless he is willing to discipline himself into using similar methods. Few men are sufficiently objective about themselves to reach such a point.

Ben Larson has produced some of radio's most famous programs. Al Jolson gave much trouble to all his producers until they assigned Larson to him. From then on, Jolson would have no other producer. Ben is a witty companion and an entertaining raconteur. Also, he loves to play gin, but his extroverted nature fails to be quenched merely by wooing the laws of probability. He chatters and quips constantly, and playing with him, and with others like him, I have learned to insulate myself from the hullabaloo and the clever sayings. Once, after we had played for hours with Ben chirping away merrily and getting zero response from me, in the midst of dealing he put down the cards, looked at me pleadingly, and with an emotional note in his voice that a Sarah Bernhardt might have envied, he said, "Harry, won't you just wave and say hello?"

In addition to gin, in Detroit I played poker, with the longest-running unchanged cast I've ever known. There were Al Dunnette, Frank Griffin, Gene Kirkby, Earl Kuhn, Jack Lamb, Earl Shimer and I. We played on alternate Fridays, at each other's homes, for fifteen years with never an argument, squabble or harsh word. On the rare occasions when one of the regulars was unavailable, we had a list of substitutes among those waiting for a chance to become a regular.

It was a most remarkable game. Play started promptly at 8:00 P.M., and late arrivals were penalized by having to ante for each missed pot. After the first few sessions no-

body was ever late, and men were known to fly in from hundreds of miles away to be on hand for the opening deal. At 1:30 A.M. sharp, an alarm went off, and wherever the deal was at that moment was the point to which we played once around and that was the end. Nobody ever suggested another round or even another hand, and the limit was never raised.

Food and drink were placed on a nearby table or sideboard; whenever a man dropped out of a pot, if he was hungry or thirsty, he quietly helped himself without ever interfering with the play.

All play was for cash. There was never any borrowing, there were no accounts to be settled, the stakes were low, and no one ever went over his head.

Nobody told stories or indulged in any conversation extraneous to the game. To the womenfolk it was a most unsociable group, but to the players it was a joy and delight. That is how poker should be played.

When I was a kid, I went in for a lot of athletics, but in my late twenties I quit such foolishness, and ever since I have firmly refused to make any unnecessary motions or indulge in any activity requiring physical exertion. I take corks out of champagne bottles, can break the seal on a pack of cards and shuffle, and even on occasion have lifted a pair of dice and rolled them. Yet in Detroit I got involved in an outdoor pastime requiring strength, stamina, physical skill and strategy.

Often I would eat at a private boardinghouse where the food was quite good. It was a century-old mansion on grounds which occupied most of a city block. Sitting on the back porch after dinner, I took to watching four fellows playing croquet. Like most American males, I thought this was pretty namby-pamby stuff, and I watched

more in a spirit of condescension than from any real interest. One summer evening, in the midst of what the four sissies regarded as an exciting contest, one of them was suddenly called away. The others looked around, and by this time, having got used to my silent kibitzing, they invited me to join them. Superciliously, I accepted, although I had never in my life played. Besides, this violated my sacred credo about needless exertion.

Almost from the start I found this milksop mollycoddle game both challenging and entertaining, and into the prevailing atmosphere of an old lady's home I immediately introduced a few roughneck competitive elements, which both annoyed and intrigued the others. Soon I was an enthusiast.

There was one chap in the game named Wallace Pipping, an interior decorator; Pipp and I started playing on Sunday mornings. We would meet at about 8 o'clock and play till noon. We did this all during the late summer and far into the fall. We had a date for a Sunday morning in late November. When my alarm clock rang, I looked out the window and saw the first snowfall of the year. Apparently it had been snowing all night. I shut off the alarm, turned over and went back to sleep, thinking to myself, "That's the end of croquet."

A few minutes later my telephone rang. It was Pipp. He said, "Have you looked out the window?"

I said, "I sure have, and that's why I went back to sleep."

Then he said, "Mr. Bannister, has it ever occurred to you that it might be a lot of fun to play croquet in the snow?"

I thought a moment and said, "I think maybe you have something."

But he cooled me off by saying, "Do you have any long underwear?"

I had never owned a suit of long underwear in my life, and told him so.

He took care of that by saying, "Put your pajamas on inside of your trousers." Then he said, "But you'll need rubbers or galoshes or your feet will get wet."

I had never in my life owned a pair of rubbers or galoshes either, and I told him so, but after thinking it over a minute I said, "Maybe I can get a pair." So we made a date to meet later in the morning.

I telephoned my friend Jerry Moore, manager of the Fort Shelby Hotel, and got a very sleepy "Hello." I said, "Jerry, can I get into your Lost and Found Department?"

He mumbled, "What did you lose?"

I answered, "Nothing, but I want to look for a pair of rubbers or galoshes that might fit me. I'm going to play croquet in the snow."

He raised his voice and said, "You sonofabitch, you're drunk," and hung up the phone.

So I patiently called him back and explained that I was cold sober and that I actually was going to play croquet in the snow and that I needed either a pair of rubbers or galoshes. So he fixed it.

It cost me two dollars in a taxi to get to the hotel and two dollars to come back, and I gave a dollar to the man who let me into the Lost and Found, making the total cost five dollars for a pair of beat-up, half-worn rubbers which probably cost less than a dollar originally but did fit me.

The game turned out to be a lot of fun, and we started a new fad among the players of winter croquet. Eventually I acquired my first suit of long underwear, my first pair of earmuffs, my first wool gloves, my first galoshes; we also

bought an iron spike and a heavy mallet to make holes in the frozen ground so we could place the wickets, and a great big snow shovel to scoop out a path from picket to wicket. It was quite a thing.

I was busy playing croquet one Sunday when I was called to the telephone. It was the announcer on duty at WWJ. He said, "Harry, just got a flash from NBC. The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor a while ago."

The import of this news failed to register and I well remember my reaction: "The goddam fools! What did they do that for?" So the war came to WWJ and to me.

Next day I began putting the station on a war basis. Right from the start it was apparent that Detroit was to be the "arsenal of democracy," and if sabotage and subversion would pay off anywhere, Detroit was the place. I stopped all entry to the station by unauthorized persons, which was a blow to the sightseers who came daily in droves. I canceled or changed every program that had a "free" microphone affording access to outsiders. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, for instance, had the oldest continuous church program in radio, having broadcast weekly on WWJ since Easter Sunday, 1922. I asked the rector, who occasionally turned over his pulpit to visiting clergymen, to let us know about such switches in advance so that guests could be checked and cleared. He got a bit huffy, but complied. What I was thinking about was that some ministers were conscientiously opposed to war, and I wanted no pacifism preached on WWJ.

Ty Tyson's "Man on the Street" went off. So did a number of audience participation shows which were broadcast from our auditorium. An armed guard was installed at the transmitter, twenty-four hours daily, and electronic controls were placed on the transmitter building doors so that admittance was possible only after recognition by the en-

gineers on duty. Extended emergency power was provided at both transmitter and studio so that both operations could continue indefinitely if there was any interruption in the power supply. I asked the FBI to check every WWJ employee from top to bottom. In retrospect, all or some of these precautions sound somewhat silly. But in December, 1941, the possibility of sabotage appeared very real, and I was taking no chances. Throughout the war, groups of saboteurs were apprehended periodically in the Detroit area by the FBI, always, however, before any damage was done. We did not know at that time that Germany had no long-range bombing planes. Our military feared a "suicide" bombing mission which might "home" on a radio signal as commercial planes fly on beams directed over air lanes.

We immediately put on the air our first programs to sustain the war effort. The number of these was to increase steadily in the next four years. We went after recruitment of doctors, dentists, nurses and other specialists. We promoted employment at the war plants, collection of scrap materials, letters to servicemen, and many other causes.

Perhaps the most important and fruitful field in which WWJ could function effectively was in the sale of war bonds. Everybody soon had more money than ever before, yet it took constant hammering to maintain the steady sale of war bonds. The bond drive in Michigan was under the direction of Frank Isbey, a tireless driver who gave his all to the job, twenty-four hours a day, through all the war years. He told me repeatedly that WWJ was the most potent single instrument at his disposal, more so than any other newspaper or radio station. Frequently he would come to me when bond sales lagged and ask for extra help, even beyond what we already were doing. He always got it.

Wartime operation posed many problems, but perhaps

the most vexing one was personnel. Previously we had an unusual record of continuity of employment. One could walk through the station and in all departments encounter people who had been at WWJ for five, ten, or more years. The war changed all that. Soon we were operating what appeared to be an employment agency. Apart from lowering efficiency, this condition affected morale. Yet I worked very hard to instill in all newcomers an understanding of the ideals and goals which WWJ strove to attain. All the older staff members helped in this endeavor, because invariably pride in the station and its accomplishments was the hallmark of our staffers.

I got a wartime idea involving the service clubs, which were a big thing in Detroit. Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, Optimists—all had large memberships and heavy luncheon attendance. Customarily the luncheons started at 12 o'clock sharp, and at 12:45 the program would begin. The speaker of the day went on at 1:00 P.M. and spoke until 1:30 when the session ended. It occurred to me that the people at the lunch were shut off from a world at war for ninety or more minutes, so I suggested to each club that at 12:45 they begin their program with a rapid-fire, highlight newscast, to be done by a WWJ newsman who would cover each luncheon. My offer was accepted enthusiastically by all the clubs, and this became a feature of every luncheon thereafter. Soon the custom spread over the country, but as far as I know, it started with WWJ, the week following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Newscasts and news commentaries were added all over the schedule, there being an apparently insatiable appetite for this type of programming both by the audience and by prospective sponsors. I drew on the staff of the De-

troit *News* and on the faculty of the University of Michigan for foreign affairs experts, until I could get no more. Then one day a Detroit advertising agency approached me with a plan to put on still one more program analyzing world affairs for an old Detroit firm which had never before been on the air, in a spot on the schedule where such a program seemed to fit neatly. Momentarily I was stumped for a commentator, and then I had an idea.

Herschell Hart, radio editor of the *Detroit News*, had an assistant and legman named Ken Manuel who had impressed me more than once with his intelligence and grasp of world affairs. In pinch-hitting for Hart, on the radio program of daily chitchat which Hart had done for years, Manuel had displayed excellent voice, diction and delivery. So I put him on the air in his own program—a weekly commentary which brought Ken Manuel to public attention. We also began using him on documentaries which he handled very well, and as an end result of all this, some years later he had an offer to join D. P. Brothers, one of the top national advertising agencies, where he was launched on a career which ultimately led to his becoming president of the agency.

Herschell Hart was radio editor of the *News*, later radio and TV editor, from the late 1920s until his death in 1960. He was the only broadcasting editor of a daily newspaper I have ever encountered who made a conscious effort to evaluate programs from the point of view of the audience.

Being a critic of broadcasting for a newspaper or magazine is a frustrating way of life. The criticisms carry no weight, and are interesting only as reading material. Critics of plays, movies, music, books and art have the power to influence acceptance or rejection by the public. In New York, for instance, the opening-night review of a play can

often make or break it. The television critic has no such power, nor had the radio critic. Furthermore, most programs will never be seen again, except possibly as a summer "repeat." Therefore the criticism will neither add nor subtract one single viewer. Television critics are prone to feel sorry for themselves because a cruel fate condemns them to watching television. I am sure most people would regard it as a pleasant way to earn a living.

Herschell Hart's philosophy of criticism was that it was part of his job to try and improve broadcasting and that he would do it not only by praising good work but also by encouraging all who tried. He felt that by so doing, in time, the bad would get better, the mediocre would become good, and the good might even become great. Sympathy, understanding and kindness were apparent in his every word. Herschell Hart's daily column in the *Detroit News* and his daily gossip show on WWJ brought him recognition and standing throughout Detroit which, as far as I know, has not been accorded any other critic anywhere.

The war did much to change the character of WWJ programming, just as it changed so much in all phases of our lives. Quality went down as more and more skilled people were drawn into the armed forces or their auxiliaries. Along with the decline in performance came a steady erosion of standards, which I resisted strenuously. Fortunately, business remained at capacity levels, so I suffered no losses from the fact that I constantly turned down proffered advertising if it violated our standards. Several times I was reported to the Federal Communications Commission for making allegedly "arbitrary" decisions in refusing business, but each time, when I explained my position, nothing more came of it. Despite the problems of war, I noted that, more and more, WWJ was being looked upon

throughout the country as a leader, a station with principles and integrity.

The exigencies of wartime programming sometimes created odd situations, as with the "Hudson Minute Parade." In 1934 I had sold this to run daily from 8:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. Although in its first few years it had a rather shaky existence, it later became a treasured asset of the J. L. Hudson Company. Early in 1942 NBC queried all stations as to the availability of the quarter-hour period from 8:00 A.M. to 8:15 A.M., Monday through Friday, for an overseas news broadcast, sponsored by Alka-Seltzer, to be known as "The Round-the-World News Roundup." It was to be made up of on-the-spot reports from London, Moscow, Cairo, Delhi, and every place not under control of the Axis powers where news was being made.

I saw immediately that this would be a desirable addition to our wartime news coverage, so I went to the brass at Hudson's and told them that in the public interest WWJ would carry this program. I suggested that the "Minute Parade" be reduced to 45 minutes to run from 8:15 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. With slight hesitation they concurred, but added a most unusual proviso. Ralph Younker, director of publicity, put it this way: "We're willing to give up fifteen minutes of our time for the duration of the war, but when war ends, we don't want any difficulty about our recapture of this time; we will continue to pay you for the full hour, though we use only forty-five minutes. It's our time and we're just temporarily lending it to NBC." So for a space of almost five years, I collected for the full hour from J. L. Hudson, at local rates, and also got a quarter hour of network compensation from NBC.

A reverse situation developed in connection with a duPont award won by WWJ. This is one of the most coveted

awards in broadcasting, given for excellence in overall programming. The winner gets a handsome plaque plus a cash prize, which, as I recall, is \$1,000. When this check came, I turned it over to the cashier along with all the other checks.

About three days later the head auditor of the Detroit *News* called me and wanted to come over and see me. He looked haggard and said, "Haven't slept for two nights, trying to figure out what to do with that \$1,000 check you got from the duPont award. There's no place in our book-keeping system for this type of receipt, and it will also louse up all our tax figures. Please do me a favor, Harry. Take your check, then tear it up or send it back."

"How about giving the money to the USO or some charity?" I blithely suggested.

The auditor's frown deepened. "Trouble is, it's made out to 'WWJ—The Detroit News.' Once it gets on our books, we're in trouble."

So I took back the check, committed forgery by endorsing it, then gave the money to charity anonymously and everyone was happy.

There are numerous awards in broadcasting, given in recognition for fine programming, and many kinds of public and special service. They are invariably prized highly by the winning stations. The stations that never seem to win any take refuge in sneering at awards and belittling them. There is something to be said for both viewpoints, but I think that, everything considered, awards do act as a spur to accomplishment and achievement. Maybe I'm prejudiced, because at WWJ we won just about every award ever offered, many of them more than once. However, it took some doing, over and beyond the on-the-air performance.

A station may perform most creditably in its programming and yet never win a single award. It's because here the mountain must come to Mohammed; it is up to the station to get its story to those who determine the awards. Otherwise its efforts will go unhonored and unsung. Sometimes a bang-up presentation will overpower the awarding committee into giving the prize to a station which did only a mediocre on-the-air job, but by and large, while good presentation is vital, it alone will not suffice.

For years WWJ did the best programming job in Detroit, yet it won little recognition. Then I smartened up and hired a bright promotion girl for a newly created full-time job of preparing entries for awards. Because our job on the air was superior, and our submission of data was now professional, we started to win. By the time I left WWJ, the station walls were covered with plaques, scrolls, medals, ribbons, and other decorative insignia. Yet I am certain we would not have won much recognition had we not been good on the air, just as previously we hadn't done well when our story wasn't properly told.

I was playing gin one night with Don Slutz. Don had been a Detroit *News* reporter and later city comptroller of Detroit. He was at this time managing director of the Traffic Safety Association. This organization is one of the most effective behind-the-scenes activities in the country. It came into being because the automobile manufacturers decided that making and selling the best cars was not enough and that they also had the responsibility of seeing that their cars did not become implements of destruction. They formed the Traffic Safety Association, got Don Slutz away from Detroit's city administration, and told him to take off. Operating anonymously most of the time, the T.S.A. works with police departments, schools,

PTA groups, women's clubs, safety departments at industrial plants—anywhere that offers the opportunity for promoting traffic safety. The snappy slogans about traffic safety frequently seen on street signs are usually the work of T.S.A. Whatever benefits are achieved are always credited to some agency other than T.S.A. It prefers to remain in the background, seeking results rather than recognition.

While Slutz and I were playing gin, we talked shop. He said, "I wish I knew some way by which traffic safety could get the same support from all radio stations that we get on WWJ."

Right then and there I got an idea. "You may not do as well anywhere as you do with me, but I'll tell you how you can get a great deal of support, everywhere, much more than you do now."

He was all ears, instantly. "How?"

"Set up a system of national awards for the best job in traffic safety. Have awards for stations, sponsors, and individual programs. Then design some attractive plaques and each year throw a dinner with a lot of fanfare in New York, which will draw publicity, and make the presentations. It will cost a little money, but should pay off a thousand to one."

That is what started the process which resulted in the "Alfred P. Sloan Awards for Traffic Safety," now one of broadcasting's most coveted prizes. Naturally, the first year's award was won by WWJ.

Despite the pressures and disorganization brought on by the war, I found time to start a program in which I took much pride. It was called "Alcoholics Anonymous." This marked the first time that the members of this organization forsook anonymity sufficiently to go on the air. The venture was regarded as being so noteworthy that all the

national officers came out from New York, and together with the Detroit heads, ten people in all, they met in my office.

They were a remarkable group of men and women. Most were professional people. All of them had been important at one time, until drink dragged them down to the point where they admitted defeat and joined A.A. Then apparently a new life opened up for them, but it was based on foundations which needed constant bolstering.

Our meeting started, and we had barely gotten over the amenities when a telephone call came for one of the officials of the Detroit chapter. He left my office to take the call, was gone about five minutes, then came back and said, "Mr. Bannister, I'm terribly sorry, but we must all leave immediately. We have a brother in trouble. I'll call you later." Without waiting for me to say anything and without further explanation or apology, all ten hurried away.

This was their own individual defense against backsliding. They kept so busy picking up other guys from the gutter that they didn't have time to lie down themselves. They were wonderful, yet in a way frightening. They all had the same look in their eyes, a look that told eloquently of past disintegration, degradation and disgrace. In the back of each pair of eyes was fear, stark, naked fear. They are never quite sure that they have made it, so fear pursues them constantly. Part of their therapy is to harp repeatedly on what they've been through, so they themselves can never forget. To an outsider, however well disposed, it gets eerie.

We got together again the next day, and this time we wrapped it up. They gave me fine scripts and we put together a weekly half-hour show, which started almost im-

mediately. The show's biggest booster, outside of A.A., was W. E. Scripps, publisher of the *Detroit News*.

We had been on the air about three months when W.E. asked me one day, "How much does this show cost you?"

I told him about \$250 every time it went on the air.

He said, "The only thing wrong with it is that it's too good for just one station. It ought to be on every station in America."

I got on the phone that day, and before nightfall I had arranged for six stations in the state of Michigan to carry the show, provided we shipped them recordings. Next morning, when I told W. E. Scripps about this, he was so happy that I asked, "How far do you want me to go? My cost because of recording fees will now be about \$500 per show. For another \$500 or \$1,000 in all, I can make and ship out a hundred or more copies of each show."

The Old Man's eyes gleamed as he said, "Would you? I think that would be wonderful!" No wonder I was so fond of him.

In a short time, I got together a list of over 100 stations. At its peak the show had a lineup of some 125 stations, and it was costing me about \$1,200 weekly for public service outside my coverage area. This got me no credit from either the FCC or local opinion makers, but I hoped it would earn me a golden crown in heaven.

Almost from the start, the hardheaded money boys on the paper were after me. While I could always hide behind W. E. Scripps and shut off all criticism, I didn't like to do this. So I pointed to our rising revenue and profits, and the excess profits tax which then took the lion's share of our profits and resulted in the show's actually costing very little, net. I know I failed to convince anyone, but for over a year I kept going.

Then I decided that the A.A. show had proved and established itself, so I wrote the 125 stations that carried it and suggested they pay us \$5 per show, which would not quite have covered the extra cost incurred in supplying the recordings. The response really made me sick. Four stations out of 125 agreed to pay the \$5 fee; all the rest said they would drop it.

So I kept A.A. on WWJ, and stopped being a program supplier. There went my chance for a heavenly crown.

PART TWO



TELEVISION

CAMERA!

● THE BEGINNINGS OF TELEVISION have been traced back to 1884. Progress was slow, and by the late 1930s there were still only a few thousand receiving sets throughout the world. As the curtain of World War II descended on all peacetime scientific achievements, a number of developments suddenly intensified the pace of television's growth. Once peace returned, it was clear that television would become a reality.

A peculiar competitive situation arose, however, which unnecessarily delayed the spread of television. Most of the development work on television in the 1930s and during the war had been done by RCA. In 1945 General David Sarnoff, chairman of RCA, told NBC's affiliated radio stations that they should begin planning to get into television. The rapid-fire finishing touches on television by RCA and its subsidiary, NBC, created a competitive situation for the Columbia Broadcasting System, which did not relish having its chief rival identified in the public mind as the sole, or even the chief, promoter of this new medium, television. Therefore, to protect its competitive position, Columbia sought an effective counterdevelopment. Its vast resources were unloosed to perfect color television, working feverishly throughout the war years

so that the television system of the nation might be based on CBS color and not on the black-and-white of NBC-RCA.

Despite its great efforts, Columbia failed. When war ended, the Federal Communications Commission, after exhaustive hearings, declared that color was not ready, while black-and-white was, and soon proceeded to issue construction permits for commercial television stations. One of these was WWJ.

As early as 1944 I had appointed a committee of department heads at WWJ to study television. They went everywhere in America where anyone knew anything about it. There was not too much available knowledge, but what there was we absorbed.

June 19, 1946, was a decisive date for WWJ-TV. Joe Louis fought Billy Conn for the championship in New York. NBC used the occasion to introduce official Washington to television by bringing the fight to the nation's capital. At the Statler Hotel in special viewing rooms were Cabinet members, FCC commissioners, United States senators, congressmen, generals, admirals, bureau chiefs and a few broadcasters, myself included. It was quite a show, and I left there determined to get into television immediately.

The next day I started work on a formal application to the FCC. At that time four channels had already been allocated to Detroit. Soon there were five applications for them. The FCC's technique for conducting hearings had yet to be perfected. It arranged to have the five applicants appear en masse, which meant that one of the five would return empty-handed.

We prepared for the hearing as we would have for a radio show, employing every device of drama and show-

manship at our command. Everyone was keyed up and raring to go. To our profound chagrin, on the Friday before the opening of the hearing, I got a wire from Tom Slowie, secretary of the Commission, saying, "No need to appear for hearing. Application granted." Two of the applicants had withdrawn, so each of the three remaining got a grant. They were WWJ, George Storer's WJBK, ABC's WXYZ.

My people were disappointed. We had the show ready and we wanted to put it on the road, but had we known then what we all know now, we would have fallen to our knees and given thanks. Protracted hearings cost huge sums of money. They also create heartache and worry, because in every competitive hearing somebody wins and somebody loses.

As soon as I had the grant, I began pushing to get on the air even though there was not a single television set in the Detroit area. Neither of my competitors hankered for the role of pioneer, but I *wanted* to be first, this being traditional at WWJ.

The first commercial license had been issued to WNBT (NBC) on July 1, 1941, followed by a handful of stations, mostly in New York. This group froze when the war stopped further growth. First to join the original group was the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* station, KSD. Two weeks later, on March 4, 1947, WWJ-TV went on the air. There followed a flood of applications and grants, although many affiliates of CBS still held back on the ostensible ground that color TV soon would make all black-and-white obsolete. I suspected that their reluctance was based on the much more practical reason of avoiding the pain and expense of pioneering. Some of those that held back never did make it, because by the time they finally

decided that television was here to stay, it was too late; there were no more channels to be had. Even those who did make it later were subjected to years of delay and long-drawn-out expensive hearings, which in 1946 or 1947 could have been avoided. Channels were going begging then and the FCC was practically pleading with broadcasters to apply.

The pioneers who applied for television in 1946 and 1947 subsequently made a great deal of money. Under our free-economy system they earned every penny of it, because at the time they applied and spent huge sums of money to launch a new business, there was no assurance that they would ever recover their investments, let alone show any profit. Many broadcasters thought that television never would be profitable. They took their courage in their hands when most "practical" businessmen played it safe. That is why many American communities without television lagged behind other sections, while the pioneers grew and grew. Such growth was a just reward for vision and willingness to run risks.

In mid-1946 the *Detroit News* carried a banner story announcing that WWJ was the first radio station in Detroit to apply for television. The next day I got a telephone call from Ralph Younker, director of advertising for J. L. Hudson, and he said, "Can I come over to see you?" Naturally I said, "Sure."

Soon he was in my office, and without any preliminaries he said, "So you're going into television. When do you expect to be on the air?"

I told him it would be late that year or early in 1947.

So he asked, "Do you have an order blank in your desk?"

Of course I did. He took it and wrote a few words here and a few there, then returned it to me.

It was a blanket order, properly executed and signed, including carbon copies, for a 30-minute program on WWJ-TV's first night on the air, and weekly thereafter with "time, cost and nature of program to be determined later." After I read it, he said, "I want to be your first sponsor." He was, and I was in the happy position of having a firm order from Detroit's leading retailer, nine months before our first television broadcast.

We got our television equipment in January, 1947. The engineers played around with it for about a month and finally learned how to transmit a reasonably good picture. So we decided to put on our first television show.

It was to be a closed-circuit job, originating in our lone TV studio, then still under construction, going by wire across Lafayette Boulevard into the Detroit News Building and up to the board room where all the officers and directors of the Detroit *News* were gathered, eager to get their first glimpse of this new marvel into which they had just sunk a million dollars.

We planned a 45-minute show consisting of news, some variety entertainment, a film, and a spiel by me about all the new frontiers we would be crossing.

About an hour before the show was to start, the engineers called and said they wanted to get a "fix" on me, and would I come up to the studio. I did, and they directed me to a spot which was indicated on the floor with chalk marks. Then they elaborately dollyed both our cameras into shooting range and turned on the lights full force. Those lights were the hottest I had ever known, and the sweat began pouring out of me. I stood there three minutes, five minutes, six minutes, seven minutes, which seemed an eternity, and then I started noticing peculiar things. There were three doors to this studio and a big

window between it and the control room, which had one door. All four doors were constantly opening and closing, and people would appear who would nonchalantly look around, grin and withdraw, to be shortly replaced by others, on and on. It didn't require much perspicacity to figure out that the engineers were giving it to me, but good; that the word had gone around quickly so all my long-suffering colleagues could have the opportunity of watching me sizzle. I was wringing-wet by this time, but I decided it was up to me to re-establish my melting authority. I looked around, grinned, and said to Dick Love, the engineering manager, who had been enjoying himself hugely, "You know, these lights are marvelous for my sinus. For the first time in months my head is clear, my nostrils are wide-open, and I can really breathe."

I then ostentatiously filled my lungs a couple of times, and everybody looked unhappy after having grinned fatuously since they turned on the lights. Soon they decided they had their "fix" and released me. Our show was a success, and the owners and management of the *Detroit News* all felt they were getting their money's worth.

We converted our biggest radio studio to television and made a control room out of the clients' observation booth, which was never very big. By the time we put in the necessary equipment, it was a tight fit. Even the girls whose work occasionally took them in there had to be flat-chested.

We went on the air in March on a haphazard sort of basis, still busy debugging the equipment and familiarizing our staff with a brand-new set of performance values. Finally in June we started regular schedules on the basis of twenty-eight hours weekly. For eighteen months WWJ-TV was on the air, all alone, with no competition, no

network, and very little available film. Yet out of our own resources we maintained a constantly increasing schedule, rising to forty hours weekly, before the coming of the network. We filled the 10-inch screen, all that was then available, with beauty contests, sewing demonstrations, midget auto racing, wrestling, hockey, amateur boxing, cooking lessons, anything that moved. It wasn't much, but it was new and exciting, and everybody loved it.

Early in our history we put on a contest to find the most beautiful girl in Detroit, who was to be "Miss Television." I will never forget the first rehearsal. We had our stage set up to look like a garden, with a rose arbor at back stage. Each contestant first appeared on camera in the rose arbor, which was three steps above the stage. Walter Koste, the producer, had one of the beauties stand under the roses. Then with a lot of schmalz in his voice he said, "Now, darling, step down with all the beauty and grace that heaven bestowed on you." She took one step, tripped and fell flat on her face; her legs went up and her dress came down, revealing her panties: Not much grace and beauty there.

Then and there I decided that beauty was not enough. I telephoned a "charm school" to send over an instructor who took each contestant in hand, showed her how to walk, what to do with hands, etc. Things got much better thereafter.

Many other strange things happened. There was the night we did a show in the J. L. Hudson series, with the commercial devoted to kitchen gadgets. We were selling a can opener—one of those fancy gadgets which one attaches to the wall. The can is inserted, a lever is turned, and presto, off comes the top. A sweet young thing in white was to do the commercial. About thirty minutes be-

fore we went on the air, the producer, who had been sitting around cutting out paper dolls, suddenly decided he'd better check the show. When he did, to his dismay and consternation, he discovered that no one had thought to provide a can for demonstrating the can opener.

So the property man was sent out pronto to scour the neighborhood and come back with a can of something.

Well, it was 8 o'clock in the evening in downtown Detroit, and there wasn't a grocery store open within a mile of the station. Nevertheless, the property man took off. In ten minutes he returned with a can, but the property man was a fellow who did practically all of his shopping in saloons and what he brought back was a can of salted peanuts. He didn't know, the producer didn't know, I didn't know (I was onstage), that for some mysterious reason when they package salted peanuts in a can they use metal about four or five times the thickness used for canning tomatoes or applesauce. So, totally oblivious to the forces of fate hovering over our stage, on went the show. Everything went off fine until the big can opener commercial. The young thing in white, in all her girlish loveliness, said, according to the script, "See how easy it works. You insert the can here, and with a flip of the wrist you turn the crank. See how easy it works." But it didn't. So, applying a little more pressure, she grasped the lever again and said, "See how easy it works." It still wouldn't budge. So, taking a firmer grip on the lever and summoning all her strength, and with a hint of grimness in her voice, once more she said, "See how easy it works." She gave it one hard yank and down tumbled the can; the can opener fell apart, and out of the wall came the panel to which it had been attached. All on camera! Everybody retired in confusion, but some quick-witted program fellow had the presence of mind to throw a piano player on the

air while we signed off the show. Then we all adjourned to the place whence had come the salted peanuts and seriously contemplated mass suicide because we had loused up our best account.

But here's the payoff. The next day, in the housewares department of J. L. Hudson's, they sold every can opener in stock—three gross. According to the buyer, they could have sold five or six gross more. Everybody who came in said substantially the same thing: "I want to see the can opener that fell apart on television last night."

We had gone on the air with a completely sold-out commercial schedule. Yet our revenue was not enough to meet expenses. At that time, on WWJ we were selling a radio circulation of 1 million sets for a price of \$800 an hour. When WWJ-TV went on regular schedule, there were about 3,000 TV sets in Detroit, for which our rate was \$250 an hour. We increased the rate within one year to \$420 an hour. Since this was cockeyed arithmetic, we made no effort to justify the rate on a circulation basis. Instead we sold the prestige of pioneering and the opportunity to learn how to handle the medium of the future for relatively little money. The plan worked. All through our early history, our business remained at capacity levels.

However, television operating costs were so high that in the first two years of WWJ-TV's history we lost over \$800,000. Everything in television was much costlier than radio, requiring more space, more manpower, more rehearsal, more staff work, more equipment. The "one-man show" which had been staple fare in radio just did not exist in TV. We covered a baseball game in radio by sending to the ball park one announcer and one engineer. It took a minimum of twelve men to do a ball game on TV; sometimes as many as seventeen were used.

In the face of our losses on WWJ-TV, the owners of the

Detroit *News* were calm, game and uncomplaining. Never once did I hear even a murmur of criticism except "Let's have more and better programs," which of course meant more expense and greater losses.

We worked with no precedents to guide us, and most of the time the only way to learn was by experience. Our engineers particularly had a terrible time learning how to handle the unfamiliar equipment because, despite the air of omnipotence which all broadcasting engineers assume and the knowing way in which they toss out polysyllabic gibberish, they knew little or nothing about television, and like all the rest of us, they had to learn in the hard school of experience. Consequently our programming had many interruptions; our picture had many ghosts, many "venetian blinds."

Some of these faults originated with the FCC, whose engineers were just as ignorant as ours, despite years of previous study. They had adopted an allocations table, distributing channels without really knowing too much about the characteristics of television signals. Soon they had created quite a mess. It had been believed that when a television impulse left the transmitting antenna it took off on a straight line for the horizon, where it hit the ground and died. However, as soon as a number of TV stations were actually on the air, and TV set ownership spread, it was discovered that after hitting the ground these signals bounced up and came down again far beyond the original horizon. Soon they were bouncing in each other's back yards, creating "venetian blinds" and chaos.

Nine months after WWJ-TV went on the air, the NBC station in Cleveland also came on, using Channel 4, the same as WWJ. In a straight line, across Lake Erie, the two

transmitters were less than 100 miles apart, yet more than 200 miles of separation were needed to prevent interference. For a few weeks our picture was simply god-awful and NBC's in Cleveland was just as bad. Fortunately, some of the NBC engineers in New York had accumulated enough experience and understanding to come up with a solution which did much to ease the situation. It was called "offset" and it meant that the two transmitters would collaborate, so that one used a frequency slightly higher than its authorization, while the other went slightly lower than its assigned frequency, thus creating a gap in the two signals which did away with the "venetian blinds." It was makeshift, but better than nothing.

This sort of thing was going on everywhere, and it was getting worse with each new grant. So in September, 1948, the FCC wisely decided not to further compound its errors and declared a "freeze" on television, until it could restudy and re-evaluate the physical characteristics of the TV signal. Stations already on the air were undisturbed, and anyone with a grant who had broken ground for construction could go ahead and build, then take the air. The "freeze" was to have been for about six months. It actually lasted almost four years.

The final melting was largely brought on by the work of my consulting engineer, Bill Foss. As is typical of bureaucrats, after creating the mess which made the "freeze" necessary, the FCC did little or nothing to improve matters as the years went by. Foss, who was a highly imaginative and ingenious man, had started to work in 1950 on the problem of how to correct the impossible situation which placed the same channel, 4, in Detroit and Cleveland, so close as to cause unavoidable interference. Also there was somewhat similar trouble throughout the im-

mediate Midwest, prompting Foss to come up with a scheme involving a reallocation of channels over an area that extended from Detroit down into West Virginia, radiating east and west. Altogether it affected about a dozen stations in eight or nine cities. In each case, by shifting channels, the Foss plan eliminated interference and greatly improved the picture quality. The FCC engineers grasped it as a drowning man would grab a rope. After approving Bill Foss's plan and putting it into effect, they used it as a central starting point to cover the nation. Eventually it became the master plan of reallocation which ended the freeze in July, 1952, and under which television still operates.

Right from the start of WWJ-TV, I tried every possible way to get my cameras into a boxing match, but the promoters would have no part of it. Finally I decided to do my own promoting. I organized the Television Amateur Boxing Association of Michigan, which served as an overall clearinghouse for everyone who had anything to do with amateur boxing. This included athletic clubs, fraternal organizations, settlement houses, church groups, boys' clubs, etc. They all needed equipment and financial support, which I gave them. In return, their activities were coordinated so that there was a weekly boxing show, somewhere, for us to televise. They were all boys, seldom over eighteen, and they were woefully lacking in skill but long on pep and zip. The audience loved it. We ran for almost a year until the network brought us professional boxing, after which my amateurs didn't look so good.

From the time of our first public announcement about WWJ-TV, I was besieged by requests to make speeches. It seemed as if everyone wanted to know all about TV. At times I made as many as three talks in one week to

women's clubs, luncheon clubs, schools, and business groups. One day into my office walked an attractive, energetic, smiling young lady who announced that she represented the Central Woodward Avenue Methodist Church, and could I come there to speak on TV on such-and-such a date. Instinctively I recoiled from a church date, feeling that my freewheeling, breezy, irreverent style was hardly suited to such a setting. So, after looking at my calendar, I murmured regretfully that I would be out of town on the date in question, which settled the matter, and she left. Later I discovered that this church conducted one of the leading lecture courses in town, attracting speakers from everywhere; they also paid a substantial fee to each speaker. I had made speech after speech for nothing, and the first time I had a chance to get paid I turned it down. How big a fool can a man be? Bitterly I castigated myself for days, but a few weeks later I got another chance. Same girl, same big smile, walked into my office again. It seemed that the speaker scheduled to appear the next night had been taken suddenly ill and forced to cancel; could I fill in, on such short notice? I almost tackled her to tell her "Yes" before she could get away. To my surprise, I found I didn't have to trim my sails at all. My slightly off-color jokes and stories never had a better audience!

One of my favorite speeches was devoted to telling what television would do for education. I used to draw a word picture of Albert Einstein lecturing on mathematics to a thousand classes assembled from Maine to California. Being thoroughly sold on my own propaganda, very early on WWJ-TV we had an hour's educational program done in collaboration with the University of Michigan. It was on atomic energy, featuring Dr. Ralph A. Sawyer,

dean of the Graduate School, who had been one of the physicists on the Manhattan Project and later, as Commander Sawyer, had headed up the United States Navy experiments on Bikini. After several such programs I decided to move into the next area which my early dreams of education by TV had envisioned, namely, courses for college credit.

I sat down with Dr. Alexander G. Ruthven, the president of the University of Michigan, and some twenty members of his faculty, representing a number of university committees. I submitted a proposal to them for a television series of college courses to be embodied in "The University of Michigan Television Hour." I offered them one hour of prime time on WWJ-TV every Sunday. I told them this offer was irrevocable, that the time would always be theirs and would never be recaptured by the station for any other purpose. I told them I would pay the faculty people who worked on this program, and I attached only two conditions: one, that some form of college credit be given for the course; and, two, that a tuition fee be charged.

Naturally they were very much interested; in fact, enthusiastic. After some discussion, the executive vice-president of the University asked me, "What do you think we ought to do with this hour?" In order to start the discussion, I suggested that the hour be broken up into three 20-minute segments, one segment to be devoted to the liberal arts, one to practical living, one to be a showcase for the University. To my complete surprise and partial dismay, they immediately accepted my suggestion *in toto*, with no discussion, and that is the way it went on the air; as far as I know, that's how it still is.

While my formula turned out to be successful, I have always felt that in grabbing it so convulsively, these rank-

ing educators from one of America's noted universities actually revealed the sterility of their own thinking. The dawn of a revolutionary communications medium should have found such a group more advanced in ideas and plans as to how television could be fitted into education. When I left WWJ in 1952, there were some 3,500 enrollments in the "University of Michigan Television Hour," each one paying a tuition fee which qualified the student to receive corollary reading material and take an examination for a certificate. At that time, 60 per cent of all American colleges had student bodies smaller in total size than the "University of Michigan Television Hour" enrollments.

Another of my early experiences with TV and education came at about this time. I got a telephone call from Dean Carl Ackerman of the Columbia School of Journalism in late 1950. At this school they have a postgraduate program called the American Press Institute, consisting of a series of seminars which serve as refresher courses for working newspapermen. Those who attend usually come in groups of about fifty, then for five or six weeks they are thrown together constantly. Even when not attending organized classes, they are comparing notes and swapping information. The Institute is sustained by contributions from newspapers, one of which is the *Detroit News*.

The purpose of Dean Ackerman's call was to tell me that they were planning a seminar for managing editors which would be attended by fifty-five men, including editors of some of America's most famous newspapers, and that for the first time television would be on the agenda. In scouting around for someone to conduct this class, he had been referred to me. I was asked to deliver a ninety-minute paper on what television is, what it will be, and what it

means to a newspaper, then spend up to two hours in answering questions. For this I would be paid \$250. The closing argument got me, and I said, "Sure."

Knowing that even on newspapers that own broadcasting stations there is a basic antagonism on the part of most working newspapermen toward all broadcasters, and that any group of fifty-five managing editors would be sure to view with suspicion and hostility a fellow who managed a television station, I determined to be as brilliant as my limited talents would allow. I worked harder in preparing my ninety-minute spiel than I ever had on any previous speech. My usual procedure is to write a speech, then rewrite and rewrite and rewrite, then polish and refine and rewrite some more. I have to do this because writing comes hard to me, and I have to work at it endlessly if I am to achieve anything satisfactory. Once the speech is finished, it is comparatively easy for me to memorize it, which I always do, delivering it without notes or cue sheets. It looks very impressive but in reality the writing and refining are much tougher than the actual delivery.

My date at Columbia University was on a Tuesday afternoon in January, at 1:00 P.M. Since managers of network-affiliated stations always have pending business at the network, I got to New York at noon on Monday, went over to NBC and saw several people. I ended up at about 4:00 P.M. in the office of vice-president Harry Kopf. Soon we were joined by Jim Gaines, Chick Showerman, George Frey and others. At about 5:30 we left for "21," where several others joined us; then we went to Toots Shor's, and then after a few weaklings had left for home, the hard core really got down to business. At about 4:00 A.M. I got back to the Ambassador Hotel. As nearly as I could afterward recall, during the ten hours or so devoted to drinking I

had had about twenty Scotch-and-sodas. However, I had been doing this all my life without ever being drunk or even slightly out of control, and with never any kind of hangover. So I gave no thought to it.

I left a call for 8:30 A.M., which would give me plenty of time to dress leisurely and spend a couple of hours in a final rehearsal. At 8:30 the operator awakened me. After throwing my legs over the side of the bed and answering the phone, I noticed something strange. The walls of my room were moving, the floor was running toward the ceiling, and the ceiling was running toward the floor. Everything moved in a counter direction, and I remember looking at this for a moment and thinking to myself, "That's a hell of a way to run a first-class hotel." This was all new to me, so I thought, "I'll stretch out for a few minutes, and it will all pass away." I did so, but then the bed started spinning, faster and faster, and buckling in the middle, and I feared it might make me nauseated. So I thought, "I'll get under the shower. That should do it." I stood under the cold shower till I got blue, then changed to hot, then cold again. It helped a little, but not much, and I was beginning to worry. I had a vision of making a bum of myself before those fifty-five managing editors.

Then I thought, "Why don't I shave? Shaving takes concentration and if I concentrate hard, mind should triumph over matter." I shaved and got through it without cutting myself. While things had slowed down a little, they were still running all over the room. I was light-headed, and everything I looked at had shadows all around it. Now I was really worried. I could think of only one thing more. I called room service and ordered fruit, eggs, steak, potatoes, rolls and coffee. Soon it came, and it helped some.

But I was still far, far from being okay. By this time it was about 10:30 A.M. and I had but one more weapon left. I dressed hurriedly, got outside, set off and walked to Columbia University, about a five-mile hike.

That did it. With about a mile to go, suddenly my head cleared, the shadows disappeared, everything was normal. But it was an unusually warm day in January, and my heavy coat plus the long hike were too much for me. I developed a severe chafing between my legs and walked into the School of Journalism bowlegged like a cowboy after a week in the saddle.

Following a brief introduction, I delivered my talk, and when I got through, some instructor took over to lead the question period. He waited and waited, but there were no questions, and finally he opined that the coverage had been "so complete nothing was left unanswered." So the class was dismissed. Several of the editors shook my hand and thanked me profusely for giving them almost two hours of free time: the hours allotted originally for the question period.

Early in television history the Ford Foundation was being importuned by colleges and universities everywhere to give them money for television, and, knowing little about TV, the Foundation sought help. It turned to an advertising man, Jim Young, an official of the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. He put together an *ad hoc* committee consisting of Paul Walker, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission; Rosel Hyde, FCC commissioner; Bob Kintner, then president of ABC; Frank Stanton, president of CBS; five college presidents, who shall be nameless; Jacob Holtzmann of the New York Board of Regents; Walter Damm of WTMJ, Milwaukee; Bob Swezey of WDSU, New Orleans; and me.

The minute we sat down, one of the college presidents took off viciously on the subject of television commercials, and despite repeated efforts by the chairman to get down to business, he persisted in ranting about the dishonesty and hypocrisy of commercial television. I was shocked, because, after all, the head of a great university must be something of an executive and should understand the value of time. There were people there, like myself, who had come from distant places, leaving their own businesses and interests in an effort to be helpful to a worthwhile cause. But this chap was oblivious to the serious purpose of the meeting, and wasted an hour of everyone's time while he vented his spleen.

The committee wrangled for the better part of a day, with the college heads revealing far-reaching ignorance of the problems and mechanics of television operation. Yet they were unyielding in their original position, which was that they wanted money from the Foundation with which to build television stations. While I never saw Jim Young's report, and the committee never met again, I understood that the recommendation was that Ford Foundation money should go into programming and not building. I heartily agreed.

I was a member of the committee which wrote the Television Code that today governs the operation of most television stations. Broadcasters learned, in the early days of radio, that a license to broadcast was not a license to run wild, and that self-restraint had to be exercised by artists, advertisers, and management.

The first governing body, the Federal Radio Commission, later succeeded by the Federal Communications Commission, did not regard itself as possessing police powers over anything except the physical performance of a

station. As long as a station's signal stayed on the assigned frequency, did not exceed its authorized power and observed its allotted hours of operation, it could get into very little trouble.

However, a considerable number of broadcasters soon realized that controls were needed, over themselves and especially over those licensees who were not inclined to respond to their public responsibility. Those with vision could see the danger inherent in such a situation. So was born the earliest code, put together under the aegis of the National Association of Broadcasters. Right from the start there were some stations which would not subscribe to the code, just as there were stations which would not join NAB. Such stations operated either under the NAB code or else by codes of their own which sometimes were stricter than the industry code.

The tendency through the years has been to make the code stronger and enforcement stricter. As radio grew and became important to more and more people, broadcasters increasingly rallied around the code, some sincerely, others with tongue in cheek.

When television came along, it seemed the most natural thing in the world to promulgate a television code. Because WWJ-TV was on the air before most other stations, I couldn't wait for an industry code, so—dating back to our first week on the air—I had established “Standards of Practice,” which said, in part:

“Our television programming at all times must be so meticulously correct that no portion of our schedule will give unnecessary offense to anyone at any time. There must be no use of ‘blue’ material or of anything susceptible to *double-entendre*. There must be nothing in our schedule which will cause the lifting of an eyebrow by even the

most straitlaced in our audience. Appearance, language, intonation, gesture must all be beyond reproach. Racial comedy types must be avoided. References to God or religion must always be reverent. Crime and drunkenness, when used, must be condemned. A list of all taboos would be too lengthy. In all cases, good taste, propriety and the avoidance of offense must be the ultimate criteria."

Critics and eggheads scream their heads off at this type of self-imposed "Puritanism," as they like to call it. It is normal procedure for both to become violent about TV. Most critics, by their own admission, dislike television. The eggheads boast constantly that they never watch television. Both indulge in a species of intellectual dishonesty. The critic's attitude stems from complete frustration at being a critical eunuch. Most eggheads incline toward intellectual snobbery, regarding themselves as above the run of humanity. They think it smart or chic to be unimpressed by what appeals to ordinary people. Most of it is a pose. There is something about broadcasting that attracts "the slings and arrows" of all eggheads. Hundreds of times I have been thrown in with people who, as soon as they find out what my business is, can't wait to tell me, and usually loudly enough for others to hear, that "television programs have become so bad, we never turn our set on any more." I usually accept this in silence, or with a feeble witticism, because I know there is more to come. It often goes like this: "Last Monday night So-and-so was certainly terrible, and who ever wrote that awful thing that followed him? Then on Tuesday I never heard anything as putrid as Such-and-such." He goes on to every hour of every night of the week; he knows the schedules better than I do, but according to him, "We never turn our set on any more."

Most people are enthusiastic about television. Almost all American homes have at least one TV set. Many have two or more. The hours of daily viewing have gone up steadily. As the number of sets increases, the use of each set also increases.

Such statistics are regarded with contempt by the egg-head. Because he thinks of himself as superior to the common herd, he feels that he has the right and should have the power to tell everyone else what to see on TV. Most of the unthinking criticism we hear stems from this viewpoint. None of it comes from the habitual viewer.

Many people would like to get their hands on television controls. In government especially the urge to regulate television programming is strong. Historically, this is nothing new; it started with the advent of radio and has persisted all through the years. Television is so much more compelling and powerful than radio that the desire to control it is correspondingly greater. Oddly enough, since television displaced radio as the number-one entertainment medium, the pressures for censorship and control have almost vanished in radio, as they have intensified in television. Yet the need for economic survival today has driven many radio stations to practices which would not have been condoned before television came along.

Criticism of television almost always stems from fundamental antagonisms and preconceived points of view, which ignore facts and are not susceptible to reason. It overlooks the most important fact of all, which is that television has given the American people precisely what it wants. Otherwise set circulation and hours of daily viewing would not have increased so consistently. This is an overwhelming vote of confidence which transcends all theory.

Then, there is the almost equally important matter of the taste of the average person. Televisors have educated the mass audience to take a *Richard the Third*, a *Macbeth*, a *Saint Joan* or a *Fledermaus* now and then, but not too often. For staple fare, the level of taste runs much lower, critics and eggheads notwithstanding.

Does television underestimate its audience? One of the favorite clichés of critics and eggheads is that if the networks just raised their sights, culturally and intellectually, they would be surprised at the audience reaction. Like all the rest of this type of wishful thinking, it completely ignores whatever there is in the way of proved facts, such as that time and again high-level programming which won acclaim from the critics has had its cultural ears beaten off in audience popularity by Westerns, whodunits, doctor shows, etc.

When dealing with something as ineffable as the demonstrable taste in television programming of more than 190 million people, there are not many "moments of truth." There is one measuring stick that I know of, which is directly pertinent: Alice Payne Hackett's *Sixty Years of Best Sellers*, an authoritative, widely recognized work. Her 1954 list of the ten best-selling books of the twentieth century was full of surprises. It consisted of *In His Steps*, two cookbooks, Dr. Spock's *Child Care*, *Gone with the Wind*, *God's Little Acre*, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, and—this was the real killer-diller—three Mickey Spillane mysteries.

All the great novelists, some with a hundred years or more accumulated momentum, are unhorsed in a generation by three Mickey Spillanes. Any television schedule, in any one week, will sink no lower and occasionally rise much higher than the literary levels of this list.

When television raises its sights and presents an *Em-*

peror Jones or a *Merchant of Venice*, the result is breathtaking. Add to this a Presidential inauguration, the coronation of a queen or a flight into space, and right there you have enough rewarding experiences to more than justify the cost of a TV set to the most cynical scoffer. Television crams more worthwhile things into a few years than most people would see in a lifetime without it.

The three networks, all told, broadcast about 20,000 programs yearly. Individual stations originate a total of about 5 million programs yearly, film included. The overall cultural level is a bit higher than average taste. In my experience, I have seldom known programs to flop because their cultural appeal was too low, but I have known many programs which laid an egg because they were over the heads of the audience.

Much has been said and written about the effect of television on children. Again, the realities are overlooked as the eggheads argue from a point of view rather than the facts. When television was young, many families acquired sets while some children had already grown up, so that frequently one or more kids grew up with TV, while older brothers and sisters did not. Fathers and mothers of such families will attest that the kids who grew up with TV are usually sharper, smarter, quicker mentally in all respects, at all comparable ages, than the older ones who had no TV.

Another truth ignored completely by television's critics is that, of all modern inventions, television does most to keep children and parents at home. Such noteworthy advances of our age as the automobile, the airplane, the motion picture, to mention just a few, all take people out of the home. The social life of our forefathers was based almost entirely on the home. Following the mechanical

revolution one invention after another took people out of the home to near and faraway places. Television reverses this trend, and the home again becomes a gathering place to which television brings the near and the faraway places.

Of course, television demands that parents exercise discrimination and discipline in their choice of programs for the children. But this problem has existed as long as the human race has been around. My father wouldn't let me read Nick Carter or Frank Merriwell. Nor was I allowed to go to burlesque shows.

No home can abdicate its obligation to supervise the education of its children. Television is much easier to control than the various forms of youthful misconduct which prevailed when I was a juvenile delinquent.

Another sin has been laid at television's doorstep. One hears that "television has destroyed the art of conversation." That's a laugh if I ever heard one!

Anyone who today is forty-five years old was old enough before TV started to have visited many people in their homes. In homes inhabited by average people, and even in the homes of exceptional people, how much sparkling conversation was on tap, regularly? What timeless quips? What memorable *bons mots*? Wherever the art of conversation was practiced notably before television, it still continues. If anything, the quality has improved, because television has added something to everyone's sum of knowledge.

Certainly there are bad television programs, just as there are bad plays on Broadway, bad movies, bad books, bad pieces written by reporters in every issue of every newspaper. Behind every television program there are people, and their work encompasses all the frailties of

the human race as well as its virtues. Occasionally television plumbs the depths, but now and then it scales the heights of beauty and perfection.

On election night, 1948, I sold a lot of television sets. I had twenty-two people in my living room, watching Presidential election returns on a couple of 10-inch screens, the only size then available. Within the next few months each one of the families who were my guests that night had bought a TV set, this despite the fact that most of them had a rotten time at my house watching Thomas Dewey lose the Presidency.

Since then I have read and heard much elaborate analysis and explanation, but I still don't understand why Dewey lost. Of course, the sometimes deliberate, sometimes unconscious falsification of the Dewey "image" by the press hurt him a lot, but at the time I thought he had too much riding for him to be done in by biased reporting. He was no backslapper, and he did let his erudition and breeding show. If there is one thing that the fourth estate cannot stand, it's a feeling of inferiority; nature had taken care of Dewey's opponent, so he never had this problem.

I first met Dewey in Washington at a Gridiron Dinner in the spring of 1947, and as usual, the dinner was preceded and followed by many cocktail parties. At one of these, as often happens, there came a moment when I wanted to be alone, so, drink in hand, I retreated to a lounge chair in a remote corner. The next thing I knew, someone had followed suit in the chair next to mine. I didn't see him approach, but I turned my head and there he was. He smiled, stuck out his hand and said, "I'm Tom Dewey." I replied, "Yes, I recognized you. I'm Harry Bannister. I run WWJ in Detroit." Having been born

and raised in Owosso, Michigan, he knew all about WWJ.

I told him that there was a question I had always wanted to ask him. I knew that in his youth he studied voice and did a lot of singing. In fact, for a while, there was some question in the Dewey family as to whether Tom should study law or try to become a concert singer. So I told him about a notation on one of our early logs. Broadcasting stations keep an engineering log and an announcer's log. Between them they record everything that goes on the air and all information pertinent thereto. This one stated, "Quartet from Owosso," and in the column headed "Remarks" the engineer had noted, "Baritone lousy." I told Dewey, "I've always wondered if that baritone was you." He laughed heartily, thought a moment, then said, "What year was that?" and I told him, "November, 1921." "No," he laughingly said, "it couldn't have been, because at that time I was in Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan. But I'll tell you something, Mr. Bannister. I sang over WWJ a number of times as soloist with the Detroit Symphony. Look it up when you get home." I did, and he was right.

We sat and chatted for the better part of an hour about Michigan, broadcasting, politics, music, economics, world affairs and the Gridiron Dinner. When we were occasionally interrupted by people who wanted to shake his hand, and he had the opportunity to leave, he made it quite clear that he intended to remain where he was. I found him to be totally unlike the word pictures drawn by unsympathetic reporters. He was warm, cordial, outgoing, with an orderly mind and a gift of self-expression. He would have been a fine President.

All through television's early years, WWJ was a Mecca for prospective televisors. Program people, producers,

engineers, accountants, salesmen came from everywhere to observe, study and learn what they could. Owners and station managers came, too, and sometimes their reactions were highly individual.

An old pal would write or telephone and say something like "You know, Harry, I, too, am going to be on the air with television in March [or in July, or in October] and I want to come over and really study your operation from soup to nuts, because, God knows, I need all the help I can get." To which I would reply, "Come when you can and I'll show you all we've got and tell you everything I know."

In due time my old pal would arrive, sit himself down in my office and say, "This is awfully swell of you, Harry, to let me take up your busy time this way. I'm here to learn all about television from you. I've heard, over and over, that you're doing a grand job here in Detroit, and I sure hope some of your savvy rubs off on me." So I would start to explain what I regarded as the salient points, and I'd get maybe a dozen words out of my mouth, when my pal would interrupt with "You know, I'm going to be on the air with TV in March [or July, or October] and I've been doing a lot of thinking about this television; I got ideas, real good ones, too. For one thing, I know I'm going to avoid all the mistakes that you, and the others, have been making." Then he would take off and talk for an hour—or as long as I'd listen—telling me how he was going to run his station, and naturally it would be altogether different from WWJ-TV. Finally I would get weary and call a halt. He would bounce out of his chair, grab my arm and pump it enthusiastically, meanwhile exclaiming with emotion, "I just can't tell you how much I appreciate all you've done for me. Maybe someday I can re-

ciprocate.” And I still hadn’t completed my first sentence.

Then I would assign someone to take my pal around the station, with instructions to show him everything, figuring that this way I wouldn’t have to listen to any more monologues, and my staff might well do with some enlightenment. Occasionally the visitor and his guide got separated, and my pal might improve the shining moment by making surreptitious job offers to people along the route, such as engineers, producers, maintenance men, etc. Sometimes the tour conductor would get a seductive proposition. As far as I know, nobody ever accepted these offers, but it sure wasn’t from lack of trying by several of my old buddies.

I remember particularly one charming Southern gentleman with a chivalrous air and beautiful rounded accents, replete with “you all,” “please, sir,” “thank you kindly”—the works. He was a man of varied interests, including part ownership of a station-representative business. He wrote a lovely letter, asking permission to call and learn all about television, and arrived dripping with urbanity and graciousness. He was most attentive to everything I told him, without any of the usual interruptions I had come to expect. This alone should have made me suspicious. He spent over half a day touring the joint, finally ending up back in my office late in the afternoon. Then it came, wrapped tenderly in eiderdown and fudge: a fraternal, sympathetic, helpful solicitation for me to fire my station representative, George Hollingbery, and turn over to my dear pal the job of representing WWJ nationally.

My impulse was to boot him out of my office to see if he would yell, “Ouch, you all.” Then I reflected that underneath that suave polished exterior there must be such crassness and stupidity that I would stub my toe, maybe

fracture it, no matter where I applied it, even at his softest surface.

I learned later that as he sat in my office, negotiations were already in progress to sell his radio station, including his TV application, and that he hadn't the slightest intention of ever going into television.

I must say that he showed lots of self-control and took quite a beating absorbing all that priceless information, which he would never use, just to set up the right atmosphere for his pitch.

At Christmastime in 1949, for the first time, the department stores in Detroit and most of the appliance stores were cleaned out of television sets. From then on, it was a seller's market, as circulation shot up and up. It had taken a quarter century after the founding of WWJ to get radio circulation to the million mark in Detroit. Television was to make it in less than a decade. And just as Amos 'n' Andy's radio quips were on all tongues in the thirties, beginning in 1948 Milton Berle dominated the nation's small talk for the next seven years. His vogue did not run quite as long as "Amos 'n' Andy's," but while it lasted, the fire burned hotter and brighter than anything in contemporary show business. I used to ride a Grand Trunk Railroad train occasionally from Birmingham to downtown Detroit. On Wednesday morning, following the preceding night's Berle show, the station platform, crowded with sophisticated, high-income-bracket commuters, rang with laughter as every funny line of Berle's was repeated over and over. Berle might possibly have lasted longer had he not been so good. He piled laugh on laugh into every minute of his weekly hour show, employing every device, every bit of comic routine he had learned in all his years of show business, spending material prodigally.

Finally he had no surprises left, and he went down almost as precipitously as he had shot upward. But while he was up there, he was king of them all. He caused more people to buy TV sets than anyone else connected with the medium.

Along with circulation, dollar volume of television zoomed and so did profits, but as our business expanded, we were more and more cramped for space. As early as January, 1949, it was apparent to me that what we needed was not a studio or storage space here and there, but a new and bigger building to house what I knew would soon be a huge business. At that time we were still in the red financially. Having put my owners through the throes of launching television, I thought it was too soon to ask for further large commitments based on the future. Yet the demand for room in which to expand was inexorable. So I started an oblique campaign, talking rather sorrowfully about space requirements, indicating, however, that if any new construction was necessary it should be purely utilitarian with no frills. I tentatively suggested a small building of cinder block, the cheapest type of construction, but dull and ugly. My purpose was to start the wheels going so that the need to build would get active consideration. I was positive that once a new building was decided on in principle, my troubles would be over, because Detroit *News* ownership and management had much too much pride to ever put up a building which would be even a shade less than the best. So it worked. The new WWJ-TV building, completed in 1952, is a thing of beauty besides being efficient operationally, much more so than its predecessor, the radio building.

In one respect it is unusual, because throughout its planning and construction I, the boss man, never once

looked at a blueprint. The architects and the engineers and my department heads used to file into my office, asking advice and direction.

As soon as they would start to unfold large blueprints I would stop them and say, "Tell me about it."

Out would come a few words, then again reference to the blueprint.

Again I would stop them with "Tell me in words—never mind the blueprint."

It took me a while to train them, but eventually they learned to tell me with just words. To me, words create images. Blueprints are so much mumbo jumbo; I don't understand them.

Bill Walbridge, who wore two hats in his positions as manager of WWJ-TV and assistant general manager of the entire business, was responsible for most of the planning, and talked, ate and slept with plans and blueprints for several years. But even he, once in a while, insisted on unfolding blueprints on my desk. When he did, because he was too big for me to throw out bodily, I would shut my eyes and repeat, "Tell me about it."

I ran a taut ship at WWJ, iron discipline prevailing at all times. After television came along with its expanded manpower and activity, I had the problem of communication within the organization, so I called a staff meeting of all department heads and straw bosses in my office every morning at 9 o'clock. This served the double purpose of exchanging information and getting everybody to work on time.

We would go briskly around the room, each man giving a rapid-fire report of happenings in his bailiwick during the previous twenty-four hours, with some general discussion of overall problems, and we would end by 9:40 or a little later.

I seldom said anything, leaving it to the others to carry the ball, but once in a long while I might interject a question, such as "What went wrong last night at 8:30 when we made that fuzzy cut?"

Invariably when I did this, Bill Walbridge would whisper elaborately to whoever sat next to him, more than loudly enough to carry all over the room, "God help us. The sonofabitch has been watching television again."

Walbridge, tall, husky and attractive, had started on WWJ in a behind-the-scenes role. While he held another job, he wrote scripts for a show called "The Black Ace," a sort of Lone Ranger in the sky. Then he came to work for us as a salesman but went off to war to be a naval officer. When he returned, I made him television manager. Now he runs KTRK-TV in Houston, Texas, and is regarded as one of the country's top broadcasters.

Bill, who came from an old Detroit family, was well connected socially. Once he served as an usher at a society wedding and among the guests were Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford—not the current Henry Ford but his grandfather. As the guests filed out of the church, Henry Ford shook hands with the bridegroom and congratulated him, adding as he took a huge old-fashioned watch out of his vest pocket, "I held a watch on you; you were married in exactly fourteen minutes and twenty seconds."

This curious intrusion of production-line thinking and techniques into personal life is common in Detroit. I encountered it often. One amusing example concerned Nicholas Drystedt, whose production exploits at Cadillac Motors are legendary.

I was once at a black-tie dinner party with Drystedt. He was talking to someone across the table when the overhead light flickered a couple of times. Nick looked up, then went on talking. It flickered again a minute or so

later and then a third time. This was too much for Mr. Drystedt. He cleared a space on the table in front of him, spread his napkin over it, stood up on a chair, stepped onto the table and unscrewed the light bulb. Then he reached into the hip pocket of his dress pants, took out a rubber glove and a pair of pliers, tightened up the fixture, replaced the bulb, then got down off the table, put away the glove and pliers and casually said to his dinner companion, "What was it you were saying?"

In 1951 came television's biggest show, the Kefauver committee crime investigation. Running over a stretch of weeks, from a number of American cities, it caused all other activity to stop everywhere. Day after day people sat with their eyes glued to the screen, watching a real-life drama which surpassed the most imaginative whodunit. The stars of the show were the "bad guys," the criminals, near criminals, and shady types who appeared before the senatorial inquisitors in New York, Chicago, Detroit and other cities. They unfolded tales of an underworld inhabited not by fictitious characters but by live human beings who appeared on the screen, unrehearsed, to have their nefarious pursuits pitilessly lighted up and exposed by sharp-tongued lawyers for the Senate committee.

Underworld names which had been bandied about for years and which had acquired a sort of mythical aura suddenly became real and prosaically dull when the owner of a fierce man-eating, tiger-riding reputation turned out to be a rather elderly, paunchy fellow, obviously nervous and scared, who gave faltering answers which didn't make too much sense.

Just as many tough guys melted in the glare of the TV lights, quite a few reputations sprouted, led off by

committee chairman Estes Kefauver, who found himself bitten by the Presidential bug as the result of popular reaction to the dramatic show. Several of the committee counsel were pitched into popular notice, but strangely enough little came of it. Perhaps the biggest star, on the side of law and order, was Senator Tobey of New Hampshire, who often stole the show from both the chairman and the underworld "heavies." He made it a constant practice to throw the Bible at the malefactors who appeared before him. By the time the investigation ended, Senator Tobey had established himself as the custodian of our national conscience, the champion of right and justice.

Personally, I regarded him as being just a politician, putting on an act for the folks back home, but I found myself in a hopeless minority. Most people looked upon him as a saint, or at least a modern Savonarola. Shortly after the Kefauver committee held its final hearing, Senator Tobey was invited by the Detroit Television Council to speak at one of its luncheons. He was paid \$500 for this, which is nice work if you can get it. They asked me to introduce him. I gave him a tongue-in-cheek introduction, but to my complete surprise, the Senator swallowed it whole.

Because Tobey went in strongly for classical allusions, I parodied his style, sprinkling quotes from Tacitus, *Ben Hur*, the Bible, and ended by presenting him as "that scourge of the evildoer, that modern Ajax defying the lightning, the Sir Galahad of the coaxial cable, the indomitable Senator from the sovereign state of New Hampshire." When he arose, the first thing he said was that never in his life had he had such an introduction and could he have a copy to take home to his grandchildren.

If I was taken aback by the Senator's serious reaction, I

had an even greater surprise some months later. Senator Tobey unfortunately passed away, and on the following day the entire membership of the Senate participated in a session devoted to eulogizing him. On the motion of Senator Bridges, they put my introduction into the *Congressional Record*. Maybe I should have emulated Fred Allen's Senator Claghorne and explained, "It's a joke, son!"

RETURN TO GOTHAM

● EVEN THOUGH RADIO still had the bigger audience, alert advertisers everywhere were planning for the inevitable future, when television would supplant radio altogether as the home entertainment medium of the nation. As early as the fall of 1948, I heard of a study made by Procter & Gamble which indicated that within four years most of their national advertising effort would switch into television. This was especially significant, because P&G was probably the outstanding example of spectacular growth achieved mainly by massive use of radio. By 1951 both CBS and NBC were getting pressure from their leading advertisers to recognize the inroads into radio audiences made by television. What these advertisers wanted was a reduction in radio rates, so they could spend the money on television.

At both networks the problem was complicated by the unevenness of television's outlets. In many major markets either CBS or NBC—and sometimes both—was without a television affiliate. Otherwise it would have been comparatively simple to reduce radio rates and apply the money to television. NBC was in the better shape, because more of its affiliates had heeded the warnings of

David Sarnoff and gone into television, but at both networks there were many important radio affiliates as yet without television, whose screams shattered microphones at the mere suggestion of reductions in radio rates. They took the position that despite television, radio was stronger than ever, and that the cowardly networks were selling radio "down the river." This was childishly wishful thinking, made especially silly by reason of the fact that all of the troubles of such stations could have been avoided if a few years earlier they had shown the foresight and courage to apply for television when its future was still somewhat unclear. They had to blame somebody for their own mistakes, and the networks were so convenient.

The problem was further complicated by the fact that in the period of radio's greatest growth, in 1940-1948, the price of network radio advertising had edged up very little despite mounting inflation in the rest of our economy. Almost every network-affiliated station in the country felt strongly that it should have a higher rate and had felt that way for some years. The networks were blamed for selling radio too cheaply. While there was some justification for the complaint, it was another case of looking around for a scapegoat to cover up the weaknesses and shortcomings of station management. I also had felt that WWJ had been sold too cheaply, but I took the matter into my own hands and found my own solutions. Most stations regarded the network hourly rate under which they operate as the accepted measure of their value. When I failed repeatedly in getting NBC management to raise my rate, I decided to ignore the network rate and take off on my own. I raised the WWJ rate repeatedly and finally by 1948, when the rate charged by NBC for WWJ was \$520 an hour, the WWJ local rate was up to \$800 an

hour, the highest rate in the country for a station of its power, which was 5,000 watts. My principal competitor, WJR, had 50,000 watts and its rate was the highest in Detroit. But I would raise my rate, without regard to WJR, and after a while they would raise theirs to stay on top. Essentially, in setting rates, I ignored local competition and also the network. Every station in the country could have done the same, if its on-the-air job had been good enough to give it the needed standing in its own community.

Advertising agency people used to bombard me with statistics and ask how I could possibly justify my ridiculously high rate when, either from my competition locally or on a network show over my own station, they could cover the same audience for much less money. My answer was always the same, namely, that anything can be proved or disproved with statistics; they are actually meaningless although frequently interesting. Quantitative statistics cannot measure quality, and regardless of statistics, the proper price for any purchasable commodity, including an advertising medium, is the price that someone is willing and able to pay for it. The price for WWJ was the price I placed on it, and the only way to get it was to pay my price. They snarled at me and they swore at me, but almost always paid the price to the profit of their clients, statistics notwithstanding.

By 1951 the management of NBC had concluded that regardless of all difficulties, it was imperative to institute a complete reappraisal of radio rates. The affiliated stations were asked to designate a small working group of station managers to join with a group of NBC market specialists in an exhaustive study of every phase of the rate-making process. This became known as "the Basic Economic Study." Jack Harris of KPRC, Houston, was then chair-

man of the NBC Station Planning and Advisory Committee, and he asked me to serve. I wasn't keen about it, but I felt it was work that had to be done, so I accepted. We struggled for weeks and finally came up with the only conclusion possible, namely, that practically every NBC radio affiliate was now overpriced due to the erosive effects of television on the radio audience. We recommended that a stiff overall reduction in the price of network radio was a "must" if the medium was to survive.

NBC planned to hold its annual meeting with all affiliates at Boca Raton, Florida, some three months after the Basic Economic Study was completed. In the meantime, from conversations with many station people, I became convinced that the majority of NBC affiliates failed to grasp the realities of the situation and that they would indignantly reject any proposal to reduce rates.

Under the network contract, NBC had the power to reduce rates equilaterally for the entire network by giving notice. But because, as radio had grown, station rates had gone up haphazardly without overall planning, what was needed now was a station-by-station reduction in varying degrees rather than a flat reduction for the entire network. This required the consent of each station, and it was on this rock that the Basic Economic Study foundered.

I was out of sympathy with the unrealistic viewpoint of most stations. Despite my frequent collisions with management thinking at NBC, I knew that the network affiliation was the most important asset of WWJ, and that unless NBC could prosper, WWJ would suffer. Moreover, I could see dark days ahead for radio, both network and local, when TV would take away most of the audience and revenue. I felt that when that time came, WWJ's dependence on NBC would be greater than ever. I wanted

the NBC radio network to stay healthy. My thinking ran contrary to many radio station operators who in the next few years were to pull out of NBC and CBS and ABC and go independent. However, most stations that did this later tucked their tails between their legs and returned to the networks, sadder and wiser.

I did not want to be present at a meeting of affiliated stations which would inflict humiliation on NBC management, so for the first and only time I stayed away from an NBC meeting.

The Boca Raton meeting confirmed my worst fears. The body of affiliates violently rejected the network proposals, disavowing the work of their own representatives on the "study" group, and bringing dismay, anger and total befuddlement to Joe McConnell, then president of NBC.

When Joe got back to his desk in New York, he decided that what NBC needed was someone who could interpret network thinking to the stations and keep network management informed as to actual affiliate reaction to network policy, so that the Boca Raton debacle would never repeat itself.

I did not know this at the time; neither did I know that in his widening search for the man he sought, he was repeatedly being directed to me.

One day in February, 1952, when I was in New York I wandered into McConnell's office for a chat. When I was about to leave, Joe said, "Don't go yet, Harry, I have something I want to take up with you." Then in fifty words or less, he took my breath away by offering me a job as vice-president in charge of Station Relations with attractive inducements and complete autonomy. For the first time in my life I was utterly speechless. I just about had enough presence of mind to mumble something about

“thinking it over,” and when Joe pressed for a deadline, I promised to let him know within a fortnight.

I went back to Detroit in somewhat of a daze; the next day I began analyzing the matter, weighing the plus and minus factors.

Plus factors for staying at WWJ were that I had built up a business from an annual total of under \$200,000 to over \$5 million, and that I loved passionately every brick, every minute, every function connected with the station. I had help, of course, from many directions, but always mine was the dreaming, the planning, the impetus, the direction which made WWJ successful and great. It was more to me than a father, or a wife, or a child. It was my life, commanding from me a devotion that was undivided and unalloyed.

WWJ represented power, which is always a nice sensation. I was monarch in my own domain. Though I was theoretically subordinate to the top management of the *News*, in actual practice *News* management was so intent on the newspaper operation that it was a relief to leave the running of the station in other hands, so long as the other hands were competent and posed no unseemly problems which might delay an edition of the paper by as long as five minutes.

WWJ represented community status. I was respected by all who knew me; those who did not judged me by what they knew of WWJ, which, of course, always reflected credit. When I went to a ball game, I sat in the press box. When I went to the theater, my seats were down front on the aisle. At a prizefight I sat at ringside. In a nightclub with the rope up and people waiting to get in, the maître d' would clear a path, and lead me to his best table. Everywhere I got preferential treatment, some-

times to the point of embarrassment. Merchants were constantly offering me discounts, which I always refused, because never would I allow anyone to compromise WWJ in any way.

With few exceptions, my friendships were formed on the staff of the *Detroit News* and WWJ. Very little of my life was spent outside the orbit of the station, and it was a satisfactory mode of life, presenting no great problems physically, psychologically or spiritually.

There was little on the minus side in connection with WWJ, excepting that once the business leveled off into routine operation—after the keen excitement of establishing radio, followed by the launching of television from scratch—I found myself getting somewhat bored. I had lived on a rich diet for years, and as problems gradually vanished, like Alexander the Great, I sighed for new worlds to conquer.

Too, I was getting tired of life in Detroit. Every time I returned home from New York, where I had enjoyed the luxury of superb French cooking at my favorite restaurants, I was increasingly aware of the deplorably low state of the culinary art in Detroit.

My love of the theater was another factor. In New York I went to a show every night and never got enough. In Detroit no more than six or eight shows a year could be seen, most of them road companies. Also the endless talk of automobiles, production and machinery always annoyed me. I knew they were great for our economy, but as conversation pieces they were not my cup of tea.

On the plus side at NBC was, first, money. Whether we like it or not, a man's earnings, before taxes, are a status symbol to himself and to others. Then there was the job itself, which as outlined to me by Joe McConnell would,

among other things, involve putting together a television network, still in a rudimentary stage at that time. All in all, it meant dealing with larger issues, larger values, knottier problems. The longer I pondered it, the more irresistible its lure. Also, strangely enough, I discovered myself suddenly homesick for my birthplace, New York. This was odd, because the New York in which I was born and raised was in every respect different from present-day New York. In my youth the city meant Van Cortlandt Park for baseball and tennis, the subway for transportation everywhere, Keith and Proctor vaudeville several times weekly, Harlem for night life and dancing, an occasional foray into the theater district to sit in the balcony or gallery. Now whenever I was in New York, my beat was the Stork Club, El Morocco and the Maisonette. I ventured into the subway maybe half a dozen times in twenty years and got lost each time. I rarely went north of 59th Street or south of 42nd except to go to the Village, and, with the exception of my trips to theater, I hugged the East Side. But whatever it was, I was homesick for the sounds, the sights, the smells of New York for the first time since I left it, following World War I.

In about forty-eight hours my mind was made up, but I decided to table the matter for a week. Just about ten days after Joe had made his offer, I telephoned him and told him that I was his boy. Over the phone he whooped for joy. So at age fifty-eight, when most men are ready to retire, I set sail for a far-off shore.

I had quite a time making my getaway. The job of running WWJ and WWJ-TV was going to Ed Wheeler, then business manager of the *News*. His shift set off a chain reaction affecting a number of people, some of whom were on vacation. General manager Roy Merrill asked me

to delay my departure for some three weeks beyond the date I had originally planned to leave. Consequently I sat in my office for almost seven weeks after my resignation had been announced. People from everywhere came to see me constantly, and frequently tears would flow. By the time I left, I was all cried out.

Ed Wheeler, who succeeded me, is also a man with a history. I hired him in 1937 to be the traffic clerk in our sales department. He had a number of jobs previously which left him quite unhappy with life. After I told him that he was hired, he said, "Mr. Bannister, I'm going to do good work for you, and then you will want to promote me. You'll want to make me into a salesman, and I want to ask you now, to please not do this to me. Just let me be and I'll do real fine work for you." I could see that something in his recent past has soured him, so I agreed to his request, resolving however that if he was half as good as I thought him to be, the fire of ambition, now almost burned out, would be revived.

From the start I could see that Ed was intelligent, alert and a real workhorse. Slim and slight of build, he could do the work of three men twice his size. In small ways, in odd moments, I needled and jabbed him, and one day after he had been with us about a year, he came into my office, shut the door, pulled up a chair and said, "You know, when I came to work here, I was down on my luck, and I said some silly things which would have been better left unsaid. I do want to be promoted, and I'm ready to tackle any job you are willing to entrust to me."

I grinned and said, "Fine."

Some time later, I decided that WWJ-FM, which had been running autonomously and sort of haphazardly, needed a manager all its own. I gave the job to Wheeler,

which surprised the daylight out of him, and as I knew he would, he did very well. When the war came along and we shut down the FM station, I brought Ed back to WWJ and made him assistant general manager, a job he handled so well that I had little or nothing to do. Then the *News* management needed bolstering and they took Ed away from me, to return him subsequently to his first love, WWJ. Years later he was to recross the street again and take over the general managership of the *News*—quite a stout fellow!

Among those who came to say their goodbyes was a porter whom I hadn't seen in years. He used to clean my office when WWJ was still in a corner of the top floor of the Detroit News Building. He was an ex-prizefighter, built like a stone mountain but gentle of voice and manner. He stumbled and stuttered, and finally grabbed my hand, pumped it and began to cry. It almost got me.

One day, unannounced, owing—as I later learned—to the connivance of my secretary, into my office came a strange delegation. It consisted of the president of the Detroit local of the Musicians' Union, the executive secretary of AFRA, several announcers who were AFRA officials, and a small committee of NABET, our engineering union. One of them made a brief speech, and then they presented me with a scroll signed by all three unions, setting forth our past pleasant relations in rather flowery language, and wishing me all kinds of good luck in my future undertakings. Rather a new wrinkle in labor-management relations.

About a week before I left Detroit, I was crossing one of the city's busiest corners, at Woodward and Michigan, where there is always a policeman on traffic duty at the center of the intersection. He blew his whistle and stopped

the Michigan Avenue traffic. Then he blew his whistle again and stopped the Woodward Avenue traffic. By that time I was halfway across Woodward Avenue. He left his post and took off diagonally to intercept me, grabbed my arm, and said, "Mr. Bannister, I want to say goodbye to you and to tell you that my family and I are sorry to see you go." He scared hell out of me.

I came to work at NBC on the Monday following Easter Sunday, 1952. Joe McConnell took me to "21" for lunch at about 12:30, and it was five o'clock before we broke up. He gave me a complete rundown on all the brass at NBC and RCA and surprised me by his insight. I had known most of the people he talked about much longer than he had, but everything he told me jibed with my own observations.

NBC currently has some 200 television stations affiliated with the network and about the same number of radio stations. Each one of these stations is independently owned, and each carries NBC programming as an affiliate of the network. Frequently, as is the case with WWJ, the television and the radio affiliation are under a common ownership.

It's the job of Station Relations to act as an intermediary between the network and the station; problems peculiar to each station need to be understood by network management; and the variety of network problems needs to be understood by the stations. For example, a certain station finds that NBC has scheduled a dramatic show on Wednesday night, 10:30-11:00 P.M. Before this station affiliated with NBC, it had sold this period to a local bank for a newscast. Since it has become a community favorite the station feels it cannot displace the newscast for the NBC drama. However, the sponsor of the drama, an auto-

mobile company, has just established a new dealer in this market; he feels his dramatic show must be presented on the station or he will move to another network.

The affiliated-station manager does not want to be responsible for his network's losing a valuable client and a good program, but neither does he want to lose a valuable local client. The problem may be resolved in one of several ways. The local bank may give up its period in exchange for one equally attractive, or the network dramatic show may be taped and broadcast at an earlier period on the same night, a week later, or in some period on another night. This is the work of Station Relations.

Sometimes station problems take a totally different turn. There are sections of the United States where two separate communities have grown so much that they now are practically one, such as Minneapolis and St. Paul, Seattle and Tacoma, Dallas and Fort Worth. Usually there are stations available for affiliation in either city. It becomes necessary to decide whether Dallas gets covered from Fort Worth or vice versa, and a choice must be made among several available stations.

Another type of Station Relations problem is represented by the developments at Boca Raton which resulted in Joe McConnell's offering me a job. Properly conducted, Station Relations should either have persuaded a majority of NBC affiliates to accept the Basic Economic Study, or else have advised NBC management that the stations refused, thus heading off a public confrontation.

Many other problems pass through Station Relations, involving programming, government relations, sales, personnel, legal matters, public relations, accounting, publicity, in fact, every phase of the business, both at the net-

work and at the stations. It's pretty much of a "specialist" job, one in which results are not always readily apparent and in which mistakes can be very costly.

Station Relations is a full-time job just in the course of normal operations; almost every program on the network schedule encounters complications in being cleared for broadcast over all stations. In addition to this routine function, when I came to NBC, we faced the monumental task of putting together a television network, then in the early stages of formation. At the same time, NBC was confronted with the equally serious problem of maintaining a radio network in the face of the constant shrinkage in audience and revenue, caused by television's upsurge.

Altogether there was plenty to do. I just about got settled in my job and learned my way around the miles of corridors when Joe McConnell resigned the presidency and went over to run Colgate-Palmolive. It was quite a shock, because I was Joe's fair-haired boy. He used to brag that he brought me into the company. It is normal procedure in big business, as conducted in New York, for the incoming boss to clean house, especially in the key posts. I thought of this often in succeeding years, because during my NBC tenure, five different men have sat in the president's chair. It was not until the management team consisting of Bob Sarnoff as chairman and Bob Kintner as president took over in 1957 that stability came to NBC.

It took me a while to learn that I was no longer an autocrat and that there were always people second-guessing me, and asking "Why?" The habit of command dies hard, but eventually I reverted to the techniques of my younger days and used persuasion rather than authority. However, with increasing years came some diminishment of my tolerance to opposition. Frequently I muttered to myself

over the stupid bastards around me. Sometimes events proved they were right and that it was I who was stupid. What the hell, you can't win them all.

At WWJ I used to come to work about 8:30 A.M. Having done this for years, I first did the same at NBC and found that for over an hour each morning I had nobody to talk to. The early birds began dribbling in after 9 o'clock, but the rest of the staff did not arrive until after 9:30. Later I learned that my early hours scared everyone in Station Relations. All of them figured they had been delivered to a modern Simon Legree. But after I got over my foolishness and started coming to work in the middle of the day like the others, everyone relaxed.

I had arrived in New York on Easter Sunday, and watched the Easter Parade on Fifth Avenue for the first time since 1920. In the intervening years the parade had changed character completely. Once it was stately and had a quasi-official status as the curtain raiser for spring fashions. Most of the paraders were a bit self-conscious with perhaps a touch of affectation but always governed by propriety. Now all this had vanished. Just about everyone was unashamedly an exhibitionist. The crowds were greater than ever, but rowdyism and vulgarity had taken over. It was most disappointing, and I soon wearied of it. This was the first of many disappointments I was to find in the city of my birth.

Before leaving Detroit, I had telephoned Ed Spencer, who runs the George P. Hollingbery office in New York, and asked him to get me an apartment in some quiet East Side hotel. He did, and that is where I went, discovering I had to sign a two-year lease before I took possession.

In the shower one morning I noticed some funny welts on my arm, and when I got to the office I showed my arm to the NBC doctor, asking, "Have I got hives?"

He took one look and snorted, "Hives, hell. You got bed bugs."

I sent out my secretary to find me another apartment, which she did, at the Élysée on 54th Street, and I rushed back, packed and scrambled, pronto, lease or no lease. I left a note on the dresser to explain why Annie didn't live there any more, and that was that. Subsequently I lived in several hotels, ending up at the Alrae on 64th Street off Madison, which I liked somewhat better than the others. But they all had shortcomings.

At the Alrae, a thief made off with some cherished valuables, and the manager seemed more concerned with protecting himself from responsibility than in protecting me or in attempting to recover my lost treasures.

Similar attitudes prevail everywhere in New York. *Caveat emptor* seems to be the motto of everyone with something to sell, whether it be goods, services or facilities. It was a shock to me, coming from Detroit, where the J. L. Hudson Company, on the assumption that the purchaser must always be satisfied, had set the tone for the entire community with its policy of refunding money cheerfully, promptly and politely, and no questions asked. In New York if you buy something and find it broken, damaged or otherwise unsuitable, when you try to return it you are viewed with suspicion and treated ungraciously to the point of rudeness. The only protection is to have charge accounts everywhere; otherwise you're sure to be gyped. The worst places of all are the exclusive, expensive specialty shops, featuring some of the world's most beautiful merchandise, usually offered for sale by artistic highbinders and elegant ruffians. Beware especially of the real chichi joints where they greet you in French or in foreign-accented English. As the language gets further away from pure American, the element of larceny grows and grows.

Despite the lure of beautiful surroundings, the safest thing to do is to turn around and walk out of any dive where you don't hear English as she should be spoke. By so doing, you reduce the odds against you.

New Yorkers, who regard themselves as cosmopolitan sophisticates, actually are the biggest yokels and rubes in the nation. Since they are especially susceptible to this foreign jazz, the town is littered with shirtmakers from Dresden, bootmakers from Prague, tailors from Bucharest, dog clippers from Budapest. I don't know why a guy born in Dresden should be a better shirtmaker than one born in Allentown, Pennsylvania, or in Miles City, Montana, and most of the time he isn't.

In supporting the foreign phony, the New York yokel gets a strong assist from the oil and beef barons of the great Southwest. Carrying oversize handbags heavy with thousand-dollar bills, the wives and daughters of tall dericks and grassy pastures come to town agog with eagerness to buy taste and discrimination in wholesale lots. When they leave, the heavy handbags are much lighter.

I have also had nasty experiences in establishments whose names have been honored and respected for half a century or more, which no longer attempt to keep up old reputations for quality. They all seem to be on the make, content to pick up a fast buck without regard to maintaining a standard.

All this and more I was to learn rapidly in New York. My homecoming became a disillusioning and painful re-education. Wherever I went, I had the feeling that I was in a den of thieves.

But the restaurants, nightclubs, operas, and concerts did not let me down. New York restaurants are incomparably the country's best. Not only are there a dozen or

so which are truly great, but there are hundreds all over town where the food is better than anywhere else in America. You can walk blindfolded into any of them and you'll do okay. Only San Francisco has restaurants in number to approach normal New York quality. There are a few in Chicago and one or two in Los Angeles that are up there, but that's all. The rest is desert.

The quality of food in New York continues to be good all the way down to the drugstore fountain. The coffee is better, the ice cream is better, the sandwiches are better. The cake is much better, but not the pie. The hardest thing to find in New York is a hunk of good apple pie. They make it like French pastry, which is fine in its way, but that's not how apple pie should be made.

Because in New York I spent many years "on the town" and because my friends all know that I like good food, I have often been asked, "What's the best restaurant in New York?" There are at least a dozen in town that would have some claim to such a title, but within my experience and judgment, if I had to award the accolade, I would give it to Le Pavillon at 57th and Park. Food, service and decor are all superb. Most of the clientele qualifies to be termed elegant. It's expensive as hell, but well worth it.

The best steaks in the country are in New York, much better than out where the beef is raised or slaughtered. Any of the good restaurants can be depended on for steaks, but somehow or other they taste best in a steak house, of which there are many good ones—topped, in my opinion, by the Press Box and the Pen and Pencil, both on East 45th Street. If you like salads, the Press Box has the best one in town, a creation of Freddy Manfredi, one of the three owners. It's a combination of several kinds of crisp lettuce with hearts of palm, and a terrific dressing

which is mixed so that no soup accumulates at the bottom. For rabbit food, it's super.

A difficult thing to find, with food, is draught beer. Excepting in the German restaurants, most good eating places serve only bottled beer. Being a beer lover, I don't especially care for it in cans or bottles. When they put it up that way, it has to be pasteurized, which completely changes its taste. In a way it's too bad, because in and around New York City they brew some of the finest beer I have ever tasted. Yet that abracadabra of the foreign label prevails with beer too, and everywhere they offer beer from Bavaria, Denmark, Holland, Sweden and Timbuktu, always looking a bit scornful when the customer insists, as I do, on American beer. There was a time in the dim past when our native beer was several cuts below the imported stuff, but that situation changed years ago. Today—in New York, Milwaukee, St. Louis and Cincinnati, and a few other places—we make beer that is better than any I have ever tasted from abroad, and I've tried them all. But try and tell that to a New York rube!

The highway system around New York is superb. Many places in America brag about their highways, including Michigan, the home of the automobile, which should lead the nation but doesn't. I have been over all the road systems which radiate out of our principal cities, but I have not seen anything to equal the wonderful roads which surround Greater New York on all sides not preempted by water. Also, there are exceptionally good parkways within the city, and if one can only get out of the crosstown traffic, the going is fine.

On city streets the handling of traffic is abominable, due mainly to failure to enforce existing laws about parking and jaywalking. Everyone in New York jaywalks, and

the authorities seem unable to cope with it. There are so many people here, in so little space, that ordinary rules and regulations which work elsewhere just can't be applied. Although in Detroit I was heavily involved in traffic safety problems, I have no solutions to suggest for New York's problems, except to note that they are presently intolerable.

New York cab drivers are the best in the country. They have to be, or else they would all die young. They are also the rudest, most uncivil and unobliging of any I have ever encountered, and I've been spending many dollars daily on cabs for some forty years. However, I'm sure that if I had to drive a cab through the frenzied lunacy of New York traffic, I would be pretty difficult also, and probably would snarl at everyone just like those who drive me.

In Detroit most cab drivers knew me, and often they would ignore others to come and pick me up. In New York nobody knows anyone, so I've had a rough time, especially in the rush hour or on rainy days. During certain hours there seem to be too many cabs altogether, but let a few drops of rain fall and cabs become unprocurable. Always in Detroit, if a lady happened to be standing near me while I looked for a cab, when one pulled up, I deferred to the weaker sex and let her have it. I did this a few times in New York and found myself growing a beard while I waited for another. The gals have no compunction about stealing a cab right from under your nose, thus making the practice of chivalry difficult indeed.

I became an opera buff when I was a boy. I used to peddle newspapers all day on Saturday, and by the end of the day my take would be somewhere between one dollar and a dollar-fifty. Then I had to make some tough decisions. First, I had to salt away a nickel for capital to

start me off to selling more papers on the following Saturday. Then, if it was summertime, I had to decide how much for ball games, how much for vaudeville and how much for ice cream sodas. For each ball game I needed five cents for a hot dog, five cents for peanuts and twenty-five cents for a seat in the center-field bleachers at the Polo Grounds. I was about eighteen years old and had seen at least a hundred games before I discovered that a Big League ballplayer has a face. From the bleachers in deep center they looked like ants, but the bleacherites knew every player in the league by some strange process of recognition involving build, walk, stance and mannerisms. I saw Christy Mathewson, Joe McGinnity, Lefty Wiltse, Fred Tenney, Mike Donlin, Roger Bresnahan, Muggsy McGraw, Bonehead Merkle and all their contemporaries many times, yet I would never have recognized any of them at close range, excepting maybe Mike Donlin, who in patrolling the outfield occasionally came close to the bleachers.

For vaudeville I needed five cents for peanuts and twenty cents for a gallery seat. Time and again I saw Eva Tanguay, Harry Lauder, Irene and Vernon Castle, Jack Norworth and Nora Bayes, Belle Baker, Irving Berlin, Al Jolson, and many others including Will Rogers, who in his earliest act before he branched out into politics used to do tricks with a lasso, sing "There's a Long Long Trail" and do a bit of patter. No one suspected then that he would become immortal.

In the fall and winter my problem grew more complicated. Even though there was no baseball, I had to divide my money between vaudeville, opera and melodrama. Opera was expensive. It cost a dollar for a gallery seat, or, to give it the high-toned Met title, the "Family Circle."

But at that, I saved a nickel, because there were no peanuts. Even so, by the time I was twenty and supporting myself, I had heard Caruso, Tetrizzini, Amato, Sembrich, Scotti, Calvé, Chaliapin, Farrar, and many others in most of the standard operas. While the distance from the gallery to the stage is not nearly as great as it was from deep center field to home plate at the old Polo Grounds—in fact, it's no more than a pop fly—the angle was much more unfavorable. Most of the time all I could see was the tops of heads and the prompter's box, which often looked like another head. Because of the extraordinary acoustics, the notes came up very clearly, but the action was a bit difficult to follow. My favorite was *Pagliacci*. I guess I heard Caruso sing "*Vesti la giubba*" at least half a dozen times. Although its composer wrote an immense amount of music, most of it mediocre or poor, *Pagliacci*, which is standard fare for every opera company in the world, will live forever, thus perpetuating the name of Ruggiero Leoncavallo.

After I grew up and left New York, now and then I was lucky enough to encounter grand opera. If I could rustle up the price of a ticket, I always went. So back in New York, in 1952, I could hardly wait for my first opening night at the Metropolitan. Not knowing my way around, I got into a jam. The sidewalk in front of the opera house was crammed with sightseers packed tight. Taxis and cars pulled up to a designated point from which the police kept open an aisle leading into the lobby. Once inside, I had to make my way about 30 feet diagonally across to the entrance of the house, and the lobby was jam-packed with curious humanity. It took me at least fifteen minutes to make it, inch by inch. By that time my shoes were scuffed, my clothes disarranged and my temper at the boiling

point. As is customary in New York, the management sells you a ticket, then abdicates further responsibility. What you really need for this occasion is a suit of armor.

After my first experience I learned how to beat the rap. The thing to do is to arrive very early before the curious mob assembles and eat dinner in Sherry's, the opera house restaurant. The meal isn't the greatest, and the service is rather hectic, but it beats fighting off a thousand people. After dinner you walk leisurely to your seat or else you get through in time to rubberneck comfortably from inside as all the luminaries and dignitaries enter. If you're lucky, as I was once, you stand near a gal society reporter who knows everyone, identifies them for you and relates their foibles and latest escapades. After all that, the opera itself may be a bit anticlimactic.

But my first opening night was a thriller all the way. They sang Verdi's *La Forza del Destino*, with Zinka Milanov, Leonard Warren, Richard Tucker and Cesare Siepi. Milanov was in magnificent voice, and as she was still at her peak then, it was really something. How the Met could use a younger version of her today!

I hate to see the opera move out of the old house, with its wonderful air of an age we will never see again, and its incredible acoustics, which I am sure will not be duplicated. When the Met moves to Lincoln Center, it will occupy perhaps the most expensive quarters in the musical world, and it should have a company to match the surroundings. While they have more good singers today than ever before, they have no great ones except Renata Tebaldi and Joan Sutherland. After an estrangement with Maria Callas, Rudolf Bing has apparently made his peace with her. I hope this continues. Although she is not a truly great singer, she is very good. In addition, she is a highly

competent actress with an astonishing gift for generating electricity on stage. With Tebaldi, Sutherland and Callas, the Met would be in better shape, even though it still lacks a Caruso, Chaliapin, Flagstad or Toscanini.

My chief joy at being back in New York centered on the theater. After more than thirty years in the hinterland, with only an occasional Broadway show coming my way, I reveled in the opportunity of going to the theater six nights a week. For a few years I went at least three or four times weekly, seeing my favorites over and over. *South Pacific* was still going, also *Pal Joey* and *The King and I*. Soon came *Can-Can*, which opened to unanimous roasts from all New York critics, who panned it unmercifully. Then it went on to run over two years, with song after song making the hit parade for weeks. How wrong can you be? I also liked *Wish You Were Here*, *Kismet*, *Wonderful Town*, *Pajama Game* and *Damn Yankees*. But the best was yet to come, the greatest musical of all time, *My Fair Lady*. I saw it repeatedly, for a total of twelve viewings in all, and I wouldn't at all mind seeing it about once a month for the rest of my life.

I have always contended that the acid test of a good musical is that it plays well regardless of the cast. This was true of *South Pacific*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *My Fair Lady*, all of which played very long runs with repeated changes in the principals. I saw every version that appeared on Broadway of all three, and they always were swell. It was even true of *The King and I*, which reportedly was written especially for Gertrude Lawrence; I saw two other actresses in the role, and they were excellent.

There is another strange fact about the great musicals. *South Pacific*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *My Fair Lady* include some of the finest songs ever written for the American

theater, yet in each the show stopper was not sung by one of the principals nor was it a love song. In *South Pacific* it was a choral number, "There Is Nothin' Like a Dame"; in *Kiss Me Kate* Lisa Kirk knocked them cold with "Always True to You (in My Fashion)"; and in *My Fair Lady* it was "With a Little Bit of Luck."

My Fair Lady, besides being the all-time number-one musical, seemed also to be a milepost. It was the culmination of a period lasting about ten years which, in my opinion, marked the heyday of musical comedy. After it opened in 1956, Broadway musicals went into a steady decline which still persists.

In serious drama, I will never forget a scene between Viveca Lindfors and Eugenie Leontovich in *Anastasia*, which I regard as the greatest bit of theater I have ever seen. It made this impact on me despite the fact that I had to be literally dragged to see it by the beautiful lady who is now my wife. Instinctively I shy away from the heavy stuff and complain bitterly if I'm constrained, but when true quality on stage takes over, I forget my complaints, subside and listen.

I had almost the same experience with *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial*. Hal and Charlotte Gross, from WJIM, Lansing, Michigan, were in town and we studied the shows. As is my habit, I tried to steer them to a musical or comedy, but they insisted on *Caine Mutiny*, and I grumpily went along, muttering at both of them under my breath, to be soon lifted out of my seat by the wonderful performance of Lloyd Nolan, who literally stole the show.

There have been two first-class whodunits on Broadway in the last twelve years, *Dial M for Murder*, written by Frederick Knott, and *Witness for the Prosecution*, by Agatha Christie. There should be more.

Almost everyone who has made it big in show business has had trouble getting up there. That's par for the course. Few, however, have had it as tough as Jack Paar—no pun intended—had it for years. If ever a man had reason to be discouraged and to call it quits, it would be Jack, who was well past his youth without having drawn more than a fleeting smile from the fickle lips of the dame who rolls the dice which designate the few who are chosen. But the dogged determination characteristic of all true artists never left him, and eventually it paid off. Suddenly straight out of left field, he clicked, and literally overnight he went from a near-nonentity status to being the most talked about, most photographed, the most impressive figure in television, maybe in all show business.

In a small way I played a part in his success, although he never knew it. NBC had started the "Tonight" show in 1954 with Steve Allen, running five nights weekly from 11:30 P.M. to 1:00 A.M. It was a new concept and nobody knew where it would lead. Everywhere it had to buck famous old movies. Slowly it built up acceptance by the audience, stations and advertisers. After a few years on the air, it had a reasonably good station lineup, a moderate audience and a fair amount of revenue, though not enough to show a profit on current operations, not to mention recovering the investment that went into establishing the show. Then to bolster the Sunday night schedule, Steve Allen was moved in for an hour's show opposite Ed Sullivan, in addition to his reduced "Tonight" schedule. After a while, figuring he had it made, Allen demanded to be relieved entirely of "Tonight." It turned out to be an unfortunate move for Allen, as he didn't do too well on Sunday night, whereas in the "Tonight" spot, while he was no Jack Paar, he was good enough to go on for years.

The spot vacated by Allen was filled by a show called "America After Dark," which laid one of the most monumental eggs in the history of eggdom. With dizzying speed the show lost its audience, its revenue, its station acceptance. At that point there was strong sentiment at NBC to give up "live" programming in this period and turn to movies. In fact, a deal was almost set to buy the entire backlog of one of the major Hollywood studios, when I began to scream. I yelled loud enough to dispel the film notion from president Bob Sarnoff's mind, and he agreed to give live programming a further trial.

Bob Kintner was then head of the television network. Once he got the green light, he decided to give Jack Paar a whirl at the "Tonight" show. The rest is history. We all knew after one show that we had something, and inside of a week the audience began to zoom, with station lineups and revenue reaching new highs constantly. It became one of TV's chief attractions.

After Paar had been on the air about six months, we threw an unusual party in his honor. We invited the manager of every station in the country which carried the "Tonight" show. Inasmuch as they were deliriously happy over its success, all came. Because in those days the show was "live," the party couldn't start until after Paar came off the air at 1:00 A.M., so it began at 1:45 A.M. in the main ballroom at the Plaza, and ran all night. For the show we had a solid lineup of comedians and nothing else, including Jan Murray, Jack Leonard, Jack Carter, Jonathan Winters, Louis Nye, and many others, each one of whom did a turn roasting all the other comedians and the guest of honor, Jack Paar. When it came his turn, Jack gave as good as he got. All in all, the party was a success. The barbs that flew around that room for several hours

were among the sharpest and keenest I have ever heard, though unfortunately most of them were unsuitable for broadcasting.

Paar built so well on the "Tonight" show that the program continued to prosper after he left. With Johnny Carson at the helm, it is doing better than ever and looks set for future success. As everyone knows, Paar switched to an hour's show, in prime time, on Friday night. I held my breath, not at all sure that the same technique which built a record audience at midnight would work in an earlier period. But I could have saved my worries. All the tricks of show business, all the savvy and know-how that Jack accumulated in his years of failure and frustration, are paying off handsomely. He appears to be in swell shape.

Of all the people I've met at NBC, Chet and Tippy Huntley are my favorites. Despite his fame and her beauty and charm, they're both as comfortable to be around as an old shoe, with no pretense, no phony airs, and an awful lot of warmth, cordiality and decency. She loves to cook and is pretty good at it. He loves to play gin and is very good. We visit back and forth and always have fun.

One of the girls in NBC Station Relations, Betty Merrell, recently had a birthday. The other girls in the department planned a surprise for her while she was out to lunch by decorating her desk with birthday greetings and gaily wrapped packages. Because Betty is an ardent fan of Chet Huntley's, the girls asked me to call Chet and ask him to telephone Betty and wish her a happy birthday. Knowing his busy schedule, I was reluctant to put him on a spot, so I had my girl call his to tell her boss. When the call came in, Chet picked up the phone and heard the request. He cut in with "What's the girl's name?" and being told, he said, "I'll be at her desk shortly after 2:00 P.M." He

then went downstairs and bought a birthday card, showed up right after Betty got back from lunch, handed her the card, kissed her and wished her a happy birthday. It was a big day in her life. And busy as he is, from morning to night, literally 365 days in the year, only a big man would go to all this trouble just to bring a touch of happiness into the life of a total stranger. That's Chet Huntley.

Another NBC figure, in a totally different capacity, who is an equally nice guy, though he plays no gin or any other game, is senior executive vice-president David Adams. David probably possesses the sharpest intellect in the business, is a charming gentleman, and a connoisseur of fine food. It's on the issue of food that I tangled with him.

It started with my nursing a boyhood memory, reminiscent of Marcel Proust, who, when he was a kid, relished *petites madeleines* dunked in tea. In manhood he had forgotten them until, at his mother's house on a cold day, she served him hot tea with *petites madeleines*. The sudden stimulus to his taste buds unloosed a flood of childhood memories which enabled Proust to fill eight books with magical reading.

Unlike Proust, I sought actively to reawaken my boyhood memory of French vanilla ice cream but without success. When I came back to New York in 1952, I searched everywhere for French vanilla, without success. Lots of New York ice cream is labeled "French" as a brand name, but as I explained repeatedly, "French vanilla" is not a brand but a flavor like chocolate or strawberry. It's like vanilla but yellower, eggier and with more vanilla flavor.

So I finally quit looking. In the Stork Club I found a frozen dessert called "Stork Club Egg Nog" which turned out to be very close. Not right on target, but a near miss. For some time I enjoyed it. In fact, I used to eat there

just to get the frozen eggnog. Then one day it disappeared. Nobody knew why, but it went, never to return.

I talked about this to David Adams, and he scoffed at me, insisting that it was my memory playing tricks with a nostalgic illusion of something that never existed. He was really telling me in a nice way that I was in my dotage.

Lunching and playing gin one day with Jim Gerity, president of WNEM-TV, Saginaw, we spoke of food, and I told him of my fruitless search for French vanilla. He, too, remembered it as a boy, and furthermore he knew a confectionery in Adrian, Michigan, where they still made it. A few days later, by special air express I got a bundle big enough to contain a small elephant or half a ton of coal. It turned out to be five gallons of ice cream from Adrian, Michigan. It was very good, but it wasn't French vanilla. Also, five gallons of ice cream to a fellow living alone in a hotel, as I did, was somewhat overpowering. I would gladly have traded it for a couple of frozen custards, which incidentally sometimes taste close to French vanilla. I was grateful to Gerity for a good try, but I had one hell of a time getting rid of five gallons of ice cream. When I told Adams about this, he was surer than ever that I was in second childhood, living on my memories.

Then Frank Folsom, retired president of RCA, was elected to the board of directors of Schrafft's, makers of excellent ice cream. So I wrote Frank about my yen and unsuccessful pursuit and asked him to find out if Schrafft's had a recipe for French vanilla ice cream. I hoped to spring it on David Adams not only to confound him but also to re-establish my trustworthiness, untarnished by time. In reply, I got a letter from the president of Schrafft's, in which he completely vindicated me. Yes, there was a French vanilla ice cream, widely sold once, in the days

when neighborhood ice cream parlors made their own. Mass production and modern distribution had murdered my sweetheart. Competition forced most small makers of ice cream out of business, and French vanilla just didn't lend itself to modern merchandising. It wouldn't keep more than a few hours. However, he enclosed the Schrafft's recipe, which was simplicity itself. It called for egg yolks instead of whole eggs and ground vanilla beans added to the vanilla syrup.

I sent the correspondence to Adams, without comment, and a few days later he asked me out for dinner, over a weekend. When I arrived, I sensed immediately that there was a delicious whiff in the air. Sure enough, when it came time for dessert, he went down to the basement and came back with an old-fashioned ice cream freezer out of which he dished French vanilla ice cream—the real prewar stuff—yellow, eggy, scrumptious. I seriously contemplated moving in with the Adamses, but my joy was short-lived. Not long after, my doctor put me on a sugarless diet, and there was no more French vanilla for me. It was a case of “See Naples and die.”

It used to be that for most American families the ultimate in status symbols was a second automobile. A garage with two cars in it got respectful attention from the neighbors, especially if the family was small and the second car betokened affluence rather than necessity.

In business offices, a longtime symbol of status has been the sole possession of a secretary. Many successful firms still have veteran executives who regard secretaries as an extravagance and look askance at younger men who demand such luxuries. When Herb Ponting was general manager of the *Detroit News* and Roy Merrill was the business manager, these two, the top executives of a multi-

million-dollar organization, shared the services of one secretary for years.

There are many other status symbols besides second cars and secretaries, but in New York I encountered one that beats them all, and it's the recognized thing in practically all organizations in the largest city on earth. The rising executive, over the first flush of youth, fighting and clawing his way toward the top, feels that he has finally made the elite upper cadre of business when he gets his own private john. This is the status symbol supreme.

Long before I knew all this, when I still lived in Detroit, I had to be in New York for an NBC meeting. After sitting for several hours, I whispered to one of the network vice-presidents who sat next to me, "Where's the nearest can?"

Instead of answering me, he sprang to his feet, said, "Come with me," and headed for the door.

I could only think that my question had struck a responsive chord and I hurried after him. We started to walk. We walked and walked and walked, turning right, left, down a flight of stairs, then right and left again. At each fresh turn I hoped and hoped that this was it, but it never was. I experienced mounting anguish and then my hearing began to play tricks on me. All the little noises from the offices we passed and from the outside world sounded like varieties of moving waters. A passing trash cart had wheels which squeaked off-key like a leaky faucet dripping tap water. The vague roar of outside traffic sounded like Niagara Falls at a distance. A faraway typewriter resembled the patter of raindrops on a roof.

Finally my tour conductor opened a door and my heart leaped, only to fall again when I was confronted by what was obviously a reception room to a suite of offices, occupied at the moment by two young ladies and a huge

plant. "What the hell?" I numbly thought. I looked wistfully at the plant and wished I were a dog. But mine host jauntily tossed a greeting to the girls and kept going into a lushly appointed office where, on the far side, he opened a door. Inside I could see heavenly white tile. With a magnificent flourish, he bowed me in. "The saints be praised," I thought, once the door closed behind me.

When I came out, he was still standing where I had left him, all smiles. "How'd you like it?" he asked eagerly, which of course gave me no end of puzzlement, as it is really not the sort of query one would expect under the circumstances.

Later I learned that he had led me past three men's rooms to reach his own private john, just installed that morning. My anguish had been worth while. I had never before officiated at a baptism.

Since the war boom, rising costs have continued to plague all companies in all lines of business, making it necessary that each item of expenditure be scrutinized carefully. Sometimes unusual situations result, such as this:

July 7, 1961

To: Mr. Harry Bannister

From: Executive Vice-President and Treasurer

As you are no doubt aware, the National Broadcasting Company spends substantial sums for air transportation—well over a half million dollars per year.

An analysis of air travel over the past few months indicates that considerable savings can be achieved by the use of tourist rather than first class accommodations, particularly in the field of jet travel where both types of service are usually available on the same aircraft. Savings of more than 20% are possible with no increase in travel time required on the part of the em-

ployee. I have notified the Transportation Department to secure tourist accommodations for employees traveling on company business whenever it does not cause undue inconvenience. Your cooperation will be appreciated.

AARON RUBIN

July 11, 1961

To: Mr. Aaron Rubin
From: Harry Bannister

Former President William Howard Taft had a seating problem all of his life because he was so broad in the beam. In those days theaters did not have chairs with arms. Consequently, whenever Mr. Taft went to the theater he bought three seats, so he could slop over in both directions and be comfortable. He had some trouble one time though, because after entering the theater he discovered that one of the seats he'd purchased was across the aisle, and even he couldn't straddle that much distance.

I tell you this because to some degree I have the same trouble. The breadth of my beam is considerably larger than the width of a tourist seat. You see, Mr. Rubin, in the tourist section they cram three seats into the space occupied by two seats in the first class cabin, so if I traveled tourist I might end up buying two seats, which would be more expensive than the single first-class seat.

Otherwise, on long trips I might prefer the jolly rollicking atmosphere of the tourist section, with active youngsters running across one's legs, redolent family box lunches and an occasional glimpse of a breast-fed baby, to the dull flat calm and quiet of the first-class cabin.

H. B.

In reply, Mr. Rubin, a most reasonable man, agreed that I could continue to ride first-class.

DEARLY BELOVED

● As I DEPLANED in Kansas City, Dean Fitzer was waiting at the gate. While shaking hands, he asked eagerly, "How'd you make out in Milwaukee?"

I replied, "Oh, I won \$45." He laughed heartily, then left me standing while he walked hurriedly to a telephone booth. I followed and heard him put in a call for Walter Damm in Milwaukee. When Damm came on, Fitzer said, "Pay me, Walter, pay me."

It seems that when NBC had announced that I was joining the network, Damm had said grumpily to Fitzer and some others, "I suppose now Harry will play customer gin," and Fitzer had loyally stepped into the breach and said, "I'll bet you \$50 he doesn't."

There was a time a little later when NBC changed its affiliation contracts, requiring a signature to a new contract. Although most stations signed up readily, Walter Damm in Milwaukee refused. So after the usual channels had been exhausted, I called him by phone and asked, "Are you going to be in your office tomorrow?"

He was very much on the muscle and replied, "What's it to you?"

"Oh, I just want to come out and see you."

There was a notable lack of cordiality in his voice throughout our conversation, but he finally and disagreeably made a date for noon the next day. Before the days of jets, an early morning flight out of New York made a stop in Detroit, then arrived in Milwaukee about 11:00 A.M. By the time I could get to WTMJ, it would be close to noon. Damm usually met me at the airport, but not this time. I came by cab. His office was on the mezzanine, and half a flight of stairs up he had a sitting room which served also as conference room, dining room and card room. Usually after a few words of greeting and the disposal of urgent current business, he would lead the way upstairs and the gin game would start. This time there was no greeting, and without delay we started playing in silence.

At about the fifth or sixth deal, while distributing the cards and without stopping, he asked, "What the hell did you come out here for?"

We played several hands, and I dealt several times, before I answered him, "I want your signed contract."

Again, a long pause before he said, "I'll see you in hell before I sign."

Several plays later I said, "Better get out your asbestos suit then, because that's where we're going. I want that contract, here or in hell."

This went on and on for some three hours, during which in disconnected dribs and drabs of conversation we touched briefly on contract matters, never disturbing the play. Finally I said, "Look, I'm booked for a return flight at 6:15 P.M. Do I make that, or do I cancel and stay over? I'm not going back without a signed contract."

He swore furiously and repeatedly, then fell silent again for a full half hour. Suddenly he put down the cards and

without saying a word he left the room. In five minutes he was back, bounced into his chair and, tossing a paper on the table, said, "Here's your goddam contract."

I took one fast look at the signature, then tucked it into my pocket. I made the 6:15 flight back to New York.

Of all the men whom I've met in my lifetime, there has never been one who even remotely resembled Walter Damm. Furthermore, of all I have known, he would rank number one as a perfect subject for a psychological study, a psychiatrist's delight. He was a mass of contradictions, part saint and part devil, as we all are, but while most of us work hard to show the world our saintly side and then let the devil do his work under cover, Damm reversed the process. He seemed to take delight in blowing fire and flame at everyone, but when nobody was looking he was a real softy. I was probably the best friend he had. When the chips were down, there was little he wouldn't do that I asked him to. Yet in all the years that I knew him, he never once said a kind or nice word to me. Others would occasionally relate a grudging word of praise he might have dropped about me, but to my face, all I ever had was criticism, complaint and abuse. I got wise to him early in our acquaintance, so I never minded his ill humors. If it had been anyone else I would long ago have poked him in the nose.

He was inordinately proud and fond of his staff, but he reacted to them as he did to me. I never heard him say a nice word to any of them, but when we were alone, he bragged about them constantly, with obvious affection.

He came home from the hospital after a minor operation while I happened to be in northern Michigan, so we arranged that I would fly down to Milwaukee, spend the afternoon and evening with him and then take off. I ex-

pected to eat dinner with him, spend the night and leave in the morning. He had a beautiful house, situated either on an entire square block or on most of it, with sumptuous grounds and a greenhouse. I don't know what it cost him, but it must have been expensive. Yet I did not spend the night there, because in this lovely home there was only one bedroom. No overnight guests for Damm. At about 6:30 P.M. there came a ring at the door, and three of his station chiefs came to take me to dinner. They put me up at some club, and that was it. The three guys who took me to dinner told me that despite years of service at WTMJ, that was the first time they had set foot in the Damm household.

Walter was below medium height, slight of build, flat-chested and sallow. He looked as if a stiff wind would carry him off. Yet he was quite an outdoor man. He was an ardent devotee of deep-sea fishing and an enthusiastic gardener, specializing in raising hard-to-grow exotic plants and flowers of many colors, which hardly jibed with his sour disposition.

Tremendously able, he was regarded as the number-one station manager in the business. Yet he had some extremely odd notions which he could never have maintained if he hadn't done such a swell on-the-air job. Advertisers had to put up with his idiosyncrasies, whether they liked them or not. For years his rate card had only one price, with no discounts for quantity or frequency, thus defying one of the basic principles of advertising—repetition and continuity. In radio he would not accept programs owned by advertisers or agencies. If they wanted to use his station, they bought “insertions” in his schedule. Years later, in television, this became known as the “magazine concept.” He didn't believe in changing his schedule, so many

of his local programs ran on and on for years. When he put up a building, he personally planned every foot of it, including the rest rooms. Some of it was a bit bizarre. I always thought that many of his methods might have been great for Milwaukee but would have run into trouble in other places, yet I'm sure that if he had had to do so, he would have shown flexibility.

When he went into television, which he did very early, he had the foresight to see that it would be years before the Telephone Company would have full facilities everywhere, so he put under long-term lease the one link between Chicago and Milwaukee, which gave him full control over its use later on when the networks came.

Television pictures go out over the country from the originating point either by relay or by telephone line. When they go by relay, they are broadcast, then picked up out of the air and rebroadcast. When they go by line, they use what is called a coaxial cable. Coaxial means concentric; a coaxial cable is a whole series of cables wrapped around each other, all having a common center. Today each of the three television networks has its own leased line into all cities, so that the entire schedule of each network is available to every community. In the early days of television, equipment was scarce, and many important cities were connected to the transcontinental system by only one line. This made it necessary for the three networks and the Telephone Company to periodically get together and agree on a distribution of the cable rights among them. The problem was complicated by the fact that one of the networks, ABC, had many fewer programs available than the other two, yet, for competitive reasons, it insisted on its full share of the cable. This deprived many communities of programs which otherwise would

have been available. In Milwaukee, Walter Damm, and nobody else, decided what programs would be on the single available line. Pretty smart!

Damm retired in 1958 and went to live in the home he had built in Naples, Florida. He had been going there for years, spending several months each winter. Yet, once he went there to live, he gradually discovered that he had made a mistake. A few months before his death in 1962, he told me that he would sell his house and move to California.

One of his contemporaries on the *Milwaukee Journal* said that Damm “was able to please a crowd but not an individual,” and that should be his epitaph. Many disliked him, but all honored and respected him. We fought savagely, constantly, in business and over cards. I miss him greatly.

We had an NBC affiliate meeting in Chicago in August, 1953. The meeting started on a Thursday morning in blazing heat and ended early Friday afternoon with the thermometer still rising. I had a couple of hours before taking off for the airport, and I killed them by getting in some extra gin with Dean Fitzer. During the game I casually asked, “When are you going home?”

Color television was rather new and NBC was putting on a big color demonstration on Monday. Fitzer told me he was staying over until Monday to watch it.

I had a summer place in northern Michigan, a holdover from my Detroit life, and my plan was to go up there for the weekend, leave late Sunday afternoon and arrive in New York late Sunday night. So I said to Dean, “Chicago will be awfully hot this weekend. Why don’t you come up to my place in Michigan with me? We can play gin tonight, tomorrow, and part of Sunday, and you’ll be back in Chicago on Sunday night.”

He looked at me for a moment and said, "Bannister, in all the years I've known you, that's the smartest thing you ever said."

So we got up to northern Michigan about 7:00 P.M., grabbed a fast dinner at the Otsego Ski Club, outside of Gaylord, and started to play at about 9:30 P.M. At about 6:30 A.M. we could see the first beams of the rising sun, and Dean chortled with glee. "Ever since I was a kid, I wanted to sit up all night and play cards. Now I've done it." After a while we went to bed, then got up in early afternoon and resumed play, to stop only for dinner. Again we played all night, slept a little, then got a few more hours of play until it was time to leave for the airport. We took off from Pellston, near the tip end of Michigan's main peninsula; then we flew to Traverse City, where Fitzer could change planes for Chicago while I went on to Willow Run and New York. It was a 35-minute flight from Pellston to Traverse City, and as soon as we took our seats, Fitzer said, "You stupid bastard. I'll bet you didn't bring any cards." So we borrowed a deck from the pilot and got in one more Hollywood.

Hal Gross, owner of WJIM and WJIM-TV, Lansing, is one of the better gin players. He and I have spent many hours trying to bankrupt one another. He came to New York during a World Series, and before leaving Lansing, telephoned to ask if I would go to the game with him next day. I had tickets for this game but had given them to somebody who came to town and could get no tickets, so I cheerfully accepted. It was left that Hal would come to my office about 10:30 A.M., we would play a little gin while grabbing a sandwich and take off for Yankee Stadium about 12:20.

When the time came to leave, we were neck and neck

after a real dingdong battle, so Hal said, "Why don't we stay here and watch the game on TV?"

I said, "Fine." So with tickets for two good seats in our pockets, we played gin through the game which set a World Series record. It was the day that Don Larsen of the Yankees pitched a no-hitter, the only one in World Series history.

One of NBC's most cherished affiliations is with WNDU-TV, South Bend, Indiana, owned by the University of Notre Dame. Just before this station went on the air, I had to go to South Bend to discuss the affiliation with Father Theodore Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame. Since I needed only an hour, or two at the most, with him, I planned to leave New York in the morning and return in the evening.

I got to South Bend shortly before noon, and expected to leave at 3:30. Father Hesburgh took me to lunch at the Union, and what a lunch it was. He was then in his early forties but looked like twenty-five. Dark, dedicated, decisive, and extremely articulate, he is one of the most captivating men I have ever known. We disposed of business in a few words, then covered a wide range of topics, with Father Hesburgh doing most of the talking. He talked of his youth, his decision to become a priest, life in the seminary, and his career before he became a teacher. He was fascinating, and thinking about it afterward, I was sure he did this deliberately. He picked me as a likely prospect, a brand to be plucked from the burning, and he almost made it. I got away in the nick of time, or he would have converted me.

We left the Union at 2:30 by my watch and started for the airport. On the way, I remembered that I had left my hat in the president's office, so we turned around, went

back and got it. But there we discovered that my watch had stopped, and it was already 3:20 P.M., too late to catch my plane. There was no other way to get back to New York that day. By rights, I should have been stuck there for the night. But when Father Hesburgh called the airport to see if there was any way to get me out, it turned out that my plane was forty-five minutes late, and we had plenty of time to make it. That's what comes of dealing with men who speak to God—everything falls into place.

Father Hesburgh, besides being an educator and an able executive, is also a brilliant, witty raconteur. He tells a delightful story which debunks what we all learned in school about George Washington and the cherry tree. According to Father Hesburgh, George Washington's father lived in Texas and that's where George was born. His father did have a cherry tree, which he cherished, and young George did one day chop it down. When Washington, Sr., saw his favorite fruit tree lying prone on the Texas plain, he yelled bloody murder: "Who done that?" It was then that little Georgie stepped up manfully and said, "Father, I cannot tell a lie. I did it with my little hatchet." Whereupon the elder Washington grabbed George by the arm and said, "Son, if you all cannot tell a lie, we all had better get the hell out of Texas." And that's how the Washingtons happened to settle in Virginia.

In Texas is another prized NBC affiliation—WBAP and WBAP-TV, Fort Worth, both owned by the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*, founded by Amon Carter, now run by his son, Amon, Jr.

Amon Carter probably was the most ardent civic booster that any American city has ever produced. Overshadowed by the much larger Dallas, Fort Worth would never have

made it had it not been for Amon Carter. He literally devoted his life to promoting Fort Worth. Much of the recognition it enjoys today is due to the personal efforts of Amon Carter. He would go to a luncheon in Dallas and bring his own Fort Worth drinking water. When air travel started, Dallas, being bigger, built an airport, which the airlines used for both Dallas and Fort Worth; the suburbs of the two cities are contiguous, with the line between them almost indistinguishable. This didn't at all suit Mr. Carter, and he proceeded to build a larger and more elaborate airport, just for Fort Worth, which is now one of the finest in the country, and insisted that Fort Worth be a separate stop. Being a heavy stockholder in American Airlines, he succeeded in getting parity for Fort Worth.

The first time I went to see him, I was ushered into an office filled with as odd an assortment of trophies, specimens and mementos as I've ever seen. It looked like a storage room for a museum whose curator had been on a long binge. Amon sat behind a huge desk, all cluttered with gimmicks and gadgets. There were many chairs in the room, all loaded with one thing or another. One had a bunch of gilded shovels, which I later found out were spades Amon had used in breaking ground for building projects. He swept them onto the floor and invited me to sit.

He was charming, well informed and sophisticated. After a while Amon secretly pressed a signal button, and suddenly a door opened at the far end, admitting a chap with a towering stack of hatboxes. Then Amon arose and grabbed my hat, looking at the size. Next thing I knew, out of the stack of boxes came a Stetson cowboy hat which was placed on my head, and lo, it fit. My own hat disappeared, and I had to come back to New York looking like

a cowpoke from the Rio Grande. After I had the hat re-blocked and the band changed, it lost some of its Western look and became quite serviceable. My several trips to Fort Worth kept me in Stetson hats for almost ten years, especially because about a month or so after each visit, my old hat, factory-rebuilt, would be returned. I had hats galore.

An early television problem at NBC was WOAI, San Antonio, owned by Hugh Halff, a bristling Beau Brummel of a man with a genius for moneymaking. Hugh had been raised by an uncle who had no children but believed in severe discipline. He trained Hugh to take care of the family fortune. Hugh learned his lessons so well that he not only took care of his inheritance but increased it far beyond the wildest dreams of his mentor.

He made a lot of money in Texas and Montana oil, but I have been in his office when a telephone call came in involving vast sums of oil money, and he would be most nonchalant about it. Yet where WOAI was concerned, he would haggle over every dollar or every comma in an agreement. Despite the multiplicity of his interests, his great love was radio, and 50,000-watt WOAI was the apple of his eye. His office was in the radio building and even the slightest detail of WOAI's operation got his closest scrutiny.

Some strange quality in the soil around San Antonio intensifies the conductivity of radio waves and enables WOAI to put in the air one of the clearest and most powerful signals in America. For years the station had been accustomed to getting mail from every part of the United States from persons who had heard its broadcasts. Hugh, very understandably, had come to regard his station as a national medium rather than just something belonging only to San Antonio or even only to Texas.

When WOAI went into television, national coverage was impossible. It took Hugh a long time to finally resign himself to merely covering San Antonio and environs after his radio station had for so long covered so much more. This realization, when it finally dawned on him, left him with a lot of frustrations. It made him most difficult to deal with especially in the early years of television. When I came to NBC, I found that he was operating without a contract, which is no way to run a railroad.

So I went to see him and—we being friends from way back when I, too, was a recalcitrant affiliate of NBC's—he greeted me most cordially. But after a while I let him have it. I told him that for a network to have an affiliate of long standing who now had one foot in the network and the other foot outside was just no way to do business; that while he might be enjoying his present status, he should bear in mind that other stations were coming on the air and that someday I just might walk over to somebody else who could and would sign a contract, a contingency I really did not envision with any enthusiasm and which I was sure he did not want to see become a reality; and anyhow why the hell didn't he stop playing kindergarten games and sign his contract so we could play gin in peace?

When I got through, he laughed loudly and said, "Well, I must say your candor and frankness is most refreshing. Go in there, in my private office, and leave me here to talk things over with my people."

I did as directed and found myself in luxurious surroundings, which I examined and admired for a few minutes. Then I spotted a handsome Barca-lounger. So I stretched out in it, and in three shakes of a lamb's tail I was asleep.

Next thing I knew, someone or something was kicking me violently and I could hear Hugh Halff saying, "He's

not kidding, the sonofabitch is sound asleep." As I woke up he said rather querulously and resentfully, "You weren't very worried about me, were you?"

I went back to New York with a signed contract.

All NBC affiliates gave three loud ringing cheers when I joined the network, because they felt that they would have a friend at court. The network brass was equally pleased, as now they would have in their high councils a voice which would clearly reflect affiliate thinking and reactions, and so prevent the growth of unnecessary strains and stresses. Secretly, I'm proud of the fact that I'm still fooling both sides.

The network-affiliate relationship is an unusual one, unlike the relationship between manufacturer and distributor, wholesaler and retailer, producer and agent, or employer and employee. It is, in fact, without parallel anywhere in our economy. Each is completely autonomous, and, like sovereign states entering into a treaty, each yields a portion of his autonomy in order to effect a working relationship. Then, the self-interest of the station and the self-interest of the network go hand in hand in a sort of partnership but only up to a certain point. Beyond that interests diverge sharply. They become competitors for the advertising dollar instead of partners, yet the competition is always tempered by the partnership.

The network programs are the big audience attraction. Rarely does a program of local origin figure importantly in the station's audience appeal. And if a station has many good programs with large audiences, it can command higher rates for its advertising time, both network and local. This precludes the dropping of network shows in favor of more profitable local shows, because that would be self-defeating. If popular programs are dropped, the

audience will diminish and the station will encounter increasing resistance to payment of high rates by local advertisers.

Efficient station management, therefore, becomes a matter of proper balance, so that the station carries enough network programming to command large audiences, and at the same time carries enough programming at local rates so that it has a satisfactory financial standing.

Broadcasting, at all levels, is quasi-public. At many points it touches on the functions of government. In wartime it promotes recruitment, sells bonds, serves as a communications medium for the government, sustains morale, etc. In peacetime, in addition to affording a platform to candidates for public office, it constantly demonstrates the workings of democracy by broadcasting news programs and interpretive analysis, showing Presidential inaugurations, political conventions, reporting elections returns and Congressional hearings; it promotes civil defense; disseminates knowledge and appreciation of our national problems by coverage of such events as the flights into space and in countless other ways. In peace and in war, broadcasting supports and sustains intellectual freedom by developing an informed citizenry. Constantly broadcasting is under injunction in the language of the law "to operate in the public interest, convenience and necessity." At every renewal of his license, the broadcaster is called on to account for his trusteeship. Beyond most businesses, broadcasters "belong" to their communities. They must always be aware of this special status. All in all, running a station well is no job for an amateur.

If it is tough to run a station, it's even tougher to run a network. The presidents of most companies are accountable only to their stockholders and boards of directors.

But a network president, while still accountable to his owners, has an even greater accountability to the public interest, the audience and the affiliated stations. The spotlight always burns brightly on the networks; while good work and good intentions are taken for granted, the slightest slip or error brings down a storm of abuse. This is especially true of government officials who have discovered that one of the easiest ways to make a reputation and get reams of publicity is to go after the networks.

Because of competition among the networks, all good talent is put under contract, sometimes for long periods of time. At almost any given moment CBS or NBC is apt to have under commitment as much as \$150 million in talent and properties with no assurance that any of it will pay off, other than whatever assurance may be implicit in the program judgment of management. One bad guess can absorb the profits of months.

The three networks owning television and radio stations are also accountable, as are all broadcasters, for their contribution to and support of religion, agriculture, education, etc. Again the networks make the biggest targets and are therefore the objects of keener scrutiny than individual stations.

All in all, a network president has to think about and worry over many things which have nothing to do with moneymaking. At the same time, he must keep his company financially healthy so that it will have the resources to survive in one of our most highly competitive fields. It's a hard way to earn a living.

I have always been exceedingly distrustful of the eager, fresh-faced young men who periodically rush into government from law offices and universities, fully equipped with all the answers about broadcasting before they ever take

office. After a third of a century spent in radio and television, I am still more than doubtful about most of them. I can't help but be reminded of what Winston Churchill said to Emmanuel Shinwell. Shinwell had been a member of Churchill's wartime Cabinet, but there was never any love lost between them. One time Shinwell was in the men's room of the House of Commons when Churchill entered. There was no one else there, but Churchill walked right by Shinwell to the farthest end.

"I say, Winnie," said Shinwell, "I hope there's nothing personal between us."

And Churchill replied, "I don't take chances, Mannie. I know you. Any time you see anything big and working well, you want to take it over."

One day in 1958 my secretary came in looking bewildered and said, "Harry Bannister is outside."

I said, "Send him in."

It was Harry Bannister the actor. We had been crossing each other's path for years, I getting his phone calls and mail, and he getting mine.

His first words were "My wife told me to go see you and introduce myself." He turned out to be a delightful chap. I had seen him on Broadway and in the movies, but I hadn't before realized that we were alike in size and build.

I started crossing his trail years before in Detroit. He had met and married Ann Harding when they were both members of Jessie Bonstelle's stock company, a school for many future dramatic stars. Years later I visited friends who lived in the house once occupied by Harry and Ann when they were newlyweds.

In New York, as I later learned, we both went to the

same tailor, who carried on his books "Harry Bannister #1" and "Harry Bannister #2." I never did find out which was who.

I didn't know, until Harry passed away in 1962, that we both banked at the Chase-Manhattan branch in 30 Rockefeller Plaza. On the afternoon of the day I read of his death, I had occasion to go to the bank and presented to one of the tellers a check for \$100 made out to cash. He looked hard at the check, then harder at me. Without saying a word, he walked away.

He came back with another man who also looked intently at the check and me, then said, "Are you Harry Bannister?"

I was beginning to get annoyed, as I had been banking there for over ten years, and I answered sharply, "Yes, that's my check."

He muttered something about "looking into this" and they both walked away.

I had been getting madder by the minute, so I also walked away and went back to my office. When I got there, I realized that I had left behind me a check for \$100 made out to cash. Just then the phone rang; it was the vice-president in charge, who was all apologies. I refused to be mollified, being secretly delighted to hang a shiner on one of the biggest banks in the world. I went back, recovered my check, walked across the lobby and opened an account at the Hanover Bank, closing out my Chase-Manhattan account forthwith.

My satisfaction, however, didn't last long. A few months later I paid a tradesman's bill for some \$30 with a check drawn on the Hanover Bank, and although my name and address were imprinted on the check, and the mysterious hieroglyphics and numerals which banks now put on

checks, my check bounced, marked "Account Unknown." I decided that being confused with a dead man wasn't nearly as bad as being labeled a deadbeat, so I tucked my tail between my legs and went back to Chase-Manhattan. Now, even if all my friends should die, I have a friend at Chase-Manhattan, I think!

In 1953 I made a trip to one of our affiliates, who for obvious reasons must be nameless. After a day in the manager's office, going through the station, transmitter building, etc., he gave a dinner party to which he had invited all his department heads and their wives. It started at about 6:30 P.M. and turned out to be most pleasant. At about 9:00 P.M. he got up from his place at the table and came around to sit next to me and say, "Harry, I've got some business to talk about for ten or fifteen minutes. Let's go up to your place." In view of the fact that we had been together all day, I thought this was a bit strange, but we went up to my suite. When I opened the door, I noticed that a coffee table near the door which had previously been empty now held two bottles of whiskey, one Scotch and one bourbon. Inasmuch as I would be there overnight, it was nice to know that I would not run dry.

We sat down, and it soon became apparent that my host really had nothing to say. After fidgeting about and making small talk for about fifteen minutes, he suddenly looked at his watch and said, "Well, it's been a long day. Guess I'll turn in." He arose to go and I did the same. "No," he said, "you stay here, but I'm going." I looked rather surprised as he moved toward the door, and he stopped to explain, "Look, Harry. In just five minutes you'll get a knock at the door, and I just want to tell you this. Don't give her any money; she's all paid for." With that he left.

I was somewhat annoyed at the whole thing, thinking to

myself, "He might have asked me first." Prostitutes have always been off my beat.

While I was still thinking, came a ring at the door, and in walked a pretty, demure-looking little trick who looked sixteen and couldn't have been more than twenty. "Mr. Bannister," she said, "I'm Maizy."

"Come in," I said, still wondering what I would do about this. "Would you like a drink?" While I fixed the drinks, I had the answer. As we sipped the Scotch I said, "Look, Maizy, I know why you're here and who sent you. In fact he just left here not more than ten minutes ago, and the last thing he said was that I was not to give you any money because you were all paid up."

"That's right," she said, "and well paid, too."

I said, "Regardless of all that, I'm going to give you twenty dollars, and both these bottles of liquor, on one condition, namely, that after you leave here you never tell anyone what happened or what didn't happen."

"Oh, you don't have to do that," she protested. Nevertheless, she took the money and the whiskey and went away into the night.

After she had gone, I thought bitterly, "What a fool I've been. She's sure to talk and my thoughtful but unimaginative host will be sore as hell."

But apparently she didn't talk, because about a month later he came to New York, popped into my office, shut the door, then whispered confidentially, "How did you like that little package I sent up to your room?"

"She was great," I replied, and all was well.

George Storer is my closest friend in or out of broadcasting. It began years ago in Detroit when we were competitors. He owned WJBK-TV and WJBK Radio, and before that other radio stations in Detroit, always competitive with WWJ. George started years ago to build a

broadcasting empire. Currently he is the leading independent operator of TV and radio stations, owning television stations in Detroit, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Atlanta and Toledo, and radio stations in the same cities plus New York and Los Angeles.

Inevitably his interests and those of NBC have touched, and at times have clashed. While he has done a number of things which have made me unhappy and I have done some things which have brought him no joy, our personal relations have never suffered. I have frequently said that in a business deal George would cheerfully slit my throat from ear to ear, then tenderly gather me in his arms and hurry me to the greatest surgeon in the world, get my throat stitched together and nurse me with loving care, until I was completely healed. Then he would buy the sharpest knife in the world so he could cut me again. That's how he gets his fun!

He has frequently telephoned me from the other end of the country to see if I was free for dinner, then flown two or three thousand miles just so we could spend an evening together. Usually I alter any previous plans to accommodate him, because there are few things I like better than an evening with George Storer.

He is an unusual companion, perceptive, polished and well informed on a wide range of subjects. Above average height, he keeps trim and sun-tanned and always manages to look elegant. If there is an American aristocracy, George by lineage, breeding and personal attributes is in the first rank of the blue bloods. His taste in all matters is regal, and, fortunately, he has the means to gratify it. Like the monarchs of old, he seldom carries any money with him. Sometimes when I win four or five dollars at gin, he can't pay, which always tickles me.

He has houses everywhere, including one on East 57th

Street in New York which is a combination of offices and living quarters. Once we had been playing gin for several hours, when between deals he said, "I'll bet you'll never guess what's going on underneath us in the floor below." Naturally I gave up, and he explained that at just about that moment, in the office directly under us, his lawyers were closing a deal to buy the Empire Coil Company, a manufacturing company which also owned three television stations. The deal involved millions, but George was more intent on skunking me to win seven dollars than on the monumental happenings below.

In my mind flashed the legend, which may or may not be apocryphal, of a secret meeting in J. P. Morgan's paternal home during the panic of 1907, when some of the nation's greatest financial giants were being put through the wringer by Morgan's lieutenants. Old J. P. himself sat in the adjoining room deep in abstracted concentration trying to beat a deck of cards at solitaire.

George has had trouble with his hearing for years, and has to wear a hearing aid. I have always suspected that one compelling reason why he likes to be with me is that my big booming voice penetrates into his ears without artificial help. Many a time, when we've sat down to play gin, he has yanked the button out of his ear and with great relief said, "Thank goodness I won't need that thing to hear you." Most people complain that I talk too loudly but not George.

Most broadcasters collect an unusual dividend from their calling. If they have sons, the fathers do not have to put up with that feeling of frustration which comes to all men when their sons develop contempt for the father's means of livelihood and deliberately choose careers far removed from that of the old man. Almost every broadcaster

I know who is fortunate enough to have a son has had no trouble at all in getting the son to follow in the footsteps of the father. In fact, as a rule the son is not merely willing but enthusiastically eager to become a broadcaster. I know of no other business where this condition exists to the same degree as in TV and radio.

George Storer has four sons and all of them are keen for the broadcasting business. They are all industrious, ambitious and capable. The oldest boy, George, Jr., is one of the brightest young men in the business and already has won recognition from other broadcasters as a potential leader. He follows George's footsteps in more ways than aptitude for successful station management.

They were dedicating a new building for WJBK-TV in Detroit some years ago, and a gala celebration was unfolding before a huge crowd which blocked traffic in all directions. On the dedicatory program was the governor of Michigan, the mayor of Detroit, half a dozen other celebrities, George Storer and also George, Jr. About the time that the program started, young George came across the platform to my seat and whispered, "I want to show you something. Come with me." So he led me into the depths of the building, to a small nook of a studio tucked away in one corner, locked the door, shed his coat, took out a deck of cards and said, "Deal." I found out later that they hunted high and low for him, to do his bit on the program, but, needless to say, they never found him. So they dedicated without him.

In February, 1963, George, Sr., decided to undergo some surgery which had been hanging over him for several years. He cut short a cruise in the Bahamas to return to Miami for this bit of unpleasantness. I had telephoned him on some other matter and learned that the next day

he was entering the hospital. So I asked my secretary to order some flowers for his room, before she went home the next day. My efficient amanuensis wanted to pinpoint the time more closely, so she called George's New York secretary, Mrs. Anderson, and asked her to check with Miami and find out just when George was scheduled to enter the "sawbone sanctuary." The dope she got in Miami was a typical: "Mr. Storer is hoping to be at the hospital by 4:00 P.M., providing he finishes his golf game on time."

For years I had a Washington friend who was a raving beauty; she was witty, loved to dance and carried her liquor like a gentleman. Almost always when I came to Washington, I took Lois to dinner, but as years went by, her two-fisted drinking eased off, finger by finger, until finally three or four snorts made her glassy-eyed. I had to ration her consumption, or else take her home early.

When Pat Weaver became president of NBC, Scoop Russell, who headed the Washington office, threw a cocktail party for Pat, to which came most of official Washington. It was at the Mayflower starting at 5:00 P.M. I figured that by 7:00 P.M. the party would begin to break up, so I made a date to pick up Lois at 7:30 and take her to dinner.

Knowing that the NBC brass was staying at the Mayflower, I took Lois to the Shoreham, on the other side of town, to be safe from prying eyes. We had a few drinks, dinner and several dances, when I noticed that right alongside, the waiters were setting up a long table to seat about twenty people.

In came the party, and it was all NBC—General and Mrs. Sarnoff, Pat Weaver and his wife, Bob Sarnoff and wife, so on right down the line. Scoop Russell, whom I had left only a few hours previously, spotted me, came over

instantly and hailed me like a long-lost brother, meanwhile ogling my charmer. I could visualize the whispering and snickering that would spread all over the network.

While I enjoyed displaying my Nordic goddess to the gaping audience, a little of that went a long way, and soon I decided to move to greener pastures. I asked Lois if she would like to go to the Statler, where some famous band was playing, and she, ever agreeable, said "Yes." So I paid the check, got up to pull out Lois' chair, she arose, turned around, and—*boom!*—she fell flat on her face. It took two waiters, a captain and me to get her on her feet. Meanwhile, I was acutely conscious of wide grins all over the faces of the NBC party.

It was less than 100 feet to the door, but it took an eternity to get there, and with the best grace in the world I would have cheerfully slit the delicate throat of my sultry beauty, who was completely unconcerned about the whole thing.

RATINGS AND IMAGES

● FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT'S first fireside chat achieved the highest rating recorded up to that time. In itself, this fact constituted a news story. Thus most people learned for the first time about a mysterious, little-understood force, "Ratings." For many it connoted strange influences which were up to no good. In reality, ratings are the essence of simplicity.

A rating indicates percentage, nothing more, nothing less. The rating of a program is the percentage of the total possible audience which that program attracts. When a TV program gets a rating of 10, it means that it attracted 10 per cent of all the television families in its coverage area. A 20 rating means it drew 20 per cent, and so on. No program I know of ever got a rating of 100, but some get a rating of one, or less. Currently there are about 50 million homes equipped with television in the United States, so by applying the national rating of any program against 50 million, it is possible to calculate the size of its national audience. For example, a national program with a 40 rating was seen by 40 per cent of 50 million television homes, or a total of 20 million homes. Studies have shown that television is usually watched by three people per house-

hold, so it can be calculated that any program with a 40 rating, or 20 million TV sets, reached a total of 60 million people.

In a city of 250,000 population where there may be 75,000 TV homes, a 40 rating would indicate an audience of 30,000 sets, or 90,000 people. The arithmetic is simple, but establishing the basis for the arithmetic is difficult. There are four main methods of obtaining the data from which the size of audiences is calculated:

(1) Telephone coincidentals: This is done by making telephone calls while a program is on the air. The investigator asks, "Are you watching television?" and "What channel are you watching?" From the answers to the first question it is possible to deduce the size of the total audience of all programs on the air at that time. The answers to the second question determine how that audience was distributed among all the available channels.

(2) Personal interviews: These are usually conducted on the day following the period being covered. The interviewer asks, "Were you watching television last night?" "What program did you see from 7:00 to 8:00 P.M.?" "From 8:00 to 9:00 P.M.?" "From 9:00 to 10:00 P.M.?" Obviously, the interviewer seeks more information than is asked in the telephone coincidental. He doesn't always get it.

(3) The diary method: A group of carefully selected households is supplied with printed forms which, when filled in, show the programs watched by each family in a given period. Rewards, either in money or merchandise, or both, are offered for the cooperation of each household in supplying the desired information.

(4) Meters: This method works exactly the same as the diary method, excepting that the information is recorded

electronically by machines attached to the TV set which register whenever the set is in use.

Each of the foregoing methods has certain values, and corresponding flaws and weaknesses.

(1) The telephone-coincidental method irritates the interviewee by calling him away from the TV set to the telephone. His answers are apt to be curt, and can be deliberately misleading. A further possibility of error lies in the fact that the interviewers must be paid on the basis of the number of calls they make, and the temptation exists to report calls never made. A few of those can throw the entire survey out of kilter. However, if it is honestly conducted, and if the questions are honestly answered, the telephone coincidental can be helpful. The fact that the telephone call comes during the program places no strain on the interviewee's memory and minimizes the chance of error.

(2) The personal interview, because it comes on the day following the surveyed program, does put a strain on the interviewee's memory, and may result in erroneous answers. Also—because, again, the interviewer is paid on a "per call" basis—a percentage of fictitious reports is inevitable. However, because it is done quietly and calmly, with no strain, if conditions are ideal, it can yield much more information than the telephone coincidental.

(3) The diary method relies on the faithfulness of each household in making prompt and accurate entries. Many people are neither prompt nor accurate, causing over 50 per cent of the completed diaries to be practically without value. Since here, too, payment is for completed reports, the temptation is great to keep up the entries regardless of accuracy. If the record is kept honestly, this can be a valuable method.

(4) The electronic meter method is the most accurate because periods of watching are recorded mechanically. Its weakness is that it indicates only that the set was turned on, but cannot show who was watching. Also, because installations are expensive, the number of meters is limited and the meters are left installed for long periods, giving the same family history over and over. This factor can be misleading.

All surveys make an effort to develop what is termed a "scientific" sample, taking into account such factors as geographical location, varying income levels and age. Then they apply these factors to the smallest possible segment of the population in order to make the final cost affordable for the buyer of the service. The result is that the habits of a few hundred people are used to measure millions. Therein lies grave chance of error. Altogether, there is possibility of error in the interviewee's responses, more possibility of error in the factor of honesty, and still more in the smallness of the sample.

Yet ratings are a necessity. Nobody can expect an advertiser to spend millions on a program without making every effort to find out what he's getting for his money.

Even with small samplings the cost of surveys is extremely high and increases constantly. Someday science will have progressed to the point where every TV set will be equipped with a gadget which will flash back information to the transmitter showing not only that the set is turned on but also how many people are watching and maybe even the age group and sex. Until that day, we'll have to limp along with the various systems now available, making sure, as far as possible, of their honesty and objectivity. These last two factors will always govern the accuracy of the survey. As long as surveys have to employ

human beings, both investigators and those being investigated, all the flaws and weaknesses of humanity will be reflected in the results.

Very early in the life of commercial radio, it was found necessary to start counting listeners. All stations developed surveys of their own, usually by having the station telephone operator make random telephone calls in quiet moments on the switchboard at night, and ask just two questions: (1) Is your radio turned on? (2) What station are you listening to? Somehow or other, the station making the survey always came out first.

Inevitably as time went on and competing stations announced highly conflicting results of such "surveys," the need arose for impartial objective measurements and the first "studies" got under way. The first radio survey on a national basis was Crossley. Then came Hooper, who organized the business on a volume basis and developed the technique of measuring the entire broadcast day rather than single programs. Later came Pulse, Trendex, ARB and Nielsen, the latter being the one who mechanized surveys by installing meters and who expanded the market for his studies far beyond stations and advertisers.

On WWJ I became dissatisfied with commercial surveys as early as 1935, when most stations were relying on their own telephone operators. My complaint about the Hooper surveys, which then were beginning to take hold with advertisers, was the same complaint I still have about all commercial surveys, namely, the smallness of the base.

The survey people get very upstage about the size of the sample and quote endless statistics to prove that the minimal so-called "scientific" sample takes into account all the variables such as sex, age, economic status, geo-

graphical location, etc., and that repeated tests have proved that increasing the bulk of the sample to be surveyed does not in any way alter the findings.

The same problem exists with public opinion polls. They, too, use minuscule samplings, for the same reason as broadcast ratings, namely, to hold down the cost to a figure that the buyer can afford to pay. The Gallup Poll was uncannily accurate until a real neck-and-neck election came along, the Truman victory over Dewey. Then the winning margin was so slim, percentagewise, that the errors inherent in applying small samplings to huge totals threw Gallup off completely; and the poll predicted the election of the man who lost. Since then, in my opinion, the pollsters have played it safe by always listing an “undecided” block big enough to throw the election either way in a close race. I can’t recall so many “undecided” responses in polls taken before 1948.

However, the Gallup Poll is infinitely superior to the methods which preceded it. Before Gallup, newspapers used to take “straw votes” wherever people congregated or they would send out reporters to “talk to people.” Both methods were haphazard, inaccurate ways of trying to do awkwardly what Dr. Gallup attempts to do scientifically and efficiently.

I am sure that it is quite difficult to accurately determine the preferences of millions by sampling a few hundred, but it’s much better than no sample at all to have an intelligently selected sample, honestly surveyed by someone whose sole interest is to come as close to pure truth as is humanly possible.

The late Fred Allen on one of his programs many years ago gave the perfect explanation of ratings. Portland, his wife, asks, “Mr. Allen, who is Mr. Hooper?” and Fred

answers, "Mr. Hooper is a fellow who can look in the bottom of a bird cage, and tell you how many grains of sand there are in the Sahara Desert."

Any professional survey can be helpful provided its findings are evaluated as being only indicative and are weighed accordingly. But it must always be accepted as the best procurable measurement and not a conclusive arithmetical finding such as "two times two is four."

Quite often this guarded approach is not enough to suit an advertiser or an advertising agency. The result is that ratings are then treated as definitive measurements, which they are not and never have been. Consequently, performers are hired and fired, shows are bought and canceled, on the basis of figures which in their very nature lack total accuracy. That is the tyranny of ratings.

There is another area where ratings fall short. That is in determining audience quality. Just as some stations have greater audience influence than that reflected by mere numbers of people, so do some programs have special appeal to pacesetters and opinion makers whose influence extends beyond their numbers. Two programs may each have a following of roughly 20 million people. Program "A" reaches an elite 20 million whose preferences may affect many additional millions, bringing prosperity to the sponsor in excess of the indicated statistics. Program "B" has an audience equal in numbers but lacking distinction, so it does no better and no worse than expected. The trick is to recognize the unusual appeal of a program, a most desirable asset. The process of recognition usually starts by some old hand "smelling" the situation, then persuading the nickel-and-dime boys to lay out the dough for extensive studies. Every performer likes to think and claim that his program is in this special category, but, unfortunately, it seldom is.

Efforts to measure other advertising media result in similar problems, but because such measuring usually has no general interest outside the trade, nobody fusses about it. Newspapers and magazines are constantly measuring their circulation. Although it is possible to determine accurately how many copies of a publication are sold, no one ever knows how much of each issue is seen and read.

There was a time when *The Saturday Evening Post* was usually read from cover to cover, including all the advertising. But that era vanished long ago. In Detroit almost every woman I knew told me that she read every display advertisement in the *Detroit News*, a monumental job. But in New York, in my household, there are whole sections of the Sunday paper which are never opened. I am sure this happens often to others, a fact which has been proved repeatedly by special studies.

I am reasonably certain that most readers of newspapers and magazines skip many pages of both editorial and advertising matter without reading them. Yet such readers are counted in the circulation figures. The existence and application of these circulation measurements have no interest whatever to the readership of these publications, nor to the general public, whereas audience reaction to television ratings is well known.

I have a feeling that someday all of the groups interested in ratings will combine—networks, stations, advertisers, advertising agencies, station representatives, program suppliers—and underwrite a rating system, with enough money in the pot to considerably increase the present minimal samplings. The principle of ratings is sound. There is nothing wrong with them which can't be cured by enough money to produce larger samplings and impersonal findings by dedicated people.

In the meantime, it is pointless to rave and rant about the rating system, because measurements of audiences are a necessity, and until a better system is devised, current surveying techniques will have to do. Much of the agitation about ratings stems from TV critics and columnists, who often will either ignore a program or else write so deprecatingly about it that it goes off the air. Then suddenly its passing becomes a tragedy, and its alleged poor rating is a national catastrophe. I knew a woman in Detroit who had been married to seven different men. She told me that her mother always disapproved of her husband until she divorced him. Then suddenly he became a paragon of virtue to the old lady. As fast as daughter shed her husbands, they became bosom friends of her mother's. That's how it is with television shows and many TV critics.

When a viewer has a favorite program that goes off the air because of insufficient audiences, the tendency, as with the lawyer in a losing lawsuit, is to damn the jury. The star of the show will usually at that point be interviewed and will get off a blast at the rating system which will immediately receive sympathetic prominence in all the TV columns. Six months or a year earlier when this same star was riding high and bragging about his ratings, he was probably being unsympathetically and deliberately ignored by all the critics. It would all be funny if it weren't so serious.

Another serious aspect of broadcasting is its "image." This is one of the most abused words in the language. Long before the word became disassociated from its Biblical context and dropped down into general use, almost everyone worked at developing a good "image" without so calling it. In the days when the English language was written and spoken more formally, this was known as

“striving for a good impression” or “putting the best foot forward.” But when the jargon of Madison Avenue became national, we suddenly all had “images.” Individuals, corporations, whole industries, and nations now have “images” which are matters of constant concern.

In the democracies the national “image” has represented an organized effort to put the best foot forward with a reasonable amount of romancing. But in the dictatorships a country’s “image” has become the focal point of its propaganda machine and pays little attention to truth, except to distort it in every possible way.

Many critical events in World War II—such as, for example, the Russian victory at Stalingrad—will never be accurately analyzed by historians, because right from the start both Russia and Germany deliberately falsified and completely muddled the archives for the sake of the proper “image.” By contrast, battles like Waterloo or Gettysburg can be documented down to the smallest detail, because while the propaganda mills were grinding even then, the art was still in its infancy. It did not attain full fruition until well into the twentieth century.

The British began working on “image” creation, without so calling it, centuries ago. According to their version of history, they have never fought a war except in defense of right and justice. The facts show, nevertheless, that every time they went to war, it was, at most, for naked self-aggrandizement, and, at least, for defense of national self-interest. Yet it is a good thing for the world that a major power holds up right and justice as motivations for its foreign policy even though this results from a sort of myopic autohypnosis. Often the process is self-defeating, because once the collective conscience of the population is mobilized, it refuses to stop working and frequently

causes radical shifts in the national policy. In any event, the British self-delusion is much to be preferred to the hate-mongering and divisive tactics which modern dictators use to justify their efforts at conquest and hegemony.

In our own country, a vast amount of thought, effort, brilliance and even genius goes into "image" creation. That is what institutional advertising is for. This doesn't mean to say that any of it is wrong, dishonest or evil. Far from it. In fact, the standards of ethics which prevail today in American industry are incomparably higher than they were fifty or sixty years ago, when most competition was conducted like jungle warfare. A great deal of this improvement is due to advertising, especially institutional advertising. Once mass production came along, requiring mass distribution, the value of a "good name" increased. After the good name was established, it was obvious that its maintenance was cheaper and much more profitable than the consequences involved in reverting to the shoddy methods of yesteryear. Abstract morality is fine, but intelligent self-interest makes much better motivation.

Sensation-seeking writers periodically turn their ball-point artillery on advertising. This is not hard to do because people who are trying to be earnest, solemn and convincing are easy to caricature and ridicule. That is why almost every nightclub comedian has a routine which spoofs TV commercials. And that is why some writers, trying hard to lift themselves into higher brackets, go gunning for business and advertising.

Broadcasting—first radio, then television—has been working for some forty years at creating "images" for others but has done precious little about its own "image."

Consequently it has been open season for the sharpshooters, with no limit on the size of the bag. As a result, broadcasting has been under constant attack, not by the mass of Americans whom it serves, but by a vociferous minority which has been whetting its hatchet on an unresisting giant that has been relying on deeds rather than words. In the realm of words, broadcasting is at a disadvantage, despite its own prodigious output, because every newspaper and every magazine in the country is at least a silent partner, and frequently a very active partner, in any effort to derogate broadcasting. They usually leap at the chance. All publications were hurt badly by radio where it hurts most—in advertising revenues. Now television is really murdering them. So when a piece appears in a magazine or newspaper about television, 99 per cent of the time it is openly or slyly critical. The reader must always bear in mind that the piece is being published by an organization which is struggling to survive against the economic inroads being made by the object of that particular article. Such are the facts of life.

Broadcast station people throughout the country have always bewailed the fact that in the two cities of America where an “image” is most important, Washington and New York, broadcasting has never been able to put its best foot forward. Some of the worst broadcasting in America during radio’s heyday was the radio fare that was dished up in Washington. There were altogether too many stations. Consequently, in the struggle to survive, all standards went by the board. You can’t preach ethics to a starving man. So the picture to Washington officialdom that resulted from this situation was never pretty.

New York television today leaves much to be desired. Every day I see things I would never have tolerated

in Detroit, yet New York TV viewers become quite indignant when I even suggest that some of their idols have feet of clay. They not only accept low standards; they actually revel in them.

Watching a ball game on TV in New York is not a satisfying experience for me. Because the camera work is often sloppy and it's hard to follow the play, I must rely on the announcer. I grew up in baseball broadcasting listening first to Ty Tyson, then to Harry Heilmann, who, as I wrote earlier, were the best ever. Tyson developed the technique which Heilmann later adopted of letting the listener know by the second or third word uttered after a ball had been hit whether it was a hit or an out. Then, after that all-important fact was established, came a detailed description of the play. The New York lads all start to talk at a furious rate as soon as the pitcher delivers the ball, and the line of patter is identical regardless of the outcome. The listener doesn't know until five or six seconds have elapsed and ten or fifteen words have been spoken whether the batter has hit safely, flied out or fouled it off. Meanwhile, a true fan can die a dozen deaths.

Very few of my New York friends are paying baseball fans. Everywhere else almost everyone I know is a patron of the game. Inevitably this condition is reflected in acceptance by the television audience of standards lower than those in many other Big League cities. New York baseball announcers are fine in delivering the commercials but could well improve the play-by-play.

Another gripe I have about television in New York is the "insult technique" used on guests who are interviewed. Sometimes I feel like reaching out and punching the noses of the small fry who try so hard to be big shots by embarrassing and holding up to ridicule the people they interview.

On WWJ interviewers were trained to treat every guest with the courtesy and hospitality they would extend to someone who visited in their homes. The true big shots in television are invariably gracious and hospitable to their guests, but the pip-squeaks can't resist the hope of acquiring cheap notoriety by being rude and insulting. Unfortunately there is always a segment of the audience which relishes this sort of thing, and there are usually enough of them to encourage the perpetrators to go on perpetrating, disregarding the fact that the decent people are in the majority.

I am certain that every time something happens on television which is offensive and in bad taste, even though an articulate loudmouthed minority may applaud, permanent harm is being done. I suggest that people who are unmindful of their responsibilities or are ready to sacrifice their obligations on the altar of self-promotion should get out of television and go back to the coal mine, the glue factory or the city room.

The real pro in broadcasting is usually humble, differing radically from the professional newspaperman who goes through life convinced that the mentality of the average reader is equivalent to that of a twelve-year-old. With few exceptions, newspapermen "talk down" to their readers and regard themselves as an elite class, especially created and endowed to guide humanity.

Broadcasters who work at it soon discover that being on the air is a source of enormous power and influence. Some allow their heads to be turned by it and become megalomaniacs. Many more are pulled up short by the realization and soberly try to measure up to what is expected of them. If they have any intelligence at all, they quickly discover that the electronic eye of television can penetrate through sham and deception most of the time;

that the quickest way to lose an audience is to patronize it. Out of all this, in most cases, there emerges humility. Those who lack this quality may get away with it for long periods, but sooner or later the roof falls in.

My chief complaint about TV in Gotham is that in the thirteen years I've lived in New York I have been struck repeatedly by the low quality of the local TV news. This is my favorite form of programming, and I watch all the news shows on all stations, at one time or another. There are few local newscasts I would have had on WWJ-TV. By contrast, most of the network news programs seen in New York are good. Some are great.

Years ago the staff of foreign correspondents on the Chicago *Daily News* used to be spoken of with awe. It included such men as John Gunther, Negley Farson, Paul Scott Mowrer, Edgar Mowrer and others who went on to fame and fortune. There is nothing like it on any newspaper today, but both CBS and NBC have staffs of foreign correspondents who, in experience, ability and personality, sparkle as brightly.

The NBC news organization is largely the creation of Bob Kintner, president of the company. A former newsman who once shared with Joe Alsop a successful Washington column, Bob Kintner had labored mightily to take away from CBS the primacy it enjoyed for years in news and special events. Success has crowned his efforts. CBS has reacted sharply to the challenge and has tried in every way to regain its lost leadership. Its staff today, while not quite up to NBC's, is better than ever before, so that in this battle the television audience has profited by getting magnificent coverage from both networks. The third network, ABC, still has high mountains to climb and deep rivers to cross.

Many of the men now doing television news are hold-overs from World War II, and quite often they have had a difficult time in reconverting to peacetime conditions, and covering stories which are humdrum by comparison with the tremendous wartime events. Some never have made the transition successfully. What bothers a lot of them is an uncontrollable tendency to constantly confuse the greatness of the events they had covered during the war with their own individual greatness.

Chet Huntley and David Brinkley are apart from all others. Together they create the outstanding newscast of all time. Their success has brought on a rash of two-man newscasts, on the assumption that there is some sort of magic in a tandem arrangement, as opposed to a solo job. So newscasting schedules everywhere are clogged with pairs who doggedly and heavy-handedly throw the ball back and forth, with sticky fingers and many fumbles, and somehow or other never manage to get very far beyond midfield while Huntley and Brinkley keep scoring touchdown after touchdown.

When, as is often the case, network people are used on local news, they do well, but the purely local shows are usually substandard. On WWJ-TV all my newscasters were trained newsmen who wrote their own material. I insisted that every newscast be an original production and not merely a reading of Associated Press or United Press dispatches, which is what most station newscasts consist of. In New York the men on the air read copy prepared by others, so any evaluation of a newscast must embrace both the man who puts it on the air and those who prepare the copy plus the production, which in television is most important. Taken together, the local newscasts seldom rise above mediocrity.

The news judgment is frequently faulty. Consequently, minor stories get prominence and major stories are relegated to secondary treatment. Clichés are rampant. Camera work seldom comes up to par. Production, especially technical production, is invariably poor. Film clips are thrown in without audio and sometimes without the film. The newscaster will say, "This afternoon as Senator Jones came out of a committee meeting on the defense budget, he was interviewed by Sam Hopkins of our Washington staff. The Senator had this to say." Then the screen goes blank. After an overlong interval of dead air, the newscaster says lamely, "I guess we lost the film." This happens much too often. Most cuts are sloppily made, resulting in far too much dead air. Filmed bits of interviews are used without regard to balance, and often the questions asked on these interviews reveal a minimum of intelligence, a maximum of banality and a total lack of imagination.

I watch these people night after night, and I literally cringe. The worst newscasting that I've ever encountered occurred during the long newspaper strike when the big names in the New York press were all over television. Talk about a fish out of water! Most of them were pretty bad, which, after all, is understandable, as newscasting, especially for television, is a highly specialized profession not to be undertaken lightly or without previous training. I must confess, however, that during the strike which left New York City without newspapers from December 8, 1962, to April 1, 1963, while TV performed Herculean feats, it never came close to filling the void created by the absence of newspapers. There is nothing like a newspaper, just as there is nothing like television.

I must note two exceptions to my criticism of local news-

casts. Ben Grauer, an old-timer, does everything well, whether it be commentary on a musical recital, a commercial plug or a newscast. He never misses. A real pro. The other is Merrill Mueller, affectionately known to all as "Red." Here is a wartime news ace who never let it go to his head. He pitches in and gives his all to everything he does. Yet if he were prone to swellheadedness, he would have ample reason; many noteworthy things have happened to him, but one unusual incident sets him apart. In the late afternoon of June 4, 1944, Supreme Allied Commander Eisenhower wrestled with his soul over a decision only he could make: whether to give the word to invade France at dawn on June 6 or, in the face of most unfavorable weather conditions, to postpone D day, already postponed once. He came out of his trailer for a walk in the woods. For company on his stroll he took along Red Mueller. They were alone for more than an hour in this, one of the decisive moments of history. Red told me this years ago, and naturally I asked, "What did you talk about?" He answered, "Nothing. I could see that Ike was in no mood for conversation. He acted like a fellow carrying a heavy load. He wanted company, but I thought it best not to intrude on his thoughts." Something for Red to tell his grandchildren.

A word about New York weather reporting. For years TV weather gals were everywhere, waxing throaty and seductive about heat waves and zephyrs. Then, all of a sudden, the winds shifted and blew them all away. This was okay with me, because I was always agin them.

Weather is much too important to be loused up with sex, and sex is much too important to be subjected to the vagaries of weather. The male contingent doing New York weather could stand improvement, too, with a cou-

ple of exceptions. One, a meteorologist, Frank Field, does the best all-around job in town. The other is Tex Antoine, a showman who manages to be interesting and informative at everything he does, and who obviously has studied hard to learn weather reporting.

At the head of NBC News is Bill McAndrew, who is so shy that he stays away from banquets for fear that he'll be asked to stand up and take a bow. Bill's passion for anonymity makes John Doe look like a candidate for public office. Since every organization reflects the man at the top, it may be that McAndrew's modesty finds its reflection in the "common touch" which is the unfailing mark of all NBC news.

Julian Goodman—who, under Bill McAndrew, runs the news operation—is one of the ablest of all the behind-the-scenes men who are never heard of but are almost indispensable. One measure of his insight is the fact that it was Julian who saw that Chet Huntley and David Brinkley were perfect foils for each other and so threw them together.

Running a team of skittish thoroughbreds like the NBC foreign and domestic news correspondents, each of whom is a personality in his own right, is a job that calls for extraordinary qualifications. Julian brought very special training and experience to his present job. He used to coach a girls' softball team, age group nine to thirteen.

In his ball club he had a pitcher whom he had nursed along carefully until she became the terror of the countryside on the female diamond circuit, down in the Old Dominion. She had speed, coordination and, best of all, remarkable control. But one day in an important game, at a crucial moment, her habitual control suddenly deserted her. Without throwing a single strike, she walked three

batters and filled the bases. The crowd was in an uproar, and in order to give his pitcher a chance to regain her composure, Julian called for time out and started to walk out to the mound.

He was intercepted by the pitcher's mother, who from her front-row seat had gotten on the field, and now said to Julian, "Mary is in trouble."

He replied gloomily, "I'll say she is. Bases full and nobody out."

"No, no," she replied, "you don't understand. Her strap is broken. I can see through her shirt that her brassiere is down around her waist. I'd like to fix it for her."

So Julian kept going till he got to the umpire; then he said, "You'll never believe this, and no rule book covers this situation, but I must request further time out so that Mary's mother can pin up Mary's brassiere which has just busted its strap."

Pitcher and mother retired behind the stand. A couple of minutes later play was resumed, and the uplifted pitcher threw nine straight strikes to end the inning.

PSALM OF HATE

● ALL OF MY LIFE I have fought a battle with nature. While I ran WWJ, I lived in the country and traveled 25 miles in and 25 miles out, daily, detesting every second of it. When I came back to New York, one of the great joys of Gotham was that a seven-minute ride in a taxi got me to the office, and no longer did I have to return nightly to grass, flowers, birds, fresh air and sunshine, all of which I hate with deep abiding passion. Besides, I don't sleep well in the country. It's too noisy, because all country noises are obtrusive and grate on my ear, whereas rumbling trucks and honking horns have a soothing quality that gently lulls me to sleep. I get my vitamins in smoke-filled barrooms, and what oxygen I require comes best from the bubbles in a Scotch-and-soda.

I have had a miserable time always with my nature-loving friends who constantly try to get me involved with the great outdoors, when all I crave is the small indoors. In Michigan many of my friends had boats of varying sizes and were forever trying to lure me aboard, not knowing that aquatic fresh air is even more baleful to me than the dry land variety; a mere seascape is apt to give me *mal de mer*. My pal George Storer has houses, ranches and

boats everywhere, and for years has been offering to send his plane to take me to Miami, Wyoming, or Cat Cay, and other wide-open spaces, the very thought of which fills me with horror. Ed Craney, who used to own the Bar Z Radio Network in Montana, never failed to press invitations on me to join him for a ripsnorting horseback-riding, mountain-climbing, pheasant-shooting imbroglio; the suggestion alone brought on an attack of vertigo and vapors. Lyndon Johnson, while he was a senator, several times urged me to visit his magnificent ranch in Texas, but even my admiration for him couldn't get me to sleep one night in a land where I know there are tarantulas within spitting distance, especially Texas tarantulas which, naturally, are the biggest.

I have never fished and never hunted and haven't the slightest intention of ever acquiring either of these heinous habits, nor do I ever intend to own a boat, or a foot of grassland or timberland. As I see it, the human race has spent maybe half a million years getting down from the treetops and coming up from the caves, and learning to live in houses which are heated artificially in winter and cooled artificially in summer. This urge to get back to nature is an atavism, a reassertion of the primal beast, a retrogression in the processes of civilization, and I'll have none of it.

Some poor bloke raised on a farm, without electricity, telephone, or inside plumbing, had sense enough to get away to the city where, surrounded by comforts and conveniences, he accumulated his pile. So what does he do? First thing he buys is a home in the country or a farm!

I've noticed, too, that after a guy acquires an estate and has lived on it for a while, something eats away at him. Why else would he attempt constantly to lure all his

city friends out to share his misery? City people seldom put the arm on their country friends to come to town, but country people are always urging everyone they know in the city to come out and get stung by mosquitoes and wasps, bitten by snakes, pestered by flies, and kept awake by chirping cicadas, rutting bullfrogs and twittering feathered monsters.

Then there's the guy, and his number is legion, who started as a boy to fish and hunt, and as he gets older and wealthier, finds it necessary to extend these activities, usually into the most remote places he can find. In his forties and fifties it's no good at all unless he can go someplace where nobody has been before him, and where he can really get away from it all. He gets away all right, far far away from everything that normally contributes to his well-being, and he puts up with foul food, sulphurous drinking water, impossible sleeping, uncomfortable everything, which if it happened at home would lead straight to the divorce court. He kids himself into thinking that he's having a wonderful time, whereas his real reason for enduring unnecessary hardship is simply that the poor bastard is trying hard to prove to himself and to the world that he's still virile and tough. That's the male ego, and I say nuts to it. All I want to prove is that I love comfort above almost all else.

Then there is the element of danger, which lurks insidiously in nature everywhere. I never heard of man, woman or child in an air-conditioned apartment who was swept away by an avalanche, or was hit in the head by a falling coconut. No ocelot or puma ever bit anybody in an automatic elevator. No tiger shark ever attacked anyone in a glass-enclosed shower.

It isn't that I am insensitive to man's struggle with nature. Quite the contrary. Take the fearless fellows who in

the interest of science go exploring the ocean floor, despite stingarees, giant crabs and octopi. I'm with them, every fathom of the way, as I watch them tremulously on television. Sometimes, in my tense anxiety, I swallow an ice cube. Or, consider those intrepid souls who to increase man's knowledge climb tall mountains, in sub-zero ice and snow and blizzard, with predatory eagles buzzing over them, and Abominable Snowmen snapping at their heels; I suffer so deeply with them that sometimes, without realizing it, I find that in my apprehension I've gone and turned up the thermostat all the way to 80 degrees.

Every time we have a hot spell around New York—and we get at least one every summer—I feel acutely for those among my co-workers who every morning come in from the country, bleary-eyed and shaking, after tossing all night in their picturesque rural infernos, unable to sleep, unable to breathe, unable to dry off the perspiration. When I have slept all night under blankets with the temperature a neat 62, topped off with a tepid shower to warm me up and a huge breakfast, it is all I can do to refrain from shedding air-conditioned tears at the revealed picture of life among the rustics.

NBC once had a week-long meeting with a committee of affiliates, of whom I was one, and because it was in August, the place selected was the Westchester Country Club. I told them flatly that I would stay in Detroit and pass up the meeting unless they could make some kind of arrangements to free me from the tyranny of country living. So I stayed at the Ambassador Hotel in Manhattan, and each morning I was driven out, then returned in time for dinner, to civilization. This way I didn't too much mind the birds and flowers.

A portion of my violent dislike of country living stems

from the fact that a landed squire, being somewhat removed from the normal conveniences of gracious living, must develop a measure of self-sufficiency; he's got to be able to insert a new washer in a leaky faucet without having to wait all day for the plumber to arrive, or if need be to change a light bulb without calling the Edison Company. I am totally incapable of such feats of manual dexterity, which out in the wide-open spaces can be fatal. So I greatly cherish an accolade I once earned by the sweat of my brow.

I had bought a new house in Detroit, during the war. It wasn't much but the best I could get. It stood on an acre of ground, wide-open on all sides, so my first concern was to fence it in. But in wartime I found it utterly impossible to get anyone to build a fence at any price. An engineer friend, hearing of my difficulties, suggested that I build it myself, and offered to lay it out and show me how to dig the postholes and put up the frames, and then I could nail the pickets, which is the real time-consuming work. He laid out a perfectly straight fence, and after a few instructions I started on the pickets—thousands of them. The way to do this is to nail one picket at right angles to the transverse board, then skip the width of a picket before nailing on the next one, etc., etc., ad infinitum. Most men doing this would rely on eye and judgment to get the picket at right angles and for the proper interval, but, knowing that both of these faculties would deceive me, I used a T-square on each picket, then carefully placed another picket alongside to get the correct spacing. I was busily working one evening when I became conscious of the fact that a car had pulled up in the roadway, and soon I heard some footsteps; then a voice said, "You're taking an awful lot of pains with that job." I laughed and

agreed with him. Then he said, "I got a lot of work to be done on my place, and I could sure use a good workman like you. I don't know what these people are paying you, but whatever it is, I'll pay you half again as much." Never has anyone paid me a higher compliment.

In my first few years at NBC, when Walter Damm was chairman of the affiliate organization, he and I would determine the location of the two or three meetings yearly between the Affiliate Executive Committee and the network brass. Because he didn't like faraway places any more than I do, we got along famously and always held the meetings in New York. But after Damm retired he was succeeded by Jack Harris of KPRC-TV, Houston, and Jack—being a golf player and an outdoors man—insisted that we go to country clubs and resorts and the like. The result was that my formerly powerful constitution weakened appreciably, and I had one siege after another with the doctors. That's what fresh air can do to a man!

Mother Nature is a vindictive wench. There's iron in her soul as well as in her soil. She knows I hate her, so she pays me back in kind and hates me double. Relentlessly, inexorably, she pursues me. Just as flatfoot Javert, without letup, chased his victim through a thousand pages of *Les Misérables*, or as the Northwest Mounties hunt the evil-doer round and round the Arctic Circle, Mother Nature dogs my footsteps.

My beautiful wife, who knew before she married me that I was no nature boy, never told me until long after the ceremony that she nursed an uncontrollable yen to flex her green thumb.

So, on the terrace of our apartment, high above the city's turmoil, where a couple of easy chairs might yield an occasional hour of quiet comfort, we have boxes and

boxes of dirty, grubby soil with ambitious worms palpitating for progress, sap roaring through budding trees in springtime, blades of grass vociferously shoving their nasty little heads into the air all summer and dead leaves crackling and snapping in the autumn hush. Naturally, I avoid the racket and stay indoors.

I am always puzzled by the fact that so many New Yorkers insist on traipsing out to the country just to eat dinner on a Saturday or Sunday in the summertime. They pass up some of the nation's finest restaurants, close by, and drive 35 to 50 miles each way to something less than first-class victuals.

They risk mayhem or murder by Seventh Day Adventurers who fancy themselves as racetrack drivers. They court extended aggravation in tie-ups on highways when some fourteen-year-old car decides to molt. They never know when that next curve in the road will flash a sign FALLING ROCKS, too late to be helpful, and a 300-pound boulder will crash through the roof, eliminating forever the necessity of picking up the table for four at Chez La Golondrina. If luck is with them and they escape all perils, after dinner, when a delicious drowsiness may come stealing over them, they find out why descending Mount Everest is even tougher than going up. No country dinner I ever ate was worth it.

THE CLAQUE

● PUTTING A MAN ON THE MOON is one of our urgent national goals. Many billions will have been spent before the day when some boy from Iowa or Texas or Oregon finds out if she's made of green cheese, if the cow could jump over her, or whether she is just "a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas."

It is quite possible that before that first young fellow steps out of his capsule to drape the Stars and Stripes on one of the crescent horns, another goal much less talked about will have been reached. In years to come it will make possible many scientific achievements, now remote. That is, vast numbers of people who cannot afford college will be obtaining a college degree or a certificate of advanced study without ever attending a class.

Once the proper techniques are worked out there is nothing that a professor can teach to fifty students in a classroom which that same professor cannot teach equally well to 100,000 students watching the television screens. I have the feeling that the reason so many educators are violently antagonistic to everything connected with television is that they fear that their own careers are endangered by the potentials inherent in the electronic camera.

For years educators fumbled around with television, not knowing what to do with it. They made no effort to get ready for it, to study its technology and techniques so that they could adapt it to education. They trained no people, made no plans, did no figuring to determine what funds would be required. One of the few exceptions was the University of Michigan, and the reason for its state of comparative readiness was that back in 1947, WWJ-TV pushed the University of Michigan into television, then nursed and weaned it, thus giving it a head start on most other colleges and universities.

By the mid-1950s, while there were a number of educational television stations on the air, their influence was negligible, because, with minimal programming, which was ill-conceived and badly produced, they were accomplishing little or nothing. Meanwhile the top college officials cried in their beer over all their difficulties.

In 1956, NBC had a thirtieth anniversary. To commemorate the occasion, Bob Sarnoff, then president, took a step which was to give educational TV a much-needed shot in the arm at a time when it was on the verge of collapse. Sarnoff announced a plan which, without cost, provided some five hours weekly of network-produced teaching programs. They were created by NBC and delivered over the network lines directly to educational television stations.

Out of this eventually emerged "Continental Classroom," which ran nationally for some five years and offered courses in Atomic Physics, Modern Chemistry, Contemporary Mathematics, Structure and Functions of American Government, representing one of TV's finest contributions to education. There resulted a considerable increase in the number of educational stations and the number and variety

of educational programs. Hope for the future of educational television rose. Someday, because of TV, maybe every kid can tackle the world with a full education under his or her belt.

Each year, the start of a new television season is usually heralded in all the television columns by previews of what is to come, done invariably in mockery, if not in outright condemnation. The underlying theme usually is that the reviewer has undergone mortal anguish by having to sit through an advance showing or to read a synopsis. Once the mood of agony has been established, it is comparatively simple for the critic to predict that all television viewers are doomed to suffer through another season of "more of the same."

Someplace along the line, the columnists and critics started confusing TV with automobiles. Just because in Detroit it is traditional to bring out a new model every year, the boys and girls who write pieces for the papers began treating the advent of each fall as a time when all TV screens should ring out the old and ring in the new.

As a matter of fact, this is not at all what most people want. In my years in broadcasting I have seldom encountered pressures to do something new and different, from anyone except those who had an ax to grind or who held preconceived notions which ignored audience preference. I have done many things that were new and different, but always on my own initiative or on the recommendation of my staff. Whenever the audience felt strongly enough to exert pressure, it was generally with the object of retaining something that we were already doing, and not of change.

If a program is good, its following wants it to continue as is. It usually does, but its return to the air after a sum-

mer lull is heralded in the columns as the “same old tired stuff.” If the program is fair, those who like it will scream their heads off at any suggestion of change. Even the outright bad programs, which are flops and fail to finish out a season, will leave in their wake a determined following which castigates all who can be blamed for the program’s demise. The net of it all is that the habitual television viewer, just like the habitual radio listener before him, is opposed to most change, has difficulty adjusting to it and much prefers the old favorites to go on and on. When the audience does tire of a program, it happens spontaneously, suddenly, pervasively. That’s how many greats have tumbled. But the autumnal equinox or the summer solstice has nothing whatever to do with it.

Another misconception regarding programming governs most of those who conduct TV columns. That is the matter of summer “repeat” shows. All “repeat” shows draw the scorn and ire of the critics. Time and time again columns have been written suggesting bright ideas like using the summer vacation period to try out new talent and new program forms. The facts are that all this has been done over and over, sometimes in hope and sometimes in desperation, and, sad to relate, with few exceptions summer replacements never draw anywhere near the audiences that will watch summer “repeats” of successful shows. This has been proved again and again.

I get a laugh out of all this, because I can remember that in the early days of radio and later in the early days of television, before the talent got famous and rich, and there was no summer lull, often when a critic was hard up for a column, he would write a piece lamenting the fact that so many good shows were on the air only once, never to return. Now that they come back, that, too, is bad!

As change multiplies, the tempo of change quickens. A glimpse of things to come arrived on July 10, 1962, the day when Telstar launched international television. That first program, across the Atlantic, may have set the pattern not only for television but for many other areas of international exchange. While heavy-handed, self-conscious big shots from Great Britain and the United States were swapping clichés and tiring dissertations on trans-oceanic understanding, the French deftly stole the show with sex and love songs. Andrew Fletcher, who lived three hundred years ago, left nothing behind except one little remark—and a quoted one at that—which by itself makes him immortal. He said he “knew a very wise man” who “believed if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation.”

This emphasis on entertainment may be the key to establishing the pattern of international TV. I think that once the people of the world get a few good looks at American television, with its whodunits, Westerns, doctor shows, uncensored news, freewheeling news analyses, game shows—well done and geared to average tastes—there will be a lot of unhappiness in many places with governmentally operated systems. The unhappiness may even extend to the system of government.

Already we have had inklings of this in the success of commercial television in Great Britain. Thrown into the ring, hobbled and handcuffed, against a pampered, coddled BBC which had a head start of years, commercial TV had made bureaucracy look silly, thus cutting the ground from under our own eggheads and bluenoses who for years have been holding up the BBC as the ideal for us to follow. Here, too, the American press has done wrong by Nell. Every time some British egghead, and

Britain has its share, takes a poke at the commercial system or makes a fallacious defense of BBC, the story gets an immediate play in newspapers and magazines on this side of the water. Yet little or nothing is ever printed about the success achieved by the private system which, despite official discouragement and disadvantage, has whipped the BBC decisively in audience appeal.

This has always been the history of individual enterprise and initiative as opposed to authority from above, whether the authority derives from medicine man, king or dictator. Because international television may be one of the most potent weapons in winning our fight for national survival, it is imperative that we never slumber in combating these tendencies by our own people, well-meaning or not, to weaken the vitality of free enterprise.

One of the salient features of our system of government is its flexibility. A sharp mind can find justification for almost anything in our fundamental law. This has been used to stretch the intent of our lawmakers, both to the right and to the left.

The great John Marshall was able to read into our Constitution a power for the Supreme Court which is nowhere specifically stated, namely, the right to declare a law "unconstitutional." This has become accepted as part of our system of law, and it has probably been a good thing, although I suspect that now and then there must be bewilderment in heaven among the founding fathers who participated in the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia in 1787.

In 1944 there was a proposal in Congress known as the Wheeler-White Bill to rewrite the Communications Act. In extensive hearings before the Senate, I was one of the witnesses representing broadcasting. During a recess, Senator Wallace White of Maine, coauthor of the bill, invited

me to visit him in his office; we chatted for over an hour. Senator White was the acknowledged broadcasting legislative expert of his day. Most of the language in the Communications Act which governs broadcasting is White's. Every bit of the law was influenced, if not dictated, by him. At that time, just as today, the chairman of the FCC, then Lawrence Fly, was reaching out for more power. Fly called it control over the "composition of the traffic" which, of course, meant programming, and this was one of the points at issue in the new bill. Senator White said to me, "You know, Bannister, I wrote the Communications Act. Almost every word in it is mine. When I wrote it, it never once occurred to me that some day an FCC chairman would point to this law—my law—and find in it vindication to censor programming."

I have often thought of that remark and wondered about what may be happening in the stately old cemetery at Auburn, Maine, where Senator Wallace White lies buried. I'm afraid that he twists and turns constantly in his eternal rest.

The coming of international television makes it more important than ever that we put our house in order. If we are going to set up our democracy as the ideal path for mankind to follow and our system of free enterprise as the key to human happiness, much of the world will hold up these concepts and compare them with the alternatives offered by communism. We had better be sure, therefore, that what we offer is "all wool and a yard wide," that no part of it is an imitation or a watered-down version of democracy and free enterprise.

Nothing will better display American life and American methods than American television; nothing will penetrate quicker into the international stream of consciousness; nothing will show the benefits of our way of life more

convincingly. Similarly, if there are flaws and weaknesses in our vaunted democracy, nothing will reveal them faster than American television.

If what we put on our own screens—and later, on the screens of the world—is to reflect the influence of doctrinaire lawyers and college professors who play with television controls in a manner aptly described as “flying a jet plane while reading ‘How to Fly in Ten Easy Lessons,’” our proselyting efforts are doomed to failure. We can’t convince other people that dictatorships are bad medicine while showing them television choked by censors; and, of course, the breed of officials who have descended on Washington in recent years all want censorship and nothing less. Every time they make a new move at control, they piously roll their bureaucratic eyes to heaven and declare anew that they don’t want to censor, as they pull the noose tighter. It’s pretty ridiculous for an FCC chairman to deny intent to censor, as Newton Minow did, even as he was making a public declaration condemning television programming as a “vast wasteland.”

Certainly he is not so naïve as to fail to realize that such a pronouncement—much more than a blue-pencil job on a script—is censorship of the most flagrant type when it comes from the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission with its vast power over every broadcaster. He had quite a neat gift for phrasemaking and because he followed the “party line” of all the eggheads, bluenoses and critics, he became and remained their darling, throughout his two years in office. It apparently never dawned on any of them that they had been had by Mr. Minow. They obviously have not yet tumbled to the fact that their idol, an unknown lawyer, stayed in Washington just long enough to make a lot of headlines and get reams of their chorusing kudos, by making a whipping boy out

of television, just as all his applauders have been doing for years. Then he quickly forsook public service, for which he had daily expressed undying love, and fell into a job which, rumor has it, pays one hundred grand yearly.

No criticism of Minow could describe how wrong he was as adequately as his own words. In a television interview, just before he left office, he complained plaintively that he could never drum up support for his pronouncements. Of course not! Most of his criticism was never justified. Those who don't like television seldom if ever watch it. Those who watch it think it's swell. Minow had the claque with him but never the audience.

This claque is on twenty-four-hour duty everywhere, and it has caused me to do a slow burn for over thirty years. Yet, now and then, I've encountered a *claqueur* who plies his trade with so much humor and erudition as to be entertaining, even while being disagreeable.

One such came my way in 1945 at WWJ. That year marked WWJ's twenty-fifth anniversary, and to note the occasion, wherever important advertising originated, I ran full-page ads in metropolitan newspapers across the nation. As a result, I got a number of congratulatory letters from people I did not know, and one not so congratulatory:

1528 Pacific Avenue
San Francisco, 9
August 21, 1945

Station WWJ
Detroit, Mich.

Gentlemen:

I read your advertisement telling us it was YOU who started radio 25 years ago. I feel compelled to let you know that I, for one, do not share your enthusiasm over this fact. In my experi-

ence, radio has meant just 25 years of increasing hell. However, maybe it was pretty brave of you to acknowledge your responsibility.

You loosed on the world a flood of loathsome gibberish formerly confined solely to lunatic asylums. You have poisoned and undermined the NATURAL joy of decent living everywhere. You have misled and drugged and debauched the tastes and sensibilities of a whole people. And embittered me.

The few possible advantages of radio have been swamped and nullified in the noxious mess that pours out of these boxes day and night.

I wouldn't have boasted about having started this thing. It would have been more seemly of you, I think, not to have mentioned it. Silence is still golden (in principle, at least).

PERRY DILLEY

I just couldn't resist the impulse to reply:

Mr. Perry Dilley
1528 Pacific Avenue
San Francisco 9, Cal.

Dear Mr. Dilley:

You probably did not know when yours of August 21 was written that it would inevitably end up at my desk, I being head man at WWJ. Nor did you know that because I am schizophrenic my reactions to your letter would be mixed. I will now answer you in two parts, one for each of the diametrically opposite sections of my split personality.

As Schizo, I deeply deplore the intemperateness of both your thoughts and language. It is quite apparent to me that you are really a frustrated radio announcer, venting your spleen upon those who happily can forget their inhibitions, via the ether.

As Phrenia, pal, I think you've got something!

HARRY BANNISTER

In essence, the state of mind of all the *claqueurs*, including the Newton Minows, is not unlike that of the dictators who do the thinking and planning for everybody. This is not the picture we should show to the world, and furthermore, it's an area to which Moscow has prior rights.

If we are going to play in the global league, we should put in our first team, trained by time-tested methods which have made American television great, and not play according to house rules written by ephemeral wonders temporarily set down in Washington by the wanton zephyrs of politics.

In recent years the clique has found a new rallying point under the banner of pay TV. This is not difficult to understand, because it's in line with the unthinking illogical attitude toward television characteristic of all *claqueurs*.

Pay TV started out years ago as an anti-television cause rather than as something that was pro-anything. All those within the broadcasting industry who, for any reason, did not believe in the future of television, and there were many such, became advocates of pay TV. They were soon joined by those in the film business who saw in television something that might destroy Hollywood and who sought a means of adapting television to motion pictures. For this purpose, pay TV looked perfect.

As time went on, almost everyone who in one way or another had missed the boat in television ended up in the ranks of pay TV. Every actor, writer, producer, and promoter who either failed to get a shot at television or who tried and lost immediately became a convert.

Another source of recruitment was in the ranks of professional sport, much of which recoiled from television

for fear of hurting gate receipts, yet recognized that it was here to stay.

Finally, the *claqueurs*. Those who occupationally, inherently, snobbishly, or in any other way dislike and resent television have gradually moved into the pay TV camp, not because they love pay TV but because they hope that in some way pay TV will be bad for television.

So far the public has rejected pay TV. Wherever it has been tested, the results have been shrouded in foggy double-talk but it has been pretty obvious that there have been no shining successes. And small wonder. It has been difficult to pin anyone down on actual costs, and a wide variety of possible prices has been kicked around, ranging from a low of 25 cents per hour's program, quoted years ago, to as much as \$7.50 for an opera, quoted more recently. With a pencil and paper, it is possible to work out an annual cost of over \$400 for anyone enjoying even a modest average use of pay TV, although the average cost price being thrown around these days is only \$120. Who would be silly enough to throw away \$120 annually in order to get something infinitely inferior to what is today available without charge? As a basis of comparison, it might be interesting to note that currently the average American family spends less than \$40 yearly for all admission tickets, including sports, movies, theater, concerts, circus, opera and anything else with a box office. This is the economic rock which will, in my opinion, wreck pay TV, if it ever manages to get going, which I very much doubt.

The presence of the *claqueurs* among pay TV's proponents would be baffling if one attempted to apply reason or logic to their position. They are the ones who constantly rail at television for not doing better and finer

things, for being susceptible to commercial pressures, for acting as a business instead of an art. Yet they line up behind a medium which is all crass commercialism, whose genesis and future are inextricably involved in profits and nothing else, and which makes no pretense about its hope to do anything except to offer entertainment at a price. At the same time, assuming that there may be hope for the success of pay TV, if such hope is ever realized, it will suck away much of the lifeblood of television and kill off segments of the better programming now available.

The vast range of cultural and informational programming now constantly offered by CBS and NBC, and to a lesser extent by ABC, is made possible only by the success of the mass-appeal programming which normally draws the scorn and ire of the clique. Any reduction in the audience, salability and revenue-producing properties of today's staple television fare would immediately dry up the sources of support for all the worthwhile things done by television, no substitutes for which are in the offing with pay TV.

Nothing in this world is free. Payment is necessary for anything worth having. Television entertainment may be paid for in one of several ways. In most countries it is paid for by specific taxes plus a constant dose of ideological propaganda and thought control. In our country its price is an equal amount of propaganda in the form of the commercial with its constant urge to buy something. Presumably, if the television viewer could buy everything offered for sale on his screen, he would be healthier, smarter, more comfortable, or else he'd be dead, but in any event he always has a free choice. If he so elects, he can take what entertainment he chooses, then thumb his nose at all the advertisers by buying nothing. This would

make his cost, for all he gets from television, just a measure of annoyance.

Now, pay TV offers a third method of payment, which is 100 percent payment and nothing else. There's no brainwashing to resist, and no way to get the entertainment without hard cash, in large quantities. As against the BBC in Britain or the French RTF or Germany's ARD or our own system, pay TV offers a program service infinitely narrower, less diversified and more rigid, at an incomparably higher cost.

SLAUGHTER IN DALLAS

● THE UNITED STATES has known few blacker periods than that immediately following the assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas on November 22, 1963. Incredulity, horror, and anger intermingled with sorrow, draining the nation emotionally as never before. It left scars that will be long in healing.

The effect was intensified because everything that followed the shooting was in open view. Although three of Kennedy's predecessors were gunned down in office, there was no television to record it. Now TV took over continuously. The result, as each development unfolded, was a pageant of tragedy and grief. The tense waiting until the President was pronounced dead, the swearing in of Lyndon Johnson, the hushed, stricken crowds everywhere, the lying in state of the body with anguished thousands filing by, the murder of Lee Oswald, the glimpses of the superlative bravery and devotion to duty of Mrs. Kennedy, the Requiem Mass, the assembling of the cortege, the funeral, the visiting dignitaries, and finally, at the close of the fourth day, President Johnson's reception for the greats of all the earth formed a sequence unmatched in our history.

The sweep of the television coverage was enriched occasionally by incidents which had not been seen before except by handfuls of people. Drama and poignancy were packed into the ceremony at the graveside when deft fingers folded the flag which had draped the coffin and presented it to Mrs. Kennedy. The lighting of the eternal flame by the widow and the Kennedy brothers was a new experience to millions. The murder of the assassin, on camera, before several ten-gallon hats, would have strained credulity in a whodunit script, and would have instantly drawn jeers from all the critics.

Right from the start there was an atmosphere of “never-never land” about the four days which could not be dispelled, requiring the viewer now and then to pinch himself. But it was real enough, real in its awesomeness and in its capacity to arouse national outrage. Therein was one of television’s chief contributions to a people in crisis. By showing everything to everybody, simultaneously, with nothing held back, nothing doctored, there was generated in our national consciousness an instantaneous spirit of thinking and reacting alike such as we’ve seldom known.

Watching the four-day drama unfold in all its ramifications, millions of our people must have realized that in striking at the President, the assassin struck at each one of us individually. Because of the President’s murder, every one of our more than 190 million Americans lost a little stature, walked a little less erect, had a shade less power and influence. All we are and all we have, as a nation, centers on and is epitomized by the Presidency. This transcends all politics and partisanship.

As they observed the developments in Dallas and heard the pronouncements of the local functionaries, it must

have crossed many minds that those oversized hats symbolized something less than good government. One wondered what manner of people these were who failed so abysmally to maintain law and order and safety of life in a city of a million souls, and who yet managed to carry off everything with such an air of self-assurance. What puzzles me is that some of the most civilized and cultured people I know live in Texas, many of them in and around Dallas. I can't understand how they acquired such public officials.

Of the four assassins who murdered a President, three were apparently motivated by belief in a cause, while one held a personal grudge. Yet those who killed for a cause all seem to have acted on their own initiative and not on instructions, or in behalf of others. Lincoln was shot by a Southern sympathizer, Garfield by a man who had failed to get a Federal job in the new administration, McKinley by an anarchist, and Kennedy by a Communist sympathizer. In all four cases the President was inadequately protected or not at all. The general effect created by those charged with his defense is one of utter helplessness.

A total revision is called for in the methods employed to protect our Presidents. Four killings out of thirty-four Presidents is altogether too many. One killing would be too many for a free, self-governing people. An Adolf Hitler was able for years to appear before masses of people in safety. In England, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, royalty and officialdom have enjoyed almost total immunity from violence. What is wrong with us?

Whatever it is, improvement in the technique of protection is indicated. If we must spend much greater sums on the process, it should be done. If we must increase man-

power tenfold, we should do it without delay. If laws are needed to take from the President all control over his movements outside the White House, they should be passed. When a citizen assumes the Presidency, his life is no longer his own. He should have no power to determine how that life is protected.

As we watched the array of foreign dignitaries at the funeral and subsequent reception, the thought struck home as never before that the United States is the leader of the world, and that in assembling to pay tribute to a departed President, the rulers of much of the earth were rendering homage to the man who lives across the street, the druggist on the corner, the postman who brings the morning mail, all of whom comprise the power and influence of the United States.

Accurate assessment of the cost of the four-day coverage is difficult, involving as it did the three networks and over 500 television stations with varying rates, discount systems, methods of accounting, etc. Actual revenue loss to the networks was around \$15 million. The total industry loss could well be double that figure. However, more than money, what made it possible for television to obtain such complete coverage was masses of trained manpower and facilities. The intense race for preeminence in news and public affairs between CBS and NBC, with ABC hovering around the fringes, made it possible to turn loose a host of experienced newsmen and cameramen with equipment to do a complete job. No government network, working on an appropriation without the incentive of outstripping the competition, could have approached this. Nor could a private system have absorbed the costs and been able to pour out its resources so lavishly unless its business was healthy, unless it was

nourished by schedules of hour-to-hour, day-to-day commercial broadcasting.

Had, by some unhappy miracle, pay TV been in effect in this country prior to that fateful Friday, most of the magnificent coverage would never have come about. Pay TV couldn't and wouldn't do it, because of the nature of its structure. If pay TV had been siphoning off any considerable portion of the revenue from free television, the resources and manpower and financial ability to do the job would not have existed no matter how strong the desire to perform might have been.

Entertainment programs on network television for the past fifteen years have been building up audiences so that today over 90 per cent of all American homes are equipped with television. It has become second nature for our people to turn on their sets whenever something happens that is of importance to the nation, knowing that television will supply the answers, fill the needs. Without this conditioning, the nation could not have responded as it did during those four days in November, 1963, no matter how good the coverage.

While television runs off its schedules throughout the day, so lampooned and sneered at by a small minority of critics and bluenoses, it works away at its basic job: to entertain masses of people, gearing that entertainment to the understanding, appreciation and appetite of those masses, in order to serve them to the maximum of its capacity. To do this job, it acquires men, materials and resources which, at a moment's notice, when time and the march of events require it, can be turned loose to perform miraculous exploits. That is how free enterprise works, and any interference with its delicate mechanism by dilettantes and amateurs, no matter how well-meaning,

can be destructive. Commercial television is one of the bulwarks of our system, and the keystone of the structure is the despised advertising message which carries everything on its back. There is no substitute for it.

Another area of vital national importance where television is supreme in crisis was demonstrated by the instantaneous mobilization of support for President Johnson. The transition of power is always a touchy thing, especially in an hour of extreme national tension. Seeing Johnson take charge, watching him in action, hearing him, studying him and, as never before, evaluating him brought to our people much-needed reassurance. Only network television could have done this, without loss of time, before fear and panic set in. To a democracy, dependent on the responsive will of the people and not on higher authority, the service is invaluable and irreplaceable.

NAME DROPPING

● THE WANAMAKER STORE in New York was anachronistic in location, archaic in method, aristocratic in its charm. Suddenly on the night of April 14, 1912, Wanamaker's was projected into worldwide news. It came about because a twenty-one-year-old wireless operator employed by the Marconi Company in its station atop Wanamaker's had horrified the world by dispatches plucked out of the air in Morse code telling of the sinking of the *Titanic* after striking an iceberg on the great-circle route from Europe to New York. "Wireless" then meant "wireless telegraphy" and it was just that. Dots and dashes but no voice. The operator was David Sarnoff, and from him the story went to the newspapers to be run off in extra editions and transmitted by wire and cable around the earth.

Such was David Sarnoff's introduction to fame. More than half a century has elapsed since, yet fame has never left him. His has been a full life ever since that night when he picked from the air the first inkling of the *Titanic* disaster. Now he is in his seventies, his mind is at its peak, his spirit soars like Lochinvar's and he never lets up in trying to pierce the veil of things to come. However,

he is the last man in the world whom I would select to be shipwrecked with on a desert island. Me, I like to work just so long, then I want to relax and play so I can get in shape to work again. Sarnoff never plays, never stops punching. He wears me out. If we were all alone on an island, I would probably be tempted to cut his throat in his sleep but would refrain only because he would have worked out thirty-one plans to improve conditions, all of them good, and without them I would starve or be devoured by wild beasts.

He tells a story on himself. During the war he was General Eisenhower's communications expert, and hours before the Normandy invasion, General Sarnoff and his British counterpart were inspecting a ship stationed in the Channel which was to be one of the key communication centers for the invasion.

The communications chief was escorting the visiting brass around, and the General noticed many types of radio receivers from all manufacturers, with RCA heavily represented.

He said to the chief, "I see you have many different makes of receivers."

"Yes," responded the chief, "we've got them all."

Then came the sixty-four-dollar question, put rather archly: "Do you find any one make that's better than others?"

Without hesitation the chief answered, "No, there's none of them worth a damn, except one that I made myself." Spoken like a true engineer!

Despite Sarnoff's achievements, his life has been no bed of roses. At an age when other boys were playing games, he was the chief support of his family and concerned only with survival and advancement. He had neither time nor

opportunity for a normal boyhood, which is probably why he still gets most of his fun by working.

As recently as 1950, when his dream of television was well on the road to success, he got what was perhaps his most poignant frustration. Before the FCC, at that time, were two competing systems for establishing color television—one, the CBS proposal for “incompatible field sequential color” and the other, RCA electronic color. In reality, the contest was a sham. CBS, in my opinion, was fighting a rearguard action designed primarily to harass and impede the development of color TV.

The “incompatible field sequential color” system consisted of photographing an object, then imposing on it a rotating wheel with four colors. It was simple and cute, but it wasn’t much. However, it served a dual purpose with great success: first, it delayed the adoption of black-and-white television; then, having lost that battle, it went to war again and clouded the entire early development of color TV. The RCA color system was much more intricate, as it was based on photographing colored objects and reproducing them electronically with no mechanical gimmicks. Also, the RCA system was “compatible.” This means that although a color television receiver was needed to get a picture in color, a black-and-white receiver would also get a picture, but in black and white. With an “incompatible” system, there was no picture at all for black-and-white receivers, so that if “incompatible field sequential color” came into general use, billions of dollars’ worth of TV receivers in many millions of homes would be useless.

By late 1950 the CBS system was as far along as it would ever be, while RCA color was still in the development stage, needing more work before it would be ready

for general use. But everyone who had seen both knew that the RCA system had the greater potential, and would be superior when perfected. The FCC was moving slowly, its engineering staff pretty well convinced that the thing to do was to wait for final development of the RCA system before making a decision.

But in the United States Senate at that time sat Senator Edwin C. Johnson of Colorado, big, burly, beetle-browed, chairman of the potent Interstate Commerce Commission. Single-handed, from his position of power, he created an artificial crisis, calling for immediate action on color TV and literally forcing the Commission to do something it didn't want to do, namely, abandon its policy of cautious waiting and authorize commercial use of the CBS color system, despite the fact that Commission engineers already knew that a superior system was in the offing.

Out in Detroit I felt the pain and disappointment experienced by all who understood the meaning of this unhappy action. The CBS color, because it was a competitive gimmick, had little impact. Nobody made any sets to speak of; nobody manufactured transmission or studio equipment; nobody put any programs on the air except as tokens. It worked just as its proponents planned. Color television was on ice, as it turned out, for three years. A great deal of harm resulted, however, from the black eye given to color TV, which later was to unnecessarily delay acceptance of a workable system.

Through it all, David Sarnoff died a thousand deaths, but finally he became philosophical about it and just sat back to wait for the inevitable. It came on December 17, 1953, when the FCC decided that RCA color was ready, and authorized it for commercial use by writing standards for its operation.

From that day on, nothing more was heard of “incompatible field sequential color,” and after a few years of slow progress, electronic color began to move. By 1962 almost every set manufacturer in the country had adopted color. RCA finally reaped substantial profits from an operation which had absorbed even more millions than black-and-white television.

David Sarnoff and I have a common bond. Both of us have had much to do with the broadcasting of fine music. On WWJ there was my full hour of symphonic music by a hundred-piece orchestra weekly, and the program of chamber music, running for some ten years. Sarnoff, playing in a bigger league and on a larger stage, was able to accomplish considerably more. His was the drive that ran down Arturo Toscanini in Italy and brought the maestro out of his retirement to create the NBC Symphony Orchestra and to produce perhaps the most beautiful tonal quality since Orpheus strummed his lyre to charm the wild beasts.

At WWJ I had discovered that rehearsals frequently are more entertaining and certainly more enlightening than actual performances. To hear a group of musicians, however accomplished, playing a number for the first time may leave something to be desired. Then to watch the conductor, literally measure by measure, bring harmony and beauty out of discord and dissonance is a truly worthwhile experience, conveying lessons in living which far transcend the rehearsal hall. After I came to NBC, I often used to sneak in to watch Toscanini rehearse his orchestra. No music lover who heard Toscanini will ever forget the experience. He was the greatest in my lifetime, maybe of all lifetimes.

Toscanini's career smacked so much of the storybook that all his life he was the subject of countless anecdotes.

He was a superperfectionist, demanding extraordinary efforts from every musician until flawlessness was achieved. Sometimes the old man would lose his temper and create situations which were highly amusing. This happened on one of those rehearsal days when everything was going badly. After a series of wrong notes, bad tempo, etc., Toscanini put his baton down, and in Italian said, "I've had it. I guess I am too old to conduct an orchestra any more, so I'm giving up music and I'm going back to Italy and I'll open a whorehouse, and on the door I'm going to put up a big electric sign stating: 'No Musicians Admitted.'"

In the NBC Symphony Orchestra there was a wealthy musician, Harry Glantz, who was rated as one of the finest trumpet players in the world. He played in the orchestra because he loved both Toscanini and fine music. Glantz spoke Yiddish and a little English, while Toscanini spoke Italian. Every now and then, as dedicated musicians often do, these two would have a real set-to, Toscanini swearing at Glantz in Italian and Glantz swearing at the maestro in Yiddish, while all the men in the orchestra wondered how each understood the other.

When Toscanini first came to the Metropolitan Opera House as conductor, he was quite young and boyish-looking. The star of the Met then was Geraldine Farrar, a fine singer, a striking beauty and an excellent actress. Opera lovers still rate her *Carmen* as the greatest of all. She also displayed temperament on every occasion. In rehearsal one day, Toscanini stopped her in the midst of an aria and admonished her about something. Indignantly, she drew herself up haughtily and said, "But *I* am the star." Tosca replied, "Madame, only in heaven are there stars. Come, let's rehearse." And she did.

While Toscy conducted at the Metropolitan Opera, he had a love affair with a noted diva. He lived at the Plaza in those days, and for several months the singer shared his apartment with him. Late one afternoon there was a buzz at the door, and when the maid opened it, there stood Mrs. Toscanini, who, as far as the maestro knew, was at the time in Italy. As she stood in the doorway, Toscanini, completely undisturbed, without losing a whit of his aplomb, rang for the butler; and when the flunky appeared, Toscanini said, "You'll conduct Mrs. Toscanini down to the docks and place her on the first ship for Italy. Go at once." And that was that.

In the late 1940s NBC sent Toscanini and the orchestra on tour. One of the ports of call was Detroit, where not only was the orchestra scheduled to perform but an intensive effort was to be made to sell the sponsorship to General Motors. So all the high brass at General Motors had invitations to attend the concert in special seats. Following the concert, NBC threw one of the lushest supper parties I have ever attended, in the main ballroom of the Book-Cadillac Hotel. There was everybody at General Motors who counted, most of the officialdom from NBC, the mayor of Detroit, the governor of Michigan, a United States senator and many prominent citizens. In fact, everybody was on hand except the guest of honor—Arturo Toscanini. It seems that one of the men in his orchestra had a birthday and the boys were throwing a party for him elsewhere, and that's where the maestro went, sponsorship or no.

One story about Toscanini has been told many times, but as far as I know has never before been fully explained. At the age of nineteen he was first cellist in the opera-house orchestra at Rio de Janeiro. The opera company had

been feuding with the conductor, and just before a sold-out performance of *Aïda* the principals threatened to walk out unless the management got another conductor. The crisis was happily solved when someone informed the management that the young cello player, Arturo Toscanini, knew the entire score of *Aïda* by heart and was highly qualified to conduct. He then led singers and orchestra in a flawless performance, conducting the entire opera without a score. Launched on his conducting career, Tosca continued to work always without a score. This has been attributed to his unusual musicianship buttressed by a miraculous faculty for memorization. While both reasons are correct, they were only contributory. The real reason was that Toscanini suffered from severe myopia and was unable to read a score at normal distances, but all his life he was too vain to wear glasses. That is why he always committed a score to memory.

Apart from his artistry, Toscanini was supreme for color. He was prime copy, exploited heavily by the press even after his complete identification with NBC. His picture probably appeared more often than that of anyone else connected with music. Despite language barriers he never had any trouble in communicating, and as far as I know, he never got a bad press, something that can be said for only a few artists in broadcasting. Newspaper stories about broadcasters are usually written tongue in cheek, whereas when broadcasters air anything about newspapermen they are quite complimentary.

Newspapermen long ago banded together in a gigantic conspiracy designed to glamorize and glorify themselves. Every newspaperman is a party to this conspiracy and works at it constantly. By a subconscious process, the conspiracy dominates their thinking, conversation, and much

of their writing, yet if this were pointed out, their reaction would be one of total indignation.

Types have been created such as the fearless, resourceful, incorruptible reporter; the hard-as-nails, heartless, secretly sentimental city editor; the fighting, crusading publisher. Plays, books and magazine pieces have been written about all these until they have become firmly fixed in everyone's mind. Yet mostly they are imaginary characters who seldom exist in real life.

Unlike the publishing business, broadcasting has done little or nothing to toot its own horn. In fact, broadcasting has gone along with the conspiracy to such an extent that there are even programs on the air extolling newspapermen and their deeds. It has been a one-way street for years and may continue so indefinitely. The days of widespread illiteracy left a legacy which still endows the printed word with an aura of authority and accuracy which it doesn't always merit. People constantly make all sorts of wild, unproved assertions and justify them on grounds of having "seen it in the papers" or having "read it in a book."

From the beginning, broadcasting has trespassed on territory regarded by newspapers as an exclusive domain. Many of the functions formerly performed by newspapers on both the editorial and business sides are done better by radio and still better by television. The fact that much still remains that newspapers can do better than either radio or television fails to soften the bitter antagonism toward broadcasting that is inherent in all newspapermen.

No newspaper ever publishes a story about broadcasting unless in the judgment of its editors such a story contributes to maintaining circulation and readership. They constantly are on the lookout for unfavorable angles which

they pounce upon with avidity. What they would like best of all would be to print the obituary of everyone connected with television and radio. Nikita Khrushchev has stated that he wants to bury us all. The print boys would gladly settle for just broadcasters.

STRANGE LOT

● BROADCAST STATION MANAGERS are a peculiar breed. Radio, in its early days, attracted an odd assortment of engineers, adventurers, show people, newspapermen, quacks and entrepreneurs, who had little in common except youth, energy and a certain flair. As the medium expanded, so did many of the people in it. Unfortunately, some stood still or retrogressed. At any given moment in the history of broadcasting there have been people in it who are on the make, interested only in what's in it for them, caring nothing for the public interest except to use it as a cover for their selfish pursuits. Then there have been those who have steadily and unremittingly performed and called for others to perform "in the public interest, convenience and necessity."

When television came along, it weakened considerably the industry average for devotion to the public interest. Television promised so much power, prestige and financial gain that a new crop of adventurers and self-seekers came into broadcasting. Some still remain. Some have been weeded out. Others have been undergoing the same transmutation which was experienced by so many radio broadcasters. The difference is that in the radio days the

tempo was slower, the temperature lower, the spotlight dimmer. There was more time to convert a man who, when he came to broadcasting, might have been snide, dishonest, mean, knavish. Gradually the chemistry of the kilocycles went to work on him, and in a few years his station would be winning awards for fine programming and public service.

The same procedure is being repeated in television, but the results are slower to appear in our fast-moving era. Any effort to speed up this process is in vain and can be destructive. Worst of all is interference by government, which, no matter how labeled, is censorship. Government does and should set up physical standards, such as frequency assignments, allocations of facilities, division of time for such areas as agriculture, religion, education, news, etc. Then, as it does, government should require the licensee to prove that his performance has equaled his promises. All of this is necessary and proper. Anything beyond that could be harmful.

Broadcast station managers come from all walks of life. Among them are aviation pioneers and former stunt flyers like Stanley Hubbard of KSTP, St. Paul, ex-lawyers like Owen Saddler of KMTV, Omaha, and Bill Grant of KOA, Denver. There are also former newspaper reporters and editors, schoolteachers, salesmen, engineers, and members of just about every other profession.

Les Biederman, a self-taught engineer who never got beyond grade school, started a small radio station many years ago in Traverse City, Michigan. Then, as it slowly prospered, he opened another and another, until he had a string of them which went by the grandiose name of the Paul Bunyan Network. All were in small communities, little more than wide spots in the road, in the wilds of north-

ern Michigan. All his listeners, piled end on end, would have been smaller than Paul Bunyan. When television came along, undaunted by mere economics, he started WPBN-TV in Traverse City, his home base, a city of fewer than 20,000 people. That, too, has prospered.

He says, "I was so grateful for the support of the community that I started research to determine what I could do to pay back." He quickly found out that what was needed most was a college, as the nearest one was several hundred miles distant and most of the young people were too poor to afford going away to school. He tried to get local support, with no success, so he started a campaign of broadcast editorials, hammering away steadily at the one theme—a college. He traveled widely, at his own expense, visiting almost a hundred schools in backward areas all over America to study financing, organization, etc.

Eventually, in an abandoned army airport building, Northwestern Michigan College opened in 1951 with sixty-five students and a faculty of six. Among the hurdles that Biederman had to take was legislation. Several laws had to be passed by the State Legislature before his dream became a reality. But he got them passed, just as he raised the money, built the buildings, assembled the organization which today makes a college education possible for thousands of boys and girls who without Les Biederman would have been denied the opportunity.

KSD-TV, St. Louis, run by Hod Grams, once ended a strike of municipal employees which threatened city-wide stagnation, merely by moving cameras into the negotiating session.

Charlotte Peters of the same station once got a telephone call from an unwed expectant mother, announcing an imminent suicide. The woman had no one to talk to, so

she called a TV personality as she would turn to a close friend. Charlotte changed the woman's mind and arranged for immediate admission to a private hospital. Mother and baby both did well.

In 1962 New Orleans was the scene of much disorder and rioting brought about by the battle over integration. Taking a strong position against segregation was not a method conducive to popularity, yet the WDSU stations did just that. While newspapers shilly-shallied or else opposed any efforts at integration, owner Edgar Stern, Jr., and general manager Louis Read made WDSU's position sharply clear, despite damage to station equipment and threats of personal violence. While the rioting was at its height and mobs were approaching the station, in scenes reminiscent of the French Revolution, WDSU-TV and WDSU Radio coverage went on uninterruptedly, eventually winning the approval and respect of the audience.

The list can go on indefinitely, as the examples cited are typical. Many more deeds and accomplishments can be racked up at every station cited, and for each station mentioned there are hundreds more.

Almost every television and radio station has in its files case history after case history of worthy deeds performed in the course of normal practice.

Doing good, without fuss or feathers, is not unusual in a broadcasting station. Some stations look for such opportunities; others wait until the occasion is thrust upon them. Whether they respond from conviction or mere expediency, the important thing is that they do respond. It is part of the business. The same channel or frequency which puts out a hard-sell, blatant, verbose, irritating commercial may at that very moment be performing or planning an act of unselfish service or, as in the case of KSD's

Charlotte Peters, may be saving human lives not for advantage or profit but simply because opportunities for service are inherent in broadcasting.

As the London scrubwoman, watching a pair of fancy floozies mincing across the hotel lobby, said (thereby adding an imperishable phrase to the language), "It's nice work if you can get it."

ELDER STATESMAN, DAMMIT!

● AT THE AGE OF SEVENTY, I no longer do the hundred yards in eleven seconds flat. With a gale at my back and a downhill slope ahead I neatly negotiate the distance to the nearest taxi. My drinking is largely confined to washing down through my reluctant gullet numerous pills of varied colors and shapes.

They have pinned a horrible handle on me which conjures up such images as a man with a long white beard or an hourglass running out of sand. I am now an "elder statesman," and younger men, whose eyes gleam with the fires of ambition, constantly seek my advice and guidance. I'd like to slit their throats!

When I am not imparting nuggets of wisdom to embryonic entrepreneurs, I sometimes think of what broadcasting has accomplished in the thirty-five years I've known it intimately and of what it may yet hope to do in the years to come.

It is never a clear picture either way. There are no sharp colors, only pastels and a lot of gray.

Have American broadcasters, haphazardly and without a master plan, set a pattern out of which may emerge the grand design for international television? Could inter-

national television be an important factor in abolishing suffering and hatred and perhaps, in time, in achieving world brotherhood? I would like to think so, but the future is never clear to anyone except an Isaiah or a St. John, and they did it without antennas.

As for the past, it is equally indistinct, despite my having been in the thick of it since 1930. As the human race is intricate and as every individual is a jumble of contradictions, so has it been with broadcasting. Occasionally I have had strong convictions that radio and television were positive forces in leading our people toward a better life. Yet sometimes I have wondered if our good intentions were not mere paving stones for hell. More often, I've suspected that broadcasting just went along for the ride, being pulled by events and people rather than furnishing any positive power of its own.

Undoubtedly opportunities for leadership were allowed to slip by unseen or unused. My reflections are not without feelings of inadequacy and even some guilt. But the net of it is, and this is a considered judgment, that if I had my life to live over again in any way I might choose, I know no other life which I would rather live. On that I rest.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

● **HARRY BANNISTER** spent the first twenty-three years of his life in New York City. He joined the U.S. Army in 1917, spent two years in France and was honorably discharged in 1919. For the following eleven years he was a traveling salesman working out of Pittsburgh, Kansas City, Cleveland and Detroit. His "lines" ranged from auto accessories and advertising to paint and popcorn machines. After a brief apprenticeship with radio stations WMBC and WJR in Detroit, he became a salesman for WWJ, which is owned by the Detroit News. During his twenty-two-year association with WWJ he rose from salesman to general sales manager to general manager. In 1952, at an age when most men think of retiring, he returned to New York as Vice-President of the National Broadcasting Company in charge of Station Relations. Mr. Bannister lives in a penthouse apartment in midtown Manhattan with his wife, Frances, and two cats.

