

**WDAE**

**Florida's**

**pioneer**

**radio station**



ROUNSAVILLE RADIO, INC.



**WDAE**  
**Florida's**  
**pioneer**  
**radio station**



ROUNSAVILLE RADIO, INC

*To my friend  
Bruce micet*

*A Radio Man  
Through and Through!  
With Warm Regards  
HamptonDunn*

*May 14, 1989*

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Hampton Dunn

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"Re-Discover Florida"

"WDAE — Florida's Pioneer Radio Station"

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"Florida Sights 'n' Scenes"

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DAVID E. SMILEY, SR.

To the memory of a grand gentleman, dear friend  
and my mentor in the newspaper  
profession, the late  
DAVID E. SMILEY, SR.,  
great former publisher of  
The Tampa Daily Times  
and for many years  
co-owner and then owner of  
WDAE  
Florida's Pioneer Radio Station



## 'THE WONDER OF THE AGE...'

WHEN Tampa's Mayor Charles H. Brown dedicated Station WDAE during a special opening program in May, 1922, he called radio "the wonder of the age that the human voice can be sent broadcast throughout the country."

As far as electronics were concerned, the Mayor was a layman, and of course this exciting new thing of radio was a wonderment to him as it was to most all who were exposed to the magic it could perform.

Golly, here we are 50 years later, and, as laymen, we can still join the late Mr. Brown in referring to radio as "the wonder of the age!" Even though it is commonplace, and even though we have television and many other marvels in this vastly advanced scientific world, it still seems a "wonder" that you can pluck someone's voice from the ether, that you can tune in one station or tune out another as you choose, that you have a fine lineup of programming from which to select, that "the human voice can be sent broadcast throughout the country."

Writing of this Golden Anniversary volume on the fascinating history of Radio Station WDAE has been truly a labor of love. The author's association and contact with the station spans a period of 36 years, which have given him an opportunity to see it perform through all those years.

If ever a medium were dedicated to the public interest, WDAE is that medium, continuously and consistently through five decades. The several managements that have operated the station during this period have all had the same common goal: To serve the listening public with the best in entertainment, in educational features, in public service, in news and public affairs. In all those years, the station has been in the forefront staying abreast with developments in electronics and keeping up-to-date in equipment and facilities and in programming.

Radio Station WDAE was born in good times, economically speaking, then survived many community calamities: The collapse of the Florida real estate boom, the hurricanes of 1926, 1928 and 1935, the stock market crash, the desperate years of the national depression, a full-fledged World War and several other wars since.

Through it all, the station has conceived its calling to be keeping the public informed of the situation, locally, nationally and internationally, and has done that well. Recognizing that its voice is the guest in households throughout its listening range, WDAE has always offered only the most wholesome and cleanest of family entertainment and educational features.

After a half century of service, radio still is an integral part in the daily lives of people who depend on it for everything from the time check to the latest word on an impending hurricane, from the latest tune in "good music" to the last word from far-away news fronts.

As a layman, this writer is glad it's that way. He'll not try to figure out how this "wonder of the age" works. He hopes just to continue for years to come to sit back at home and to listen to WDAE, or to keep tuned in while motoring all over the countryside.

It was an honor to get this assignment to tell the colorful story of Radio Station WDAE, and it is a pleasure to say:

"Congratulations! Happy Golden Anniversary—and Many More!"

—HAMPTON DUNN

Tampa, Florida  
May 15, 1972



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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20554

August 11, 1971

IN REPLY REFER TO: 8700

Mr. Robert W. Rounsaville  
Chairman of the Board  
Rounsaville of Tampa, Inc.  
101 North Tampa Street  
Tampa, Florida 33602

Dear Mr. Rounsaville:

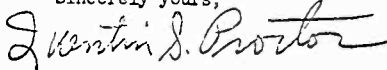
The years 1971-72 mark the fiftieth anniversary of operation for a few of the more than 6600 radio broadcast stations now licensed and operating in the United States of America. A research of the records of broadcast stations licensed in the early 1920's by the Department of Commerce has revealed the fact that Radio Station W D A E was first licensed on May 15, 1922 and was the first radio station to begin operation in the State of Florida as a broadcast station.

The records disclose the fact that the first license was granted on May 15, 1922 to the Tampa Daily Times, located at Tampa and Locke Streets, Tampa, Florida, with 500 watts power using the call letters W D A E.

The records disclose that the station has been in continuous service, using the same call letters since May 15, 1922. You are to be congratulated for being the operator of one of the oldest operating stations in the country and the oldest in the State of Florida. A copy of that first license is enclosed.

Happy Fiftieth Anniversary.

Sincerely yours,



Quentin S. Proctor  
Chief, License Division  
Broadcast Bureau

Enclosure:



## WDAE IS FIRST

**R**ADIO STATION WDAE in Tampa is Florida's first broadcasting station. In 1972, it is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Through this half century of service to the Gulf coast and Central Florida, WDAE has compiled an enviable record of "firsts" in its field. Here are a few of them:

**1. WDAE was Florida's first licensed station, and the first to begin broadcasting in the State of Florida as a broadcast station.**

Since the birth of radio in the Sunshine State, there has been a continuing dispute between WDAE and other stations claiming the honor of being the "first." But this argument now has been resolved once and for all by official documents on file in Washington.

Robert W. Rounsaville, Chairman of the Board of Rounsaville of Tampa, Inc., present operators of WDAE, proudly displays a letter, dated Aug. 11, 1971, in which Quentin S. Proctor, Chief, License Division, Broadcast Bureau, of the Federal Communications Commission, proclaims:

" . . . A research of the records of broadcast stations licensed in the early 1920s by the Department of Commerce has revealed the fact that Radio Station WDAE was first licensed on May 15, 1922 and was the first radio station to begin operation in the State of Florida as a broadcast station.

" . . . The records disclose the fact that the first license was granted on May 15, 1922 to the Tampa Daily Times, located at Tampa and Loëke Streets, Tampa, Florida, with 500 watts power using the call letters WDAE.

"The records disclose that the station has been in continuous service, using the same call letters since May 15, 1922. You are to be congratulated for being the operator of one of the oldest operating stations in the country and the oldest in the State of Florida. . . ."

Proctor also explained to Vincent Pepper, WDAE attorney in Washington, that "in the early days of radio, a party would construct a radio station (it was a homemade rig in the truest sense) and then apply to the Federal Radio Commission for a provisional license. These licenses were granted for three months at a time and were

readily granted, provided that the station passed an inspection given by one of the FRC personnel."

The memorandum from the WDAE attorneys, Smith & Pepper, based on files from the Commission's Record Center, notes: "WDAE applied for two successive licenses on the following dates: May 15, 1922 and August 15, 1922. If WDAE had not commenced broadcasting on May 15, 1922, there would have been no need for it to seek a renewal of its license and obtain one on August 15, 1922.

"On the August 15, 1922 application there is a notation by R. Y. Cadmus, Radio Inspector, Baltimore, Maryland, that WDAE was inspected on April 11, 1922 by W. VannNostrand and that 'Renewal of License Recommended.' This notation documents the physical existence of WDAE as of April 11, 1922, that an inspection was made at that time prior to the grant of the first provisional license for WDAE (granted May 15, 1922), and the statement 'Renewal of License Recommended' reinforces my earlier conclusion that WDAE had, in fact, commenced broadcast operations as of May 15, 1922. Finally, you will note that attached to the August 15, 1922 authorization was a statement from the United States Department of Agriculture granting WDAE authority to give weather announcements. This tends to buttress, corroborate and support the conclusion that WDAE was operating at this time."

According to the late L. Spencer Mitchell, general manager of WDAE for 33 years, the station was given the authority to erect its facility on February 12, 1922, by the Department of Commerce, which was the regulatory agency for broadcasters at that time. The original license was signed by Herbert Hoover, then U. S. Secretary of Commerce, and later, of course, the President of the United States.

## **2. WDAE was the first radio station in the United States and probably in the world to broadcast a complete church service.**

The service from the historic First Methodist Church of Tampa was broadcast June 4, 1922, less than a month after WDAE was opened by The Tampa Daily Times. The Rev. William Frederick Dunkle, pastor of the church at the time, conducted the service, speaking on the subject, "Who Then Can Be Saved?" The choir sang several hymns. Reports came in from listeners all over the country.

A few weeks later, the Associated Press reported from a city in the north that on the preceding Sunday the worship service of a church in that city was probably the first complete service ever to be broadcast over the radio. The Times advised the AP that the First Methodist Church in Tampa had broadcast a complete service a few weeks before over WDAE. The AP then published the fact that this Tampa service had been, indeed, the first complete service broadcast.

## **3. WDAE was first radio station in Florida to originate news broadcasting.**

The first regularly scheduled daily broadcast was known as the "Sunshine Edition" of The Tampa Daily Times, and was aired by

Harry Slichter, then managing editor of the newspaper which owned the radio station. As the first edition of *The Times* came off the presses and hit the streets, Slichter turned on the microphone in his office just away from the rumble of the presses and gave highlights of the news to listeners throughout South Florida. The program was logged at 12:30 P.M.

Broadcasting the news "free" over the radio brought a protest from the circulation department of *The Times*, which didn't like the "competition." In later years, the late L. Spencer Mitchell, manager of the radio station, recalled: "Newscasting at that time was untried and, at one point, the circulation department of the newspaper (The Tampa Daily Times) felt that their business was being damaged by these daily broadcasts and prevailed upon Mr. (D. B.) McKay (publisher) to have the station to discontinue the newscasting. This recess did not last long as demands for radio bulletins became immediate and powerful and they were resumed and have continued to this day."

The radio columnist in *The Times* reported on Jan. 19, 1932, "Every morning since he's (Slichter) discontinued his broadcast of the news, the postman has staggered into these studios, his bag simply bursting with letters from fans all over the state, asking, begging, demanding that Mr. Harry Slichter return to the air at once."

The day he dusted off the mike and went back on the air waves, the columnist noted: "And the shouting that arose! Long before he (Slichter) was finished with his 15 minutes, the phone began to ring at WDAE and delighted customers were saying how happy they were. And they should be for they were the ones who did it. Of course, the station used persuasion, too, but it was the letters from the gentleman's admirers that really decided the thing. Those letters were interesting, too; some came in the form of Christmas cards to Mr. Slichter and stated that if he'd come back, it would be a grand Christmas gift; several were from blind persons to whom the service means a great deal. . ."

#### **4. WDAE was the first Florida station granted authority to broadcast official weather reports.**

As noted earlier, on August 15, 1922, the U. S. Department of Agriculture granted WDAE authority to give weather announcements. This has been an important public service of the station throughout its 50 years of broadcasting.

During the devastating hurricane of 1928, the station attempted to keep its listeners informed with accurate information. WDAE was officially commended by Mayor G. B. Knowles of Bradenton "for correcting the misinformation about storm conditions being broadcast." He said local citizens "recognize the importance of combatting various forms of false propaganda against us in the north and unless refuted these false alarms about Florida hurricanes will do us untold damage." George H. Clements of the Bartow Chamber of Commerce likewise praised the station: "You kept not only the

people of the state but of the nation advised of true conditions and no doubt did much to counteract the stories sent out by irresponsible persons, including newspaper correspondents eager to get first page at the expense of accuracy." The station stayed on the air all night during the severe storm to give the world the only news of Tampa.

Likewise, in 1929, and in years since, the station staff stood by throughout the night to relay information on a storm.

In 1933, WDAE rendered public service by broadcasting warnings of high water to residents of lands later flooded when Hillsborough River overflowed its banks in September. The first news of the breaking of the Tampa Electric Co. power dam, two miles east of Sulphur Springs, was broadcast over WDAE a few minutes after the retaining wall broke. Additional warnings were broadcast at five minute intervals.

It was in 1937, in cooperation with Meteorologist W. W. Talbott, then head of the Tampa Weather Bureau, that WDAE inaugurated a daily marine broadcast at 12:30 P.M., giving reports of marine conditions from Hatteras to Jacksonville, Jacksonville to the Florida Straits, East Gulf, Western Caribbean, Middle Gulf and West Gulf. When he retired from the Weather Bureau service in 1958, Talbott joined WDAE as a staff weatherman and continued his daily broadcasts which he'd given for many years in his official capacity.

In a news story in The Tampa Daily Times on May 16, 1922, the policy of the station on weather news was laid down: "In case of any serious weather disturbances such as storms and the like, the station will be kept open both day and night, keeping farmers, truckers and shippers posted with the latest developments."

#### **5. WDAE was first to broadcast an athletic event "direct from the field of play" in the Tampa area.**

On Christmas Day, 1926, the station broadcast direct from Plant Field the post-season intersectional game between Hillsborough High School of Tampa and New Rochelle, N. Y. Ulmer Hawkins announced the play-by-play. Hillsborough won, 33-0.

#### **6. WDAE was first station in immediate area to carry first network program broadcast in Florida.**

On Sept. 22, 1927, WDAE was one of the stations joining in the greatest national "hook-up" in the history of broadcasting at that time to bring the World's Heavyweight Title bout between Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey—the famed long-count second meeting of this pair. WDAE advertised in The Times that "The man with a Radio in his home or place of business will be 'sitting on top of the world' listening into every detail—blow by blow. The next best thing to a ringside seat is to have your own Radio Thursday night."

More than 10,000 sports fans jammed the streets in four directions at The Tampa Daily Times building to hear the fight, described as the "battle of the century" by popular NBC sportscaster Graham McNamee. Traffic was rerouted by ten officers detailed by Police

Chief D. B. York and street cars were halted by order of the Tampa Electric Co. to insure quiet. And, The Times reported, "one of the largest assemblages ever gathered together in so small an area stood breathless as the radio announcer sitting at the ringside in Soldiers' Field tolled off the blows exchanged between Gene Tunney, the champion, and Jack Dempsey, the challenger."

The Times story continued: "Absolutely no detail was spared by The Times to insure the most vivid account of the fight possible without actual vision. Through the National Broadcasting Company, Station WDAE, The Times station, was given a direct wire from Chicago over the American Telephone and Telegraph system. Graham MacNamee, premier fight announcer of America, spoke into the mike at the ringside and his voice, transmitted over 1,500 miles of wire, was picked off at this end and hurled out onto the ether again by means of the radio."

There even was a boxing ring erected at The Times site and fans were introduced to local boxing figures such as Big Ben Pound, Soldier Eddie Benson, Willie Greenspan and others who were introduced by Jim Downing, promoter at Benjamin Field.

#### **7. WDAE first station to broadcast Easter sunrise services conducted by Egypt Temple Shrine.**

On April 17, 1927, WDAE broadcast the Easter sunrise services from Plant Park at dawn, for the first time in its history. B. Marion Reed, past potentate of Egypt Temple Shrine, said that broadcasting had been considered several times before, but decided against. Even today, WDAE still broadcasts this annual event.

#### **8. WDAE broadcast first wedding on radio.**

In the early 1920's, when WDAE was first on the air, it broadcast the marriage of a couple from a truck parked on Franklin St. The preacher was in the studio. The ceremony may have been a world premiere of doing up such an occasion in such a manner. The newlyweds, not feeling too sure of the security of their blessed state, hurried around to the preacher to have it done all over again—off the air.

A few years later, a full score of couples were wed in front of the grandstand at the Florida State Fair grounds, and the massed ceremony was broadcast over WDAE, with state notables looking on and leading merchants participating by giving the happy voyagers substantial aid with household furniture and other goods.

L. Spencer Mitchell, veteran manager of WDAE, noted in an interview just before his death in 1971 that a checkup on the couples married over the radio at the fair found that most of them were still living together many years later "so the radio part didn't hurt."

#### **9. WDAE broadcast first regular high school football game in Florida.**

Play-by-play reports of the Hillsborough High School of Tampa and Andrew Jackson High School of Jacksonville for the state football championship was broadcast over WDAE on Nov. 24, 1928. Ulmer

Hawkins, who handled the University of Florida game, was at the microphone.

**10. WDAE First Florida station to have full-time network with Columbia Broadcasting System.**

On June 20, 1931, WDAE went full-time network with CBS and Hank Simmons and his "Show Boat" program saluted Tampa that night. Two other Florida stations—WQAM, Miami, and WDBO, Orlando, joined the network a few hours after WDAE.

**11. WDAE broadcast one of country's first remote control radio pickups.**

In 1926, D. P. Davis leased radio station WDAE, then four years old, and moved it bodily from downtown Tampa so that the station break could be "WDAE, beautiful Davis Islands in Tampa, Florida." For one hour every evening it was broadcasting the music of Isham Jones nationwide in one of the country's first remote radio pickups. In another first, the roof of the Davis Islands Country Club slid back on clear nights while the patrons danced under the stars—an amenity which was always duly commented upon by the radio announcer.

**12. WDAE may have broadcast the first "singing commercials."**

In 1925 or 1926, there was a trio of young ladies, composed of Mrs. C. Verne Klintworth, Mrs. Mac Rogers and Mrs. M. L. Montgomery, who sang often on WDAE. Mrs. M. L. Price was their accompanist. They came up with the idea of a singing commercial for their sponsor, Dodd Motor Company, distributor of Fords in Tampa. Mrs. Klintworth recalls it was "quite a little catchy tune" that began, "Buy a little Ford and ramble right along, park it on the Bayshore. . ."

**13. WDAE first radio station to broadcast dressmaking.**

Madame La Vitt was the original radio dressmaker and began a program over WDAE on June 23, 1932, instructing women in the designing and making of their own clothes. Madame LaVitt explained in simple language a new style, one from her own collection of original Paris models. She gave minute directions for making the costume and offered, for a small fee, to cut an individual pattern for listeners. A news story in The Times stated that Madame La Vitt "will give an unconditional guarantee that her patterns cut to each listener's own measurements, will fit exactly."

**14. WDAE broadcast the first Florida Congress of Parents and Teachers program in history.**

For the first time in history of the state, Florida Congress of Parents and Teachers went on the air over WDAE on Jan. 27, 1928. The presentation included four minute talks by Omar Carmichael, supervising principal of Tampa schools; Lorne W. Barclay, state chairman, and others.

**15. WDAE launched first church campaign on the air.**

A plea for the establishment of a Methodist hospital in Florida was made March 4, 1928, in two addresses over WDAE from the Tampa Heights Methodist Church to congregations throughout the state. This was the first time that a statewide church campaign had



been inaugurated with a link radio program.

**16. WDAE, with others on modified Gator football network, first to broadcast pre-game meeting of officials and captains and the flip of the coin.**

Famed sportscaster "Red" Barber recalls the Gator football network of 1933, when WDAE, Tampa, was hooked together with WRUF, Gainesville, and WJAX, Jacksonville. He got the idea to pick up live from the field the pre-game meeting of officials and captains and get the flipping of the coin, actually pick it up live on the air. It was done at the Tampa game between Florida and Maryland.

"It is my recollection," "Red" told this writer during an interview at his Key Biscayne home, "it was noted in The Tampa Tribune the next day that that was the first time in the history of radio and college football broadcasting that the pre-game flip of the coin, the referee introducing the captains to each other and giving them instructions ever went out on the air."

**17. WDAE originated first nationwide broadcast from Gasparilla Coronation Ball.**

On the night of Feb. 2, 1937, from the glittering Coronation Ball of Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla at the Municipal Auditorium, WDAE originated a nationwide broadcast over CBS of the music of Eddie Duchin and his band. Program made possible by David E. Smiley and Ralph Nicholson, publishers of *The Tampa Daily Times* and operators of WDAE. Broadcast over 60 stations across the nation, WDAE previously had broadcast the ball locally. On the network show, Mrs. C. Verne Klintworth described the gorgeous gowns of the ladies at the ball, and talks were given by Gov. Fred P. Cone and Mayor R. E. L. Chancey.

**18. WDAE was first with F-M in Tampa Bay area.**

On Nov. 17, 1947, WDAE Engineer Bill Moore fed the first F-M broadcast to listeners in the Tampa Bay area.

**19. WDAE-FM first to give all-night, uninterrupted election broadcast.**

In its November, 1948, issue Radio Mirror reported "WDAE-FM picked up the results at 7 P.M. and gave an all-night, uninterrupted election broadcast—first of its kind in Florida's radio history!"

**20. WDAE first station to broadcast the music from Bok's Singing Tower at Lake Wales.**

On Dec. 2, 1928, Carillonneur Anton Brees gave his first recital at the keyboard of Edward W. Bok's Singing Tower—and the concert was broadcast by WDAE. The informal concert included such numbers as "Lead Kindly Light," "America the Beautiful" and Stephen Foster's "My Old Kentucky Home."

In reporting on plans for the broadcast, The Tampa Tribune noted in a dispatch from Mountain Lake on Nov. 21: "Engineers and experts from station WDAE, at Tampa, have been working on special equipment in an effort to overcome an obstacle found everywhere

in attempting to broadcast carillon symphonies—the terrific din picked up when the transmitting instrument is placed close to the source of the music. They have gone to every length in an effort to obtain the best microphone available and believe they have been successful in obtaining one that will eliminate noise." Apparently, the broadcast was a success, since no report to the contrary was carried by the press.

The Singing Tower was formally dedicated on Feb. 1, 1929, by President Calvin Coolidge.

**21. WDAE first station to broadcast the Christmas Eve Midnight Mass from historic Sacred Heart Catholic Church.**

Beginning with the Yuletide of 1930, the station has aired this important event every year since. It is one of the oldest continuous religious broadcasts in the country.

Undoubtedly, there were many other "firsts" for WDAE during the early part of its 50 years of existence.

For instance, it has claimed to be the first station in Florida to broadcast election returns; first to attempt a complete band concert broadcast; first Florida station to be granted night-time power of 5,000 watts; first Florida station to broadcast regular forenoon program (Towne's Laundry, sponsor); first Florida station to broadcast a play-by-play account of a world championship baseball series; first to operate continuously on a 16-hour-a-day schedule, and first to bring full-time 16-hour day network programs on a permanent basis.

To this present day, WDAE continues to be first in many broadcast activities in the Tampa Bay area. Under the present ownership, an enviable list of "firsts" has been compiled:

22. WDAE was first to do live air traffic coverage over the beach areas with its Beach Patrol, now known as Marine Patrol, starting July 4, 1968.

23. WDAE was first to broadcast air traffic reports from over Tampa Stadium during a major sports event, the University of Florida vs. U. S. Air Force football game, Sept. 21, 1968, witnessed by 52,000 fans. There were no traffic tieups, thanks to Sky Patrol, Sgt. Al Ford and WDAE.

24. WDAE was first radio station in the area to broadcast the inaugural Peach Bowl game from Atlanta—Florida State University vs. Louisiana State University—on Dec. 30, 1968.

25. WDAE was first radio station to broadcast the American Bowl Game for the Tampa Stadium, Jan. 4, 1969.

26. WDAE was the first and only Bay Area radio station to send its own newsmen to Cape Kennedy for Moon Flights. News Director Burl McCarty covered Apollo 8 Moon Orbital Mission on Dec. 20, 1968, and has covered each succeeding Apollo mission.

27. WDAE gave the first aerial radio broadcast of a yacht race. The St. Petersburg to Venice race, sponsored by the Southern Ocean Racing Conference, was covered live by WDAE's 1250 Sky Patrol on Jan. 31, 1969.

28. WDAE was first to give aerial traffic coverage over the Pinellas County Fair at Largo, on March 13, 1969. The 1250 Sky Patrol flew with a member of the Largo Police Department aboard, complete with two-way radio communications back to the Largo Police headquarters.

29. WDAE was first station to broadcast a police ticketing from the air. Sgt. Al Ford of 1250 Sky Patrol cited Seaboard Coast Line Railroad for blocking traffic in Tampa longer than five minutes with a train. The ticket was written during Al's broadcast over WDAE and received nationwide news coverage.

30. WDAE was the first station to give air traffic coverage of the Festival of States Parade at St. Petersburg, on April 8, 1969.

31. WDAE was first to rescue a capsizing boat by air during a live radio broadcast. The 1250 Sky Patrol spotted the vessel and coordinated a rescue effort with the U. S. Coast Guard on Tampa Bay, on April 29, 1969.

32. WDAE was first to broadcast live aerial fishing reports. Jim Hamlett flew Sky Patrol plane for "Tarpon Spotting Reports" during the Tampa Tarpon Tournament; the live reports began June 7, 1969.

33. WDAE was the first radio station to do a live broadcast from the pirate ship, "Jose Gaspar" during Tampa's Gasparilla Invasion. Ed Ripley broadcast the actual pirate invasion via a portable transmitter while on board the ship. It was the first time such an accommodation had been made to a radio station by the exclusive "Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla," and happened on Feb. 10, 1970.

34. WDAE was the first station to air a live aerial broadcast over Walt Disney World, from the 1250 Sky Patrol plane on Jan. 30, 1971, during the period Disney World was under construction.

35. WDAE was also first to broadcast air traffic reports during the weekend Walt Disney World first opened its gates, in October 1971.

36. WDAE was the first radio station to provide aerial reports from the Florida Marine Patrol. This State organization, which has police powers over all waters of WDAE's listening area, works with WDAE reporting fishing, boating, beach and recreational news and information; the service began March 8, 1971.





## THE BIRTH OF A STATION

NOT only was WDAE the first radio station in Florida, it was among the first in the nation. The broadcasting industry was but an infant, and struggling for the breath of life, when the Tampa outlet got its license to go on the air on May 15, 1922.

GI's returning from World War I had been introduced to the marvel of wireless and were fascinated with the idea of radio. For awhile there was no broadcasting, as we think of it, but here and there across the country stations were able to put experimental transmissions on irregular schedules for a few minutes at a time.

Earliest broadcast licenses were issued to WBZ, Springfield, Massachusetts, Sept. 15, 1921; WWJ, Detroit, and KDKA, Pittsburgh, October 13, 1921. However, KDKA had held an experimental license dated Oct. 27, 1920, which was fortuitous, because that station was able to broadcast the returns from the Presidential election in November, 1920, in which Warren G. Harding won over James M. Cox. *The Pittsburgh Post* cooperated with the radio station by feeding reports as they came in on the news wire ticker. KDKA listeners were first to know the outcome.

It was that night, according to L. Spencer Mitchell, who served as general manager of WDAE for three decades, "this new infant, radio, which was to grow into one of the great mediums of education, entertainment and communication, let forth its first lusty yell."

Reviewing the history of broadcasting, Mitchell said: "The publicity that the broadcast of these election returns brought to the new art caused many thousands of people, all over the nation, to become interested and to start building radio receivers.

"At that time, only a few commercial models were available and they were very high-priced, but the American citizen is ingenious and he found that in some instances radio reception could be had by a few turns of wire, a galena crystal and a headset, or a single tube receiver. With this crude apparatus, thousands searched the air waves each night to see what they could hear. There was very little because only a few stations were on the air and they at irregular times."

But as more stations came on the air on more regular schedules, as Americans became enchanted with the new "toy," the sale of receiving sets zoomed. By 1922, the year WDAE was licensed, there

were 100,000 sets sold in the U. S. A year later, 1923, there were 550,000 sets sold; in 1924, 1,500,000, and in 1925, 2,000,000. The sale of radio receiving sets hasn't let up to this day: In 1970, even with "competition" from television, about 320.7 million, or a little more than half of the world total of 620 million radio sets, AM and FM, were in the U. S., according to *Broadcasting* magazine.

In response to readers' interest, the newspapers started giving space to news of the new medium in the early 20s. Newspapers all over the country gave heavy coverage to the KDKA election party in 1920.

By 1922, the papers in Florida were giving more attention to the subject of radio. In February, announcement had been made that a permit to build and operate a radio station had been granted to *The Tampa Daily Times*. On April 1st that year, The Times started a "Department of Wireless" in its columns, edited by Jack Landon, who answered questions in the paper regarding radio and the home building of radio receivers. Then on May 1st, John V. L. Hogan, nationally known radio engineer, appeared in the columns of The Times conducting a similar feature.

Now, let Spencer Mitchell, who was a World War I Navy veteran, pick up the story on the origin of WDAE:

"World War I had left quite a few Naval and Coast Guard installations of radio in Florida. This equipment was very crude and was used mostly for radio telegraph communications, but many fine and sincere young men, working in these stations, were interested in the new art and hoped to make it a peace time occupation.

"Among these was one Harold McClung, who had been attached to the Naval radio station at St. Petersburg. Mr. McClung shopped around and assembled the necessary equipment to build a broadcasting plant. He first approached the University of Florida to sell them the equipment. They were not interested.

"In December of 1921, Mr. McClung approached the management of *The Tampa Daily Times*, which was then owned by Col. D. B. McKay, and offered to install and sell his broadcast equipment to *The Tampa Times*. The management of the paper was definitely interested in this new art and immediately concluded the deal with Mr. McClung and filed an application with the Department of Commerce, which was then the licensing authority for radio. On Feb. 12, 1922, authority to erect and operate a radio station was received by The Times."

A slightly different account of McClung's selling efforts comes from local historian, Mary Rae Thompson. Her research indicates that McClung was a "ham" operator and constructed a transmitter that worked. Miss Thompson picks up the story:

"But simultaneously something new was added to the young man's life: romance. This offset to some extent Mack's interest in the air waves and, in addition, brought on a need for extra money.

Mack decided to cash in on his home-made transmitter and began peddling it about.

"One of the first prospects was the late Charles G. Mullen, general manager of *The Tampa Daily Times*. But it was all so ephemeral, Mr. Mullen just was not interested. Love is a potent factor, however, so the persevering swain solicited the University of Florida. He found educational moguls there with the foresight to be interested but with nothing in the college budget for such an unprecedented venture. As they bickered, Mr. Mullen had a change of heart, sensing publicity advantages in the contraption, with the result that *The Times* purchased the transmitter."

As soon as authority was received from the Department of Commerce, plans were pushed for getting the station on the air. A studio was rigged up in one of the rooms of the Citrus Exchange Building (now Maas Brothers Building) and the broadcasting equipment on the roof, with the aerial wires strung around the cornice, here and there. By this time, W. R. McDonald and G. C. Warner, well known radio operators had been engaged to operate the new station. In April, 1922, air tests began.

On May 17th, a telegram was received from Washington bearing the good news that a license had been issued and announcing that the call letters WDAE had been assigned. Local radio fans were advised to "make a note of those letters."

On Monday, May 15, the birthdate of the station, *The Times* had requested all owners of sets in this section to "please stand by" from 7 to 9 P.M. for the next three nights, to see if they could hear anything.

"Tell us how your reception of our radio station is," the announcement read. "Let us know if you hear any 'buzzing noises.' That is static."

And that night the station went on the air, unofficially. In the tests the day's baseball scores were broadcast, and several phonograph records were played.

"Of course," it was necessary to apologize, "things will be working better after awhile. It takes several days to tune up the transmitter machinery properly. Stand by again tomorrow night."

The first studio was a simple affair. A small room, with a microphone hanging from the wall. That's all it was. In an adjoining room was the transmitting machinery, also simple.

The microphone in those days was very imperfect and the sounds that came out were not exactly what went in—as the Dutchman said as he blew into his big horn: "I play so sweet and it comes out so sour." Unless the announcer talked in a very monotonous, uniform tone and bit off his words, the result was a garbled speech. The microphone was not yet developed to pick up all the tones of an orchestra. You might hear the flute or the violin, but maybe not both together.

By May 22nd, WDAE had received reports from all sections of Florida, as well as from many other states and from Cuba, that the station could, indeed, be heard on the air waves!

When I interviewed Spencer Mitchell at his Davis Island home on Nov. 21, 1970, after his retirement, he reminisced:

"Some of the early days of getting WDAE on the air were quite interesting. Everyone was looking forward to radio. They didn't know what to expect. While quite a few people had bought radio receivers or built them, they were small in number compared with the numbers that would start appearing when it was known that WDAE would soon be on the air. The average person did not have a complete radio set. They were expensive and no one knew for sure which one was the one to buy.

"Most of the daily newspapers carried columns that gave instructions on building radio receivers. They were from the simplest which consisted of a round oatmeal box on which a coil was wound and the addition of a crystal and a pair of headphones . . .

"The Tampa people were no different from any other place. They went into the radio set building business and immediately started listening to every test that WDAE was making at night. Conversation around the coffee tables and such places the next morning consisted of what was heard, and how well they heard it. Distance was the interesting thing at that time. Nobody had thought or dreamed of real programs . . . It was a matter of making a noise and giving your call letters with frequency so that you could establish that you were being heard . . .

"At the time WDAE went on the air, they transmitted with a power of 250 watts. That sounds like a lot—250 watts—but that probably is about the size of some of the lamp bulbs around your house, so it is not a lot of power. But even with that, many people reported hearing the station in various parts of Florida, both day and night, and the day-timers gave a considerable group of listeners to the station in what has always been known as the Tampa trade territory . . .

"When WDAE was testing, people who did not have receivers flocked around various places to hear the radio, like some great many years later they did to follow television. One of the places that I particularly remember was the Eli Witt Cigar Store, which was then on Franklin Street adjacent to what is now Pendola's. The place was called the Hole in the Wall, and they had a receiver and a so-called loudspeaker, which was really a loud squawker, mounted behind the counter and every evening people would gather around to hear the radio. Many of them had never heard anything like it before and were fascinated with the possibilities. But very few of them dreamed that it would grow up to become a great commercial enterprise."

On May 31st that year of 1922, the test periods for WDAE were over and the first regularly scheduled broadcasts were begun. The



station came on the air at noon with weather and markets, then went off for the afternoon, returning to the air at 7:30 P.M. with more market reports. A piano interlude bridged the programming to 8 P.M. when the formal opening "radio concert began. On the 10th anniversary of the station, in 1932, Mitchell and his staff re-enacted that historic first program, using many of the same persons who appeared at the 1922 grand opening.

On the anniversary program, Mrs. A. L. Muir (Miss Helen Ray of 1922) played again the first piano number ever broadcast by WDAE. She was one of the musicians of the initial concert and repeated Newman's "Valse Caprice." Two singers on that first program of 1922, Mrs. W. D. Bailey and Miss Ruth Bomford, repeated numbers they sang then, Mrs. Bailey singing "Roses of June" and Miss Bomford singing "Dainty Daivie."

The first speaker on WDAE was E. D. Lambright, who was Postmaster in 1922 and was editor of *The Tampa Tribune* in the anniversary year of 1932. His talk in 1922 was about the "Spirit of Rotary". He had been president of the Tampa Rotary Club in 1917-18. The first program in 1922 was arranged and announced by Harry C. Slichter, managing editor of *The Times*, who was back to introduce the performers on the anniversary program.

Other persons on WDAE's first night were the late Charles H. Brown, Tampa's Mayor in 1922; Homer Moore, music teacher, and Miss Marian Pierce, children's librarian; Adam Weidenaur, tenor. The latter three had left the city before the 10th anniversary program.

Two other singers took part on a test program the night before the official concert. They were Mrs. Ethel Bennett and R. G. Lamberton, who were away at the time of the 1932 re-enactment.

And so, after that memorable and historic night in 1922—WDAE was on the air!

The original equipment designed and put together by young McClung proved satisfactory for the experimental days of the station, but proved inadequate for general broadcasting. After a year of operations from the Maas Brothers, or Citrus Exchange Building, it was found that the location was not ideal and J. McDonald (Don) Thompson, later a City Councilman in Tampa, was engaged by *The Tampa Times* to completely rebuild the equipment of WDAE and install it in *The Times* building at Franklin and Washington Streets.

Some background on what went on behind-the-scenes in Thompson's assignment comes from "Salty Sol" Fleischman, the dean of Florida broadcasters with more than 40 years experience, most of it on WDAE. Sol recalls:

"In 1923, I was an Eagle Scout and there was a fellow down the street from me named Don Thompson, whose daddy owned the Thompson Electric Company at the east end of Lafayette St. (Kennedy Blvd.) Bridge. From that store came the little parts and pieces of electronic gear in those days that Don put together as the transmitter, and he put it together right near my home.

"I lived at 601 South Newport, and right around the corner from me were Jimmy Steele, Freddie Frick, Bob Frick, Sonny Inglis . . . Bill Moore lived on Plant Avenue, a little further away. But Bill and Bob Frick were the early experimenters of radio and wireless and they were 15 or 16-year-old boys while Don Thompson was about 22 or 24, and they helped Don. Don Thompson, on a back desk of some sort of boards on his sleeping porch put together WDAE's early transmitter. It was a little thing. I think it was 100 watts, I'm not sure."

Sol Fleischman continued the story: "He (Thompson) had a funny antenna on top of that house there, and he would transmit, I don't think they had a license to, no, this is before licenses in Florida. So I think Don would transmit an hour every afternoon on a phonograph table that they used to wind up and Freddie and Sonny and the boys who built little crystal sets or little receivers listened to it. They were the only ones who heard it."

Thompson was interviewed for *The Times* in 1932 by Mary Rae Thompson. The story mentioned that the engineer's success in providing the transmitter was measured by the volume of fan mail the station received from far-away points. The station, at that early date, not only covered Florida, but reached out all over the country.

Thompson recalled the names of many of the early performers, and how the radio staff used to fill in the gaps, for instance, how *The Times* employees—Mrs. Irene Rovira, Miss Lois Rodgers, David Ginsburg, Joe Mickler, and others sang, and played and improvised generally to keep the audience quiet while waiting for some regular performer who was delayed.

Names of local musicians who appeared regularly on early programs included the Stumpf family, Mrs. David Safier, Mrs. J. R. Bradford, Mrs. Tracey Gray, Miss Ena Sherill, Mrs. Ethel Bennett, R. G. Lamberton, and others. He also remembered one desperate predicament, a 10-minute period that would have been absolutely blank had not Harry Slichter, *The Times* managing editor, filled it with an unaccompanied trombone solo.

A colorful character on WDAE in the early days was the late George Seargeant, one-time vaudeville showman. In an interview in the early 1930s, Seargeant admitted that in the "old, old days" of WDAE "the main thing in a radio station was getting on the air. It didn't matter a bit what you broadcast, because the radio sets were so poor, it was only after tinkering for hours the fans could hear anything at all and by that time, it was such a thrill to get a sound, they didn't care what it was!"

Fan mail poured in after the first broadcast in what was then considered great volumes. Ballast Point had heard the program distinctly and an ingenious Plant City fan told how he received the program over his new aerial—his bed springs.

Several nights after the opening broadcast, the station decided it was ready for a full-fledged band concert. The band was too large

to crowd into the studio. A few instrumentalists squeezed in along with the leader, but many others, including the big horn players and the drummers were strung out along the hall. They all played with vigor and something was lost to posterity when the ensuing sounds that came out of listeners' earphones were not recorded.

At the conclusion of the first number, the band leader, standing in front of the microphone, forgot where he was and proceeded in somewhat picturesque language to bawl out members of the band. He got in several choice remarks before the program director could wedge his way across the room to the broadcasting switch to cut him off.

The next day several fans reported to the station that they enjoyed the band leader's remarks more than the music.

In that original broadcast over WDAE on May 31st, 1922, Mayor Brown extended greetings to the new station, articulated what all who heard him out there in radioland were thinking when he called it "the wonder of the age that the human voice can be sent broadcast throughout the country."





## THE ROARING TWENTIES

THE exciting medium of radio could not have picked a more exciting era in which to be born than the decade of the 1920s. This was especially so in flamboyant Florida, where the period put the state in the national limelight with its crazy real estate boom.

The Roaring Twenties is the label usually applied to noisy days of those years. Paul Sann wrote a fine book on those times which he entitled "The Lawless Decade." F. Scott Fitzgerald dubbed it "The Jazz Age." Journalism's angry man, Westbrook Pegler, gave it the colorful tab of "The Era of Wonderful Nonsense." To others, it was "The Get-Rich-Quick Era," and the sports writers raved about the 20s as "The Golden Age."

In the early days of WDAE's existence, management of *The Tampa Daily Times* had gone along carrying this clever "toy" on a non-profit basis. Programs of many kinds had continued from the WDAE studios in The Times Building, but no effort was made to commercialize the operation. At mid-decade, just as the Florida real estate boom popped into full blossom, the management of The Times began to feel something should be done to put the station on a self-supporting basis.

About this time, William Pharr Moore, chief engineer on the station for 40 years or more, and another radio pioneer, Roger Lum, entered into a lease agreement with The Times to take over the WDAE facilities and operate them. They got the station to humming and by time the lease expired in 1929, it was on a paying basis.

Moore told a reporter in later years: "When we wanted to renew the lease, Mr. (Charles G.) Mullen wouldn't give it to us."

About the time Moore and Lum took over the station, there was a colorful and enterprising real estate developer, D. P. Davis, who was developing the ritzy Davis Islands project. He pumped the subdivision out of the Bay and sold \$18,000,000 worth of created properties within 12 months.

Davis offered WDAE space in two of the new buildings on his sensational man-made Islands, and the station thus moved to its third location. Promoter Davis realized the publicity value of radio for his wealthy development. The studio was moved into the Bay Isles Building, with the transmitter just across from the attractive

Davis Islands Country Club, another swank enterprise of the developer. The transmitting site consisted of two steel towers and the necessary transmitting antenna. This move was engineered by J. McDonald Thompson, who had handled the previous move for WDAE, and Dick Quinby.

With the transmitter so near the popular night spot, it was a simple matter to have remote broadcasts from the Country Club. And so for one hour every evening "WDAE, on beautiful Davis Islands in Tampa, Florida" was broadcasting the lilting music of Isham Jones and His Orchestra. It was truly a sensation. The roof of the Davis Islands Country Club slid back on clear nights while the patrons danced under the stars—an amenity which always was duly commented upon by the radio announcer.

Since WDAE had almost unlimited range in those days, the Isham Jones program drew literally thousands of letters from every state in the Union and numerous foreign countries. "Those were the days," Moore dreamily recalled in a newspaper interview years later. Jones moved on to become a star on the networks and during the 1930s his band ranked as one of the most popular and polished of all of the big bands.

In his book on "The Big Bands," George T. Simon noted: "For pure, ungimmicked music and musicianship, there were few bands to match the one led by Isham Jones, a somber, long-faced gent who looked more like a strict manual arts teacher than a leader of one of the most romantic-sounding bands of all times."

Jones, according to Simon, was a prolific song-writer responsible for a whole slew of hits, including "I'll See You In My Dreams," "It Had to Be You," "The One I Love Belongs to Somebody Else," "On the Alamo," "You've Got Me Crying Again," and the band's lovely theme song, "You're Just a Dream Come True."

WDAE got started on the way to a paying basis one day in 1926 when two of the boys, George Seargeant and Bill Moore, were sitting around the studio without much to do. One came up with the idea that the station needed daytime programs. Up until then there were no daytime programs being broadcast anywhere in Florida.

Seargeant recalled in an interview a few years later how he and Moore scurried around town looking for sponsors.

"The first man I went to see," he recollected, "was Mr. Mack Towne, father of Dudley, and president of Towne's Tampa Steam Laundry. Well, I breezed into his office bright and early and I said, 'Mr. Towne, I've come to sell you some radio advertising.' That didn't sound so funny but when I added that it was for seven o'clock in the morning, Mr. Towne gave me a sharp look and said, 'Look here, young fella, you better go on home and get some sleep—you must have been out all night!'"

Finally, Seargeant talked him into it, though, and Towne's Tampa Steam Laundry was the first firm in Florida to broadcast an early

morning program. The laundry remained a loyal sponsor on the station for many years.

"The next man I approached," Seargeant continued, "was Mr. Hess of the Senate Coffee Company. He wasn't quite so hard to sell, because his product was coffee, the article people had rather think about in the early morning than anything else."

Other sponsors of those early daytime programs of WDAE, through whom the station was able to keep open shop during the daylight hours, were the G. Norman Baughman Co., Rutland Brothers department store, the Majestic Distributing Corp., the Electric Service Co., the Adams Jewelry Co., and, according to a story in *The Times* in 1932, "some other far-sighted firms who could see the value of daylight advertising and who have continued to use it, pretty consistently, ever since."

As time went by, WDAE smartened its programming and offered its eager listeners a variety of entertainment. A popular feature in the Winter of 1927 was the broadcast of Col. Harold Bachman's "Million Dollar Band" direct from the band shell at Plant Park. The concert series was sponsored by the Tampa Board of Trade. Thousands of persons would crowd into the park on the grounds of the Tampa Bay Hotel to hear the famed band, while untold thousands tuned in.

A news account of the event reported: "When broadcast, the band gives the effect of a full symphony orchestra, and as such constitutes the finest radio program on the air south of the Mason-Dixon line."

Bachman had conducted the Second North Dakota Infantry Band in France during World War I. A general, upon hearing the unit and seeing the cheering effect of the music on the faces of the men of the division, remarked, "Colonel, that band is worth a million dollars to the American Army." And that's how the band got its name. Later, in civilian life, Bachman organized his professional band, traveled the nation on the Chautauqua Circuit during the summer and played in Florida during the winter. Colonel Bachman later went on to become director of the University of Florida's Gator Marching Band.

The famous evangelist, Billy Sunday, came to town in the Winter of 1927, and his sermons were broadcast over WDAE to the satisfaction of the preacher. A news story reported: "The evangelist was unwilling to have his sermons put on the air until the final week of the campaign, pointing out that no station which had ever undertaken to do so had been able to pick him up."

Sunday, an ex-professional baseball player, marched, and pranced, and bounced and jumped all over the pulpit when he was fighting the devil, so it was difficult to get a pickup of his voice.

"By a little careful study of Billy's habits on the stage of the tabernacle, and by the construction of a special set of 'mixing' equipment," the story continued, "WDAE's engineers succeeded in putting

a perfect broadcast on the air from the tabernacle for three consecutive days.

"It has been reported that at several places in the city where tradesmen put their loudspeakers out of doors during the services, crowds of pedestrians and traffic jams resulted. This occurred at two places on upper Nebraska Avenue and also at the intersection of Zack and Florida Avenues."

The Times and WDAE displayed ingenious perseverance in reporting the top crime story of 1927. Late in May of that year, a man named Benjamin Franklin Levins was arrested and charged with the axe murders of a man, his wife and four children. He was put in the old County Jail on Pierce St. Soon a mob descended on the site and attempted to steal the accused man from the Sheriff and lynch him. The situation got out of hand. Finally, Governor John W. Martin called out the National Guard. The troops were under command of Col. Sumter L. Lowry Jr., who ordered out five batteries of troops with the necessary equipment and assured the Governor, "I will see that this man is not lynched."

At the scene, and following a brief exchange of gunfire, Lowry was able to convince the would-be lynchers that the law meant business and there would be no lynching. The mob broke up, leaving several persons dead and 19 injured in its wake. Interest in the case remained high, and so it was, when the execution of Levins was scheduled at the State Prison at Raiford in November, extraordinary effort was put forth by the media to bring the news instantly to Tampa, to let the people know that Levins had paid for his despicable deed.

The Times-WDAE sent a portable amateur radio station to the penitentiary, mounted on a truck. Powell Hunter and Edward M. George were operators in charge of the Unit, 4US. In Tampa, station 4IZ, owned by Bill Moore, the WDAE chief engineer, located at 339 Plant Avenue, was utilized to pick up the messages from Raiford. Kenneth Skelton, long time program director of WDAE, was relief operator, and Roger Bruce Lum, manager of WDAE, was general supervisor of the transmission system. By a tie-up inside the news room of The Times, the Levins story came directly from the death house to the news room.

Newsmen on the hot story were Harry C. Slichter, managing editor, and Joseph R. Mickler, reporter. The portable wireless outfit was just outside the death cell door, barely ten feet from the electric chair itself. When the fatal switch was thrown and the electrocution was over, The Times reporters stepped to the door and the radio operators flashed the details to the editorial rooms in Tampa, and thence to the public over WDAE. Engineers on mission truck had strung up a 30-foot antenna and a 30-foot counterpoise, and the communication back to Tampa was perfect.

Nothing was too zany for the announcers to put on the air during those early days. They cooperated with the press agent of the Johnny



J. Jones Circus, which was based in Tampa, in airing the desperate groans of ailing Alice the elephant: She had a toothache and it was hoped some dental experts would offer a remedy!

In another stunt, Roger Lum and Bill Moore, doubling as dee-jays of the time, literally got "mileage" when one midnight they offered two black Tom cats as prizes during a broadcast. Telegrams poured in from 24 states and two foreign countries (one of them: New Zealand) and from ships as far away as the Pacific.

Communicating that far gave the station the idea at Christmas time in 1927 to broadcast a telephone visit with Santa Claus. The Times' Joe Mickler reportedly did the Santa role. Advance news stories cautioned that "Little boys who won't eat their oatmeal, or little girls who talk cross to mother won't be able to hear the good old Saint Nick when he talks."

There were as many contests on the air then as there are today. One offered a \$5 prize for the best three-word description of the daily noon news broadcast over WDAE. The winner was Mrs. Frank Moore of 300 E. North St., Tampa. Her entry: "Hit air splendid!"

Another contest sought the best six-word slogan that sums 'up succinctly why Tampa cigars should be the choice of all smokers, with the prizes being handsome humidors filled with fine Tampa smokes. Sample entries: "The Smokers Test Proves Tampa's Best," "Good to the Very Last Puff," "If You Must Smoke, Smoke Tampa's," and "Truly America's Most Pleasantly Aromatic Smokes."

There was a contest on the air to choose an announcer from five candidates given a tryout. The Midnight Serenaders, playing old square and round-dance numbers, gave the program and the five announcer-candidates were left in the studio to introduce each other and conduct the program. They were also presented successively and asked to make a stock announcement and read a stanza of "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Telephone calls from listeners in Tampa and many nearby cities were received—over 300 calls. Listeners as far north as Morristown, Tenn., and Hendersonville, N. C., called. C. F. Owens was elected and went to work for the station. Incidentally, the drummer in that Serenaders band was Sol Fleischman, who later became an institution in Tampa broadcasting as a staff man with WDAE and later, WTVT Television.

The politicians discovered the magic of radio for getting their messages to the public. A home town candidate for Governor, Doyle E. Carlton, Sr., kicked off his campaign with a speech from the Courthouse Square broadcast over WDAE on March 2, 1928. The "Carlton for Governor Club" ran newspaper ads saying "For the benefit of voters in distant communities, Radio Station WDAE will rebroadcast Mr. Carlton's address—destined to be one of the most significant utterances in the history of Florida politics." Carlton had invited his leading opponent, Fons A. Hathaway, then chairman of the State Road Board, to share the platform with him, but he declined. This, the ad said, "has forced Mr. Carlton into divulging startling facts,

which he would have preferred to have stated only in the chairman's presence." Carlton was elected Governor.

One day in November of 1927, then Gov. John W. Martin paid a visit to The Times news room and appeared "live" on the noon news broadcast over WDAE. At the conclusion of his talk and while he was still standing in front of the microphone, a Times reporter suddenly stepped forward and asked:

"Governor, are you going to run for the Senate?"

While hundreds of radio listeners waited, the governor smiled and told the microphone that he was still undecided.

"And will the fact that Senator Trammell would be your opponent have any weight with you?"

"None at all," answered the Governor. "The Senator wouldn't carry more than six counties in the state."

As it turned out, Governor Martin did run for the Senate, and he proved to be a poor prognosticator. He carried 21 counties—Senator Trammell carried the other 46, and was re-elected.

WDAE early in its career felt the responsibility of public service. One night in March, 1928, the station manager Roger Lum appealed on the air for funds to aid the flood sufferers in Southern Alabama and West Florida. Donations ranging from \$2 to \$5 quickly raised a fund of \$865. A couple nights later, prominent Tampanians were invited to make personal appeals for the fund, and it swelled the total by several hundred dollars.

In 1927, WDAE had set up its "crystal studios" at the Florida State Fair and broadcast daily from the fairgrounds. The following year, the station brought stars Smilin' Ed and Mama McConnell to entertain the fair-goers. Traffic police were necessary one night when a thousand of enthusiastic fans milled about the studio to watch Ed and Mamma perform. A story in The Times noted, "And the program justified the enthusiasm! These McConnells know their music, and one of the rare songfests including old-time melodies and latest jazz numbers was put over the air for the delectation of young and old alike." It was estimated that 100,000 persons visited the crystal studios at the exposition, which was then known as the South Florida Fair, "and watched the speakers and musicians as they faced the microphones . . . More than 80 hours of programs were broadcast during the 11 days of the fair."

Since almost from the beginning, WDAE has saluted Tampa's neighboring cities with special broadcasts. In December, 1926, a special program, "A Night in Venice," brought national attention on that West Coast community, since WDAE was heard throughout the country at that time. Letters came from all directions. A fan in San Pedro, Calif., wrote that WDAE came in strong despite a storm that was raging on the West Coast at the time. Tony Lopez' Orange Grove Band from the Venice Hotel was a top feature of the presentation. A listener in Columbus, O., wrote: "Enjoyed the wild Irish tenor. Quit kidding now, and tell me is Venice all you claim for it?"

In the late '20s, WDAE was heavy on picking up remote broadcasts of dance bands. Sol Fleischman, who started at the station in 1928, recalled how every Saturday night WDAE carried four hours of "live" music. The pickups came from the old DeSoto Hotel, the Davis Island Coliseum, the Moulin Rouge Night Club and the Forest Hills Country Club. (All four popular spots have now been torn down or burned down). Fleischman and another announcer, the late Johnnie Hicks, raced from one dance to another to handle the technical details and to announce the shows.

Fleischman tells a classic story of Tampa in the wild, rough days of the late 1920s when gambling was wide open. The incident happened at the Moulin Rouge on 22nd Street Causeway.

"I used to broadcast from the Moulin Rouge about three nights a week, 11:30 to midnight, a man named Claude Harris and his orchestra," "Sol" relates.

"Unbeknownst to the ownership of WDAE, there was illicit gambling at this night club. That was the day of gambling here. Okay, so Claude had a fine band, five pieces. WDAE wouldn't have broadcast it if they hadn't thought they were good for the people, and they were. And we got paid for it. It was a commercial and it was called, well Sollie Chiles used to come on and say, 'This is the Moulin Rouge Night Club just across the 22nd Street Causeway.'

"One Saturday night I was broadcasting Claude Harris' band, and we always had 200 or 300 people in the night club, and this was Prohibition times, so don't forget that.

"So while I was broadcasting, a man sidled up to me and whispered, 'Sol, don't stop broadcasting. We're having a raid. Just keep on going and don't mention it. When you get through, sign it off.' And I, a young guy scared to death, looking all around and you know what? There were moving vans backed up to the back behind where the band was and they were taking out roulette and gambling tables, that I didn't even know were there.

"So I broadcast on a FCC-operating station while the government was taking out illicit gambling things and no one ever knew about it. It was a long time before the newspapers published it, not about the broadcast, but about how they had raided this place."

What did the folks like to hear on their radio in the 1920s? They were pleased to hear anything. A radio editor, seeking to learn what set owners liked most to hear through their loudspeakers, found himself little closer to what he wanted to know than when he started his survey. His findings: "Ukelele, guitar, music; harmonicas, symphony orchestras, dance tunes, saxophones, quartets, tenors, basso profundos and comedians—all were favored in about equal proportion."

A U. S. Senator knew what he wanted on the air, however. Sen. E. D. Smith was quoted as fighting "radio jazz" and claiming that "the air should be more for education than for synthetic music."

As "the Era of Wonderful Nonsense" neared its close, radio in Florida and elsewhere had come a long way. A story in *The Times* in July, 1929, noted that "The last seven years have been a thousand if you're measuring radio progress. Seven years ago it would have taken a prophet to forecast the tremendous development that has taken place in this field."

In its first five years, WDAE had earned the national reputation as the "world's biggest 250-watt broadcasting station." In 1927, the power was increased. As the decade neared its close, WDAE was sharing time with WDBO in Orlando on the 620 frequency.

In 1929, the Federal Radio Commissioner conducted a hearing in Jacksonville on WDAE's claim for full time. Fans throughout the listening area went to bat for WDAE, bombarding the Commissioner with testimonial letters. WDAE was granted full time, effective Nov. 15, 1929, but lost the 620 spot on the dial, which it had shared with WDBO, and was assigned a frequency of 1240 k.c.

*The Times*, proud of its station going full-time, ran an ad saying WDAE had been granted full-time because:

"The Federal Radio Commission recognized the admirable record of Florida's pioneer broadcaster.

"The radio listeners demanded full time for their most reliable station.

"WDAE serves Floridians first.

"WDAE serves Florida's permanent population and purchasing power.

"WDAE is run by skilled men under the guidance of a wise public service institution."

The change meant that WDAE went on the air at 7:30 A.M. and stayed on until 1:30 P.M., an hour later than before, and returned to the air at 6 P.M., instead of 7 P.M. as before.

Manager Roger Lum told the press: "Potential sustaining features have always been great in Tampa, but time sharing has made it impossible to accommodate them in the past. Programs will have much more local interest than they have in the past year because we will be able to broadcast almost any suitable local material now that we have full time."

Once again, WDAE moved its studios, this time from Davis Islands (it had moved previously into a bungalow next to Marjorie Park Yacht Basin in 1927 from its prior location in the Bay Isles Building), to the Allied Building at Cass and Tampa Streets, where the studios were located while the transmitting equipment was installed in the Country Club area of Forest Hills.

With the expiration of the Lum-Moore lease with *The Times* for operating WDAE, and with the change of location of studios, came further changes. Roger Bruce Lum, who had piloted the station during the salad days of the Florida boom and the gay, swinging days of the late '20s, left the company to accept the position as commercial manager of Radio Station WGST in Atlanta. Moore remained

with WDAE as chief engineer, a position held until his retirement in the 1960s.

Appointed manager of WDAE to succeed Lum was Charles G. Baskerville, a nephew of Charles G. Mullen, general manager of The Times. Baskerville was 23 years old when he took this responsible position. He was a native of Charlotte, N. C., and was a graduate of Davidson College.

So firmly established was WDAE as a broadcasting outlet in this area at the end of "the roaring Twenties," it was ready to move into big-time operation by becoming a network facility as the new decade began.





## HITTING BIGTIME: JOINING THE 'CHAIN'

INEVITABLY, with radio stations springing up in communities across the country, the idea of a network developed early in the life of the industry. The first such "chain," as the fans called them, was the National Broadcasting Company. The network bought, for \$1,000,000, Radio Station WDAE in New York from the American Telephone and Telegraph Co., and made it the key station in its "chain." The first coast-to-coast program was broadcast from the Rose Bowl football game in California on New Year's Day of 1927. Soon, other special big events were brought to the people at the grass roots level via radio. A one-hour broadcast of Floyd Bennett's funeral service in Arlington absorbed the public, much the same as did the televised proceedings of the funeral of President Kennedy years later. Herbert Hoover's acceptance of the Republican nomination for President was broadcast from Palo Alto, Calif., in January, 1927 (and WDAE was one of the 100 stations in the great national hookup; the Tarpon Springs Leader newspaper reported "Reception was wonderfully clear and there was almost no static.").

The Columbia Broadcasting System was founded in 1929, under the aegis of 27-year-old William S. Paley, heir to a tobacco fortune. Its key station was WABC (now WCBS) in New York. The network boomed.

Tampa being remote from the big centers had not received the benefits of network broadcasting. It had occasionally tied in by special arrangements for the big news events, i.e., the Dempsey-Tunney fight in 1927; Hoover's acceptance, as well as that of Democrat Al Smith (relayed by WDAE on Aug. 22, 1928, to a huge "live" audience at Tampa's Plant Park, which had been "warmed up" for the broadcast by a local band, the Carolina Collegians then playing at the new Bayshore Royal Hotel, swinging out with appropriate numbers such as "The Sidewalks of New York" these and other unusual programs.

So it was big news in Tampa when The Times brought the good tidings on March 1, 1930, that WDAE was going on the "chain!" Not full-time, but at least part-time.

"For months—years—radio listeners in southwest Florida have hoped and wondered and inquired about 'the chain,'" The Times

reported. "The Columbia Broadcasting System was first to recognize the importance of the territory and has extended its facilities to the state on an original development basis which will progress with more and more network programs each month."

The announcement said the first program scheduled would be that of the Alemite Company, coming at 10 o'clock, Thursday, March 13. The following evening at 10 o'clock will start the 16 week series of programs for Quaker State motor oil.

According to Spencer Mitchell, network broadcasting was brought to Tampa through the efforts of Mr. Lum and The Times management. Mitchell said the new programs started; they were few in number but the quality was "magnificent." This only served to whet the appetite of radio fans here for more network offerings.

And so WDAE's cup runneth over when it was able to proudly announce that the station was going full-time network with CBS on Saturday, June 20, 1931.

A full page ad in The Times announced: "Under arrangements made by The Times, owner of WDAE, with the Columbia Broadcasting System, a limited number of national commercial programs will be accepted; but emphasis has been placed upon non-commercial programs. The country's greatest orchestras, bands and musicians, the world's greatest singers, story-tellers, lecturers and entertainers, now will be broadcast to you through WDAE.

"It was possible to buy a limited number of Columbia's great sustaining features—instead ALL OF IT WAS BOUGHT. Every great program originated by Columbia is made available to WDAE hearers. From 12 to 16 hours, every day in the year, of unexcelled radio entertainment.

"Other networks furnish a part of their service to Florida stations. Never before has any Florida station broadcast the complete service of either of the outstanding chains . . ."

On the eve of the big day when WDAE was joining CBS full-time, The Times ran a front-page news story listing all the exciting goodies that were in store for local fans:

"Orchestras, singers and clowns—an almost bewildering variety of entertainment with the music of 18 different orchestras coming at intervals through the long day—will be on tap for WDAE listeners tomorrow as The Times station joins the full network of the Columbia Broadcasting System.

"And what a program this opening day's broadcast will offer South Florida! Something for everybody, all day long, until midnight tomorrow night. Even the youngsters will be remembered, with a special program in the morning.

"And in the afternoon sports lovers will get a thrill from Chicago, where the rich American Derby will be run . . ."

"The opening Columbia program tomorrow and every day thereafter comes at 8 o'clock in the morning, although the station goes on the air each week day morning at 6:45, with a "Good morning"



program followed by setting up exercises for the calisthenically inclined.

"Promptly at 8 o'clock tomorrow the station will "join the network," becoming at one flip of a switch a part of the biggest network in the world. First on the program will be the Commuters, a Columbia musical organization with a cheery list of selections, intended to speed the parting husband on his way to work . . ."

There followed a long list of interesting features scheduled for the day. Commenting on Kate Smith and her Suwannee music, *The Times* said: "WDAE fans are going to learn to like this little girl. She sings blues in the torrid manner."

Then came the piece de resistance:

"But get ready—here comes the showboat! At 9 o'clock the curtain rises on Hank Simmons' famous 'Show Boat' program, the joy and pride of the Columbia system. And you simply musn't miss this tomorrow night. The whole program will be dedicated to Tampa and WDAE, as well as to the three other stations in the South Atlantic group which join the national network tomorrow—Miami, Orlando, and Savannah."

Other features listed in the full page ad included *The Ambassadors*, *New World Salon Orchestra*, *The Columbia Revue*, *Don Biglow and Orchestra*, *Dale Winbrow* (popular Floridian who was on the network), *Columbia Salon Orchestra*, *the Four Club Men*, *The Three Doctors*, *Saturday Syncopators*, *Ann Leaf at the Organ*, *Winegar's Barn Orchestra*, *Columbia Artist's Recital*.

*Reis and Dunn*, *St. Moritz Orchestra*, *Camel Quarter Hour*, *Pryor's Cremo Band*, *Henry Burbig with Nat Brusiloff's Orchestra*, *Manhattan Male Chorus*, *National Radio Forum from Washington*, *Jack Denny and Orchestra*, *Will Osborne and Orchestra* and *Bert Lown and Orchestra*.

*The Times* reported the following afternoon, on opening day of CBS full-time for WDAE: "It was a red-letter event in the annals of radio broadcasting in Florida—the biggest moment since the voice of WDAE, as Florida's pioneer broadcasting station, went on the air 10 years ago for the state's first broadcast. With WDAE now a part of the biggest single network in the world, every radio listener in this section is assured of the finest entertainment on the air—all day long, seven days a week."

And so it was, WDAE listeners had front row seats to all the big news, events and entertainment of the fast-growing 1930s. They tuned in to President Franklin Roosevelt's first "Fireside Chat" on March 12, 1933, in which he explained to the country the reasons for his historic bank moratorium. Earlier that year, local listeners got the hot news from Miami via CBS of the attempted assassination of Roosevelt, then President-elect. The network put eye-witnesses on the air within 90 minutes of the crime, via a special line.

About a month after Tampa area radio fans were enjoying network radio full-time, another marvel was happening in New York.

On July 22, 1931, CBS began daily television broadcasting—and the audio portion of the program was carried over CBS Radio and WDAE. Ted Husing, veteran announcer of the chain, was master of ceremonies; Mayor Jimmy Walker of New York City, Kate Smith, Ed Wynn, "The Perfect Fool" and other stars were on the show.

But it was to be two decades or more later before the Tampa area was to "see" television.

In 1931, the fans settled down to thoroughly enjoy the high-class entertainment and first-class special events brought to them by network radio.



## L. SPENCER MITCHELL: "MR. RADIO"

**L.** (LAURENS) SPENCER MITCHELL looked less like a showman than any showman I ever knew.

See this short, roly-poly (he was chubby up until his later years), grinning, happy man on the street, you might think he was a lawyer . . . a merchant (which he was at one time) . . . a chief . . . or some other professional or businessman. But a showman? Never!

There was little in his background or training that equipped him to take over a radio station, put it on the road to success, and conduct a day-to-day operation of entertainment and education that made it one of the outstanding stations in the entire country.

"Mr. Radio" is the apt tag put on Mitchell by one of his former employes, a fellow Mitchell had faith in and started him in show biz as a kid out of college—Vince Meloy, erstwhile sportscaster and announcer, now a Tampa City Councilman. And "Mr. Radio" he was.

Spencer Mitchell began his long tenure as general manager of Radio Station WDAE in August, 1931. He remained at the helm until August, 1964, shortly after purchase of the station by the present owners in May of that year. He told newsmen at the time of his retirement he planned a long vacation, but he quickly added, "I won't leave Tampa."

Mitchell—"Mr. Radio"—died March 17, 1971 in the Veterans Hospital at Gainesville after a long illness. He was 76 years old.

This distinguished radio executive was proud of the fact he was a native Floridian, a "Florida Cracker." He was born Aug. 23, 1894, in Fort Meade, Fla., in Polk County, the youngest child of Dr. Charles Lucien and Ellen (Spencer) Mitchell. He started school in Bartow and attended Sixth Avenue Grammar School in Tampa. Mitchell was enrolled at Randolph Macon Academy in Bedford, Va., and attended Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh.

A veteran of World War I, Mitchell joined the U. S. Navy in November, 1917, and served overseas until April, 1919. He was a charter member of U.S.S. Tampa Post No. 5, American Legion. He married the former Miss Genevieve Priest on Oct. 16, 1923.

Mitchell was a nephew and admirer of Florida's 16th Governor, Henry Laurens Mitchell (1893-1897), his father's oldest brother. Governor Mitchell, a veteran of the Confederate Army, served in the

State Legislature from Hillsborough County in the 1864, 1873 and 1875 sessions. He was appointed to the Supreme Court in 1888 and served until 1891, when he resigned to run for Governor. After his term as Governor, Mitchell was elected Clerk of Circuit Court and the County Treasurer of Hillsborough County.

I interviewed Spencer Mitchell at his lovely home on Davis Islands on Nov. 21, 1970, and he filled me in on some of his life story:

"My work prior to getting into WDAE was largely in the automotive field until the two years prior to joining the station. That period I was in the radio department with the Knight & Wall Hardware Company in charge of that branch of the business.

"At the time I was with Knight & Wall, I had gone there because I was a radio fan, and then Frank Cooper who was President brought me in to organize and get a new radio department going. We had the Ever-Ready line of radio which was manufactured by the National Carbon Company. They are no longer in that field. They are the people who make the flashlight that you probably have in your automobile or home.

"While at Knight & Wall, we not only sold the radio which was built by National Carbon Company, but another line known as Dufan which was built by the Dayton Engineering Laboratories. They are no longer in that field.

"My first interest in broadcasting and being a part of it started at that time. I had been a listener prior to that. The occasion developed on the anniversary of Knight & Wall Company that they needed a program on the air, and since I was in charge of the radio department, it fell to me and my good friend, Jimmy Wall, to put together a program. I believe this was the 45th anniversary of the Knight & Wall Co."

(It was. On the evening of Jan. 19, 1929, the firm had a reception at the store and the broadcast over WDAE from 7:30 to 8:30 P.M. Then as now, Knight & Wall was one of the oldest and most successful business organizations of Tampa, and had witnessed the growth of the city from the time when there were no bridges over the Hillsborough River and only a few scattered houses on the west side of the stream. It was founded in 1884 by Perry G. Wall and the late H. L. Knight, the first store being located at Washington and Marion Streets.)

Mitchell said he remained with Knight & Wall as long as they stayed in the radio business, and then after a short period of "looking around," moved into the general managership of WDAE, which was owned by the Tampa Publishing Company, of which D. B. McKay was the president and principal owner. McKay served 14 years as Mayor of Tampa.

In his new position, Mitchell learned the broadcasting field rapidly and was responsible for many innovations. He was particularly skillful in discovering and encouraging talent. He was one of

the founders of the Florida Association of Broadcasters, and served as president of the group in 1941. Shortly before his death, in 1968, Mitchell was honored by his long-time broadcasting friends and awarded a plaque and life membership in the F.A.B. Mitchell was instrumental in 1947 in opening WDAE-FM, the first frequency modulation station on the Florida West Coast.

Throughout his lifetime, Mitchell was active in civic and fraternal affairs. He was a Mason and Shriner and a member of the First United Methodist Church. He also was a member of the Tampa Rotary Club from 1941 on, holding the classification of Communications Service—Radio.

Anyone who ever worked with Spencer Mitchell had the highest of respect for him. For this book, I interviewed Ralph Nicholson, who was a co-owner of WDAE for nearly 20 years.

In reminiscing, Nicholson had this to say:

"One great asset that the paper (The Tampa Daily Times) had was Spencer Mitchell, the manager of WDAE and the knowledgeable persons that he employed from time to time.

"I remember one time the station's manager for Columbia (CBS), that then meant the control—oh, not completely that, he worked the circuits, this guy did, and he dropped into the radio stations all over the country. He's the one who told Spencer that there was going to be a change in who got the next money—the network or the local stations and this so and so said he was going to take about twice as much of the money that came into WDAE and the other Columbia stations and Spencer let out a howl that could be heard in Jacksonville. He was just frightfully angry and he had reason to be so. So that's the anecdote that I put in my book (*A Long Way From Greens Fork, the Autobiography of Ralph Nicholson*) about the trip I made up there telling Columbia that we wouldn't have that scrimpy little arrangement with them."

Mitchell rated high in the organization of CBS affiliates. In 1952 he was elected to the nine-man CBS Affiliates Advisory Board, which represented Columbia radio affiliates in all the U. S. and its territories. He represented District 4, which included Puerto Rico, Florida, the eastern half of Georgia, and North and South Carolina. He succeeded Glenn Marshall, of Jacksonville, who had resigned.

The WDAE manager also took an active part in the management of the publishing company and newspaper. He was a director of the company and in 1952 was named advertising director of The Tampa Times Company, supervising the advertising for both the newspaper and radio stations.



## THE DEPRESSION YEARS



THE mighty stock market crash of 1929 was the omen of bad times ahead as the nation entered a new decade which turned out to be "the depression years" of the 1930s.

The period proved to be tough business-wise, in Tampa and everywhere else in the land. But the radio industry was blossoming into manhood and entering one of its greatest expansions in its history.

WDAE faced the future with confidence, despite the times and conditions. The formal opening of the station's new transmitting plant in Forest Hills came on the evening of Aug. 28, 1930, promising a distinct contribution and improvement to the pleasure of listeners "who daily tune in on Florida's pioneer radiophone."

"The enlarged and improved equipment installed by WDAE," said a news story that day, "stands today as the most modern 1,000-watt plant in the state, and it embodies all the best principles of construction and operation known to radio science."

The improved equipment was designed, as its predecessors had been, by William Pharr Moore, the station's veteran and versatile top engineer.

On that same day, Aug. 28, 1930, WDAE was able to boast that it covered Florida's "most thickly settled section. Within 75 miles of Tampa the population for the trade territory was 492,996. By contrast, Jacksonville had 347,940, and Miami, 232,166.

Within the year, WDAE was frequently carrying programs of the CBS network, and by June, 1931, the station went on "the chain" full time (Chapter IV).

In August, 1931, WDAE got a new general manager, L. Spencer Mitchell (Chapter V), who replaced Charles G. Baskerville. Later Baskerville was to become general manager of Radio Station WFLA, as well as Tampa radio stations WALT and WWTB. When he died in October, 1971, Baskerville was serving as community affairs director of The Tribune Company.

September of 1931 found WDAE ready to move again. The Allied Building studios were outgrown and out of date. Looking around for a location, one was found in the plush Tampa Terrace Hotel, one of the boom-time hostelrys built by the Barron Collier interests.

The radio studios and offices were moved to the 12th floor of the hotel, and a formal opening was held on Oct. 7, 1931. That night on the network, the Columbia Broadcasting System dedicated its program, "The Columbians," famous orchestra, to WDAE's new studio in the Tampa Terrace Hotel.

The announcement story proudly told of splendid accommodations in the new location. "The walls and ceiling of each studio have been treated with Acousta-Tile, a new Celotex product, which gives a beautiful effect of a stone-walled room, set with large and small stones, while being at the same time the very last word in acoustical treatment," was the description. A far cry from WDAE's early studios which tried to deaden the noises with Monk's cloth, or burlap.

The opening of the new studios was held simultaneously with the formal reopening of The Tampa Terrace Hotel, which Manager Hal Thompson announced would be operated as a year-around hotel in the future. The Terrace was built in 1927 and sold to Collier just as the Florida boom collapsed and the stock market crashed. Collier's other hotels were the Floridan in Tampa, the Lakeland Terrace in Lakeland, Manatee River Hotel in Bradenton, the Sarasota Terrace in Sarasota, the Dixie Court and Royal Worth at West Palm Beach, together with other hotels at Boca Grande, Useppa Island and Charlotte Harbor.

Sol Fleischman, who'd joined WDAE in 1928, backgrounded us on the move to the Terrace:

"The Tampa Terrace had been closed for a couple of years due to bankruptcy and what have you, poor business, depression. Either D. B. McKay, Charlie Baskerville or Spencer Mitchell made the deal with the receivers to let us open the top floor, put a radio station in there. Hal Thompson was the man. Hal Thompson always wore a white carnation. Hal made arrangements with, I believe, Spencer Mitchell. They would open the second and third floor of the Tampa Terrace, and the top floor, and the second and third floors would be open to the public, and they had to build a wooden tunnel-like so people wouldn't go in the lobby, that they would just go straight to the elevator and straight up to the second or third floor or to the radio station. They didn't want anybody pilfering anything.

"And we would, on the hour, say: 'This is WDAE, The Tampa Times Station, atop the beautiful Tampa Terrace Hotel in Tampa, Florida.' And in those days it was legal for us to get our rent free for that announcement, and, in getting our rent, Mr. Thompson thought that it would draw enough people to the Terrace to open it up. And, do you know, it did! From that day until they closed it (1965) WDAE was responsible for some of the greatest hotel business on the West Coast. They later, in the same year, opened all the floors, and then the big dining room. It was nice to broadcast down there."

With the move into the fancy new quarters at the hotel, a new period of expansion and development started. In December, 1931,



Kenneth W. Skelton returned to WDAE as Program Director, a position he held for many, many years after that. A native Britisher, Skelton worked with the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), later was a radio operator for a ship. He worked a bit at WDAE, when its studios were on Davis Islands, then moved to Orlando to accept an announcing job, until he rejoined WDAE.

In 1933, ownership of WDAE and *The Tampa Daily Times* changed hands. D. B. McKay, who had taken over The Times back in 1898 and ran it all through the years, apparently was in financial trouble. He also was heavily involved in politics, having served many years as Mayor of the city which left him little time to watch over his newspaper and radio interests. He thus entered into a lease-option arrangement with two newspapermen from the north. They were David E. Smiley and Ralph Nicholson, highly successful newsmen in Philadelphia and New York prior to coming to Tampa.

Smiley, who had been editor of the Ledger newspapers in Philadelphia and the Post in New York and had served as general manager of the North American Newspaper Alliance features service, became president of The Tampa Times Company in partnership with Nicholson. Nicholson, a former reporter and foreign correspondent in Japan for Smiley, became general manager and treasurer of the company.

In both his autobiography and in an interview with this author at his charming Rose Hill Plantation in Tallahassee on Oct. 5, 1970, Nicholson tells how he and his partner, Smiley, came to acquire the Tampa properties without putting up any cash, which they didn't seem to have, in those tough depression days.

Let Nicholson relate the story:

"Well, Hamp, it was a long time ago when we moved from New York to Tampa and acquired Radio Station WDAE and The Times. We had a barrel of fun. Everybody was broke, or nearly so. The people were friendly, good-natured. Politics, thick and thin. But no money of any consequence passed hands. And that was the same with the alleged owners of The Tampa Times. We really were the owners. We, Dave Smiley and I, acquired those two properties, WDAE and The Tampa Daily Times. And, as I believe I explained after a fashion in my autobiography, how the two of us, without any money, could acquire those two properties.

"When we went in to tell Mr. (R. J.) Binnicker of the First National Bank about some of the queer quirks in the method we used to come into possession of those two properties, the paper was more nearly broke than I believe the owners knew, D. B. McKay, a delightful and honorable gentleman if I ever knew one.

"To start, Dave Smiley and I didn't take any pay. He had his life insurance mortgaged. I sold \$3,000 worth of stock in newspapers, which kept my partnership afloat for some considerable time.

"When we went to see Mr. Binnicker, we found him in his office fingering through a voluminous explanation about what the process was. Mr. Binnicker said, 'I've looked all through this and I can't find

how much money you boys are going to put up.' And I said, 'No, that's not surprising. You won't find it there.' Then he said, 'Oh, of course, that's in another document.' 'No,' I said, 'That's not in another document because there isn't any other document.' And we covered this with both the radio station and the newspaper a long list of things that tied us up head and foot almost.

"But when I said to Mr. Binnicker that there wasn't any such article, well, he said next 'I can't understand this' . . . What about the outstanding obligations of the paper. Well, we are going to pay those off. He says let's get back now to how you got the newspaper without a cent down. And I said, 'Because we are not using the technique for this paper, or will, when these documents are signed tomorrow. We are doing it differently from the way you did. Because, Mr. Binnicker, you nearly ruined this newspaper. Every time it needed money to stay afloat, it came here and you gave it the money, and we're going to cure that newspaper of such bad habits.' He wasn't quite sure that we hadn't hornswoggled Kenneth McKay, D. B. McKay's brother and lawyer, and he almost could not believe his ears when I told him what we did. Well, it was a delightful experience. We did make something out of nothing. It was the radio station doing a good deal of business. Also, sometimes it made more money than the newspaper did."

And so from that rocky start, the new owners took over and before the five-year lease period was over, the company seemed to be on a sound financial basis. On Aug. 5, 1938, there appeared on the front page of *The Times* this announcement:

"D. B. McKay announced today the sale of *The Tampa Daily Times* and Radio Station WDAE to David E. Smiley and Ralph Nicholson, who have been operating the properties for the last five years under lease. The sale was made by *The Tampa Publishing Company* which Mr. McKay owns, to *The Tampa Times Company*, owned by Mr. Smiley and Mr. Nicholson, in accord with the terms of an option given in 1933 simultaneously with the lease. The purchase includes all assets of the *Tampa Publishing Company*."

Throughout the decade of the depression, WDAE periodically upgraded its equipment. At Christmastime in 1935, the station announced that Santa's gift to the station was the latest model radio transmitter tower on the market—a 230-foot Truscon Vertical Radiator, which when erected, would be the tallest structure in Hillsborough County.

On Dec. 6, 1939, just as the decade neared its finish, *The Times* station became the first in Florida stations to be granted night-time power of 5,000 watts, which it already had secured for day-time operation.

A near tragedy occurred one day in 1932 when a steeplejack working on the then new Forest Hills transmitter of the station had a narrow escape. L. H. Van Loon, the man who's done more steeplejacking than anyone else in this part of the country, had ascended

the tall structure to repair the broken halyard which had caused the station to be off the air several minutes the Friday before. Van Loon was up some 214 feet when the belts he used as rests around his waist and foot began to slip. Before he could stop himself, he'd dropped 15 feet. The tower was wet from rain, and it was with utmost difficulty Van Loon had hoisted himself that high in the first place. When the leather lost its grip, if the tower climber hadn't known just how to grasp the wet pole with his arms, he'd have skidded all the way to the ground. The winter before, the steeple-jack had gone aloft the Tampa Bay Hotel (now University of Tampa) turrets to paint the half moons up there. He didn't use his belts on that job, he explained, "because I could sit in the half moon, and anyway that's not high!"

Things were tough all over, those depression years, but not so rough that the people didn't take time out for fun. A rage at the early part of the decade was marathon dancing. Professionals and a few amateurs seeking thrills would hang on to each other in supposed dance routines for weeks on end. One of these marathons was staged at the Sulphur Springs Dance Hall and radio fans were entertained nightly with a broadcast direct from the dance hall. The musical director of the marathon was Clyde McGue, gifted player of various instruments including the accordion, xylophone and the piano.

Sol Fleischman tells a behind-the-scenes story in his breathless staccato way on that marathon:

"We had a vogue that hit Tampa and the United States in the late '20s and early '30s. It was called marathon dancing, and it later became walkathons. We had a man named Leo Salazar, who still operates the Roller Derbies, he's made millions of dollars. He began, Leo Salazar, in Chicago. He made millions. He came to Tampa and an old gent, he's been dead about 30 years, Morris Less, bald-headed, incapacitated with one leg, owned Sulphur Springs Dance Hall. And Salazar hired the Sulphur Springs Dance Hall for the dance marathon, then went to WDAE and promoted a 15 minute program every night.

"They didn't have the money to buy a telephone wire, and if they did, I don't think they could buy them in those years. I think you couldn't. But the transmitter had just opened in Forest Hills, the WDAE transmitter. Bill Moore, who's still alive today and a great man, said 'Go ahead, George Seargeant, sell it to them and I'll get that program from Sulphur Springs Dance Hall to the transmitter.'

"Of course, it wasn't but about maybe five miles, something like that. Well, Bill Moore strung a pair of wires, called duplex wires, they bought enough wire, which was cheap in those days, or maybe they borrowed it, I'm not sure. And they strung that to the dance hall and I put on those programs, as a matter of fact, I don't think I did, I think that Mr. Salazar did the talking himself, and we just turned it on. In this day, you can't do that any more—that's against

the law, too, because you have to have a man on the job to protect your license in case somebody jumps up and starts talking against the Government or something.

"So this went on for the full 30 days, every night. And at the end of the contract, when the man left Tampa with all the professional marathon people, of course, he had a few local people in there. I remember Rene and Charlie Milian's sister was one of them, the local people."

And then Sol Fleischman gave us the "punchline" of his story: "We had a grand old man of the Peninsular Telephone Company, who's been dead for 30 or 40 years, Mr. W. G. Brorein. I understand he stopped Mr. (D. B.) McKay on the street one day. Now, Mr. McKay didn't know too much about radio operation because he was too busy, he was Mayor, I think, at the time. He stopped him on the street and he said, I think this is what he has been quoted as saying and it's been so many years, nobody's going to fuss at me, 'Colonel, if you tell me how you got that doggone broadcast from Sulphur Springs Dance Hall on the radio, because we didn't furnish any wires, I'll let you have a month's rent of your telephone at home.'

"So Mr. McKay found out and he came back and do you know what his answer was? Of course, this is not the way they did it. They were afraid to tell him that they did it with their own wires because that's against the law, too, and still is. Mr. McKay is reported to have gone back and said 'Mr. Brorein, about that broadcast that you asked about. You can start giving me my telephone free because we piped that music and that talk over the water pipes!'"

By the middle of the 1930s, radio was truly big-time, the exciting medium that entertained America. And the CBS network at the time seemed to be well out front. In February, 1934, 12 of the 18 winners in *The New York Telegram* poll of radio editors were CBS features. Among them: Guy Lombardo, Bing Crosby, Ruth Etting, the Boswell Sisters, Jack Benny, the March of Time, Ted Husing.

Among the hot names on the radio dial in 1936 were "Coast to Coast on a Bus" with Milton Cross; "Magic Key of RCA" with Floyd Gibbons; "National Vespers," Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick; "Catholic Hour," Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen; "Dodge All-Star Revue" with Harry Richman; Chase & Sanborn Presents Major Bowes Amateur Hour.

One Sunday night in the Fall of 1938, it was on Oct. 30, one of the most memorable broadcasts ever aired, before or since, took place on the CBS Network, and had repercussions in Tampa just as it did all over the United States. That was the night Orson Welles did his famous "Hallowe'en spoof" on the Mercury Theatre of the Air and touched off a wave of hysteria with his dramatization of H. G. Wells' "The War of the Worlds." It led thousands, according to *The New York Times* the next morning, to believe that an interplanetary conflict had started with invading Martians spreading wide death and destruction in New Jersey and New York.

Once again, we call on colorful "Salty Sol" Fleischman for a report on what happened in Tampa that night of the "Martian" broadcast:

"I was on one Sunday night, was the announcer and the engineer, WDAE watch, when Orson Welles of the Mercury Theatre was a great weekly program. Orson Welles was only about 23 or 24, I believe, a very young man, great voice, still got a great voice. He put on the famous *The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells and everybody knows by now that caused panic and chaos in the whole country.

"In those days (1938) there was no such thing as FCC regulations saying that you must put a disclaimer on it like we do today to say that this is not real. You must not say what Orson Welles did on WDAE in those days. Let me just recall a few of the things that he did so you'll know what I mean, and this is part of the story. Near the first of the show, they didn't make it clear on CBS or WDAE that this was a dramatization. On television and radio they (now) have to show it and say it many times. So these things that are now against the law were said. There was something that Welles was doing for about two minutes at the beginning, and suddenly it broke off and a man said something like 'We interrupt this program to bring you a special news bulletin.' Well, today it's got to be a news bulletin, it can't be fake. The man said, 'There are strange men landing on the New Jersey coast. More details later,' and it went back to the music or something. It broke on WDAE again and the man said, 'This is a special announcement from the White House. We take you to Washington, D. C.' And the President of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt's voice, said, 'Don't be alarmed you people there on the East Coast, there are stranger men coming out of green funny-looking rocket ships of some kind. We don't know what it is. We are calling out the militia. Don't get nervous.' Or some kind of thing like that.

"But let me tell you what happened on WDAE: I was on watch, and the telephone started ringing. And it rang off completely and I tried to tell everybody that called that it was only Orson Welles, and then I got panicky and I thought, 'Well, maybe it isn't. Maybe it is real.'

"And then I didn't start telling them that it wasn't a dramatization—I was almost panicky. And here's what happened in Tampa. A man was riding down Florida Avenue in his automobile with his radio on and he heard WDAE and he heard the President say he's "calling out General Arnold and the Air Force and General this guy and that guy, he said General Marshall, I believe it was, the United States Army and Admiral King is getting the Navy ready to go' and this guy riding down the street heard that. And he was right in front of the First Methodist Church, now it is the First United Methodist, the old church, the original one. He jumped out of the car right there and

they were having a prayer meeting because I think it was around 8 or 8:30 that it happened.

"He rushed into the First Methodist Church and there the late Bishop Branscomb was conducting the services. He rushed up to the pulpit and stopped right in the middle and the Bishop turned around as if what in the world is going on and the man said, 'Dr. Branscomb, (it was Rev. John Branscomb then,) Dr. Branscomb, something terrible is happening in New Jersey. There are little men coming out all over and the Army and Navy is mobilized, the country is going to the devil and we're liable to be killed any minute.' And Dr. Branscomb immediately stopped the services and announced for everybody to please bow their heads and pray for this terrible catastrophe out in New Jersey so it won't get to Florida."

More happened here in Tampa as the result of that broadcast of Orson Welles on WDAE, according to Sol:

"Well, that was just one thing on WDAE. Another thing was, that I remember very well because I was in the middle of it, that there are a lot of apartment houses around Plant Field, around Plant Park and, of course, still are, they were loaded with winter visitors because this was winter and all of these people must have been listening to WDAE.

"They got panicky and they all grabbed furniture and belongings and put it out of the house and moved their stuff as much as they could into Plant Park because somebody had said on this broadcast that the thing to do in Fairmont Park in Philadelphia and Central Park in New York was to take your belongings there because it'd be safer than in a home that might be devastated by fire.

"So, golly, that's what happened on the Orson Welles—I could go on and on. It was really something and, of course, as soon as that was done and the country settled down and the FCC passed laws that none of that could be done again unless it was a pure dramatization."

Whew!

Radio did play an important role in a local emergency in Tampa in 1935. Sometimes referred to as "Tampa's Longest Day," Sept. 3rd of that year was the day the city saw its most violent election, climaxing the depression-era political power struggle, with a turbulent Labor Day weekend tropical storm. The city was an armed camp, with the Sheriff's forces pitted against the City police. To help bring about order out of chaos, Gov. David Sholtz called out the National Guard.

A news story in The Tampa Daily Times that afternoon reported: "Mobilization of the Tampa unit of the 116th Field Artillery following orders from Governor Sholtz that the troops "stand by" at the Benjamin Field Armory ready to suppress any outbreaks which might occur in connection with the Municipal Primary today, was affected quickly last night through cooperation of The Times and Radio Station WDAE.

"Governor Sholtz told The Times at 6 o'clock, one minute after he issued the mobilization order to Adjutant General Vivien Collins here by telephone, of his declaration, and the news was immediately broadcast.

"Thirty-five minutes later, General Collins, at the request of The Times, personally broadcast the Governor's official decision and called for mobilization of the troops at Benjamin Field beginning at 8 o'clock. Word spread over the City quickly and at 8 o'clock most of the Guardsmen were in uniform. Three hundred men are said to be in the local unit."

In the stormy election that day, R. E. L. Chancey defeated D. B. McKay, the former Mayor who was seeking to make a comeback.

There was always excitement going on through special events broadcasts. Seven hundred Boy Scouts gathered at Plant Field to hear a broadcast message from President Roosevelt on the Scouts' birthday Feb. 8, 1932. A WDAE amateur wireless operator conversed with the Byrd Expedition at Little America in April, 1934. The frigate U.S.S. Constitution came to Tampa and its crew re-enacted the dramatization of the Barbary pirates bombardment of forts, this in April, 1932. There was a moonlight recital from Bok Tower broadcast in February 1932.

In July 1934, WDAE cooperated with Tampa police in a demonstration of the use of radio to catch criminals; a prowler was nabbed in Hyde Park in one minute after the crime. Police radio came into being shortly after that.

Radio as a tool for public education wasn't overlooked. On Feb. 18, 1932, formal dedication of the radio sets installed in the public schools of Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties took place. In connection with the local program, there was a special program from New York under the direction of Walter Damrosch, dean of music. The program was designed for students in grades 7 through 12.

In June of that year, 1932, Sam Pickard, vice president in charge of station relations for Columbia Broadcasting System (later a resident of Florida), had an article in *Broadcasting* magazine on radio's part in education. He made special mention in the article of the presentation of radio receiving sets to the 23 grade schools here by WDAE. He cited the growing popularity of the CBS feature, American School of the Air. Pickard concluded his article with statistics which proved the value of radio as a supplementary agent in the education of children, and adults, in the United States.

Yes, radio "grew up" during the depressing days of the 1930s, became an integral part of American living, brought cheer and entertainment amid hard times, developed into a profitable business enterprise for competent operators. WDAE was doing all these things at the regional level.

As the decade ended, the war has broken out in Europe, the U. S. was preparing for its inevitable entry, and radio was organized to perform at its best in news, programming and public service in a time of national emergency.







## STARS ARE BORN

THE minute she opened her mouth, I knew she was a natural-born singer full-blown and ready for stardom!"

And sure enough, a star was born the minute famed musician Rudy Vallee heard Florida's sweet Frances Langford back there in 1931. Her earliest radio experience was on WDAE, Tampa, and she's one of several talented persons the station sent on to network radio, TV, movies and stage.

Valee made the statement about Frances in a letter, written June 19, 1968, to Earl J. Brown Jr. of the Havatampa Cigar Corporation in Tampa, reviewing his relationship with the late Eli Witt, founder of the cigar firm and one of the top cigar manufacturers in Tampa. Eli Witt "discovered" Frances Langford and propelled her on the road to stardom.

Frances was born in 1914 in Citrus County, at Hernando near Inverness, and was moved to Lakeland as an infant. I interviewed the noted singer at her fabulous home at Jensen Beach, Fla., in November, 1970. She's now married to well-known boat-motor magnate Ralph Evinrude and operates a whole complex of business enterprises on her own at this attractive Martin County community.

"I've been singing, I guess, ever since I can remember," the lovely songstress told me. "My Mother was a concert pianist and I guess that is where I got my musical talent from. I have no musical talent in my fingers—I can't play a note. I can read music, but I can't play it. I guess I was pretty lazy because my Mother played and I didn't have to. My father was a building contractor in Lakeland."

Frances was graduated from Lakeland High School and went on to Florida Southern College in her home town. "I took music out at Southern," she says, "but it didn't do me much good. Well, I can read it so I guess it did me some good."

Frances aspired to an operatic career, but a risky operation when she was about 14 years old changed the direction of her career.

"I started out with a coloratura soprano voice," she related. "That wasn't very popular with the kids in school. My ambition at that time was to be an opera singer. But then I had very bad bronchitis for so long and the doctor said that my tonsils would have to come out. He didn't know if I would be able to sing at all after that. After

my throat healed I decided to try it, and it was altogether different! I was real happy with it."

So was the world.

Frances won the local American Legion talent contest at which the late Frank Grasso, a splendid orchestra leader and great music teacher, heard her and encouraged her to pursue her musical career. Grasso took her under his wing and made the contacts to put her out front. He at one time was music director for WDAE and later for WFLA in Tampa. Frances sang on the Eli Witt Program for, she says \$5 per week.

Let Sol Fleischman pick up the story here: "Frances had been on the air maybe twice when CBS formed a new organization called the Dixie Network in Charlotte, N. C. A man came down named Dick Powell at the invitation of Mr. (D. B.) McKay to look into Frances Langford singing on CBS network in those days. Mr. Witt said, "I'll sponsor it on CBS if we can raise the money among the cigar manufacturers. We won't call it Hav-a-Tampa, Eli Witt, we'll call it the Tampa Cigar Manufacturers Association."

"They sent a crew down here, I was the announcer, Mardi Lyles did the commercials, Frank Grasso's big orchestra was in WDAE's studios in the Allied Building. We put Frances Langford in the corner. She loved to sing with her back to the music, a goose-necked microphone, carbon microphone if you please, like the telephone today. She sang great songs in those days, 'All of Me,' and that type of thing. This skinny, wide-eyed girl from Lakeland had an appealing, throaty voice that vibrated on your heartstrings."

Fleischman continued: "Now, they couldn't get enough money from the cigar manufacturers. They didn't have enough foresight to go on CBS. New York, listen to this. We did two test programs. They loved it—New York loved it. Nobody would hire Frances Langford, though, in New York when they heard about it.

"So Mr. Witt, the late Eli Witt, and I remember very well, called Spencer Mitchell up. He says, 'Spencer, I spend a fortune with some big tobacco company, and they sponsor Rudy Vallee on Fleischman's Yeast Program, and I'll call that guy and tell him to put Frances Langford on, at least listen to her anyway.'"

We switch now to Rudy Vallee, the hearthrob to millions of women in those early days, as he came on the air with his "Heigh-ho, everybody" and thrilled his listeners with his theme song, "My Time is Your Time." He and his Connecticut Yankees had started the Fleischman Hour in October of 1929 and Vallee was credited with being the originator of the radio variety show.

In that letter to Earl Brown Jr., Vallee recalled:

"In 1931 . . . we trained to Miami where I did a week at the Olympia Theatre, living in the then plush Coral Gables with my boys!

"Early in the week, Eli called me to rave about a young girl who had been broadcasting for him from either Tampa or some small radio station in the area.

"I explained to Eli, that our once-a-week broadcast, The Fleishman Hour which we did on Thursday nights from 8:00 to 9:00 P.M. was going to star Eddie Cantor who was playing a spot on Miami Beach.

"In those days before it became a Variety Hour in 1932, we used only one personality and this was to be Cantor's first coast to coast, radio exposure!

"Nothing daunted Eli however, and he insisted on driving down to Miami with Frances Langford for me to listen to her sing!

"The minute she opened her mouth, I knew she was a natural-born singer full blown and ready for stardom!

"Sooooooooo, Eli and Frances arrived and I have a photo taken of her and me standing around the NBC microphone of that day . . . She wore a beret and flat heels . . . furthermore her dress was nothing much . . . but in the corner of the frame is a small clipping from one of the film trade papers which listed Frances (this would be about 1943 or '44) as THE BEST DRESSED GAL OF THE WEEK! Quite a difference between the two shots of her!

"Since Cantor was to appear three times during our one hour broadcast, we just couldn't use Frances, but I suggested that we take her to New Orleans, our next stop where we would be playing the Saenger Theatre during Mardi Gras Week!

"The producer of the show explained that we'd already auditioned and selected a local New Orleans girl, but I countered that we could use BOTH girls with each appearing in two of the 15 minute segments of the broadcast! He agreed and we took Frances and her mother to New Orleans paying their fares round trip.

"Nothing happened as a result of her appearance on the New Orleans broadcast . . . no deluge of mail, etc."

And then Rudy Vallee's letter continues:

"We continued on our tour and after arriving back in Brooklyn where I appeared at The Brooklyn Paramount Theatre there for over two years, I guess it would have been the end of Frances but Eli called me and asked if I could place her in radio in New York.

"I gave it some thought and suggested that Eli pay her fare to New York and I would then guarantee her one hundred a week for four weeks during which time I would personally take her on a tour of radio stations, arrange for appearances at Sunday night benefits, etc.

"The president of WOR was one of my dearest friends and the minute he heard her, he offered her three broadcasts a week for \$75!

"I personally introduced her on her first broadcast and left her to the care of Jerry Sears, a capable pianist arranger who helped her select songs and arrange them for her.

"As the months passed, my man of all work and service, Ken Dolan, was beginning to get an ambition to become an agent!

"I gave him Frances as his first client and gave them my blessing.

"Dolan built quite a stable of personalities including Mary Martin,

Bill Gargan, Beulah (Beulah was actually a MAN!), Dennis Day, Johnny Mercer and a few others and after putting Frances on the radio program Hollywood Hotel with Dick Powell, he got her a couple of pictures and a Broadway show which didn't last very long!

"Later she became a part of Bob Hope's entourage and when that terminated she hit the night club circuit. Along the way, she met and married Evinrude."

Vallee recalled that he met Eli Witt when he played the Gasparilla Ball in Tampa in the early '30s. Alice Faye was his girl band singer on the tour. He was entertained in the Witt home and Vallee found Mr. and Mrs. Witt "always most congenial and had much class and quality and I enjoyed being with them!"

Now, back to our own interview with Frances.

"If it hadn't been for Mr. Witt and Frank Grasso I just don't know what would have happened to my career," Frances said, sincerely.

She said that after going to New York on Radio Station WOR, she got "all kinds of commercials and I was working like a beaver. Then I started doing personal appearances and I was making all kind of money."

The Broadway musical, Peter Arno's "Here Goes the Bride" opened Nov. 7, 1933, and ran only seven performances. But shortly after that, Frances sang "Night and Day" at a party honoring Cole Porter and she was signed on the spot by Walter Wanger to do movies.

She did a lot of 'em, including "Every Night at Eight," "Hollywood Hotel," "Hit Parade of 1941," "The Glenn Miller Story" and others, a total of more than 30.

Along the way, Frances Langford married Actor Jon Hall. They were wed for 18 years and were divorced in 1955. She married Evinrude the same year.

More than 15 million Frances Langford records have been sold. Probably the most loved of all was "I'm in the Mood for Love."

Coming from the citrus country originally, Frances Langford has continued her love for the soil and for orange groves. She has a large one in Jensen Beach, on the 200-acre layout she owns.

"You know, I'm a real farmer at heart. I love it. I just feel that if you don't own some ground, why, you're just not making it at all."

And so, the "skinny, wide-eyed girl from Lakeland" and her millionaire husband are beautifully situated on Florida's East Coast, and they can, just like the fairy stories say, "live happily ever after."

Hers is the biggest name in the entertainment world to have originated from Tampa's WDAE.

Another sparkling gift from WDAE to network radio in the 1930s was singer Alice Cornett, a country girl from Brandon, Fla., who made it big in New York after her start on Tampa radio.

On Mother's Day, 1971, I visited Alice Cornett and her family at their lovely apartment in New York City. She is married to Eddie Asherman, who was guitarist in Xavier Cugat's band at the time Alice

was the singer, back before World War II.

Alice laughs pleasantly as she reviews her career which went from "Hallelujah to Hot-Cha."

She was born in Plant City, went to grammar school there, her family moved for a brief time to Tampa and then, when she was about 11 years old her father bought an orange grove in Brandon. She was graduated from Hillsborough High School in Tampa and received her music degree from Florida State College for Women (now Florida State University) in Tallahassee.

Alice's interest in music started when she was about three years old. Her father, H. W. Cornett, and mother were evangelistic singers and traveled all through the South organizing and conducting evangelistic revival meetings. Alice began to hum tunes even before she could talk.

"My parents tell me that when I was three years old, they would stand me up on a chair and I would harmonize with them," the songstress told me.

After college, Alice chuckles, "I suppose maybe you would call it going from hallelujah to hot-cha. I decided I wanted to get into show business."

Starting in the new year of 1932, the WDAE scrapbooks are loaded with clippings about Alice and her friends in "The Happy Sisters"—Daphne Stout and Doris Baynes, two young ladies from Plant City. One story noted that the regular WDAE feature compared favorably "with those famous trios on the networks—the Boswells and Do, Re, Me."

WDAE was in its studios in the Tampa Terrace Hotel, and the girls were given a suite in the hotel. They had an early morning program, and, Alice recalls, "when they had little extra moments to fill in in the middle of the news or whatever was going on, they would call us up and they would say 'Can you fill in for 15 minutes?' so we would jump in the elevator and fill in. I mean we were always available, you know, for spots."

This was before network and all the programming on WDAE was local.

By November, 1932, The Happy Sisters were public figures and they were invited to perform on the stage of the gorgeous Tampa Theatre. WDAE proudly boasted that "their popularity, attested to by their theater engagement, has come entirely through radio, the girls never having made a public appearance."

Alice even now remembers clearly about the famed organist at The Tampa, Eddie Ford: "Eddie was a big help to us because really this was the first time we had been on stage, you see. Being on stage and being on radio is something entirely different. Eddie had been in it quite sometime and he was really a great help to us. He gave us a lot of assurance. He was a great guy."

Like so many other newcomers to radio during that period, The Happy Sisters got a lot of support from the veteran pro at WDAE,

Sol Fleischman. Said Alice: "Sol was our living doll. He was the papa and brother of The Happy Sisters and I just simply adore him. I remember Sol coming through the studios, always with a ready smile and saying, 'Gals, you're doing great. Good luck.'"

One of the other girls got married, the trio broke up, and Alice performed as a single. Confident that she could hit big time radio, Alice packed her belongings and with \$50 embarked for New York City in late 1935.

Through a friend, she was introduced to Donald Knovis who had a variety show with Nick Kenney, the New York columnist, and she competed on the show with other professionals, got the most votes called in and won a two-weeks' engagement at the Newmount Theatre in Newark, New Jersey. From there, she was auditioned for the Silver Grill at the Hotel Lexington.

"At that time," Alice recollects, "Ozzie Nelson was playing there. He needed someone who could sing during his performances. It's very funny, I remember, I think I made at that time \$48 or \$50 a week, and they gave me room and board. I went in for two weeks and, luckily, they kept me for seven months."

One night, unbeknownst to Alice, a scout for NBC was in the audience at the Lexington, heard Alice sing and arranged an audition. She was accepted for 13 shows a week.

From there, Alice auditioned for the Coca-Cola Show, which was going on CBS, and the little Florida gal competed against 200 other aspirants and won out. News reports said "Overnight the petite Alice became the rhythm singing star on the Coca-Cola Song Shop program."

Alice told us about another comer at the time, Dinah Shore, who befriended her: "I wanted to get out of New York, I had just come to New York from Florida, hadn't traveled any. Dinah was making recordings with Cugat at that time—Xavier Cugat. So she said, 'I wish you could come down one day with me. I'm going tomorrow and I would like very much for you to try out for Cugat because he's going on tour for six months and it will give you an opportunity to get out of town—get away from it all and it will be an entirely different thing. You're so tired of sitting at the piano singing or standing up in front of the band at the same place. He's going a lot of places. Why don't you do it? Why don't you come down with me?' So I went down with Dinah and I auditioned for Cugat."

It was Dinah Shore who introduced Alice Cornett to her future husband, Eddie Asherman. She went on tour with the Cugat band for six months and she and Eddie were married. She gave up show business when her first child, Dukie, was about three years old. They have another child, a daughter. Asherman retired from the Cugat band and now is a Chevrolet dealer in New York.

Another Floridian who turned out to be a great big name in network radio and television had a connection with WDAE in his early days a broadcaster. They called him "Red" Barber, his full name

is Walter Lanier Barber. For years and years and years, he broadcast baseball games, first for the Cincinnati Reds, then the Brooklyn Dodgers and finally the New York Yankees. He wound up on the big time as director of CBS Sports in New York City.

A native of Mississippi, "Red" grew up in Sanford, Fla., and went to the University of Florida, when it had a student body of 2,000 male students. While an undergraduate, he got a job as student announcer on the brand new Radio Station WRUF, his pay was 35 cents an hour. He confided to us in an interview at his magnificent Key Biscayne home on Dec. 1, 1970, that he was "the worst announcer" that WRUF had. They had a program featuring the music of a string band which "Red" gave the name of the Orange Grove String Band, and this was "the worst program" on the air at the time. "Red" said:

"Maj. Garland Powell, the director of the station, made a decision. He said, 'I'll put the worst announcer with the worst program and let the devil take the hindmost.'"

Barber recalls how "the cussed thing" caught on and the program soon was getting by far the most fan mail of any on the station.

The great sportscaster, who brought the Southern drawl to the nation's air waves, explains his relationship to WDAE:

"I never had a working connection with WDAE. I was never on the staff. I was often in the station to see Mr. (Spencer) Mitchell; Sol Fleischman and I were buddies. I used to come down to Tampa a lot. After I went up to Gainesville, my family (his dad was an engineer for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad) moved back to Tampa.

"So I would come down and I would be down every Spring with the Cincinnati Reds and I would see Sol. In 1935, Larry McPhail was running the Cincinnati ball club and he wanted some interviews put on at noon from Plant Field, that's where the ball club trained. That was long before anybody ever thought of building Al Lopez Field. So McPhail thought it would be progressive and McPhail was a very progressive man. I would say that McPhail took advantage of radio long before anybody else did.

"But McPhail thought it would be helpful to the gate of the exhibition games in Tampa if we would—if I would—interview some major league ball players at noon from the field on the day they were having an exhibition game, and just say 'Well out here in a couple of hours the Yankees are going to be playing the Reds,' you know and so on.

"Again, you might say radio was in such a happy, informal, non-commercial state, it was still a broadcaster's medium, not a commercial medium, that I went to Sol Fleischman and he went to Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Mitchell said, 'Sure we'll run a line over to Plant Field and we'll put you on 50 minutes at noon any day that you want to go on. Just like that—just like that. So that's what we would do and it was a happy relationship.'"

And then "Red" told us a little history on Florida radio back when he was a student at the University of Florida:

"I believe, now again I was doing the broadcasting and I don't recall exactly what the technical setup was, I know that for a couple of years that I was at Gainesville, that WJAX in Jacksonville picked up our broadcasts of the Florida football games, and I believe for one or two of those years that WDAE in Tampa also picked them up, or maybe they picked up certain games, and in 1933, Florida played in Tampa and played the University of Maryland and to the best of my recollection, if I were a betting man I would say it was so, that WDAE took that broadcast and also did the pickup. So when you hear the Gator Network these days, we had one going back there then. Well, listen that was big news! WDAE, WRUF, WJAX in Jacksonville hooked together at the same time! My gracious, that was really getting up town."

During our visit, "Red" Barber reflected on the thrill of radio when he was just a boy in Sanford. He remembered "My father and I used to love to sit up and listen to WENR's three hour program from Chicago. Radio had such a magic in those days. People today just take radio for granted. They just flick a switch and they get radio stations. In fact, they get more stations than are even on the dial. You have AM stations and FM stations broadcasting 24 hours a day. People just take it like they take their next breath. But again, I guess that's what progress means, that you go on and on and you have more blessings and you don't stop to even count them, much less be grateful for them."

Tremendous broadcaster and sports reporter, "Red" Barber. And he started out right here in Florida, with an early tie to WDAE.

In recent years, and in another branch of the entertainment field, an alumnus of WDAE who's done quite well at the national level was Lester Flatt of the now-famous country music team of Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs.

Flatt worked over WDAE for about a year during the early 1950s, about 1951 and 1952. One thing that happened to him while here was the experience of cutting a Blue Grass record at WDAE in the height of a tropical hurricane that swept through Tampa at the time.

Lester Flatt had been working with a group called the Foggy Mountain Boys in Lexington, Ky., when he was invited to come to Tampa by Charlie Arnett who, with his wife, performed on WDAE as Old Brother Charlie and Daisy Mae.

Flatt was interviewed in Nashville, Tenn., by Ken Lester, announcer for Radio Station WVOL, a sister station to WDAE, on Nov. 24, 1971. He wasn't very talkative, but he did remember cutting records in the WDAE studios, the popularity of the Old Brother Charlie and Daisy Mae Show, and the good fishing that was so plentiful here during his stay.

"While we were there, I remember one incident that happened, that we were on Mercury Records, and we had a contract with Columbia Records," Flatt said. "We were waiting to get loose from Mercury, and a guy came down while we were there. He said if we



would do him a full album, they would give us a contract. So we went in the studio there at WDAE and he set a little portable recorder down.

"We gathered around one mike and did an album, a full album, in a matter of just a couple of hours, you know. That was some of the best sound quality that we've ever had on a record. That was all just a little portable outfit, you know. With everything that they have to work with at the studios now, I still have to say that that was one of the best albums that we ever did, quality-wise and everything." Flatt said he and Scruggs were doing "Blue Grass Style" then. "That's all we've ever picked," he declared. "Of course, it wasn't called Blue Grass then, just country music, you know. Just a matter of a few years ago, overnight the DJs went to calling it Blue Grass, and I guess it is, it's branded with that, it'll always be Blue Grass. What had a bearing on it, I think, is Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys, you know, and I think if he should have had the Green Mountain Boys, why it would have been Green Mountain music, you know. I feel like that's really where it got the start, you know."

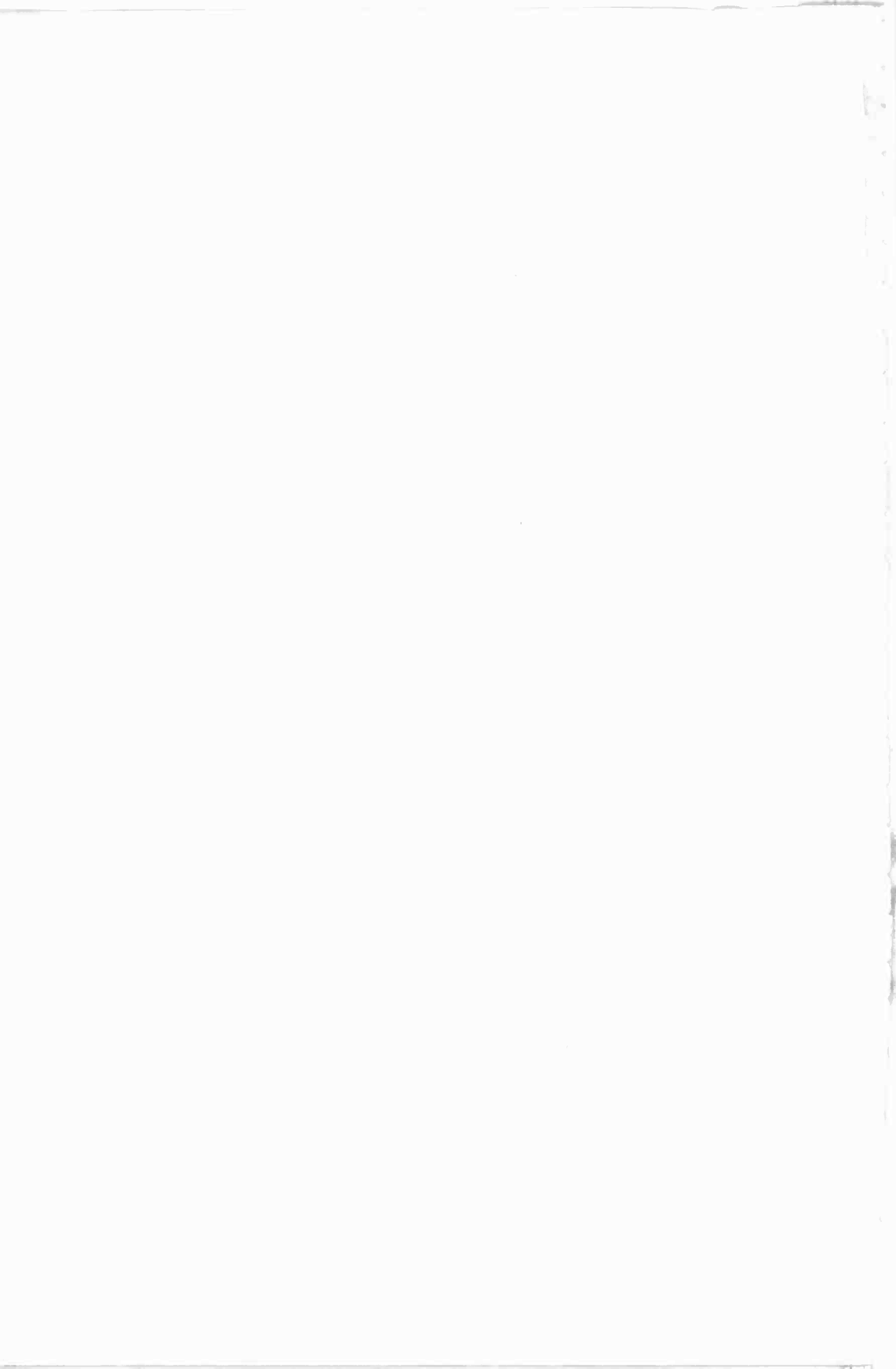
Big sponsor of the Old Brother Charlie Show was the Dixie Lily Flour when Flatt and Scruggs were with the unit. Flatt said he did not write any songs while he was in Tampa because during his stay "we were enjoying the weather so much and the fishing, you know, we didn't take time to write a song." He remembered he had written his hit, "Little Cabin Home in the Hills" just before coming to Tampa and it was recorded by Elvis Presley for his Elvis Country Album. Flatt and Scruggs went back to Kentucky and on to the Grand Old Opry after leaving Tampa.

A talented Miss who was destined to become "The Park Avenue Hillbilly"—Dorothy Shay—began her professional career at WDAE. She was a native of Jacksonville. She rode to fame on the catchy tune, "Feudin', Fussin' and Fightin'".

One of the giants of Music City, U.S.A., Nashville, now is Bobby Lord. Bobby came from the Tampa Bay area, made some of his first public appearances on WDAE. When WSUN-TV, now defunct, went on the air, he had a program and before long he was headed for Nashville.

Among other stars who had close relations with WDAE during the beginning of their careers were Lenny Dee and The Three Suns, acts that used to be featured at the Bayshore Royal Hotel.

Talented singer and pianist, the lovely and beautiful June Crayton, was featured at the Tampa Terrace Hotel and was a regular on WDAE, sharing the spotlight with Vince Meloy, now a Tampa City Councilman, in a program called "Late Date." June moved on to New York City, where she did quite well, professionally. She originally was from North Carolina.



# YET ATTEND HAGUE

## CONNECT LABOR LEADERS WITH A TROCCITY

### OPTIMISM IS NOT JUSTIFIED, SAYS DEFREES

President of Chamber Commerce Warns Delegates.

### STABILITY OF EUROPE SERIOUS

S. Aid Essential to Normalcy in Commerce.

### CHURCHMEN ARE VOTING FOR BISHOPS

Methodist Episcopalians Balloting for Five.

### THREE NAMES ARE PROMINENT

Dr. Parker of Emory Asks Friends not To Elect Him.

His friends, at a meeting held on the first ballot today at the quadrennial conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, here, Dr. Parker, of Georgia, has been elected to the office of moderator of the annual session. The vote of the delegates was 145 to 135 for Dr. Parker, and 135 to 125 for Dr. Parker, of Georgia, and 125 to 115 for Dr. Parker, of Georgia.

After the second ballot, Dr. Parker addressed the delegates and said that he was not a candidate for the office of moderator. He said that he was a candidate for the office of moderator, but he was not a candidate for the office of moderator. He said that he was a candidate for the office of moderator, but he was not a candidate for the office of moderator.

### Three Names Prominent

The names of three candidates for the office of moderator were mentioned by Dr. Parker. They were Dr. Parker, of Georgia, Dr. Parker, of Georgia, and Dr. Parker, of Georgia.

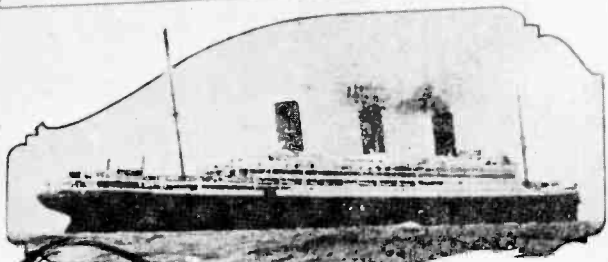
### Further Division Discussed

The question of further division was discussed by the delegates. It was noted that the delegates were divided on the question of further division.

### Stamp Meeting

A meeting of the stamp collectors was held in the evening. The meeting was held in the evening.

## White Star Liner Majestic



## Largest Ship Nears New York

### TIMES RADIO BROADCASTER PUT TO TEST

### Fans Throughout the State Are Asked To Stand By.

Monday night the Times radio station was tested for the first time by W. H. Matthews and J. Warner. The test was successful and the station was found to be in good condition.

### State Gains Point In Gov. Small Trial

The state gained a point in the trial of Governor Small. The jury found in favor of the state on the question of the validity of the governor's actions.

### Specifications of The Liner Majestic

Length, 600 feet; Breadth, 65 feet; Depth, 35 feet; Gross Tonnage, 13,000; Net Tonnage, 7,000; Horsepower, 10,000; Speed, 18 knots; Range, 10,000 miles.

### STEEL MERGER IS APPROVED BY DIRECTORS

### Both Will Pay Lawanna with 7 Per Cent Stock.

The directors of the Steel Corporation have approved a merger with the Lawanna Corporation. The merger will be completed by the end of the year.

### State Gains Point In Gov. Small Trial

The state gained a point in the trial of Governor Small. The jury found in favor of the state on the question of the validity of the governor's actions.

### Stamp Meeting

### MAJESTIC ON LAST LAP OF MAIDEN TRIP

### Former German Vessel Biggest Ever Built.

The White Star liner Majestic is on her last lap of her maiden voyage. She is the largest ship ever built and is expected to set a new record for speed and range.

### Giants May Have

The Majestic, which is not only the largest, but probably the swiftest passenger ship now afloat, has a record of 25 knots an hour and her engines are still hot.

### Highest Point

Loaded as she was today on her last lap, the Majestic reached a point of 25 knots an hour. This is the highest point reached by any passenger ship.

### Stamp Meeting

A meeting of the stamp collectors was held in the evening. The meeting was held in the evening.

## REFUSAL INVITATION ISN'T

### Door Left Further

### NEW PARLIAMENTS IN JEC

### U. S. Refusal Make Me Useles

The refusal of the United States to accept the invitation to participate in the new parliaments in Jerusalem is a serious matter.

### Stamp Meeting

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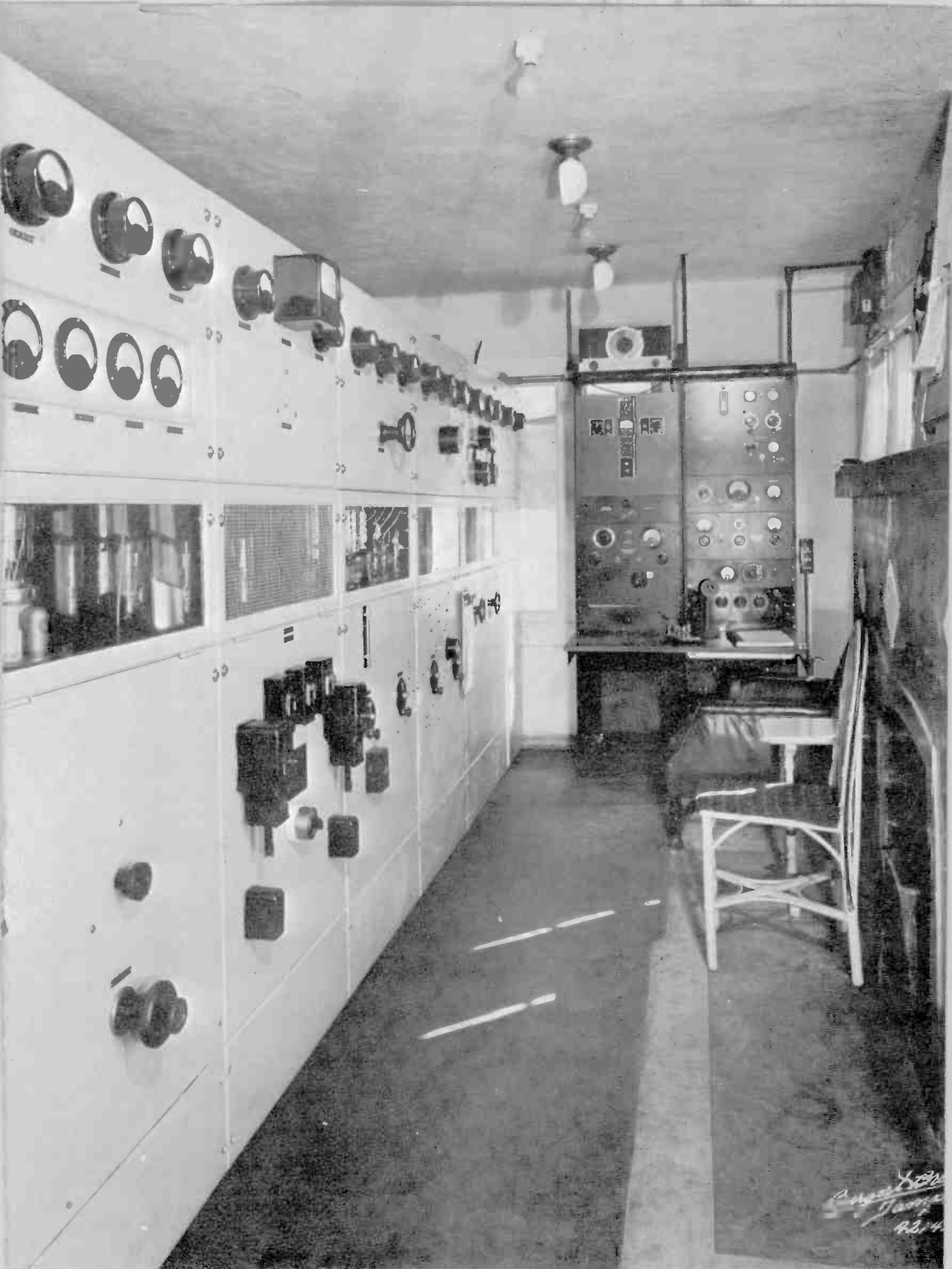
### Stamp Meeting



First in Florida to do singing commercials were three gals called the "Southern Songsters". I to R, Edith Price Montgomery (Mrs. M. L.), Sue Jones Klintworth (Mrs. C. Verne) and Georgia Goodell Rogers (Mrs. Nat) Their first musical messages in 1922 went out for Harry Dodd Motors, Tampa Ford dealer.

Early in the 30's, the hottest spot in town was the Moulin Rouge Night Club. WDAE broadcast live and direct on a wire mike barely visible in the center of the stage rear, Saturday nights got so hot at this 22nd SE Causeway spot, the place burned to the ground.





William Pharr Moore, the original Chief Engineer of WDAE, literally built this composite 5 kilowatt transmitter at the site of Forest Hills. This original photo was taken in May 1932.



Florida's citrus industry has used radio a long time. Their singing commercials on WDAE were often done live as shown above in 1933. Studios were then atop the Temple Terrace Hotel.

From the shelves of WDAE's well-stocked, "up-to-the-minute" music library, shown here, came the melodies which help get WDAE listeners off to a good start on the familiar "Wake Up Tampa Show" each week-day morning and on other programs throughout the broadcast day in the 1940s. The record librarian was Mrs. Gail Darby.



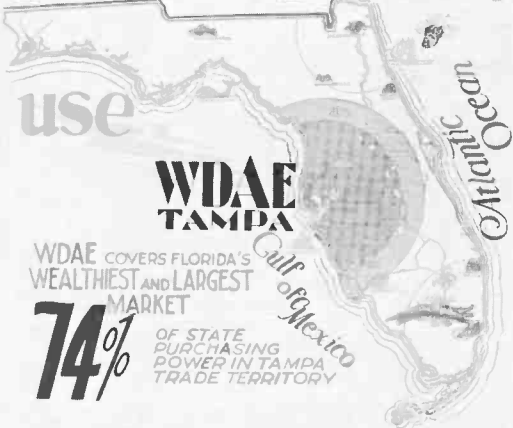


Alice Cornett was a staff songstress on WDAE in 1937-39. She went on to CBS in New York, and later was selected over Dinah Shore to appear on the Coca-Cola Hour. She later married Eddie Asherman, a guitarist with Xavier Cugat. Alice is a native of Brandon.

A 1929 advertising broadside was aimed at the size and permanency of the Tampa listening area.

The really big fight was reason enough to go out and buy that radio set. Fight was the Dempsey-Tunney match, Sept. 22, 1927.

# Broadcast to Florida's PURCHASING POWER AND PERMANENT POPULATION



WDAE  
TAMPA

WDAE COVERS FLORIDA'S  
WEALTHIEST AND LARGEST  
MARKET  
**74%** OF STATE  
PURCHASING  
POWER IN TAMPA  
TRADE TERRITORY

Population within 75 mile service range (based on 1925 census)

WDAE, Tampa, Reaches 340,995  
Jacksonville Stations - - 215,827  
Miami Stations - - - 118,662

Modern Equipment—100% Modulation Regionally Cleared Channel  
Newspaper Ownership—Listener Acceptance

## A Ring-Side Seat For the Big Fight IN YOUR OWN HOME

Thursday  
September  
22nd  
Starting  
at 8:15 p. m.  
Tampa Time



## Over W-D-A-E TAMPA TIMES STATION with a national hook-up relayea Direct From the Ring-Side

The greatest national "hook-up" of radio stations in the history of broadcasting will handle the big battle for the World's Heavyweight Title direct from the Ringside in Chicago, Thursday night, Tampa and all of this section of the country will be served through W-D-A-E simultaneously with the big stations throughout the country. The man with a Radio in his home or place of business will be "sitting on top of the world" listening into every detail—blow by blow. The next best thing to a ringside seat is to have your own Radio Thursday night. The dealers and jobbers of this section are prepared to make lightning quick installations.

Have Your Radio Installed  
Today and Be Ready to  
Enjoy Every Detail--Act Now!



Roger Baker interviews the Reds on WDAE. The occasion and players' identities are lost, but it records earlier days for our Citrus league companions. The Reds have been coming to Tampa each spring since 1938.

WDAE Studios atop the Temple Terrace Hotel in downtown Tampa circa 1939. Live shows and CBS network made up the day's broadcast then. People heard such famous shows like Vic and Sade, Davis Rodes Songs, Today with Bob Frost, Lum and Abner, Jack Berch Songs, Leighton Noble and his Orchestra.







This picture, taken from the WDAE master controlroom, shows an actual mid-1940s radio program in progress. While Announcer Ken Skelton reads the title of the next selection at one microphone, Van Wilson awaits his cue at the studio console organ.

The 1950's saw many changes in the way of life in Florida. WDAE's Sol Fleischman is shown interviewing L. B. Giles, Buick dealer at the opening of the First National Bank's drive-in bank "window." The late E. P. Taliaferro stares at camera beside the curb depository. E. W. Sisson in straw hat on right was WDAE comptroller in those days.





In 1954, WDAE was conducting RADIO RALLY, a program designed to showcase politicians. Leroy Collins is shown addressing a live and a radio audience in the campaign where he defeated acting Governor Charley Johns and candidate J. Brailey Odham. In background is Hampton Dunn, then managing editor of The Tampa Daily Times.

Babe Zaharias came home the last time from one of her famous golf tours. Vince Meloy interviews as the late Mayor Curtis Hixon looks on. In background is Bobby Hicks, Tampa Tribune Sports Writer. The year was about 1955.





**Spencer Mitchell was manager of WDAE for 33 years. He was a charter member of the Florida Association of Broadcasters.**

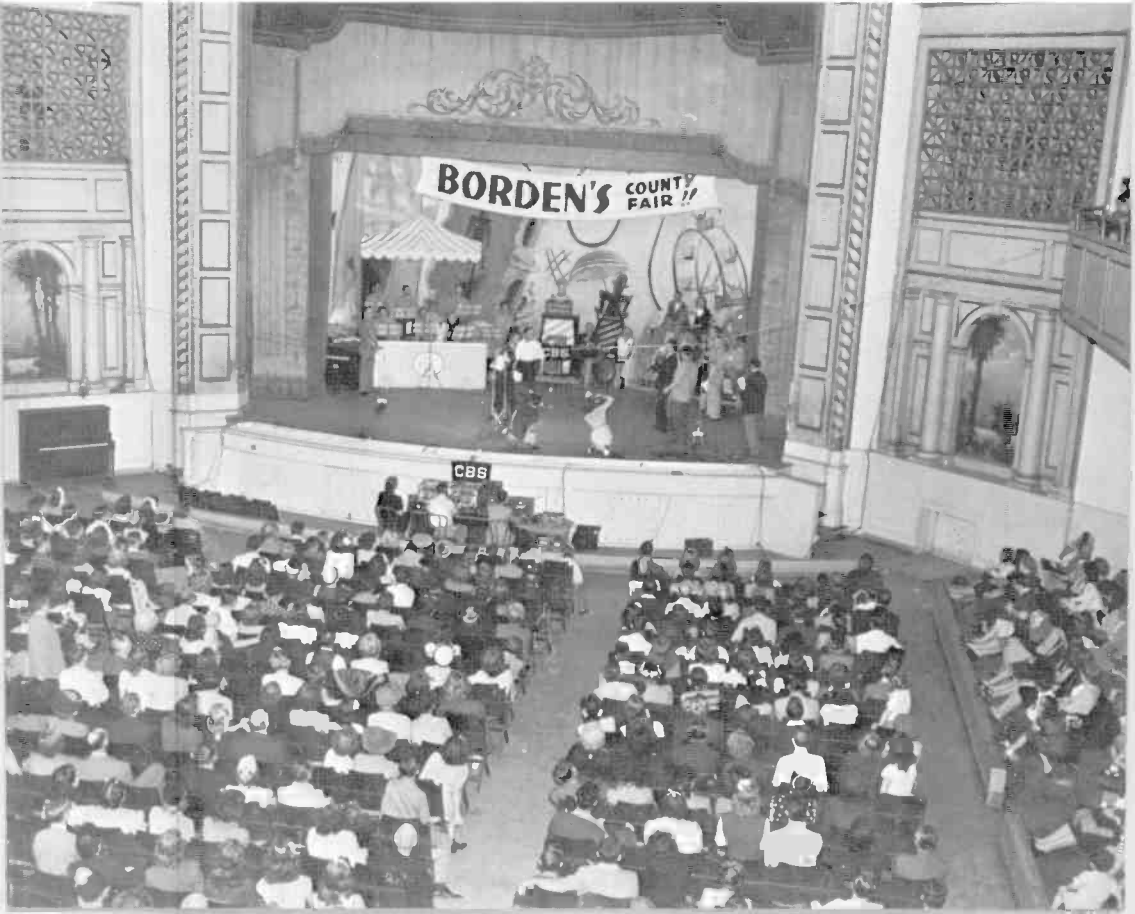
**In the early 1950's, Public Affairs Forum, was conducted as a forerunner to today's Point of View program. Shown left to right in a heated a political discussion are Tom Johnson, State Senator; Hampton Dunn, moderator, James S. Moody, State Representative (now Hillsborough County Circuit Judge) and Sam Gibbons, State Representative (now U.S. Congressman).**



The talented and attractive June Crayton at the organ sang for thousands of Bay Area listeners on "Late Date" a popular show in the 50's. Her emcee-announcer was Vince Meloy, presently Tampa City Councilman.



Borden's County Fair, carried coast to coast on CBS originated over WDAE in the 1950's. The above shot was made of the stage presentation at McKay Auditorium during the Florida State Fair.





The present building at 101 North Tampa was built for television and FM. The full story is told elsewhere in the book.

Bobby Lord did a stint on WDAE before he landed on the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. This was shot in McKay Auditorium in the 50's.





Priscilla Parker, staff announcer at WDAE interviews one of the many visiting stars. Can you identify all of the other famous faces—including the one which is obviously the oldest picture and which is known to have been taken in 1928?



Robert W. Rounsaville, Chairman of the Board of Rounsaville Radio, Inc., owns WDAE today.

Ralph Johnson, President of Rounsaville Radio, Atlanta, takes a ride in WDAE's 50th Anniversary Model T Ford while in town. WDAE did the parade "tour" in the Bay Area in 1972 with this authentic car rebuilt by Davis Harman, St. Petersburg, especially for the Anniversary.





**DONALD K. CLARK**  
Vice President and General Manager



**R. ED RIPLEY**  
Operations Manager

## 1972 WDAE STAFF



**JERRY NORMAN**  
Sales Manager



**BURL McCARTY**  
News Director



**WARREN KAUFFMAN**  
Chief Engineer



Marie Almeda

Jim Anderton

Pierre Bejano

Mel Berman



Al Blake

Emmajeane Correll

Dennis Crandall

Ron Ebben



Sylvia Fabbri

Lt. Al Ford

Bob French

Dick Gilmore



Dan Grant

Bonnie Heath

Roy Ludwick

Carolyn Mack



Andrew Manning

George McConnell

Officer Dick Nelson

Linda Newbold



Dave Pegram

Al Ritter

Mary Shelnut

Bob Smith



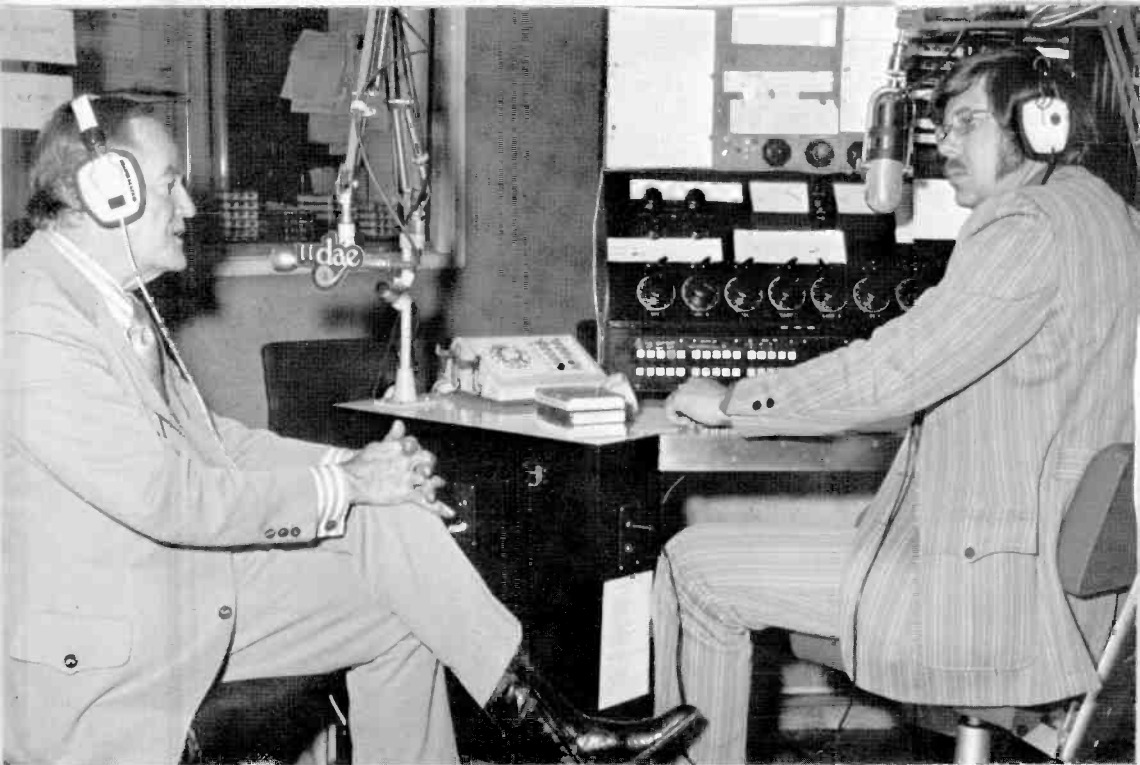
Gina Tidd

George Topolancik

Cherie Troped

Richard Vevang





Former Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey "on the campaign trail" joined Ed Ripley in 1972 to discuss the issues on POINT OF VIEW on WDAE's two-way talk show.

In 1972 on Gasparilla Day, morning man Al Blake was kidnapped by Jose's bad guys. Gunman De La Vergne took over on this day. The switchboard was flooded with queries in regard to Al's "kidnapping."



## WORLD WAR II, PEACE & FM RADIO



**R**ADIO, both locally and nationally, was in high gear and rolling as the decade of the 1940s opened. But there were dark days ahead. There was a hot shooting war already underway in Europe—Germany vs. France and England. And war clouds hovered ominously over America itself, destined soon to be part of the world-wide conflict.

WDAE, like all other businesses, industries and individuals, faced many changes. Personnel were leaving to join the armed services. Programming was changing. Public service and support of the war effort had top billing. The national interest was put above all else.

The national interest showed up in the least expected places. Like when a fine and popular pre-war program, entitled “Curbstone Forum”, was halted suddenly by order of the Government. The m.c. of the show was Sol Fleischman who recalls: “Several hundred people would stop in front of the Tampa Theatre during the broadcast. I did a program from inside the theatre with Organist Eddie Ford, and then I would go out front of the theatre at noon and we would do this show. But this was stopped by the Government.

“Well, before I went to war and unbeknownst to us, the enemy was able to put people, who perhaps were spies, I can say that, in the audience of the ‘Curbstone Forum.’ And the huge shipyard at Tampa was turning out ships real fast and a lot of information on the activity that would be helpful to the enemy was transmitted by the enemy over that microphone that I used, by a guy working his way to the front . . . and I would say, ‘Today’s Curbstone Forum is about, Shall we take the street car tracks up in Tampa?’ And he might say, with German submarine commanders or mother ships listening within two to five hundred miles in the Gulf, he might use a code word as he would say to me, ‘Yes, Sol, I guess they should take the tracks up’ and the word ‘guess’ might mean that there are two ships to be launched in the next month at Tampa Shipbuilding Company.

“Now the weather, we quit that, we couldn’t broadcast the weather because they would hear and that would help them, aid and comfort the enemy. The Sidewalk broadcast was the first in-

stance of stopping broadcasts of this kind on the coastal areas of the United States."

Came Dec. 7, 1941, the date President Roosevelt told radio audiences would go down as a "day of infamy." At 2:30 P.M., Tampa time, the news wires crackled with the shocking bulletin:

"The Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor by air! President Roosevelt has just announced . . ."

Not only her Allies, but America herself was at war!

On duty that sleepy Sunday afternoon in the plush WDAE studios atop the Tampa Terrace Hotel was Tampa's top radio personality, the inimitable Sol Fleischman. For a direct report on what happened in WDAE Land that historic day, let's hear from Sol himself:

"It was the usual thing on Sunday that after you got the station going good, around 12 or 1:00, if you got hungry, you had permission of management to lock the top floor door, after you checked with Forest Hills transmitter, to go downstairs and get a sandwich or go across the street to get a sandwich or something. And this particular day, I had been watching the wire pretty good. We had one Associated Press printer. Nothing particular had happened. I kept my eye on it pretty good. The Network hadn't said anything. I got kind of hungry around maybe 1:00.

"Kate Smith was singing from Fort Dix, N. J., for the boys. Midway in her program, Hamp, I got hungry. I was just getting ready to call Talon Nesbitt, the transmitter operator. That was the procedure. Call him and throw a master switch switching CBS direct to Forest Hills, cutting off the Tampa Terrace in case a wire broke or power failure, the Network would still be at Forest Hills on the air. That was the procedure."

And Sol continues to recount the local events of that memorable date in history:

"I was getting ready to call Talon when the Network broke. Kate Smith was singing a song and it broke, and the announcer in Washington said something like 'Unidentified planes apparently have been sighted off Ford Island and Pearl Harbor!' It was right back to the Network. Kate Smith was singing, and I thought, 'Well, well, what is that?' You know, Pearl Harbor—unidentified planes. I just said this to myself as I got ready to call Nesbitt.

"But I went back to the printer, and that flash was on there and nothing more. No backup, no sidebars, no nothing. And I got to thinking, 'What in the world do they mean?' And Kate Smith was singing and I figured if it was big enough, New York would be talking or something would have happened. I never dreamed we were being bombed at Pearl Harbor.

"This was about five minutes before the second flash came on saying, 'The President of the United States has reported that Japanese planes with red markings are dropping bombs on the Navy at Pearl Harbor!' This was the next one. Before they did that, I called Nesbitt, cold patched it, and went downstairs in the elevator.

"In the Terrace sitting at the bar having a drink before dinner was Gen. Clarence L. Tinker, one of the greatest generals of our time. He was sitting there with, I think, Col. (H. H.) Young, who was his Chief of Staff, and he (Tinker) was Commander of MacDill (which had been activated in 1939). We had the Third Air Force at old Benjamin Field.

"So I went down and there was a girl named Virginia Louget who was the cashier and she had the telephone by her side. The General was sitting there and I was privileged to know him and to know Colonel Young, and as I swung around by Virginia, I said, 'would you order me a ham and cheese sandwich?' General Tinker said, 'Hey, Salty.'

"And I was fortunate enough to say, 'General Tinker, something funny just happened on CBS Radio on WDAE.' He looked up at me and he says 'What do you mean? What happened?' And I said, 'General, they just broke the network of the Kate Smith program at Fort Dix and said, 'Unidentified planes are apparently over Ford Island and Pearl Harbor.'

"And I thought he (Tinker) was going to choke on whatever—he had a light drink—and it spilled. He almost broke the glass, dropping it down, and he kind of uggghhh like that, and he says, 'Are you sure?' And I said, 'I am definitely sure.'

"And General Tinker said: 'This means war, Sol!'

"And he ran to that telephone and he called MacDill and sure enough they were trying to find him, and he and the Colonel rushed out, as I just told Virginia, 'Forget about the sandwich,' and I rushed upstairs and I got there just in time for that second announcement to come and for the bells to start ringing on AP for Pearl Harbor to be in full bloom."

That's the story of how WDAE brought the news that America was at war during World War II to General Clarence L. Tinker, the commanding officer of one of the most important airfields in the country.

Fleischman added a footnote or two to the account: "General Tinker was a great friend of WDAE. He set up a program every week in which I went out to the base under his auspices, on this station WDAE to broadcast. General Tinker set up with General (L. H.) Brereton for WDAE's broadcast every week from the Third Air Force Headquarters. And, you know who was my guest every week, who did the talking before I went away? You can't imagine—today he is the President of the University of Florida, Steve O'Connell. He was the athletic officer and we did this sports program from the field every week."

General Tinker left Tampa within a week or 10 days after Pearl Harbor to become commander in chief of the Hawaiian Air Force, and was killed in combat.

Radio newscasting really reached its heights prior to and during World War II, as CBS brought to WDAE listeners such stellar com-

mentators as Elmer Davis, Albert Warner, Edward R. Murrow, William L. Shirer, Cecil Brown and Bob Trout.

In May, 1942, WDAE celebrated its 20th anniversary on the air, amid congratulations from fans and advertisers alike. Leon St. John, who operated an optical dispensary, ran an ad in the newspapers, saying "Personally listening to the station since first coming to Tampa in 1926, I became interested in it as a medium of getting my message over to the public. Have been constantly on their station for the past five years."

Peninsular Telephone Company congratulated the station with a big ad saying: "Twenty years ago there were but two full-time radio stations in the United States. They were WGY Schenectady, and KDKA Pittsburgh. Then a third station came into being . . . WDAE Tampa, beginning an uninterrupted service to the people of Florida's west coast.

"Radio was young then. There were no 'chain' programs and networks were unheard of. But 20 years have changed radio. The development has been miraculous indeed . . . now through the use of telephone lines, programs are relayed to you by radio, so that you may sit comfortably in your home and listen to a range of comedy, drama, music and up-to-the-minute news, unparalleled anywhere in the world . . ."

Then Governor, later U. S. Senator, the late Spessard L. Holland wired David E. Smiley, president of The Tampa Times Company: "The birthday of WDAE comes during a critical period when radio's place in human activities is being most firmly established. The Tampa Times station, pioneer in Florida's development of wireless transmission, has played an important and constructive part in the State's growth . . ."

Then Sen. Claude Pepper, now U. S. Representative, who was a top figure in Washington during the war years, often spokesman for President Roosevelt in the Senate and a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, sent greetings to WDAE: "Few institutions today have a greater opportunity for public service than radio stations. They hold the public ear and have entre' to the people's heart. Their opportunity for good, or evil, is immeasurable.

"I can attest gladly that WDAE has been not only public spirited, but exhibited genuine patriotism in the policies which have characterized its period of public service. It is a public institution worthy of public confidence and credit. I know that its future shall be one of expanding service."

The late U. S. Sen. Charles O. Andrews wired from Washington, where he served on the Senate's Committee on Naval Affairs: "The work you have done is to be highly commended and is especially important in this emergency war period. Radio is vital to the Nation and can be used as an instrument of offense and defense. You are doing your full share for Victory!"

Smiley took the occasion of the 20th anniversary of WDAE to

publish an outstanding editorial in The Tampa Daily Times commemorating the event and stating policy of the company regarding the radio operation. It's worthy of reproduction since it marked a significant milestone in the career of Radio Station WDAE:

### A RADIO PIONEER HAS A BIRTHDAY

A member of the family is celebrating a birthday.

Not just a member of The Times family, but of the family of West Coast and Central Floridians whom it has served and is serving.

For in the 20 years since Radio Station WDAE piped its first greeting as Florida's first broadcasting station its program service can fairly be said to have established a place for itself in the daily lives of thousands of Floridians.

It speaks now with the clear, strong, adult voice of a pioneer in the vital but comparatively young radio industry, in which a 20-year-old is an "old-timer" whose experience enables it to render a more vigorous, progressive, dependable service.

It has been a sounding board for the growth of the Tampa area and the trends of the times, catching and broadcasting the elements of these human symphonies by every means, from on-the-spot reports of neighborhood get-togethers to eye-witness accounts of great events that shape world history.

It can conceive of no higher or prouder goal for the future than to continue to serve all the members of the American family that it reaches by bringing the best in entertainment into their homes and reporting quickly and accurately all the vital public information by which a democratic people must guide their lives.

In these crucial days, The Times' family is proud that its Radio Station WDAE brings this vital information to the public the moment it is available, while The Times brings its readers the first complete story from the world's battlefields every day on the day that it happens.

With that pride is full recognition of the responsibility that goes with it; so while gratefully receiving congratulations on its birthday, WDAE and The Times earnestly pledge continued service with and for the community family.

One more message that came into WDAE on its birthday anniversary was signed by William S. Paley, president of CBS. It said:

"You really got started when the radio box was a mysterious wonder. In sending you my felicitations, I would like to wish you well for the future. I have the feeling that if as much progress can be made in the next 20 years as has been made in the last 20, all of us in radio will have even greater cause for gratification.

"Your contribution to the progress of our art has been significant

and I am sure is truly appreciated by your great listening audience."

Throughout the war, of course, WDAE made available all of its facilities to provide information on the war effort to the public; news and announcements about gasoline and other rationed items, scrap metal and other collection drives, War Bonds campaigns, and entertainment of the untold thousands of troops stationed in Tampa and the West Coast area of Florida.

And thanks to the remarkable coverage of the war fronts, by CBS, WDAE was able to keep an anxious populace up-to-the-minute on the military situation. Dramatic moments, in which broadcasting reached its finest hour . . . like that evening of D-Day—the day the Allied troops invaded Europe—and President Roosevelt went on radio to ask the people of America to pray with him "in this poignant hour:"

"Almighty God, our sons, pride of our nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity.

"Lead them straight and true; give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts, and steadfastness to their faith. They will need Thy blessings . . . For these men are lately drawn from the ways of peace. They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end conquest . . ."

"Some will never return. Embrace these, Father, and receive them, Thy heroic servants, into Thy Kingdom . . . Thy will be done, Almighty God. Amen."

Radio was the instrument the nation's leaders utilized effectively to unite the Nation and to keep up morale and the determination to win. Finally victory came, and radio turned to post-war expansion.

Late in 1946, Station WDAE ran a contest to find out what the fans thought about radio. Hundreds of essays poured in, and the winning entry was that of Mrs. Eunice Talbott of Tampa. It gives a good view of the values attached to radio by the listening public. Here it is:

"To me radio is the means of conveying the 'artistic' as well as the 'practical' to the multitudes. I am one of the multitudes. The mere flick of the dial can eliminate a program I don't like. Another flick of the dial can bring the latest news or a symphony orchestra into my home. I am the sole arbiter. No one dictates what I shall hear; for radio in the United States is based upon the democratic idea that the public is judge of what it will hear.

"I have been profoundly impressed by radio's attitude toward racial and religious minorities. At no time has there been prejudice voiced by the broadcasting systems themselves. I like that. It is my conception of the democratic function.

"Radio's phenomenal rise to its present status has not been accidental. It is the results of the high standards exacted by the networks and local stations. Radio itself has educated its listening audience.



This audience looks for and expects these high standards to be maintained.

"Radio has raised the national level of music appreciation. It has restored the once lowly pun to its former Shakespearean prominence. It has broadened the use of language, and it is extending our mental horizons to the far corners of the world."

Immediately after World War II, the occasion arose for WDAE to once more move its studios. And so it was, on April 1, 1946, the radio station was moved to the ground floor of The Tampa Daily Times building at 114 N. Franklin St., where modern air conditioned studios and offices had been installed with all new equipment of post-war manufacture. The faithful old transmitter remained at Forest Hills.

Always in the forefront of technical developments in the radio industry, WDAE was ready to introduce F.M. broadcasting to the Tampa Bay area in the mid-1940s when the FCC handed out assignments. And so it was on Nov. 17, 1947, that Chief Engineer William Pharr Moore fed the first F.M. broadcast to listeners in the area.

F.M. channels were first available in 1936, but because the interests of F.M. conflicted with those of television, just budding at the time, only a few were handed out by FCC. Immediately after the war, F.M. was assigned to the 88-108 megacycle bands, and the major radio stations jumped to get a channel. Thus, WDAE pioneered in this field in Florida.

The original F.M. transmitter was at the Forest Hills facility, but in 1951, The Times had constructed a new building on its property at Tampa and Whiting Streets in downtown Tampa and erected on it a brand new 10,000 watt transmitter "of latest improved design which will deliver a vastly stronger and clearer signal, free of static and outside interference." It was assigned a new position on the dial—100.7 megacycles. The radio tower, a dominating feature of the Tampa skyline, reaches skyward 435 feet.





## SOME WDAE PERSONALITIES

THE Bible tells us, "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house."

This sage advice does not apply to recognition of the scores of key personalities who through the years made WDAE a household companion and became true friends of the large unseen audiences they built up.

These air men and women, and those who worked behind the scenes, developed great followings and were loved and admired by fans who tuned in regularly to WDAE to hear them and to appreciate their talent.

No account of the station's stewardship should overlook these hardy pioneers, these gifted artists, these hard-working and dedicated broadcasting types. Let's tip our hat to some of the standouts in the first half century of operation of WDAE.

The two men who brought radio to Tampa, to Florida, were Roger Bruce Lum and William Pharr Moore. They guided the affairs of WDAE in its formative years and for a period leased it and operated it as individuals.

Lum got interested in radio as early as 1912. His brother had a radio apparatus and "I very soon learned to monkey with it so consistently that he became rather discouraged. But he continued to finance the devilishly expensive business through those earliest days of amateur radio and I stayed at it until I went to sea in 1918 as a 'wireless' operator."

After World War I, Lum worked for a manufacturer of radio equipment and in 1923 he got the job as combination operator and announcer for WJZ, then operated by the Westinghouse Company at Newark, N. J. From there he went to WJZ-JY, Aeolian Hall, New York City. When RCA opened WRC in Washington he transferred to the station at the capital city and was there until he joined the staff of WNYC, municipal station of the City of New York, in August, 1924.

Interviewed by The Tampa Daily Times in 1929, Lum recalled: "In the summer of 1926, having quit broadcasting 'forever' after almost two trying years of intensive work at WNYC, the opportunity to join WDAE and see Florida attracted me. And here I am."

Lum told the reporter then that his "hobby" was "WDAE."

"I am associated with the finest group of young people I have

ever seen assembled on any radio job," he continued. "The city and West Coast with its industry and wealthy backcountry offer one of the finest fields in the country for the radio broadcasting business.

"It is up-hill pioneering here yet, but we have the reward of knowing that WDAE's extensive schedules and reliable service over these many years have created a radio community. More than half of Florida's homes have radios—and that in a state where static is supposed to be a handicap.

"We all feel that WDAE has a great responsibility to our group of listeners, who depend on us almost solely for regular service during six months of the year when static shuts out the northern broadcaster."

When the Lum-Moore lease expired in 1929, Lum went on to WIBK, Utica, N. Y., to Atlanta and later Washington, continuing to be an outstanding broadcaster throughout his career.

It's been said that Bill Moore put his first radio set together at the age of eight when most of his playmates were playing cops 'n' robbers and learning to fly kites. The Charlotte, N. C., native next turned a Model-T spark coil into a portion of a small transmitter with a radius of about two blocks.

Almost before Bill realized what was happening, he was devoting every spare minute to equipping a radio shack behind his home. His conversation was spiked with lengthy discourses on "piezo quartz crystals," "vacuum tubes" and "high frequencies," was directed as far away as Europe and South America. His 250 watt transmitter in Tampa was licensed under the call letters of 4-IZ in 1921. During a severe hurricane, the first official news reports out of Tampa were transmitted over 4-IZ to *The New York Times*. It also was used to advantage in sending relief supplies to stricken areas.

WDAE had been in existence only three years when Bill Moore took over as chief engineer. He designed and built Radio Station WJBB in Tampa, which subsequently was moved to California, and WSIS at Sarasota. And, of course, his valuable contributions through the years to WDAE have been recounted in this history of the station.

Moore was associated with WDAE for 40 years, until his retirement.

"When things go hay-wire on a program, do something about it—even if it's wrong!" That doctrine was the primary rule all the while that Kenneth W. Skelton served as program director for WDAE from 1931 to the 1960's. This long-time employee of the station died in 1971.

Skelton became interested in radio as a student back in his native England, and at one time worked for BBC. He went to sea as a radio man, finally wound up in Tampa. His distinctive, smooth and pleasant voice was welcomed into thousands of homes for many years. Reportedly Ken Skelton's unique voice was chosen by civil defense authorities to be used in case of a national emergency during the organization of CD after World War II.

One of the industry's earliest early-bird disc jockeys was Freddie Frick, one of the pioneer communications experts who put the first transmitter together for WDAE. He'd greet his listeners with "Good Morning. This is WDAE, Florida's pioneer radiophone, The Times at Tampa," or perhaps "The aroma of coffee, stealing from kitchen to bedroom, makes many a sleepy-head anxious to get up." He'd be on at 7 A.M. for the short while the station was on the air in the day-time back in the beginning days.

Frick also was a radio technician and had his own amateur station W4BN.

A character around WDAE and around the city for several decades was George J. Seargeant, a showman from early childhood. The family had a vaudeville act, the "Cleopatra Company" which did a mystery act in most of the cities of the globe. George and his sister put on a vaudeville act that ended when his sister got married.

He was an automobile race starter in New York for awhile, then the lure of Florida during the real estate boom brought him to the Sunshine State where he sold real estate until the boom collapsed.

During the South Florida Fair of 1928, George Seargeant strolled leisurely into the booth of Station WDAE and here is what he said: "Boys, I am going to work for you." He was greeted with outstretched arms and ever since that day he worked for the station until his retirement.

In his early days with the station, he was one of the most popular entertainers with his singing of old-time songs, as well as the modern jazz classics. His mother, Mrs. Clara A. Seargeant, accompanied him on the piano.

Finally, Seargeant found his niche at the station to be commercial representative and he sold time for many years. He did some "moonlight" announcing at the Tampa Dog Track and his was the voice that signaled the start of the races with the thrilling words: "Here comes Rusty!"

In January, 1929, just prior to the South Florida Fair, Seargeant took his song and talk act on a good will tour of Florida, acting as good will ambassador from WDAE as he performed on WRUF in Gainesville, WJAX in Jacksonville, WQAM in Miami, WSIS in Sarasota, WMBL in Lakeland and WDBO in Orlando.

The "function" of the tour, it was explained, "is to publicize as widely as possible the fact that during the period of the South Florida Fair special rail rates will be in effect from every point south of Washington and east of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers for travelers to Florida. He will also call attention to the extensive broadcasting schedule to be conducted from WDAE's South Florida Fair studio for ten days and ten nights."

One of the delightful personalities on WDAE in the late 1920s and for a long period after that was Mardi Lyles, a friendly chap with chestnut curls and a pleasing voice, who was chief announcer in the early days. Later, he worked for WFLA. During World War II he was

in the service and was injured in combat. In the later years of his life, Mardi Lyles left the radio business and was on the editorial staff of the Tampa Tribune, serving as farm editor. Coincidentally, Lyles' own birthday anniversary was the same as that of WDAE.

One day in June, 1932, the phone rang at WDAE and the scared voice of the Tampa Terrace Hotel operator downstairs gasped "There—there's a man up on the roof—taking off his shirt—getting ready to jump off—could—could you go up there—"

Manager Spencer Mitchell shouted to Engineer Bill Moore: "Hurry, Bill—hurry—man on roof—gonna commit suicide." Both the manager and chief engineer dashed up the narrow stairs and out on the roof, panting for breath, and out there, they encounter their senior announcer, Mardi.

Mardi, it seems, being off duty, had gone up for a sunbath. And to make it really effective, had removed his shirt. Whereupon, somebody—probably one of those stenogs at the Court House across the street, got so unstrung, she 'phoned the Tampa Terrace operator that a man was about to jump off the roof.

"If I'd had that in mind," concluded Mardi after the laughter died down, "I wouldn't have bothered to take my shirt off."

One of the long-time career employes of WDAE was a commercial representative for the station, Harry Lee Weedon. This personable gentleman was a cousin of the manager, Spencer Mitchell, and he went to work for WDAE in 1934, a few years after Mitchell had taken over operation. For 34 years, until 1968, Harry Lee Weedon pounded the streets of Tampa, selling time on WDAE.

Weedon, now retired, comes from a truly pioneer Florida family. His great-grandfather, Dr. Frederick Weedon, was a surgeon for the U. S. Army and attended Osceola, the famous Seminole Indian leader, in his fatal illness at Fort Moultrie, S. C., in the 1830s.

Harry's father, Dr. Leslie W. Weedon, served as city physician of Tampa during the yellow fever epidemic in 1887. Largely because of the rigid quarantine regulations Dr. Weedon put into effect, Tampa escaped without having one case of the disease the following year, in 1888, when Jacksonville and many other cities were stricken. Dr. and Mrs. Weedon owned a large tract of land on Pinellas Peninsula just south of the western end of Gandy Bridge. Included in it was a large island on which there were giant Indian mounds, which were excavated by Smithsonian Institution in 1923-24. The island is known as Weedon's Island.

One of the interesting characters connected with WDAE for nearly three decades was Mark Swingley, now retired and living in Tampa. This gruff-appearing man with a big heart and warm personality underneath, met Roger Lum when he worked on WGST in Atlanta. Swingley decided to come to Tampa, and upon Lum's urging, went to WDAE to see about a job.

"I didn't look good to Spencer (Mitchell)," Swingley said years later, "and he threw me out of the office."

That same day, the jobless announcer ran into Bob Bentley, general manager of The Tampa Daily Times at the time. He was an old friend of Swingley's and suggested Mark go see Spencer. He related his experience earlier in the day. Bentley reportedly then told Mitchell to hire Swingley, anyway.

"That didn't set well with Spence," Swingley laughs now, and it took nearly a couple years before the announcer gained the confidence and friendship of Mitchell. After that they became fast friends. "By the time I left WDAE," Swingley said, "he was as good a friend as I ever had."

Swingley was a newscaster, and he admired good newscasters. He mentioned seeing H. V. Kaltenborn, the noted CBS commentator, at work in WDAE studios one time: "THERE was a broadcaster (Kaltenborn)," says Swingley. "He would sit down before the mike with a piece of paper about the size of four postage stamps with some hieroglyphics and deliver a 15-minute commentary!"

An insight into Swingley comes from an anecdote and a human interest story by a later day WDAE sportscaster, Vince Meloy, now a Tampa City Councilman:

"Mark Swingley. He's one of the great characters of all time. . . Copy for a newscast would come off the machine, and a five minute newscast would be maybe 24 inches long, but it would be three times that long for a 15 minute newscast.

"Mark Swingley had a great voice. Mark was just an independent character. Most of us would cut the script up so it was in short sheets. Mark, he went to the old school, he'd let it hang on the floor and he would just go through it like it comes off the machine.

"I remember we set fire to his news once. Well, normally what you do, you try to put out the fire and you start to read slower so it takes you longer to cover what's left. But with Mark, the fire got a little out of hand and Mark started talking faster and faster and faster and faster. Well, that one was funny, and then another time, though, we did the same thing and Mark just—this was the 7:00 news which was the big one, prime time—and Mark just says, 'All right, cut the horsing around now.' And there comes the telephone lighting up and we knew Mr. (Spencer) Mitchell and Mr. (David E.) Smiley were calling up and all these were wondering who was horsing around."

Councilman Meloy talked more about Swingley: "Mark is one of the really great characters that I have ever known and has a photographic memory. I remember with the ministers. We used to have them on on Saturday afternoon and Mark would always be the one who put them on the air and took them off. They were really crazy about him because Mark had a photographic mind and he knew the Bible, he could quote from it. Where he used to really rattle them, though, he would get some of the young ministers who would come in—the old ones were crazy about him—but some of the young ones, he would shake them up a little bit because he

would get in a debate with them afterwards.

"He'd say, 'How could you say what you said? The Bible doesn't say—it says so and so.' And he'd get in these debates with them. I remember one day one got so shook up, he ran out of the studio. He said 'I'll never come back where that heathen is.' Of course, Mark was no heathen, but Mark, anything he ever got into he knew it."

And then Meloy told this heartwarming story about Mark Swingley:

"One time there was this girl who worked at the station. She was divorced and she had a little girl about six years old. Mark always liked to be gruff and acted like he had no emotions whatsoever. But it happened that Mark heard one girl say to this one who was divorced said—the next day was Mother's Day—and said something about Mother's Day and the divorcee said, 'Well, my little girl probably won't send—she'll probably bring a card but since her father's not here and all.' So when Mother's Day came that Sunday, there came a big bouquet of flowers and they had the little girl's name on them. They checked back with the florist and found out that Mark sent them."

Through the years, WDAE had some most accomplished music directors. There were August Ingley, who later became director of the University of Tampa Band, and Frank Grasso, who gave the world Frances Langford, and Maximo Echegaray, who also had an orchestra at the Tampa Terrace.

A long-time musical director for the station was talented Ed Walker. He never set out to be a musician; in fact his parents faced the customary opposition of an eight-year-old who rebels against lengthy piano practice sessions. But the lessons continued.

Before long Ed's fingers began to drift from the despised scales and exercises into the secret melodies he heard in the singing surf and sobbing winds of Atlantic City, N. J. The keyboard offered him an entrance into the delightful world of Chopin, Debussy, Schubert and into the great heart of Beethoven who composed melodies his ear never heard. He went to college, playing in a dance band along the way, and then studied at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. He played with a band after graduation, and did some work on the networks in New York.

He wanted to come to Florida, and did—to Sarasota. Finally, he came to Tampa and for years was the splendid musical director of WDAE.

Not just a "personality," not just an announcer, not just the dean of sportscasters in Florida, but really and truly an institution in broadcasting in Florida is "Salty Sol" Fleischman, who, this year, is celebrating his 44th year on the air. It all started on WDAE back there in 1928.

Sol had been curious about radio and interested in it as a youngster, watching Don Thompson build one of the first transmitters, watching Mardi Lyles spin records in the early 1920s, as a musician



in the Serenaders band and on other units. It was through his musical efforts, he's a drummer, Sol got his break that put him on the air as an announcer. He was playing in a little band that included Harvey Barritt, whose father's firm, Poinsettia Dairy, sponsored the program involved. WDAE was broadcasting ticker-tape play-by-play of the Florida football games, and the band Sol was in played interludes such as "Betty Coed" and "Washington & Lee Swing" during the broadcasts.

During one of these broadcasts one day, the usual announcer was taken suddenly ill. Charlie Baskerville, station manager, looked around and asked if anybody in the band knew anything about football. Sol didn't say anything, but Harvey Barritt nudged him and said, "Go on. You know. You're a cheerleader." (Sol had been the first cheerleader at Plant High School and one at Hillsborough before that).

"So, I sat down there that day and never got up," is the way Sol tells it now. "I'm still sitting here." He stayed on WDAE until 1957 when he moved over to Television Station WTVT.

Telling about those early football broadcasts, Fleischman explained: "They used to send WDAE messages over Postal Telegraph. Florida played at Gainesville and they would hire the sports editor of The Florida Times-Union, I think Sam Butz, or somebody like that, and he would sit there while he was writing his story and he would say to the Postal Telegraph operator, he'd say, 'Hampton Dunn goes two yards over left tackle.' That's all he'd say, and then the guy would send it.

"Well, I was one of those guys with a great imagination, and I still have, I guess, and we'd make it up and that's the way we re-created it. Today, it's against the law. So that's the way we broadcast the game."

And so it was, one of the most colorful careers in all of broadcasting began. Sol has done everything in the way of sportscasting. Among his broadcasting "firsts" are the Florida broadcast of a CBS radio program; the first broadcast of a major league baseball game in Florida; the first play-by-play broadcast of an entire season of the Florida International League; the first broadcast of Tampa's famed Gasparilla parade, invasion and ball; and the first broadcasts of the Dixie International Tennis Championship, the Dixie Speedboat Regatta, state bowling and basketball championships, the University of Tampa sports schedule and Hillsborough and Pinellas high school games. In addition, he became an outdoorswriter of note as fishing editor of The Tampa Daily Times. There's just no special event in the Tampa area in the last four decades that Sol Fleischman hasn't vividly described for his big following.

Broadcasting is the very life and breath of Sol Fleischman. Small wonder then, he told a news reporter on his 40th anniversary of being on the air: "I won't retire anytime soon. I can't retire because I know that if I ever really left the air, I'd die."

Truly a dedicated broadcaster and ambassador for the industry—Sol Fleischman.

“Howdy, Folks!” was the salutation used every day for more than ten years by genial W. W. (Wes) Talbott in giving weather commentaries and forecasts over WDAE. He was the chief U. S. Meteorologist at the Tampa Weather Bureau before his retirement. After his retirement, he continued on the air on WDAE, as staff meteorologist, the first on radio in the area.

“Wes” started his broadcasts on WDAE on his wedding anniversary, June 23, in 1939. He was silenced during some of the war years because of the Government blackout on weather information.

When he resumed his daily chats with his listeners, in November, 1943, after 21 months of silence, Talbott explained that the blackout had really been hard on him “because there is nothing worse for a weatherman than not being able to talk about the weather.”

While still an infant, William Wesley Talbott was taken from his Illinois birthplace to a farm near Holden, Missouri. As a child he heard daily weather signals blared by the whistle at a nearby flour mill and he realized the influence this had upon residents of the community. In school, he learned the three R’s under a school teacher who had a passion for assigning themes about the climate and weather.

Talbott mixed his weathercasting with his broadcasting when radio was in its infancy. In 1922, as official in charge of the Springfield, Mo., Weather Bureau, “Wes” Talbott pioneered a series of weekly weather broadcasts that won favorable comment from a loyal but then much-limited radio audience.

As a newcomer to Florida in 1934, Talbott heartily advocated an intensive fruit-frost service patterned after the California system. The costly freeze that year gave him the support of the citrus industry and the following July the frost warning service was organized.

Talbott was a real “pro” at forecasting, and he was the most skilled forecaster of hurricanes in the business. Residents of Central Florida hung on to his every word during an emergency. They could depend on him for the accurate information.

One day in 1947 a ferocious hurricane roared toward Tampa Bay. Talbott was on duty, on the air, hours at the time. That hurricane did an unusual thing: After leaving the Sarasota area, it zoomed up to the mouth of Tampa Bay and there it stalled.

Others in town just knew the hurricane was going to wipe the city off the map. They were telling the people of Davis Island to evacuate. Talbott kept his cool, calmly reassured WDAE listeners: “The hurricane is not going to inundate Davis Island. Stay on the Island. Don’t be afraid.” The crazy and erratic storm faded away—and Talbott was right again.

In 1948, Radio Mirror carried a full page feature on Talbott and quoted him as saying: “My long suit is serving the public. I rarely address a scientific audience but I’ve made scores of speeches, hun-

dreds of broadcasts and written thousands of daily weather stories. The Tampa Daily Times and WDAE have been most cooperative in carrying forecasts from my office mike."

A new crop of WDAE stars blossomed after World War II, personalities who added much to the freshness and carefree days of peacetime.

Van Wilson was born in the same little Citrus County village that gave the world Frances Langford—Hernando—on beautiful Lake Tsala Apopka. His approach to life was often influenced by the philosophy of his wise father.

It was "Pa" who told Van Wilson: "If you can be cheerful until 10 o'clock in the morning, the day takes care of itself." And so talented Van Wilson conducted the happy "Greeting Time" morning show on WDAE for a number of years, interspersing his lively chatter with vocal flings to his own accompaniment on the organ and piano.

Actually, Van joined the staff of WDAE prior to the war, in 1941, and was on the staff for four years. Then he took off for two years, traveling the country as a member of the musical quartet, The Four-some, then returning to WDAE in 1947.

Van is a natural-born musician, he can play most any instrument. At the age of 10, he was the harmonica champion of Lakeland, where his family had moved.

Glamour and versatility were added to the "Greeting Time" show with the addition of pretty Miss Betty Skelton, "Sweetheart of the Skies." Betty at the time was at the peak of her aerobatic career and was International Woman's Aerobatic Champion.

Betty brought variety and a new dimension to Van's show. She was firmly convinced that the interests of the average young woman go far beyond the realm of homemaking. And so it was she brought as evidence guests with an interesting story to tell, bringing out amusing facts and stories dealing with occupations of women.

The team of Van and Betty was popular for a long period. Miss Skelton, now married, is an advertising agency executive in Detroit.

Along the way, Sol Fleischman discovered and developed outstanding young sportscasters. One of them was a young fellow named Vince Meloy, nicknamed "Cowboy," who learned broadcasting the hard way—a sink or swim proposition, if you will.

Meloy, now a City Councilman in Tampa, tells how he applied in 1948 for a job in broadcasting to manager Spencer Mitchell:

"'Well,' he said, 'you go over to Plant Field,' the Spring training was on then, and he gave me a pass to get in. He said, 'I'll tell Sol Fleischman you'll be there and you meet Sol and let's see what Sol thinks about you and you can do a little bit of work.'

"So, at the old press box at Plant Field, I walked in and introduced myself to Sol just before the game. And here was really a big league game because it was Spring training, the Cincinnati Reds playing the Boston Red Sox, and there were some great players out

there . . . Ted Williams and people like that, really sports heroes for some young fellow like myself who liked sports.

"Sol talked to me a little bit and then I sat there. The broadcast started. Sol was doing a play-by-play, and about the third inning when it finished, Sol announced: 'And now, here to do the next three innings, play-by-play, is Vince Meloy!' Well, I had never done a play-by-play in my life and here I was and the first man to come up to bat was my hero, Ted Williams, who proceeded to sock a home run—the first play I called. Well, it scared me to death, but somehow I fumbled my way through that. I learned never to be shocked again by Sol or anyone else."

Meloy remembered how he outfoxed Sol a few weeks after that. The old Dixie Tennis Tournament was coming up, and Vince figured Sol would throw the mike to him again on that big event.

"And I didn't know much about tennis, the terms and everything," Meloy added. "But there was something on radio the week before and I listened very carefully to one of the network broadcasts, the terms they used, you know, the vollying back and forth, the forehand, the backhand and all this business. I knew how to score it, but that was about all. But I listened and practiced. And I used to go out to the first few early games there at the Dixie and just quietly broadcast just in my head . . ."

"We got up there, ready to start the tournament and it was Gardnar Malloy on the court, and Bitsy Grant, you know, and that was big time, too, that was just like Ted Williams all over again. But Sol did the opening and all of a sudden he said, 'Now to do play-by-play is Vince Meloy.' Well this time I said, 'Thank you,' and started and I never looked at him again. I just started to describe this thing as I had heard it on the network and did an adequate job, I would say. But Sol never surprised me after that.

"Sol, of course, is one of the greatest friends I've ever had. He taught me everything I know about public speaking, in broadcasting and, politically, if it hadn't been for Sol teaching me about people and how to handle yourself, I don't think I would ever made it in politics, either."

Meloy became a very excellent sportscaster and was with the station for many years, before getting into television, and later into politics.

Fleischman started training another sports announcer the same day he did Meloy. The other aspirant was Guy Bagli, who had been a third baseman and outfielder for the old Tampa Smokers of the Class B Florida International League. Guy was injured and got out of baseball, and Sol hired him for WDAE. Bagli spent some 25 years on the air.

"He had a real talent for the ad lib," Fleischman said of Bagli, "of never letting it die there on the air."

When the old WSUN-TV went on the air in April, 1953, Bagli joined the original staff and became the first television sportscaster

in the area. He excelled in many things; he kept up his studies until he graduated from the University of Tampa, he was a flyer during World War II and rose to the rank of Colonel in the Air Force Reserve. He later worked on WTVT and WFLA-TV. In his last years, he was in private business. In 1971, Bagli died. Police said he took his own life.

There was a young announcer who early in his career, was a familiar voice on WDAE who since has gone far in the highly competitive field of newscasting on television. This chap's name is Wayne Fariss, who has a flawless delivery. He left WDAE to serve in the Army, later went to work for WTVT television in Tampa, then in 1958 moved to Miami where he developed a tremendous following as the top newsman on WCKT-TV, Channel 7. After 11 years there, he slipped up to Chicago for a couple years where he was on WBBM-TV, and then returned to Miami, back to his old position on WCKT and still with a large following.

In the post-war days at WDAE, other stars developed. One who was popular with the younger set was Damon Eckles, who had a Junior Disc Jockey Club show. They called him "Dreamin' Demon." He came from Mason City, Iowa, where he had started on KGLO and then was called into the service. He trained at Tampa's Drew Field and married a Tampa girl. He did very well on WDAE, but during the Korean conflict was called back to active duty and was a top person in the Armed Forces Radio Network.

One of the personalities on WDAE in the 1950s was a philosophical fellow named Roger Bennett, idol of the housewives he chatted with twice a day, every day. The late Bennett classified himself as a "casual conversationalist," and that he was. His was an inspirational presentation which caused his listeners to do some serious thinking and soul-searching.

Before he joined WDAE in June, 1950, he was on the air in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and pulled more than 55,000 cards and letters within four months. He came to Tampa from the Columbia network where he was the popular director of Columbia's Housewives Protective League.

He broke into this radio work in Chicago, where he was an understudy of Galen Drake, who was going over big doing similar work in New York. Later, when ill health forced Drake to take a four-months leave of absence, Bennett went to New York to take over directorship of the HPL for Columbia's key station.

Another star on WDAE about this time was a sharp young lady, Priscilla Parker, who conducted a women's interest show most successfully.

A couple of the better-known disc jockeys of this period were Chaz Roye and Pat Chamburs.

Yes, through the years, WDAE has been blessed with talent, men and women dedicated to performing at top standards, and WDAE fans have always responded with their loyalty and admiration.





## THE 1950's; A FIGHT FOR TELEVISION

AS the decade sometimes called "the Fabulous Fifties" arrived, Kenneth W. Skelton, program director of WDAE, went before the luncheon meeting of the Tampa Advertising Club and gave what amounted to a state-of-radio, at the local and national level, message.

He reported that the radio business was putting words and music into more than 94 percent of American homes. In Hillsborough County alone, he said, 89 percent of the resident families have radios.

"These figures speak for themselves," Skelton told the Ad Clubbers, "when you think of the number of people necessary to keep entertaining and educational programs going over the air to those radios some 18 hours a day."

The speaker pointed out exactly why more people are listening to more radios is an unanswerable question, but "it is a fact that there are 80 million radios in the country and only 92 million beds."

"It is estimated that the average family spends approximately 33 percent of its time each day listening to portable radios, car radios or home radios," he continued.

Skelton said that the people behind the hours of programs and advertising were striving to put across a business that must serve both the masses and at the same time serve the specialized needs of minority groups.

The Ad Club speaker pointed a finger at the listening public, whose "greatest shortcoming" was the lack of discriminating and intelligent criticism.

"A radio listener will condemn the whole business because of a few programs or commercials they dislike, but those same people would not criticize the entire field of journalism if they did not care for the material that one particular magazine or newspaper published," Skelton observed.

About that same time in early 1950, others on the staff were trying to determine what the fans liked or disliked.

As conductor of WDAE's popular "Top Five" disc jockey stakes then running a full hour five days a week, Damon Eckles admitted to a reporter that he was at a loss to explain just what makes a tune click.

Taste fluctuates to such a degree that often the most sentimental ballads rub elbows with crazy novelties, he said. Thus far, Eckles reported, only one classic number had made the grade, "Be My Love," sung by Mario Lanza.

Selection of the Top Five tunes was made on the basis of sales reported daily by 18 local music stores in Tampa and St. Petersburg. The disc jockey noted that taste in music was very much the same in both cities although novelty numbers catch on sooner and last longer in Tampa.

At the time of the interview, the current leader, "Tennessee Waltz," held the record. The dreamy, folk-type melody had been on top for 50 consecutive programs. Its closest rival, "Good Night, Irene," was only good for 18 "firsts" in a row.

As the decade began a bitter confrontation between the two partners who owned The Tampa Times Company, which operated WDAE, was approaching. There had been an undercurrent about the ill-feeling between David E. Smiley and Ralph Nicholson for years, and it was about to come to a head.

The dissension apparently began in 1941 when Nicholson bought the New Orleans Item by himself and did not cut in his partner, Smiley, in on the opportunity. It's understood that Smiley labored under the impression that when he and Nicholson came to Tampa in 1933 to take over The Times and WDAE that they would be partners in any other business ventures that may be opened to them.

Nicholson denied both in his autobiography, "A Long Way From Greens Fork," and in a long interview I had with him at his plantation at Tallahassee in October, 1970, that he had any such agreement with Smiley.

Discussing the New Orleans purchase, Nicholson told me: "I told him (Smiley) that I had acquired The New Orleans Item at the request of the paper company which owned it . . . But later, not much later, Dave Smiley told friends of mine and his that at the time that we acquired The Tampa Times, we signed a pact, the two of us, Smiley and Nicholson, that any place one went the other had a right to follow and participate in the new acquisition. I never said anything like that. . ."

"When I had the meeting with the headquarters people in New York and after the one there they continued the negotiations, I asked them in this meeting, 'I suppose you're making this offer to Dave Smiley and me.' He said, 'We are not. We are making it to you and you exclusively.' I didn't say anything more of consequence, and put the question twice more. That irked them a little and I stopped asking. . ."

That was when the falling out began, Nicholson reported. In July of that year, 1941, Nicholson presented his resignation as general manager, treasurer and secretary of Tampa Times Co. at a meeting of the board of directors. Smiley was authorized to assume full executive charge of the company's affairs as editor and publisher, as well



as president of the corporation. Smiley's sons, David E. Jr. and Joseph F., who were employes of the company, were elected treasurer and secretary respectively. E. W. Sisson was appointed business manager.

The announcement story in *The Times* added: "In presenting his resignation, Mr. Nicholson stated that in view of the fact he had purchased the *New Orleans Item* and become its publisher on June 27 last, he felt impelled to resign from active management of Tampa Times Co. in order that he might devote full time to his new position in New Orleans."

So, from then on Smiley had full charge of *The Times* and WDAE. In his book, Nicholson reported that he went to *The Times* early in 1951 and "I told Dave (Smiley) I was ready to start participating in the management of the paper and the radio station. He said 'you left here voluntarily and now, damn you, stay out.' We had a bitter confrontation at the next annual meeting with several lawyers present. The breach widened. Each tried to buy the other's stock without success until I woke up one morning realizing that I wanted nothing more to do with my former friend and on June 21, 1951, agreed to sell for \$825,000 cash. The Federal Communications Commission approved the transaction on September 14, 1951."

So it was Smiley became the sole owner of *The Times* and WDAE.

No sooner had Smiley finished the row with Nicholson than he was in the thick of another fight—the contest for a television channel.

Back in the late 1940s, WDAE in its consistent effort to be first in all broadcasting activity, had made application for Channel 13. It had no competition at the time for the spot on the screen.

But, unfortunately, before the FCC could act on WDAE's application, it slapped a "freeze" on all pending applications while the regulatory body attempted to sort out the maze of requests it had received.

Originally there were but 12 channels. By July 1948, the FCC had issued more than 100 licenses and had on file 300 applications for additional licenses. Since stations operating on the same channel had to be separated by at least 150 miles to avoid interfering with each other, the 12 channels proved wholly inadequate to meet the demand for additional stations, particularly along the Atlantic seaboard and in the Great Lakes area. The FCC looked for space at either spectrum for additional channels. The only space left was in the ultra-high-frequency band. At a hearing in September, 1948, the FCC was advised that equipment for the new region would not be ready for possibly three years. In October, the agency ordered the "freeze," leaving WDAE's application pending. It was not until 1953 that the FCC got around to acting on the Tampa case again, and by now there were other applicants for Channel 13.

The WDAE and *The Times* staffs spent much time and energy putting together a fine presentation to the FCC examiner. It was so convincing that the examiner, after hearing all the witnesses, seeing all the parties seeking the channel and viewing first-hand the Tampa

situation, delivered, in December, 1953, a strong recommendation to the whole Commission to award the license for Channel 13 to WDAE!

An objective account of the examiner's ruling appeared in the trade journal of the newspaper industry, *Editor & Publisher*, in its Dec. 5, 1953, issue. The headline on the story was: "SMILEY RECORD PRAISED; VICTOR IN TV HEARING."

Dated Washington, the story read:

"Grant of the application of the Tampa Times Co. for TV channel 13 in Tampa over those of the Orange TV Broadcasting Co. and Tampa TV Co., has been recommended by an FCC examiner. His hearing report commented on the three applicants as follows:

" 'The past record of the *The Tampa Times*, and in particular, the record of this company since 1933 when David E. Smiley, Sr. acquired an ownership interest in the company and in station WDAE, gives the commission every reason to believe that the Tampa Times, under the present ownership and management, will construct and operate the station proposed by it in the manner shown in the application and at the hearing.

" 'Orange, a newly formed corporation, has no record of past performance with the commission but we are convinced that it cannot construct and operate a television station in the Tampa-St. Petersburg area in the manner proposed in its application and at the hearing.

" 'Tampa TV, a newly-formed corporation, does not have a past history with the commission but W. Walter Tison, its vice president, largest single stockholder, proposed general manager and the man on whose property Tampa TV proposes to build its offices and studios, does.

" 'As shown in our basic findings, the manner in which Mr. Tison has operated station WALT, owned by him, which obviously reflects Mr. Tison's understanding of his duties and responsibilities to this commission and to a substantial number of the persons living in the area to be served by the proposed television station, is directly at variance with many of the policies which we are told would govern the operation of the television station of which he is to be general manager. . .

" 'Station WALT has broadcast smutty songs, tipster and other gambling information, the barest minimum of local public service programs, controversial programs of a person who doesn't seem to be for anything much, without responses thereto, who has engaged in double and triple spotting, has broadcast spot announcements each minute on the minute for as long as 12 consecutive minutes.'

" 'At the hearing Mr. Tison did not know how his station had been operated during the preceding several years, 'except that it had made money from the start,' the examiner added."

The next issue of *Editor & Publisher*, the newspaper trade journal, had a longer story detailing the financial situation of The Times and

WDAE under a headline which read: "RADIO STATION INCOME EQUAL TO DAILY'S IN '51"

The story stated:

"A five-kilowatt radio station which takes in approximately \$370,000 a year makes almost as much profit (before taxes) as a 50,000-circulation newspaper which grosses \$1,200,000.

"The Federal Communications Commission has before it, in a report by a hearing examiner which favors the granting of a television license to Tampa Times Company, a chart which sets forth that the *Times*, an evening daily, earned \$71,000 in 1951 while its companion radio property earned \$69,000. Both figures are before taxes. The total income, after taxes, was \$81,000.

"But it wasn't always that way. In 1947, the newspaper income was \$205,000 while that of the radio station was \$85,000, and the combined net (after taxes) was \$179,000.

"The successful operation of the Tampa Times and its affiliated radio station by David E. Smiley, Sr., since 1933, figures importantly in the examiner's recommendation for TV license, as against two competing applicants. (E&P, Dec. 5, page 62).

"Mr. Smiley and Ralph Nicholson purchased the properties in 1933. The latter moved to New Orleans in 1941 and Mr. Smiley was in charge of the day-to-day operation in Tampa. In 1951, the corporation purchased Mr. Nicholson's half-interest for \$825,000. Now Mr. Smiley, Sr., votes 88 per cent of the stock and members of his family have the rest.

"In 1933, according to the testimony reviewed by the FCC, the gross revenue of WDAE was \$25,000. This increased to \$100,000 by 1937, \$300,000 in 1945 and \$370,000 per year as of the hearing in October, 1952.

The *Times*, with a circulation of 22,000, had \$350,000 revenue in 1933. Now, with 51,000, the annual revenue exceeds \$1,200,000.

"The Tampa Times Company, as of Nov. 30, 1952, has total assets of \$1,760,498; total liabilities, exclusive of capital and surplus, of \$858,639. Assets included \$500,000 value on the circulation and Associated Press membership and \$350,000 for goodwill of the radio station.

"Machinery was carried at \$38,189, the book cost less depreciation of the printing equipment which includes a six-unit, 96-page press worth more than \$425,000, and 16 linecasting machines, each with replacement value of \$15,000.

"When Mr. Nicholson's stock was bought the company drew \$125,000 from current assets and issued 5 per cent bonds for \$700,000 to the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company. The bonds are paid off in annual installments of \$35,000.

"Included in the current assets were cash of \$229,074 and accounts receivable of \$148,259 after a reserve for bad debts.

"The newspaper income (before tax) was \$205,000 in 1947,

\$81,000 in 1948, \$123,000 in 1949, \$116,000 in 1950 and \$71,000 in 1951.

"The radio income (before tax) was \$85,000 in 1947, \$57,000 in 1948, \$55,000 in 1949, \$89,000 in 1950 and \$69,000 in 1951.

"Together (after tax) the income was \$179,000 in 1947, \$86,000 in 1948, \$111,000 in 1949, \$121,000 in 1950 and \$81,000 in 1951.

"The net newspaper revenue for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1952, after deduction for depreciation but before deductions for interest and income taxes, was \$92,608.98, or at the rate of \$126.42 per thousand persons who reside within the trade area of the newspaper. The net radio revenue for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1952, after deductions for depreciation but before payment of interest and taxes, was \$75,099.18. Thus, the total net of the Tampa Times Company after depreciation but before interest payments and income tax was \$167,702.16.

"The Times said it expects to pay the costs of construction and operation of the proposed station out of cash and accrued profits. The major item of the total construction costs is the \$395,529 to be paid to General Electric for the transmitter and associated electrical equipment.

"Assuming first year operating revenue of \$424,000, first year operating expenses of \$423,393, the proposed television operation will "break even" during the first year of operation. The Times anticipates that its second and third year operations will show a net profit.

"The Tampa Times does not expect to borrow any funds for the construction and initial operation of the proposed television station. To put at rest any question as to its ability to obtain funds, the Times presented as a witness the president of the Marine Bank and Trust Company of Tampa, Florida, a financial institution having a total reserve of approximately \$18,000,000, who testified that the Board of Directors of the Bank had given Mr. Smiley a commitment in general terms that they would loan the Times \$140,000 on open basis or \$350,000 on a secured basis."

The FCC handed down its decision in the Channel 13 case on Sept. 3, 1954, preferring Tampa TV over The Times-WDAE and Orange Broadcasting. (Tison had been joined in the application by a group of prominent persons including former Gov. Doyle E. Carlton).

One issue that appeared to prevail as far as The Times-WDAE was concerned was the factor of diversification of the media of mass communication. In fact, a statement in the Commission order stating why "Tampa TV is . . . to be preferred over Tampa Times" had the comment: "More significant in the circumstances of this case is the fact that a grant to Tampa TV would serve the Commission's well-established policy of diversification of the media of mass communication." And so, the FCC overruled its examiner, and The Times lost out in its bid for a television license.

Tampa TV put Channel 13 on the air, and after operating it for awhile, sold it to the present owners.

First TV station on the air in the Tampa-St. Petersburg area was an ultra-high-frequency station, WSUN-TV, Channel 38, which began broadcasting on May 31, 1953, and which succumbed on Feb. 23, 1970.

Despite the advent of television in the Tampa Bay area, radio continued strong throughout the 1950s, just as it has remained popular since that time.

In 1952, radio was the vehicle that almost elected a man Governor of Florida. An obscure state legislator from Sanford, his name was Brailey Odham, was running against a well-known politician who was the runnerup in the 1948 gubernatorial race, Dan McCarty. Odham lacked funds for a statewide race and had very little hope getting them from usual sources. So he came up with a gimmick that almost catapulted him into the Governor's chair.

Odham developed the idea of a radio talkathon. It had been used successfully in Arkansas just prior to that and the same producer brought the plan to Florida and sold it to Odham. The way it worked, Odham started in Miami, buying up as much time on all the radio stations as he could for a 24-hour period. He invited listeners to call in their questions about the candidates, about state government, about what Odham ate for breakfast, about most anything. The youthful candidate was rather glib and a real showman. The Talkathon became an overnight sensation. In his broadcasts, Odham solicited financial aid in small bits—"Dollars for Decency," he called them—and he would raise enough in one town to finance the radio time in the next city. Through use of the electronic medium, Odham was able to set the grass roots afire and become a household word. He nosed out Alto Adams, former Supreme Court Justice, to get into the runoff with McCarty, and pulled to within 50,000 votes of the popular McCarty.

In the elections of 1952 and 1954, The Times-WDAE set new records for election reporting as it fed lightning-fast returns to the public. In the Eisenhower victory in '52, the station cleaned up Hillsborough County in 34 minutes, capturing national attention for such speedy work. In the hot Democratic primary for Governor in 1954, the station beat its own record by completing the count in all 88 precincts in just 26 minutes. LeRoy Collins defeated Charley Johns in that contest. Noland Norgaard, Chief of Bureau of the Associated Press for Florida, had high praise for The Times-WDAE for its quick coverage, and sent a letter saying: "My compliments for your extraordinarily fast cleanup of the Hillsborough County returns. It is easily the most efficient job of its kind I have ever seen."

One day late in May, 1958, there appeared on the front page of The Tampa Daily Times the following:

## ANNOUNCEMENT

Under an agreement just concluded, The Tampa Daily Times evening newspaper will be sold to the Tampa Tribune Company effective at the close of business next Saturday, May 31, 1958. The sale includes the goodwill, circulation lists, machinery and equipment, rolling stock, furniture and fixtures and other assets connected with the production and distribution of The Times. After the above date, The Times will be published by the Tribune Company, beginning with the issue of next Monday. A lease covers temporary use of present newspaper quarters.

The sale does not involve transfer of title to Radio Stations WDAE and WDAE-FM or any part of the real estate properties owned and occupied by Tampa Times Company. The radio operations will continue under present ownership and management.

Tampa Times Company  
DAVID E. SMILEY  
President

And so, after nearly 70 years of independent operation, The Times was absorbed and consolidated with its morning competitor, The Tampa Tribune. Radio Station WDAE then became the operation of Smiley Properties, Inc.

Subsequently, WDAE studios were moved once again, from the main building of The Times offices at 114 N. Franklin St. to the new structure built at the time of the new F.M. tower in 1951. L. Spencer Mitchell continued as general manager.

In 1960, the newspaper field lost a real giant in journalism, and radio industry lost a real friend and wise leader: David E. Smiley died.

Following Smiley's death, his son, Joseph F. Smiley, took over presidency of Smiley Properties, Inc. and the operation of WDAE. Old veteran L. Spencer Mitchell continued on as general manager and the station carried on in its same format.

One new wrinkle was added during this period. Joe Smiley, who had written editorials for years on the old Tampa Daily Times, began airing daily editorials on WDAE, the first radio station in the area to carry editorials.



## "OUT THERE IN RADIOLAND"

IN the two and half years research that went into compiling this book, and in the 36 years the author has been associated with WDAE in one way or another, there has accumulated a wealth of notes, of odds and ends, of anecdotes and tid-bits, about the station and its personalities. These gleanings are part of the story, too, and should be included in the history. They're bits that should amuse and inform and entertain all of you "out there in radioland"—to use a phrase that was often over-used in the early days of radio.

Most of the items originated in coverage of the station by the old Tampa Daily Times, and the source is labeled, simply "Times." Other sources are identified appropriately, including some of the numerous interviews that were conducted in the preparation of this history.

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My father, the late Charles G. Mullen, Sr., then general manager of The Tampa Daily Times when he put Radio Station WDAE in operation in 1922, didn't have a working radio in his house until 1934!—Interview with Charles G. Mullen, Jr., Oct. 2, 1969.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

It was May 22, 1922, before the *Sanford Herald* carried the first picture of a radio. It was in a feature story telling how you could build a 'set.' The Herald reprinted a *Tampa Times* article that asked people of Seminole County owning radios to be sure and turn them on between 7 and 9 P.M. nightly, so they could report to Tampa how the weather and crop data came through!—From "Sanford as I Knew It" by Peter Schaal, published 1970.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Spurgeon Tillman owns the first radio set working in Lake Wales, installation having been completed by N. E. Jordan of Bartow Tuesday. That night the Tillman family heard the first program, a fine concert from the Havana broadcasting station. The machine is a Westinghouse with a selective wave length from 170 to 700 meters, making its receiving capacity practically unlimited. The static was heavy as it always is during the summer, but the music was heard very well.

Mr. Riddling is installing a set and Joe Briggs, L. H. Kramer, H. S. Norman and others are talking of putting them in.—The Lake Wales Highlander, June 14, 1922.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Harold Bachman, director of the "Million Dollar Band," received a letter from one of his boyhood friends from whom he had not heard for years, as the result of broadcasting over WDAE from the municipal auditorium on Sunday, January 16.

The correspondent was Harold Scott, owner of a sugar plantation, whose home is at Herradura, Cuba.

He writes in part: "Tonight while turning the dials of my radio set I ran into some good band music, and after listening a few minutes, heard the announcement that it was Bachman's Million Dollar Band playing at the bandshell in Plant Park, Tampa. The program was presented by the Board of Trade.

"It was certainly a pleasure and a surprise to hear your organization down here just as clearly as though it had been only a block away. Great improvement has evidently been made in the Tampa station."—Times, Jan. 24, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Bradenton will be the first city to broadcast over WDAE by remote control and the programs commence the beginning of a valuable type of service which WDAE has been designed to render cities of this section.—Times, Jan. 24, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The exhibition broadcasting studio placed in Wall Hall at the South Florida Fair by WDAE has proved one of the greatest attractions at the exposition, as evidenced by hundreds of visitors who crowd around the broadcasting demonstration each afternoon and evening.

The studio is enclosed in plate glass, thus permitting the uninterrupted progress of programs, witnessed by as many visitors as are able to crowd about the front.

Programs include many interesting stunts typical of the fair. Barkers, sideshow stunts, frequent reports of contests and the awarding of prizes, the daily program of the fair are all broadcast through WDAE which is credited with being an important factor in holding the attendance up as well as publicizing the event all over the United States . . . Already replies are on hand from many states in the union, where listeners had never heard of the South Florida Fair before.—Times, Feb. 8, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Sarasota first "went on the air" Monday night, Feb. 14, 1927, when a hook-up was made with Radio Station WDAE, in Tampa, from El Verona Hotel. John Ringling was the principal speaker; Jules Brazil, official announcer, and music was furnished by the Czecho-Slovakian Band. On the second broadcast, Feb. 21, which had to be postponed twice because of static, C. L. Knight, publisher of *The Akron Beacon-Journal*, spoke on the subject, "Sarasota as a Recreation Center."—From "The Story of Sarasota" by Karl H. Grismer, Published 1946.



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The station, owned by The Times, has been leased to the Central Florida Broadcasting Stations, Inc., which also operates WDBO at Winter Park. G. Emerson Markham, former announcer at WGY, Schenectady, N. Y., is general manager of the concern . . .

A tabulation of fan mail received by WDAE since Jan. 1, 1926, shows that 41 of the 48 states, and seven foreign countries, have heard the station.—Times, Oct. 19, 1926.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Ray Parmely, sports editor of The Times, will be heard over WDAE at 8:30 P.M. with a talk on local sports programs and events. Mr. Parmely has been scheduled several times previously, but is in such demand at various sporting events that he has been unable to keep the engagements before the microphone, which comes at an hour when most contests are just commencing. His many friends and readers will welcome him this evening, as hundreds of inquiries as to his previous absences indicated.—Times, Dec. 7, 1926.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

So many requests for special numbers were received by the Harmony Four, Negro quartet, at Station WDAE last night, when the Board of Trade presented its weekly program, that hereafter their part of the program will be made up from request numbers.

The Negro singers extended their time last night 50 minutes because so many selections were asked.—Times, Dec. 20, 1926.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Florida citrus industry will inaugurate a unique radio feature at 9 o'clock this evening over WDAE.

A "master grapefruit" will be cut before the microphone at the studio each evening, the seeds counted and the count will serve as the key to those who guess correctly how many seeds are in the grapefruit of the evening. To any successful contestant outside the state, a box of Florida's finest fruit will be delivered promptly. This feature will be on the air every evening! How many seeds in a grapefruit?—Times, Dec. 20, 1926.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Bridge fans assembled at tourists' headquarters of the Junior Board of Trade will listen to the radio bridge games and analyses which are broadcast each Tuesday at 7:30 P.M. over WDAE.

Mrs. C. A. Miles, director entertainment of the Board, has arranged tables at the tourists' rooms to accommodate all players who care to listen to the bridge instructions prepared by the great exponents of the game. A radio receiver will be installed there by the Tampa Bay Electric Company for the occasion and, as the plays are called off and analyzed at the radio studio, players assembled can follow them and hear the discussion of motives for each play.

This radio bridge instruction has many devotees and each week many requests are received for the "advance hands" and copies of instruction. Advance hands are advertised in all newspapers here.—Times, Dec. 27, 1926.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A first grade teacher of Gorrie School, who was just beginning instruction in spelling, asked: "How many want to learn to spell?"

A little boy spoke out, "I can spell already. I can spell Tampa."

"That is fine," said the teacher. "Spell it for us."

"W-D-A-E, Tampa," was the reply.

That's Tampa's radio call.—Times, Feb. 26, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Announcement was made by Dr. S. L. Lowry, City Commissioner, over WDAE, last night that citizens of Tampa are to be given an opportunity next Sunday afternoon between 3 and 5 o'clock to inspect the new hospital plant on Davis Islands, parts of which Dr. Lowry told the "invisible audience" are 98 per cent completed.—

A six-hour program was put on the air yesterday by WDAE, including the broadcast of two sermons by Billy Sunday, Bachman's Band concert, and the Board of Trade featured by the Harmony Four Quartet.

Listeners from various points in the country have written regarding the Billy Sunday broadcasts, which were conceded by Tampa listeners and also by Mr. Sunday's organization as being eminently successful.—Times, April 4, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WDAE will broadcast the Easter sunrise services to be held by Egypt Temple in Plant Park at dawn tomorrow. The service will go on the air for the first time in history. B. Marion Reed, past potentate of Egypt Temple, who is in charge of arrangements, stated that broadcasting had been considered several times in the past but decided against.—Times, April 16, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The feature of WDAE's broadcasting this evening will be the principal address at the "get together meeting" of the Rotary Conference. Paul Harris, president-emeritus of Rotary International and founder of Rotary, will be the guest of honor of the conference. His address will be broadcast from the Municipal Auditorium at about 9:15 this evening and Rotarians all over the country will be listening to him.—Times, April 8, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Local radio listeners will be enabled to use their receiving equipment for a total of four hours during daylight hours commencing Tuesday morning at 10 o'clock which will mark the beginning of a three-hour daily schedule sponsored by the Tampa Radio Dealers Association over WDAE. This schedule, with WMBR's one hour between 1 and 2 P.M., will total four hours.

This increased broadcasting schedule is the greatest forward step made in local radio for some time. . .

Users of radio sets are asked to assist the services by suggesting features and by criticizing the material constructively to the end of improving the service constantly.—Times, May 30, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The graduation exercises of a Tampa high school will be broadcast for the first time when WDAE puts the Hillsborough High School exercises on the air this evening at shortly after 8 o'clock, by direct wire from the Municipal Auditorium.

Members of the families of graduating students and many of their friends who may be unable to attend the commencement will hear all there is to hear at the auditorium by tuning in on WDAE this evening.—Times, June 1, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Response to the broadcasting of church services over WDAE yesterday was very great. Telephone calls were received at the station for over an hour after last evening's service, many from out of town. Although such service is not unique or new, churches have never been regularly broadcast in Tampa, and there is a definite demand from listeners. The Times station plans to broadcast services of various denominations if the cooperation of the churches can be procured.—Times, June 6, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

This morning at 10:45 o'clock a new service was inaugurated at WDAE in response to many requests from ladies among the listeners. Madame Himes, Tampa's longest established and best known "beautician," will give beauty hints several mornings a week over the air. Each day Madame Himes will present some interesting and instructive phase of her many subjects and also answer any questions which may be written or telephoned to her at WDAE. . .

Many letters from outlying cities indicate that WDAE's daylight range is remarkably effective, covering practically the entire state. Fort Pierce, Fort Myers, Orlando, Jacksonville, Kissimmee, Sebring, all contribute regularly to the mail. Listeners in those places state that the station comes in with excellent volume and pleasing quality, since the daylight hours seem to be entirely free of atmospheric disturbances.

The daylight broadcasting schedule, inaugurated here on May 20 by the Radio Dealers' Association, has successfully killed the Summer broadcasting jinx and demonstrated beyond doubt that service is virtually as reliable through the hot months as in the winter.—Times, June 8, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Several fishing parties who have been out in the Gulf recently for tarpon report their pleasure at being able to hear WDAE's programs while they are chasing the "silver king." Fishing for tarpon from the cockpit of a trim little cruiser, while seated in a wicker chair beneath an awning, with the latest music trickling in over a radio set! It's a picture of the life of the hardy fisherman, eh?—Times, June 20, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WDAE owes radio listeners an explanation for failure to broad-

cast church services, as advertised and announced for 8 o'clock Sunday evening. All props were set, equipment installed, and preparations made to put the evening worship from the First Presbyterian Church on the air. At 7:45 P.M., when the transmitter was to be turned on and tested, the transmitter felt inclined not to work. It was not a case of genuine disinclination, but of malnutrition. The main supply line into the transmitter seemed to work perfectly, i.e., it would turn on lights and also the filaments of the big transmitting tubes. But the current was insufficient to excite the rectifier system. It was discovered after a very puzzling few minutes that the supply line was delivering only 110 volts, instead of the necessary 220 volts. The trouble was found in an external terminal box at the main supply source and could not be fixed by anyone but the electrical contractor who had originally installed it. So much for the occasional "cussedness" of a radio transmitter.—Times, June 20, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Carl Swain, radio wizard of the Adams Jewelry Company, took "28" and a "104" to the Tampa Electric Company's picnic yesterday and used the equipment on the steamer and also at Pass-a-Grille, by way of augmenting other entertainment.—Times, June 23, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

For the first time in Florida a three-station broadcasting chain will go on the air at 12:10 P.M. Monday, when WDAE, The Times station, and WMBR, F. J. Reynolds, both in Tampa, link up with WFHH at Clearwater to broadcast the entertainment, broadcasting party and luncheon meeting of the South Florida Radio Dealers by direct wire from the Tampa Terrace Hotel.—Times, June 25, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WDAE went on the air for a short program last night so the listeners might be informed of the latest location of the Byrd plane. This program, at 8:30 o'clock, lasted for two hours because local and out of town listeners would not permit the station to stop broadcasting. In two hours, a few less than 200 telephone calls requesting special numbers were received at the station.—Times, July 1, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WDAE will not broadcast the regular daily schedule on July Fourth. The management has declared a holiday, believing that the Fourth will find many people away from their homes, touring, bathing and visiting. And also believing that they could use a holiday very comfortably themselves!—Times, July 2, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A new stunt in record programs will be presented by WDAE within a few days. The station management has discovered that no listeners resent hearing reproduced music from the studio any more, even though the studio phonograph made the early days of broadcasting hideous.

Many regular listeners to WDAE write that they did not know nor realize that they were hearing phonographic music until they

discovered that they were being told so quite plainly.

The consensus among listeners is that such programs are far superior to the work offered by well-intentioned but mediocre 'artists' and infinitely better than picked-up broadcasting."—Times, July 14, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The fight between Big Ben Pound and Dan Bright, of England, will be broadcast blow-by-blow from the Benjamin Field arena to-night over WDAE. . .

The bouts tonight will be reported to radio fight fans by Virgil M. "Red" Newton, sports editor of The Times, and by Roger Bruce Lum, "the same old voice" from WDAE. Newton's report will undoubtedly have the authority of accuracy and exactness. Lum's report will probably be less accurate and authoritative, but have the color of announcing practice and experience behind them.

Letters from listeners regarding reception will be welcomed by WDAE, since they will give the station an interesting cross section of opinion on the announcing of the fights. A prize fight is considered the most difficult assignment an announcer can have, since it requires—for ideal handling—a double-jointed tongue and an automatic brain.

Tonight will be Newton's first official appearance as the microphone chauffeur.—July 22, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Bill Moore of WDAE, who had important business to transact with Douglas Russell, manager of WMBL in Lakeland, was unable to reach Russell on the telephone Wednesday evening. He requested Lakeland listeners to inform Mr. Russell to call him on the telephone at his earliest convenience.

Yesterday he received a call from Russell who "cussed" him roundly for having kept him up until after midnight answering infomatory calls from Lakeland listeners. Russell reported that nearly a hundred people had been so kind as to inform him that he was wanted by Tampa—and they didn't care what time of night they called him.—Times, July 22, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The M. L. Price Music Company has arranged with WDAE for the broadcasting of request Victor programs on the next two alternate Monday evenings at 8 o'clock. Listeners may call on the telephone and hear any number they want during the programs from the complete Victor library of the music company. This broadcasting will be done direct from M. L. Price's at Zack and Tampa Streets. A demonstration will also be given during the program of the old and improved methods of broadcasting phonographic reproduction.—Times, July 22, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A letter received this morning from Armando Garrido of Camaguey, Cuba, states that many Cuban listeners heard the Sharkey-

Dempsey bout reports as they were translated into Spanish at WDAE, and urges that the station continue with auxiliary Spanish announcements. He states that the programs of WDAE are received there very consistently, but that unfamiliarity with the English language keeps thousands from enjoying them. Mr. Garrido states that WDAE had signed off before PWX was giving the fifth round of the fight.—July 28, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Times station went on the air yesterday afternoon between 3:45 P.M. and 5:00 P.M., unheralded, and at a time when radio listeners are supposed not to be listening. Response to the program was a great surprise. Over one telephone call per minute came into the radio station. The majority of calls usually come from women. On Sunday afternoon it is quite evident that the men of the family turn the dials since 90 per cent of the calls came from men. The station will explore the possibility of a regular program late Sunday afternoon.—Aug. 8, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Ear drums of 40,000 to 50,000 Tampans will be tuned in tonight on the biggest sporting event in modern history—the Dempsey-Tunney championship fight at Soldiers Field, Chicago.

Interest in the bout has reached the fever pitch attendant to a national election. And everyone who can buy borrow or build a radio is preparing to shut himself away from business and domestic cares with a set of ear phones or a loudspeaker and drink in the details of the encounter.

Through the hook-up of WDAE, Tampa broadcasting station, with the National Broadcasting Company's chain of 56 stations throughout the country, fight fans will be provided with the real atmosphere of the ring. The cry of the peanut hawker, the clang of the gong and the cheers of the throng—all save the smell of resin and canvas—will be transmitted direct from ringside to the home. . . .

The promise of clear reception for owners of the most unpretentious home-made crystal sets has done much to stir up enthusiasm in the program. Even those small cigar box affairs will be worth as much, or more, than a \$40 ringside seat—at least the owners will be able to hear what is going on. . . .

Radio dealers have felt the effect of the interest in the fight for several days. Demands for new sets and special service have been unprecedented, and new aerials have sprung up on housetops all over the city, like mushrooms after a rain.

Many special radio parties are being planned by business firms, fraternal and civic organizations and individuals. Probably the largest will be given by the Studebaker Gulf Sales Company, which has issued 1000 invitations to attend its program.

The Knights of Pythias have prepared for 500 to 800 persons at their party. Other parties are being planned by the Woodmen of the World, Odd Fellows, the Atlantic Coast Line band at the East Tampa

shops, the Civitan Club, Egypt Temple Shrine, the Thompson Electric Company and the Fisher Electric Company.

Hundreds of private parties will be given at which friends of the family will assemble. Audiences at these parties will range from three to 15 persons, and with more than 3600 radios listed in Tampa, it is thought that at least 25 percent of the population will become listeners-in during the fight.—Tampa Morning Tribune, Sept. 22, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The First Baptist Church is the first congregation in Tampa to make arrangements to broadcast its Sunday services and other activities. Arrangements have been made for the broadcasting over WDAE for one year.

The first broadcast will be tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock. Dr. C. W. Duke, who has been absent from the city for several weeks, will be heard in his first sermon after his vacation, and hundreds who are unable to attend will be able to hear the entire service over WDAE. . .

M. H. Mabry and Troy A. Brown, in charge of arrangements, stated that the congregation has approved the plan.

Broadcasting will alternate between the morning and evening services for 52 consecutive weeks.—Times, Sept. 17, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

A news service for the citrus industry has been inaugurated by station WDAE in the form of an early evening schedule of one-half hour devoted entirely to the interests of growers and their allied industries. This is the first service of its kind ever given by a radio station. . .

The manager of the service is experienced in the collection of citrus news. With the belief that there is no general statewide citrus news available to growers as a daily service, the broadcasters have gone into this plan as a matter of giving to the state's largest and most important agricultural industry a reliable daily source of up-to-the-minute information which will disseminate news while it is still "news."—Times, Oct. 15, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

There goes that announcer again.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience," he is saying, "Station WDAE will now transfer you to the Davis Islands Country Club, where a dinner dance is in progress . . . dancing out of doors, practically, with the roof rolled back, and nothing but the stars overhead, and the languors of the tropic night rolling in from the sea and countryside."

Dancing out of doors, did he say? With the temperature up to 78, did he say?

And up there in the Middle West there is nothing but frostbitten ears for the hardy, even foolhardy, who ventures out for a few minutes.

Dancing in the open air? Dinner and dancing? In midwinter?  
Advertising Tampa?

There's nothing like it.

And that is what WDAE is doing.—Times, Dec. 24, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Christmas cheer for all of South Florida will peal forth early on Christmas morning from WDAE.

With an eye to furnishing early morning entertainment to new owners of radio sets, whose patience would not survive a day of waiting for the night radio program, The Times station will go on the air at 9 o'clock in the morning, and from then on through the day it will be nip and tuck between rest and recreation for the radio entertainers.

A number of Tampa merchants are sponsoring the radio programs tomorrow—They are using this method of wishing their friends and customers "a merry Christmas."

(Christmas chimes and carols until 2 P.M., then professional talent "takes up the burden of song and entertainment. This program has no set hour of termination. It won't last less than two or three hours.")

"The Times station had planned to take a day of rest on Christmas," said Roger Lum, station manager. "But we thought of the hundreds of families with new radios, all of them anxious to tune in on something, and we decided to make Christmas a gala day. We will, thanks to Tampa firms who are sponsoring the various programs."—Times, Dec. 24, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WDAE, The Times' station, was an unexpected visitor in Los Angeles during the testing out of a Radiola, which was equipped with only an inside aerial, and which was not angling for distance, according to a dispatch received here today from an enthusiastic radio fan.

"We were just testing out the radio set with aerial wire around the room," writes Verne Evans, of the golden state, "and we got your station WDAE. It was such a thrill to get Florida—especially without an outside aerial, that we are anxious to get a verification from you. Yours for more radio bugs.—Times, Dec. 28, 1927.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Lohengrin wedding march by radophone is the latest wrinkle in Tampa nuptials.

Tonight at 6:15 o'clock when radio listeners hear "Here Comes the Bride" over WDAE, The Times station, they will be mute witnesses to the marriage of Miss Florence Bryan and Thomas S. Hayes.

The ceremony will take place in the home of the bride's parents, 120 West North St., with the Rev. Zack Clark Hayes, brother of the groom, of Palmetto Ga., officiating. W. S. Jones will act as best man.

The event has been planned carefully so as to have the radio wedding march begin just as the bride makes her appearance. The



strains will again be heard for the recession when the newly-married couple will "sign off."—Times, Jan. 5, 1928.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Florida jazz seems to go over big in Akron, Ohio, according to a message received today by WDAE, The Times station, from Fred Bock, of that city.

"The Blackbottom program from your station this evening sounded like the real stuff. We tuned out some of the big metropolitan stations to hear all the Florida jazz over WDAE."—Times, Jan. 3, 1928.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Ann Hickox, the "apostle of safety," who will be in Tampa for the next two weeks to conduct a safety campaign, under the auspices of the Tampa Motor Club and the Board of Trade, will speak on "Safety for Children," over WDAE, The Times Station, this evening at 6:20 o'clock.—Times, Jan. 12, 1928.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WDAE has assumed a new role as Good Samaritan, bringing its voice within prison walls, it is revealed today by a social service worker who is in receipt of a letter from the federal prison in Atlanta.

The letter penned by a prisoner, who formerly lived in Tampa, expresses keen appreciation of WDAE programs, saying: "I have spent many nights listening in on Tampa's WDAE radio programs, and some time when you have time, I wish you would call them and tell them that the Tampa boys are always glad when they can have WDAE."—Times, Jan. 12, 1928.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WDAE, The Times station, wins an indirect prize through the originality of one of its Pennsylvania listeners. E. L. Babb, of Scottsdale, Pa., was awarded a prize by French Humor, a magazine, for one of the best "Radiocrostics" of the week. The prize winner was "We Drive Away Ennui," standing of course for WDAE.—Times, Jan. 17, 1928.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WDAE doesn't broadcast in Spanish. But people speaking only that language get baseball reports over it just the same.

W. A. Gonzalez, of the American Cigar Factory, 14th St. and Ninth Ave., sees to that.

Mr. Gonzalez has been receiving the baseball results over WDAE and translating it to over 700 employes of the factory. They couldn't understand it at all unless he did. He enjoys it, too. He gives them the results just a few minutes after the plays. And after all, when Spaniards can't have their bull fights—they must have their baseball.—Times, Oct. 8, 1928.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Florida, with a number of 43 radio sets to each 100 dwellings, ranks third in the nation and is far ahead of the national ratio of 29 sets to each 100 dwellings.—Times, Nov. 27, 1928.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Graham McNamee, world famous announcer at sporting events and for radio programs will be at the Community Chest luncheon tomorrow and will speak to the workers at the luncheon meeting which will be held at the Tampa Terrace.

McNamee was heard by many Tampa fans over the radio when he was official announcer for the Dempsey-Tunney fight . . . He will also be heard over WDAE tomorrow noon about 12:30, broadcasting during the regular Community Chest five minute period.—Times, Dec. 10, 1928.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Thousands of radio listeners the country over will be tuned to WDAE at midnight tonight to hear the Bok carillon at the Singing Tower, Mountain Lake, when Anton Brees, world famous carillonneur, plays a program of Christmas carols on the world's largest carillon. . .

The broadcast has been arranged by the Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce and will be accomplished over 65 miles of telephone line from the highest point in Florida to WDAE's transmitter at Davis Islands.

Although entirely satisfactory transmission is difficult to accomplish, the interest of radio listeners near and far has been considered as a demand for the event and the great bells will travel to the whole country on the radio waves of The Times station.—Times, Dec. 24, 1928.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"There is a terrible fight going on at 3510 Dartmouth Ave.!"

This was the breathless report made by a neighbor this morning about 7:30 o'clock when a telephone call had got police headquarters on the other end of the line.

Two sturdy policemen were dispatched to quell the disturbance.

In a few minutes the front door of the residence of R. D. Potter, 3910 Dartmouth Ave., resounded to the anxious knocks of the cops. Mrs. Potter answered the door.

"The neighbors phoned headquarters and said there was an awful fight going on here, said one of the cops, somewhat taken aback at the composure of Mrs. Potter. They said they expected to have to deal with almost anything short of murder, and were non-plussed at the cool reply of Mrs. Potter: To wit, "Fight? What fight? Maybe it's the radio that the neighbors heard."

The radio was going when the cops called. The program "was coming in fine" as the fans of WDAE have it. The Senate Coffee Company of Tampa was sending out some sort of a feature which wasn't exactly a violin solo. "To be truthful, it was rather noisy," said Mrs. Potter today.

The cops laughed and went away. The Potters smiled broadly too. The joke was on the neighbors.—Times, Jan. 19, 1929.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Jack Dempsey, the old Man Mauler, arrived here at 3 o'clock

this afternoon, but he couldn't dodge details and duties in connection with the Jack Sharkey-Young Stribling fight. They followed him here from Miami. . .

Radio fans will get a chance to hear Dempsey tonight when he will make a talk over WDAE, The Times radiophone. The former heavyweight champion's talk will be broadcast direct from WDAE's studio at the fairgrounds at 7:30 o'clock.—Times, Feb. 8, 1929.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

John M. Griffin, 20-year-old radio engineer of Tampa, was killed this morning when a big Pan American Airways plane crashed in Cuba, less than a week after he had joined the ship's crew as radio operator. . .

"Johnny" Griffin, as he was known to his friends, was considered one of the most brilliant young radio engineers in this section and, though only 20 years old, he had already made a name for himself in radio circles.

He was connected at various times during the past years with WDAE, The Times station, but probably his outstanding work was as an amateur operator during the hurricane of last year. He and his companion operator, Freddie Frick, are credited with giving the world the first news of the disaster. . .

The youth was one of the pioneer operators of Tampa and at the age of 15, handled WDAE virtually alone in the early days of The Times station, oftentimes broadcasting programs unaided, attending to the technical end, announcing and arranging the programs. At one time he was in charge of the station at Lakeland.—Times, June 13, 1929.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Tampa's Committee of 100, made up of aggressive young business men of the city, will take their campaign for public funds into the homes of citizens tonight via the radio.

Feeling that the purpose of their enterprise should be explained to the citizens themselves, the Committee's speakers will try to reach the 16,000 homes in Greater Tampa equipped with radio receivers, by broadcasting from station WDAE.—Times, Sept. 2, 1929.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

What a small town Tampa is, after all. With the Terrible Tribune finding fault with the appointments of The Tampa Times Mayor, and refusing to print the radio schedules of WDAE, we are reduced to sighs. Why can't they get along over there like we do here in Pinellas! —Largo Sentinel, Sept. 26, 1929.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WDAE brand of oranges and grapefruit.

It's being packed by the Franzblau-Daniel Company, of Plant City.

And it's just as good advertising for the company's citrus fruit as it is for WDAE, The Times radio station.

The packing company sensed the advertising value of the WDAE

call letters, both in Florida and in the north. Northern citizens, accustomed to tuning in on Florida on cold winter nights, when they listen to Tampa and other warm Florida cities, may easily be expected to thrill pleasantly at the sight of WDAE brand of citrus fruit when they see them in the stores.—Times, Oct. 16, 1929.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WDAE, The Times Radio Station, will have its only holiday of the year Monday, Armistice Day. Programs are broadcast every day of the year with the entire staff working Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year and all other holidays with the exception of Armistice day.—Times, Nov. 9, 1929.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Radio listeners in search of a unique program will find it worth the while to tune in on WDAE, The Tampa Daily Times, each Friday evening at 8:45 when Russell Kay of the Florida Clipping Service opens his "State Press Scrap Book" and reads numerous interesting, entertaining and amusing items taken at random from the 238 newspapers regularly reviewed by his Service. Mr. Kay supplements his reading from the Scrap Book with sparkling comment.—Vero Beach Press Journal, Nov. 12, 1929.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

E. K. Williams, of New York, buying supervisor of the S. H. Kress Company, will speak over WDAE, The Times radiophone Monday night. Mr. Williams will outline the history of the Kress Company here. The first Kress store here was opened in February, 1904.—Times, Nov. 15, 1929.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

During the Church of the Air program tomorrow night from 6 to 7 o'clock, over WDAE, Rev. A. A. Smith will begin a four weeks "Hunt-a-Word Contest," and offers a prize to the winner. He will quote familiar verses of Scripture, omitting or adding a word or words. The listener must detect the error, write the verse correctly, and mail it to WDAE.—Times, Aug. 23, 1930.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The tidy building which houses WDAE's transmitter at Forest Hills is quite unique as far as can be determined in that it is the only "all metal" transmitter house in use by any broadcasting station.

Constructed of heavy-gauge fabricated galvanized steel, the building contains no wood, except in the trim, window sashes, doors and door casings . . . Such a building is all that could be desired for a radio transmitter. The static electrical factors of the building remain constant through all conditions of weather . . . With a complete studio transmitting equipment and local power supply, programs can be carried on from WDAE indefinitely through any period of time when electric and telephone wires are down.—Times, Aug. 28, 1930.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Members of the 116th Field Artillery, now in camp at Camp

Jackson, S. C., are keeping in touch with Tampa news by listening in every day over WDAE. Rev. George Hyman, chaplain, writes that the broadcasts come in plainly and are part of the daily programs of the Tampa unit.—Times, July 29, 1930.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Census Bureau today announced for Florida 377,823 families and 58,446 radio sets or 15.5 percent of the families having radio sets.

The number of persons per family was 3.9 as compared with 4.1 in 1920.

Jacksonville had 32,555 families, 8058 radio sets or 24.8 percent; Miami 30,902 families, 7587 radio sets, or 24.6 percent; Tampa 25,111 families, 3695 radio sets, or 14.7 percent.

Daytona Beach, 5042 families, 1041 radio sets, 20.7 percent.

Gainesville, 2688 families, 529 radio sets, 19.7 percent.

Key West, 3442 families, 442 radio sets, 12.8 percent.

Lakeland, 5055 families, 977 radio sets, 19.3 percent.

Orlando, 7809 families, 1607 radio sets, 20.6 percent.

Pensacola, 8083 families, 1267 radio sets, 15.7 percent.

St. Augustine, 3154 families, 744 radio sets, 23.6 percent.

St. Petersburg, 12,749 families, 3061 radio sets, 24 percent.

Tallahassee, 2737 families, 408 radio sets, 14.9 percent.

West Palm Beach, 7479 families, 1622 radio sets, 21.7 percent.—Associated Press, March 23, 1931.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

“WDAE, Times at Tampa,” a march composed by August Ingley but first played by Merle Evans’ Band during the South Florida Fair, will open the program of music to be presented by the Little Symphony Orchestra tonight at 8 o’clock during the Esplanade Hour.—Times, Sept. 9, 1931.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Betty Joe McBride, well known little Tampa singer who has made many radio and stage appearances during her brief career—and always to the delight of her audiences. Betty Jo, who has to stand on a chair and the big studio dictionary in order to reach the microphone, is singing with Dick Marion and his boys during their broadcast this afternoon at 4:30 over WDAE.—Times, May 22, 1932.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Jimmy Bigelow, internationally known banjo expert, is visiting several days as the guest of George Mason, manager of the Tampa Terrace Hotel. The “Banjo King” will be broadcast at 8 o’clock tonight from WDAE. He has been featured twice in Ripley’s “Believe It or Not” cartoons as holder of the world’s record for playing the banjo continuously for 25 hours and for memorizing more than 300 selections.—Times, Oct. 8, 1932.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Beryl Shaden assumes the role of society reporter on the Pioneer program to be heard over WDAE Wednesday morning at 10:15.

Miss Shaden will take the air three times each week on the same program to tell listeners all the most interesting news about Tampa's gilded youths and maidens as well as some of the older members of the creme de la creme who keep the old town's midnight oil burning brightly.—Times, Jan. 17, 1933.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

D. B. McKay, chairman of the Tampa Committee for the President's Birthday Ball, will be one of 89 local chairmen to speak on Comedian Eddie Cantor's program at 8:30 o'clock tomorrow over the Columbia Broadcasting System. The program will be broadcast as "invitation to dance" at the President's Birthday Ball. Mr. McKay will speak from the studios of WDAE, The Times station, at a designated time and will deliver appeals for support of the worthy cause in Tampa.—Times, Feb. 23, 1937.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

It was October 4, 1922, before Sanford Herald Editor R. J. (Bob) Holly apparently fell before the onslaught of radio. He remarked that day he couldn't put up any longer with Doc Stevens "bragging about how by just simply twisting a knob, he can get any city he wants in America and listen to music, market reports, the ball games, and daily happenings."—From "Sanford as I knew It" by Peter Schaal, Published 1970.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The pre-arranged broadcast from the Coliseum could not be presented on account of a slight complication which arose at the last minute over the matter of an American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers' license. This will be adjusted promptly, however, and Blue Steele with his band of syncopators will be on the air soon.—Times, Oct. 20, 1926.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Radio Station WDAE, with its power boosted from 250 to 1,000 watts, will take the air again Friday night, Oct. 15, with a special program. The call slogan to be used will be "WDAE, in the land of 'Wonderful Days And Evenings,' at Tampa, Florida." The old wave length, 273 meters, will be retained.



## 1964: NEW OWNERSHIP, NEW PEOPLE, NEW NETWORK

WHEN the announcement was made that Robert W. Rounsaville had bought WDAE in the summer of 1964, no doubt, everyone wondered what would happen to WTMP. Rounsaville Radio, Inc., an Atlanta-based group had owned WTMP since the mid-fifties. FCC regulations prohibit ownership of more than one radio station in a city by one individual. As a matter of fact, some folks probably thought it a bit unusual in that the purchase of WDAE preceded any announcement about WTMP. The ordinary business approach would dictate that as soon as Rounsaville and the Smileys made an agreement, Rounsaville would try to divest himself of WTMP before any disclosures about the WDAE purchase. Therein lies the clue to the personality and business acumen of Robert Rounsaville.

Rounsaville began as a broadcaster in Cedartown, Georgia in 1941 with the part ownership of WGAA.

His philosophy over the years has been to buy smaller or weaker stations, improving them and then stepping up to larger stations or larger markets. At this writing he totally owns, in addition to WDAE-AM and WDAE-FM, these other stations: WFUN in Miami; WBJW, Orlando; WMBR, Jacksonville; WCIN, Cincinnati; WVOL, Nashville; WYLD, New Orleans. The four Florida stations are known as the "Sunshine Group".

But to further understand Robert Rounsaville, one must examine him in the light of his personality and his business traits. What sort of person is "Bob" or "Robert" as he is more familiarly called by those closest to him in the company. All of his top level executives call him Robert except when others are around. Robert, to his home office executives and his managers, is a dynamo of never-ending vigor and can stay up longer, work harder and play harder than any of his men whom he refers to as his "family". He will quickly tell you "that family includes their wives and children." Rounsaville takes his big family seriously and remembers all birthdays, yes, seldom fails to ask about a manager's family in a phone conversation and has given untold boosts to his people when disaster fell at times in the past. His personal interest in the lives of each member

of his "family" is one of his outstanding and well-known-in-the-industry trademarks.

This "new" owner to WDAE in 1964 had been a Tampa broadcaster since 1956. WTMP was WIOK when Rounsaville bought it in its infancy from Cal Young, a Nashville broadcaster. So Rounsaville was no stranger in town, and had had many successful years building WTMP into one of the most respected and profitable Negro-oriented stations in the South. But by announcing the acquisition of WDAE first, he had to deal with prospective purchasers with an "open hand" so to speak. That characterizes the man as he really is—an open individual. A man who tells it like it is... who lets you know where you stand. It's unorthodox in today's business world.

Robert Rounsaville and his methods and influence are omnipresent in every one of his stations. His endeavors of trying to produce the best possible broadcast property he can, keeps him active today. More in a philosophical vein, although in constant—almost daily touch with each one, Rounsaville has much of the day-to-day operating details handled by a personable, astute and handsome President, Ralph B. Johnson, who has been with him 20 years. Johnson, a native of West Virginia, managed WCIN in Cincinnati for eight years, was appointed national sales manager of the group in 1960 and president in 1967.

Breathing Rounsaville breath into the newly acquired WDAE began as soon as possible. WTMP was purchased by Speidel Broadcasting of Columbia, South Carolina, and in October of 1964, after the FCC approved the sale of WDAE to Rounsaville, the way was clear to operate the new property at 101 North Tampa Street, where the station is located today.

As the first manager under the new ownership, William Arthur Selley, Jr., was handed the tough job of takeover. Coming into a group of people all of whom had been used to different ownership and management principles would not be easy. Selley says his task was to build a brand new image for WDAE without taking away anything from the old. It meant a new logo, new stationery, new sound complete with new jingles, music selection and the rest. Most of the old personnel were kept on and even until today Burl McCarty, news director, remains on the staff after eight years of ownership by Rounsaville.

McCarty is typical of WDAE people. He is well known, liked and respected. He started in radio at WTSP (now WLCY) in St. Petersburg in 1942. He worked for WFLA in 1943 and then to WSUN in 1944. In 1945 he **first** joined the WDAE staff before returning to WSUN. He stayed there until 1953 at which time he moved over to WSUN-TV (Channel 38) and became the famous "Captain Mac" and did a kids' show until 1960. As kids' demands changed, Captain Mac found another job with the City of St. Petersburg for three years



and then returned to WDAE in 1963.

Selley ran WDAE under the new format called "The Sound of Music" until the summer of 1965 at which time he was called into the home office as Group Sales Manager. Carl Glicken, another Rounsaville man was brought from WCIN in Cincinnati to manage WDAE.

As part of the revamping of the station's programming, WDAE decided to drop its long-standing affiliation with the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS).

In 1965, a new program director was brought to WDAE in the person of Ed Ripley. He had worked with the Storz Stations in New Orleans and Minneapolis. He played an important part in the overall continued success of WDAE. His latest achievement is the top-rated talk show called "Point of View" which he moderates. It boasts as its former guests, in person, Sen. Hubert Humphrey, (former Vice President of the United States); Fred Lasswell, famous "Snuffy Smith" cartoonist; and it regularly features the top newsmakers around the Bay Area and Florida. It is a program which deals only in controversial matters—issues of genuine public concern.

In this first full year of Rounsaville ownership, the latest transistorized equipment was installed including a new RCA transmitter.

In 1967, Rounsaville changed managers again at WDAE when Carl Glicken left the company.

From the Cincinnati property Rounsaville drew on another of his present managers bringing Donald K. Clark to Tampa. Clark is a Southerner, a native of Kentucky and had worked in all of Rounsaville stations owned at that time. He joined the Rounsaville organization originally in 1959 as assistant manager of WYLD in New Orleans, La. Clark eased quickly into the community life of Tampa and St. Petersburg. He was named "Ad Man of the Year" by the Tampa Advertising Federation in 1970-71. In 1972 he was elected President of Sales and Marketing Executives of Tampa. Clark is also listed in Who's Who in Advertising in America.

One of the most significant programs occurred in radio broadcasting in the Bay Area on April 10, 1968 with the initial flight of Sgt. Al Ford and what was named "1250 Sky Patrol". The station arranged with Jim Chessen at Peter O. Knight Airport to rent a plane and use student pilots to fly over the Bay Area on a daily basis. Chief J. G. Littleton of the Tampa Police Department nominated Sgt. Al Ford, then a motorcycle policeman and leader of the Tampa Police Band, to the job of broadcast policeman to ride in the WDAE plane. Sergeant Ford (at this writing is **now** Lt. Ford) soon became a legend in his own time with his homey, folksy, and direct approach. Although the 1250 Sky Patrol performed traffic surveillance, it "performed" in many other ways and once landed Sergeant Ford on the front page of papers from coast to coast. On one occasion a Seaboard Coast Line employee was fined when charged with allowing a train to block Adamo Drive for more than the per-

missible time. In two cases in court simultaneously, one was dismissed and one drew a \$500 fine. According to the March 26, 1969 Tampa Tribune, "Both violations were reported by Sgt. Al Ford from his plane during a traffic patrol he flies twice daily." W. E. Tucker, a yard foreman was found guilty for allowing a train to block the highway for 11 minutes on March 7. City Judge Charles Scruggs handed down the decision. A Charleston, West Virginia, newspaper recommended to their readers that they try to locate a Sgt. Al Ford to help them clear up similar problems in their city.

Sgt. Ford's responsibilities have grown in the community as the years passed. He speaks to as many as a dozen luncheon clubs every month and on one occasion substituted as the speaker at a high school baccalaureate speaker at Largo Senior High. It seems that in the Spring of 1971 the seniors requested that no baccalaureate be held, but the ministerial association met with the seniors and according to the May 30, 1971 Clearwater Sun, decided "the students were not against a religious service but against the conventional way of having it." Yes, they wanted and got Sgt. Al Ford and they did not wear the conventional caps and gowns, but "regular street clothes" according to the Sun.

Sergeant Ford and the work of Officer Dick Nelson, and several others brought about a decision by the city fathers, Mayor Dick Greco and Chiefs Littleton, Brown and Wainwright that, in truth, so much had been accomplished with a fixed wing plane that what Tampa needed was a more **complete** "air arm". After all, chalked up to the one plane's credits were such things as locating hit and run drivers, chasing fleeing criminals, aiding in the apprehension of six boys on statutory rape charges, and a host of other air surveillance feats.

And, after all 1250 Sky Patrol has its hands full just looking after the safety of "all my drivers" as Sergeant Ford so personally treats his listeners. His listeners treat him personally, too, and you'll find in the April 1971 classified section of the local paper, "Sgt. Al Ford Thanks! Keep it up" and then a list of jobs available by applying at **Alert Personnel** a personnel firm—or in the same paper another classified ad that says, "Happy Anniversary Sgt. Al Ford and Sky Patrol. Keep up the Good Work. George at A & C TV". Lt. Al Ford tells his listeners to "give the boss a good eight-hour day", "go to church Sunday," "thank the good Lord for this beautiful day" and then, in the same breath become very harsh by scolding drivers for recklessness and scold factories for polluting up "the Good Lord's beautiful sky and city I love down below."

Sgt. Al Ford has also appealed to poets and one in particular at the hand of Carl Shawver stands out in the form of a "vertical acrostic," meaning that the first letter, read downward, spells the title. Shawver goes on to say "It is written in what is known as trochaic verse with four-foot trochees.

To: Al Ford  
SKY PATROL  
Soaring over Tampa Bay  
Keeping ever watchful eye  
Year-long friend from day to day  
Pacing autos from the sky;  
Albatross of those who dare!  
Titan of the Traffic ways;  
Robin Hood of all who care;  
Optimist of better days —  
Lots of thanks to Sgt. Al.  
Carl Shawver

Many interesting projects have been initiated by the station in more recent times. Such praiseworthy events as raising \$8000 in a day to send under-privileged kids to camp; walking for the March of Dimes and drug abuse victims and raising literally thousands of dollars by being the inspiration and the giving of its talented staff of guys like Ed Ripley, Al Blake; wage a campaign to put three kidney dialysis machines in the city hospital; initiate the momentum which started the annual Gasparilla Sidewalk Art Festival; set in motion a campaign to save the "Missing Link", a 150-mile stretch of the coastline north of Tarpon Springs in a joint venture with the Audubon Society and Dick Gilmore, able writer of the editorial staff; inauguration of a **forceful editorial policy** which produced a letter of commendation from President Nixon among other responses from Cong. Sam Gibbons, Sen. Lawton Chiles, and other dignitaries on a regular basis; air coverage of traffic problems over Tampa Stadium; flying the beaches with boat and car traffic problem with the Florida Marine Patrol and Officer Bob Knight who looks like he might become another Sgt. Al Ford; and air coverage of SORC and MORC yacht races out of St. Petersburg and dozens of other innovative forms of radio broadcasting.

In 1969 WDAE affiliated with the American Broadcasting Company's "Information Network". This, the world's largest news organization devoted strictly to radio, brought additional dimensions to WDAE's reputation for being first with total news. Through just such a combination of local and network news teamwork, WDAE offered live coverage of all the Apollo lunar shots at Cape Kennedy. ABC fed WDAE reports from space and Burl McCarty, veteran WDAE news director, provided lift-off coverage from the Cape.





## THE "70's HAVE JUST BEGUN

ONLY two years of this decade have gone by, and those two years have seen Florida's Pioneer Radio Station in a tremendous spirit of growth. Yet, staff turnover has been at an all-time low. It is a strong staff with business at a high point simultaneously. The present staff includes many talented people: **Programming**—Ed Ripley, Operations Manager; Al Blake, Assistant Program Director; Mel Berman, Production Manager. Staff announcers are, in addition to the aforementioned, Dan Grant, Jim Anderson, Jerry Walker, Scott Jennings, Tony Bell and Wiley Duff. **News**—Burl McCarty, News Director; Dennis Crandall, Ronald J. Ebben, Ken Dale Iglesias, Linda Newbold, Cherie Troped and Dick Gilmore, Editorialist. **Sales**—Jerry Norman, Sales Manager; David Pegram, Rick Weinkauf, Robert French. Robert Smith and Pierre Bejano. **Copywriter**—Merrily Coughlin. **Secretaries**—Marie Almeda. Gina Tidd and Bonnie Heath. **Receptionist**—Carolyn Plummer. **Traffic Manager**—Emmajeane Correll and assistant Traffic Manager, Sylvia Fabbri. **Engineering**—Warren Kauffman. In addition, those working on a part-time basis regularly are George McConnell, Al Ritter and Mack Lee, engineers.

During the fifty years of its life, the industry has changed from a curiosity item to an entertainment medium. In the last two decades, the industry has experienced a metamorphosis into a service medium, broadcasting mainly music and news. The industry grew from a \$160 million annual gross in the late '40s to a billion dollar industry in the '70s with no signs of slowing down. Today more than 7000 broadcasters say radio is growing, and there is talk of opening a third band in the future. The AM band became saturated a few years ago and FM is rapidly filling up.

While radio in general continues to grow, WDAE continues to grow. Future emphasis will continue in polishing and keeping up to the minute in audience interest with the AM. On WDAE-FM, expansion began three years ago with many special AM features transferred to FM such as **Point of View**. Further expansion plans for WDAE-FM are on the drawing board, and assuredly before long, it will be a complete and separate entity from the partial AM simulcast life it leads today.

This year marks the major beginning of Rounsaville's dream of the "Sunshine Group: of which WDAE-AM and FM are a part. The "Group" consists of WDAE in Tampa, WFUN in Miami, WBJW, Orlando and WMBR, Jacksonville. WMBR was acquired in 1972 and is also one of Florida's pioneer stations having been born in 1927. Great strength is gained for WDAE by being a part of this total picture, and the future for Florida's truly pioneer radio station indeed looks good.

In the translation of call letters as it was once designed, the past, the present and the future look like "**Wonderful Days And Evenings.**"

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## WDAE BIOGRAPHER



Hampton Dunn

HAMPTON DUNN has been closely associated with and identified with Radio Station WDAE—Florida's first broadcasting station—for 36 of its 50 years. He's also a veteran writer, lecturer, broadcaster and Florida historian.

So it was a "natural" assignment for Dunn to be called on to serve as the biographer of WDAE, putting together the history of the station to help celebrate its Golden Anniversary. For 22 years, Dunn was on the staff of The Tampa Daily Times—the newspaper which founded WDAE in 1922 and operated it until the paper was merged with The Tampa Tribune in 1958—from 1936, when he went to work as The Times' "greenest cub reporter" until the sale of the newspaper, at which time he was and had been for nearly 10 years the Managing Editor.

The newspaper and the radio station worked closely together and Dunn often broadcast over WDAE on news and public affairs programs. He developed a high speed election returns reporting system and directed "election parties" over WDAE for many years, winning commendation of the Associated Press and others for his quick news-gathering.

Hampton Dunn now is an executive for the Peninsula Motor Club (AAA). He also is a free lance writer and prolific author of books, newspaper and magazine articles on Florida historical subjects. He is in demand up and down and across the state as a public speaker on these and many other subjects. He also is an active civic leader and community servant. He presently is serving as District Governor of Rotary International.

A native Floridian, Dunn was a major in the Air Force in World War II. His journalistic achievements have won many prizes, including the Associated Press award for the Best Spot News Story of the Year, and the Florida Historical Society's Award of Merit for Excellence in Presentation of Florida history in the Public Media. He is married to the former Charlotte Rawls and they have three children, Janice Dunn, a Peace Corps Volunteer teacher in Thailand; the Rev. Hank Dunn, a student in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Dennis Dunn, a student in Hillsborough Community College.