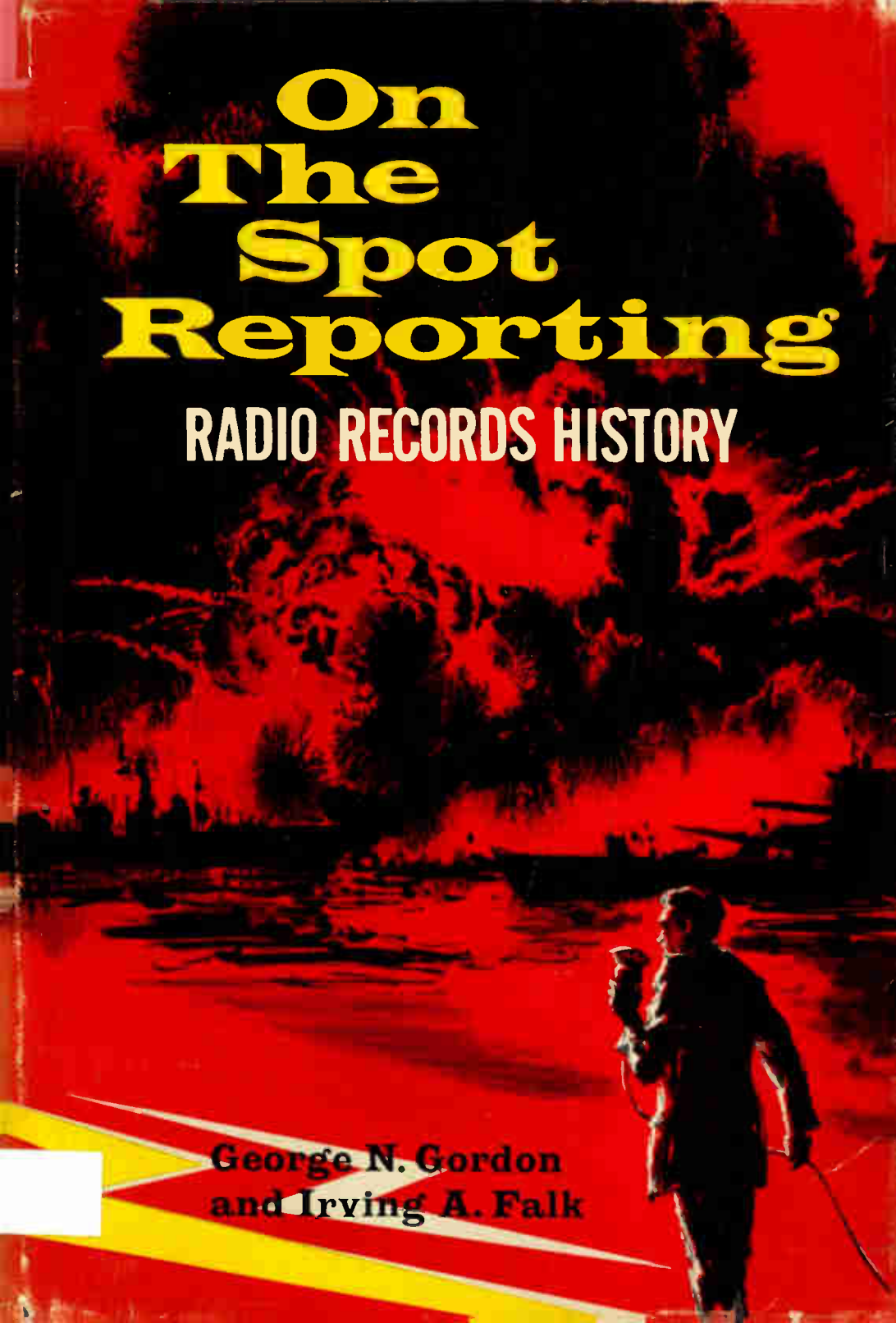
On The Spot Reporting

RADIO RECORDS HISTORY



George N. Gordon
and Irving A. Falk

$3.95

On-the-Spot Reporting

Radio Records History

by GEORGE N. GORDON
and IRVING A. FALK

Foreword by A. A. SCHECHTER
first director of News and Special Events at NBC

Illustrated with photographs

The story of on-the-spot reporting, like that of radio itself, is one of explosive growth. At the end of World War I, despite the efforts of men like the inventor, Lee DeForest, and the wireless pioneer, David Sarnoff, radio was little more than an esoteric toy. Not until 1920 was the first radio station, KDKA in Pittsburgh, put into operation. There, in the space of a few short months, modern radio broadcasting was born.

The years that followed saw millions of radio sets sold, and the great broadcasting networks take shape. While the roaring 20s gave way to the troubled 30s and then to the immense drama of World War II, such radio reporters as Graham McNamee, Ted Husing, Gabriel Heatter, H. V. Kaltenborn, Robert Trout, William L. Shirer, Eric Sevareid, and perhaps most memorable of all, Edward R. Murrow, became household names as they roamed the country and the world for the news *when* and *where* it happened. At the same time, the voice of Franklin Roosevelt gave hope to the nation, and far away, Adolph Hitler sounded his note of warning.

Today radio plays a valuable role in the world of communication. But its scope and grandeur cannot compare with that time when a huge audience could sit horror-stricken as a reporter gasped at the *Hindenburg*'s breaking into flames, or listen gripped with excitement as Edward R. Murrow began, "This is London . . ."

For those too young to have known radio broadcasting at its peak, this book tells about the men and events that combined to create radio's "golden age" and recaptures its color, its drama, and the living history it so brilliantly recorded.

Jacket by DON LAMBO

Also by George N. Gordon and Irving A. Falk

YOUR CAREER IN TV AND RADIO

"This book explores every occupation of the broadcast industry—producer, director, writer, researcher, announcer, designer, engineer, technician—and goes backstage to describe duties and specialized activities. . . ."

New York Times School Weekly

"The authors of this career book, who are well known in the communications field, discuss the history and development of radio and TV and the qualifications and opportunities for the manifold jobs available . . . fascinating glimpses of actual program productions and of various personalities in the field. The appendix lists scholarships available, schools offering degrees . . . educational TV stations, and suggested reading. . . . A good addition to vocational materials."

School Library Journal

"One of the Messner career books, this volume explores the broadcasting industry, stressing considerations to those aspiring to careers in radio or television. . . The book is an answer to the many students and others seeking information on radio and television fundamentals."

Broadcasting, Washington, D.C.

Stephen Hayes, Jr.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

GEORGE N. GORDON was born in New York City and received his Ph.D. from New York University. During his long and varied career he has worked as a professional actor and director (he graduated in 1947 from the Yale Drama School), magician, mind reader and ventriloquist. He has written or co-authored six books on subjects ranging from educational television to applied psychology. Dr. Gordon has been an associate professor at New York University where he was acting chairman of the Department of Communications in Education. At present he is Director of the Communications Center at Hofstra University in Hempstead, Long Island, New York, holding the rank of full professor. He is married to an Australian and is the father of two girls and a boy.

IRVING A. FALK was born in Paterson, New Jersey, where he went to school through the secondary level and then continued on through undergraduate and graduate school at New York University, Yale and Columbia respectively. His career as an information editor-writer-professor has taken him to Broadway, off-Broadway, Washington, D.C., New York, New Haven, Petersberg, and Hollywood. He is presently Associate Professor in the School of the Arts at New York University where he is assistant to the Chairman of the Television, Motion Picture and Radio Department. He has produced and directed hundreds of broadcasts, and he received a merit of citation for THE URBAN LEAGUE PRESENTS on its one-thousandth broadcast in the winter of 1966. He has edited and co-authored several books, all dealing in one way or another with TV and radio.

On-the-Spot Reporting

RADIO RECORDS HISTORY

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From 1920 to the beginning of the television era, on-the-spot radio broadcasting occupied a unique place on the American scene as people *listened* breathlessly to the words and sounds of history being made. From the roaring 20's through the drama of World War II, such reporters as Graham McNamee, Ted Husing, Gabriel Heatter, H. V. Kaltenborn, Robert Trout, William Shirer, Eric Sevareid, Edward Murrow, became household names as they roamed the country and the world for news *when* and *where* it happened. For those too young to have known radio broadcasting at its peak, this book tells about the men and events that combined to create radio's "golden age" and recaptures its color, its drama, and the living history it so brilliantly recorded.

BOOKS BY GEORGE N. GORDON AND IRVING A. FALK

ON-THE-SPOT REPORTING: RADIO RECORDS HISTORY

YOUR CAREER IN TV AND RADIO

On-the-Spot Reporting

RADIO RECORDS HISTORY

George N. Gordon and Irving A. Falk

Foreword by A. A. Schechter, first Director of
News and Special Events, National
Broadcasting Company

ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS

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Foreword

George Gordon and Irving Falk, the capable authors of this book, have bestowed upon me the honor of writing a foreword to this fascinating chronicle of radio's contributions to news coverage.

On-the-spot reporting by radio broadcasters was born of necessity.

In the early thirties publishers suddenly decided that press associations, by making their news wires available to radio, would hurt newspapers. Thus radio was suddenly deprived of its principal sources of news. Yet obligations to the listening audience and to the advertisers who were willing to sponsor news broadcasts had to be met. The only answer was to plunge into an expansion of its own limited news covering facilities.

The results were memorable, as this book will tell you.

I write this foreword not only for myself, but also for the late Paul W. White of CBS. As few others did, Paul and I shared the scoops, the mishaps, the excitement of that period, feeling that we were giving birth to a new form of journalism—this time electronic. We both had to train newspapermen to write for the ear rather than the eye. We committed everything short of mayhem to slow up the opposition in the quest for the big story coverage.

Yet, through the years it was an intense but friendly rivalry.

When both White and I went to Canada to cover, for our respective networks, the arrival of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, Paul became ill, whereupon I pooled all our facilities with Paul's staff.

From London, during World War II, I was expecting an important broadcast for NBC, and our reporter failed to get to the studio in a blackout. It was Ed Murrow of CBS who, already in the BBC studios and learning of my predicament, got a British newsman to substitute for us, so we would not be left with blank air.

I am afraid that much of the pioneering and spontaneity of the early days has calmed down now that the age of TV news coverage has arrived. For those men—both those at the networks and the hundreds of dedicated news directors of independent stations—who contributed to the early era of radio news reporting this book is a must. The reader will get a perspective and a behind-the-scenes look at those exciting times.

A. A. Schechter

January 4, 1967

Contents

1

DATELINE: YESTERDAY

The history of man's attempts to spread the news—from the ancient clay tablets of the Phoenician "cradle of civilization" to the reports on tonight's TV news programs—is the rich and colorful story of communications. It includes the development of his languages, both written and oral, and the growth of his ability as an artist and poet who, over many centuries, has devised countless ways of communicating with other men.

To tell this story adequately we would have to fill many books this size.

One part of the story, however, is so fascinating and dramatic that it fairly begs to be told separately, and that is radio history, recorded in the voices of the men and women who lived it.

Radio broadcasting as we know it today is just one part of a revolution in mankind's way of living that started about five hundred years ago. It is called by many the *communications revolution,* a by-product of technology or the art of inventing machines.

The particular machine which started the communications revolution was the printing press, a most peculiar invention because it appears that it was invented *twice.* Considerable evidence exists that long before Europeans developed the art of printing, the Chinese, sometime between the ninth and eleventh centuries A.D., had devised a method of reproducing their difficult written language in book (or scroll) form and at the same time also developed methods of manufacturing paper.

Although Marco Polo described this remarkable Oriental invention in his diaries as late as 1295 A.D., Europeans went right on copying books by hand the way they had for thousands of years. It was not until the middle of the fifteen century when Johann Gutenberg devised his famous wine-press printing machine, employing movable type (a system capable of producing as many as 600 printed impressions per day), that the printing industry spread through Europe and the communications revolution began.

Why do we call it a "revolution"? The influence of printing alone on Europe indicates how a *single* invention can change the way of life and thought of *millions* of people. The printed book was the main instrument by which the Reformation—and the development of the many Protestant churches—was spread throughout Europe. The availability of books in the century that followed the invention of printing caused hundreds of thousands of Europeans (and Englishmen at home and later in the colonies) to learn

to read, and schooling therefore made great advances. The printed page also served as the device whereby other inventions in the great age of discovery were communicated from inventor to inventor, and the industrial revolution itself was an inevitable result.

The invention of printing also gave us the modern newspaper, and from the city desk of the big city daily it was just one giant step to the broadcasting station and the miracle of radio and then television.

We are not certain where or when Europe's first newspaper was printed, because this depends on how one defines a "newspaper." English papers, called "corantos," were published now and then for interested, literate British citizens of the 1620's. They were printed in Holland and hawked in London. Nathaniel Butler and Thomas Archer, importers of these corantos, distressed that they contained only foreign news and nothing of local origin, began to print their own versions in England shortly thereafter. This move was directly responsible for James I's imprisonment of Archer for his criticisms of British foreign policy. At one point in their careers Butler and Archer and Nicholas Bourne succeeded in publishing in succession twenty-three issues of *The Continuation of Our Weekly Newes.* And in the modern sense of the word, the newspaper was probably born at this time.

The death of censorship and technical progress in printing saw the newspaper flourish in the century that followed. By 1702, when the *Daily Courant* found its way into the hands of its London readers, the format of the modern paper had taken shape. Published by Samuel Buckley, the *Courant* appeared daily, strove for objectivity in the presentation of the news, and showed a dateline (indicating the place and date of the story following)

for each piece in the paper. Because it accepted advertising printed on the front and reverse side of its single sheet, it even showed a profit.

Credit for the first American newspaper is given to Benjamin Harris, whose *Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domestic* appeared in Boston on September 25, 1660. Harris' paper was partially a "do it yourself" venture. One side of his four-sided newspaper was left blank so that the reader could fill in his own news (or gossip) before passing it on to a friend.

Not until 1704 (two years after the *Courant* had paved the way in the mother country) did the American colonies have a genuine newspaper, regularly published and conforming to the present-day idea of what a newspaper is. It was once again published in Boston. It was called *The Boston News Letter,* and its guiding genius was John Campbell. Campbell was a Scottish postmaster of four years' newspaper experience. He put out a longhand newsletter in Boston containing local news and gossip gathered from correspondents in other colonies and abroad. A veritable mine of such information, Campbell poured it all into the *News Letter,* mixing local and foreign news, writing in English barely decipherable today and fighting the spectre of bankruptcy because he never managed to circulate more than 300 copies. The American newspaper was born.

The *News Letter* was followed in 1719 by a more interesting journal, James Franklin's *New England Courant.* Its star reporter was Franklin's younger brother, Benjamin. Ben eventually took over publication of the *Courant,* after James had been forbidden to publish any further copies by the Puritan fathers of Boston. The *Courant* died in

1725. Then young Ben Franklin set off for Philadelphia to begin his career as the publisher of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and to move from there to immortality.

Newspapers came and went with amazing rapidity. More than two thousand newspapers were started in America between 1690 and 1820, and more than half of them were out of business before they were two years old. But in the period before the revolution, most Americans who could read had access to a paper of some kind on a regular basis, although the circulation of these hand-printed journals rarely exceeded 2,000.

On-the-spot reporting? Some of it is found in these early papers, although their political and mercantile biases, combined with their dense literary style, made their coverage of most immediate events seem like second-hand news at best. An exception was Isaiah Thomas' coverage in the *Massachusetts Spy* on May 3, 1775, of the British raid on Lexington and Concord, the first battle of the American Revolution. Wrote Thomas:

The body of [British] troops . . . to the number of 1000, proceeded to Lexington about six miles below Concord, with great silence. A company of [American] militia, of about eighty men, mustered near the meeting house; the troops came in sight of them just before sunrise. The militia, upon seeing the troops, began to disperse. The troops then set out upon the run, halloing and hussaing, and coming within a few rods of them, the commanding officer accosted the militia, in words to this effect, "Disperse, you damn'd rebels—Damn you, disperse." Upon which the troops again hussaed and immediately one or two officers discharged their pistols, which were instantaneously followed by the firing of four or five of the

soldiers; and then there seemed to be a general discharge from the whole body. Eight of our men were killed and nine wounded . . .

Exceptions notwithstanding, the early American papers were rarely as exciting as Thomas' report might lead us to believe. Newspapers were not published for the common man, but rather for the uncommon literate citizen interested in political matters, or for the self-educated businessman of wealth and prestige.

Not only were these early journals—before and after the revolution—geared for the classes rather than the masses; they were expensive. Individual copies of newspapers were extremely costly: a single copy of a New York daily cost six cents in the 1820's, an era when the skilled artisan was lucky if he earned ten dollars per week. Subscriptions to weekly papers were just as costly—and payable in advance! Certainly the early nineteenth century newspaper was the rich man's luxury.

Technology gave the communications revolution another hearty shove, as the device was developed which would make possible not only the relatively rapid spread of printed words among *groups* of men and women but to vast *masses* of them. The steam engine was wedded to the printing press, and by the second decade of the nineteenth century, newspapers were printed on this improved machine, the *steam press*, in both Europe and England.

In 1833 a twenty-two-year-old printer in New York named Benjamin H. Day was responsible for the next leap taken by the communications revolution. Sensing the demand for a cheap paper which was of interest to and could be read by "the man in the street," he brought out the New York *Sun* at a penny a copy. He also hired a

reporter, George Wisner (for four dollars a week plus part of the profits), to go to the police courts and cover news there, news which was far more sensational than the staid political and business coverage of Day's competitors.

The *Sun* was an immediate success. Six months after its first edition the paper had a circulation of 8,000 copies a day, and within a year reporter Wisner was Day's partner. Soon the *Sun* was using the rapid cylinder press, and by 1835 its daily circulation had risen to 20,000.

Ben Day's New York *Sun* marked the beginning of the era of *mass communications:* the meeting of the technology of mass production with the technology of communication from man to man. It is a phase of the communications revolution which is still in progress.

All factors, including a receptive public, had to be right for the mass circulation of newspapers to begin. Ben Day simply took advantage of these factors by reducing the price of his product, talking the same language his readers talked, and by satisfying the customer's demand to discover the latest news and gossip in the world around him. Day's advertising rates obviously shot up as his circulation rose, and the *Sun* became an enormously profitable venture.

Developments in mass communications rarely occur in isolation from other developments in society. In free enterprise nations like the United States, a successful venture like Day's was bound to have competitors. The nineteenth century in the United States saw the development of countless other newspapers similar to Day's *Sun*, printed by power presses and eventually, by the late 1880's, set mechanically in type by Ottmar Mergenthaler's remarkable linotype machine.

The population of America was also increasing rapidly.

Schoolhouses followed our frontier westward. Wherever people congregated in large groups to search for gold, to build homesteads or to conduct trade, one or more newspapers were likely to spring up.

By mid-century news itself was also carried from one place to another by telegraph. At first stagecoaches, then pony express riders and at last the railroad could distribute newspapers throughout the entire nation. The web of mass communications was reaching out to more and more people.

Most important for our concern in this book is the fact that the rise of the mass-produced newspaper created the very concept of what we today consider to be news or newsworthy. Because of the pressure to achieve enormous circulations, news could no longer be confined to events which a publisher thought were important. News had to include whatever the reader thought was interesting—interesting enough to make him read one paper as opposed to another and to keep reading that particular paper.

The great editors and publishers of our American papers realized this. Mostly, people wanted to know what was happening in the world beyond their own eyes and ears. If nothing much was happening, publishers like James Gordon Bennett and Horace Greeley *made* it happen. Bennett popularized the newspaper exposé of corruption and big city crime; Greeley entered politics and even ran for president of the United States. In effect, *anything* was news which would attract the reader. The more dramatic or unusual the story, the more likely it was to catch and hold his attention.

The Mexican War was the first great conflict involving the United States during which the mass press could show

its value and power in helping to keep the American people informed about events occurring in remote places. War dispatches from Mexico frequently took two weeks to reach Eastern newspapers, but readers were treated to first-hand accounts of battles like the fall of Vera Cruz where General Winfield Scott hoisted the American flag over the "halls of the Montezuma" and of the capture of Mexico City. The war not only gained California, New Mexico and Utah for the United States but also encouraged journalists to perfect their skills as accurate and involved on-the-spot reporters.

The great Civil War attracted a host of talented correspondents not only from newspapers in the North and South of the dis-United States of America but from all over the world. Artists drew sketches of the various battles and, although newspapers were not yet able to reproduce photographs, early cameramen like the famed Mathew Brady brought wagon loads of bulky equipment right into the thick of battle where their crude "exposures" had to be developed on the spot. Frequently, drawings made from such photographs were printed in newspapers.

In fact, so numerous were the war correspondents and so avid was their reporting that both the North and South faced the problem of censoring news which might give aid to the enemy. From the Civil War to the present day, this problem has occurred again and again in reporting war news to the American public: the question of how to keep the balance between fair and accurate reports of warfare and at the same time to protect the security of the nation.

The great Civil War story was closing with the following headline in *The New York Times:*

VICTORY
"On To Richmond"
Lee's Defeat and Retreat
Confirmed.

The saddest single news story of the period was written by Lawrence A. Gobright of the Associated Press. It began:

"Washington, Friday, April 14, 1865—The President was shot in a theatre tonight, and perhaps mortally wounded."

After the Civil War, American newspapers, now mass-produced more efficiently and quickly than ever, grew into big businesses. Immigrants by the thousands were landing on our shores and filling the empty places in our nation's new states and crowding our cities. Enterprising publishers provided newspapers for them which gave them what they wanted: vivid news stories and features, simply told and easily read. By the end of the century, publishers like William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer had begun the era of "yellow journalism," so called because the sensational (and sometimes fake) news stories they ran were printed on yellow paper to attract attention.

The early years of this century were a wild period of circulation wars among newspapers which resulted in the introduction of pictures, photographs and comic strips to the dignified profession of journalism. It was a time when newspapers became *mass media* with an accent on the word "mass," as circulations grew and publishers formed newspaper chains and developed monopolies and cut-throat competitive methods to sell their wares to more and more people while making millions of dollars.

It was also a period of great reporters who brought to the American public a new awareness of the social prob-

lems and political and military events beyond their own front lawns. In a newspaper series, Lincoln Steffens exposed the disgraceful plight of the poorer classes in American cities. Jacob Riis told the story in print of the impoverished tenement dwellers in New York City. Will Irwin's newspaper coverage of the San Francisco earthquake and fire in 1906 remains a literary classic to this day. Men like Julian Ralph and Richard Harding Davis created the image of the dashing international correspondent who turned up wherever and whenever there was trouble—in Greece, Cuba, Belgium or anywhere else. These reporters became celebrities themselves, publishing occasional books describing their exploits and commanding enormous salaries from eager publishers who coveted their "scoops."

By the time World War I began our journalists had achieved a high degree of skill in accurate on-the-spot reporting of history in the making. True, an over-anxious reporter released the news that the Germans were defeated some days before the actual event (and textbooks on journalism often overlook this colorful "fluff"), but a top-flight echelon of about five hundred American newspaper correspondents followed the Allied troops into battle until *The New York Times*' headlines sang out on November 11, 1918:

> ARMISTICE SIGNED, END OF WAR!
> BERLIN SEIZED BY REVOLUTIONISTS;
> NEW CHANCELLOR BEGS FOR ORDER
> OUSTED KAISER FLEES TO HOLLAND

And the newspapers had a field day, with stories filed from all over Europe by such noted reporters as Irwin

Cobb, Ring Lardner, Floyd Gibbons and Heywood Broun, names which resound today in journalism's hall of fame.

The World War I years were also the time when on-the-spot news coverage jumped from the printed page to another medium of mass communications—radio. The change was slow at first, but by the nineteen-twenties, American newspapers no longer had a communications monopoly on great and speedy reporting, and newscasters and writers were deserting their typewriters and telegraphs for the microphone.

By the First World War, dozens of radio transmitters were active in the United States. However, the kind of broadcasting that was done then is known as point-to-point broadcasting. Shipping companies equipped passenger liners with radio, adding to the safety of the passengers, and radio on banana boats could direct them immediately to profitable markets. Radio broadcasting on a point-to-point basis for the military forces meant the priceless collection and coordination of intelligence in offensive and defensive operations. The First World War dramatized the potentials of radio in point-to-point communication—such as rescues at sea, espionage, directing airplanes to exploring parties in the jungle and arctic expanses, exchange of messages with far-flung outposts.

In 1916, a telegrapher for the American Marconi Company in New York, David Sarnoff, had a suggestion for the future of radio. He wrote in a memorandum to his superiors: "I have in mind a plan of development which would make radio a household utility . . . The idea is to bring music into the home by wireless . . . The receiver can be designed in the form of a simple 'Radio Music Box' . . . The same principle can be extended to

numerous other fields, as for example receiving lectures at home . . . also events of national importance . . ."

Lee DeForest, one of the inventors responsible for the miracle of radio, is reported to have said as early as 1909, "I look forward to the day when by means of radio, opera may be brought into every home. Some day the news and even advertising, will be sent out to the public on the wireless telephone."

The new idea of radio as a public broadcast medium caught the imagination of the American people and spread like wildfire after World War I. From three stations in 1920, the number rose to over five hundred in 1923, and sales of radio receivers rose from $2,000,000 to $136,000,000 in the same three-year period. The stage was set for a vast expansion of on-the-spot coverage of national and international events when the networks were organized during the mid 1920s and early 1930s. Now information about events happening anywhere in the world could be quickly gathered and broadcast to the people from coast to coast. Mass communications had come of age! And on-the-spot coverage was the technique which could bring everybody (who owned or could hunt up a radio set) simultaneously and quickly to an event as an *ear* witness *while it was happening.*

For more than a generation radio broadcasting was to remain the most immediate, fascinating and dramatic device available to the people of our nation to find out what was going on around them. Newspapers were still to serve a significant function in public life, but the radio newscaster on the spot was to supersede the newspaper reporter as the man on the front lines of news reporting.

The radio newscaster saw his great day pass by, how-

ever, just as the newspaper journalist had before him, with the rise of TV after World War II. Television proved its mettle in the coverage of the presidential campaign of 1948 and the Korean War early in the 1950s. Films, still photographs, and the reporters, whose faces became as familiar as those of our neighbors, spoke to us from the glowing tube in our living rooms. Radio broadcasters took a back seat as a prime medium of reporting the news.

In this book, we will turn back the pages of history a leaf or two to that great generation of on-the-spot radio reporting. It covers the period from the time mom and dad (or grandma and granddad) huddled around their crystal receivers wearing outlandish earphones listening to the results of the Harding-Cox presidential election in 1920 to the emotion-packed days after World War II when the voices of statesmen and generals spoke of an era of international peace in the halls of the temporary United Nations headquarters at Lake Success, New York.

Radio is not dead today. It is still on the spot where it is needed, but the big broadcasts of the twenties, thirties and forties are over now, comfortably asleep in the tape and record archives of the major radio networks and in the memories of the men who made them.

Speaking to a nation of listeners glued to their receivers, they tell the stories of World Series and prize fights, catastrophes and celebrations, battles and holocausts. They speak of triumphs and victories and catastrophes, frequently flat and impersonal when reduced to the cold print of a history book, but bright with the fire of excitement as we live them again in the words of the eyewitnesses who reported history *on the spot by radio.*

This is the story of those days and the fascinating people behind those countless microphones. It was one of the proudest—and sometimes craziest—phases in the long colorful history of the communications revolution.

2

THE MAN ON THE ROOF

Our story of on-the-spot radio will begin with its finest moment and then make a full circle in time coming back to this moment at the end of the book.

A time, a place and a man merged into a brief but brilliant period in the history of radio broadcasting—in the history of journalism, in fact—about which men will speak and write for many years to come.

The time was the late nineteen-thirties and the early forties.

The place was London.

The man was Edward R. Murrow.

Ed Murrow died on April 27, 1965, two days after his

fifty-seventh birthday, but he will be remembered by many people for many reasons.

His friends recall vividly his frequently enigmatic, gruff but cultured manner, his unusually fierce personal loyalties and his uninhibited sense of humor.

Broadcasters think of him as a top-drawer talent of radio and TV: the man who gave the industry its first great documentary series, *See It Now*, who had the nerve to stand up to demagogue Senator McCarthy on the air, who reported the news without fear or favor, who helped build the CBS News staff and who later brought his professional broadcasting abilities and shrewd judgments to the United States Information Agency.

As an on-the-spot reporter he had his finest hour at the start of World War II, a CBS microphone in hand, a tin hat on his head, standing on a roof top somewhere in London, reporting Hitler's *blitzkrieg* of merciless bombers as they pounded the ancient city on the Thames with dynamite and incendiaries.

Murrow had started his broadcasts from London during the summer of 1939, and within the next year London was to begin to fight the "Battle of Britain," meaning German bombers overhead by night and the threat of German invasion by day. From the outset, Murrow's voice was heard in America telling us that "This is London . . ." as he reported the fall of Britain's ineffectual peacetime government and the rise of a new leader, the indomitable Winston Churchill, who would bring his people to victory five years later.

In 1940, when the air-raid sirens sounded all through the city of London, the population moved underground. They hid in subways and cellars, relatively safe from the devastation around them, while intrepid teams of air-raid

wardens, firemen, demolition experts and others did what they could to minimize Hitler's sadistic air attack on a city of civilians which could have little military value to the Nazi war machine, except to soften up British morale as a prelude to the coming German "invasion"—which never occurred.

One man in London, however, stood on a roof top, holding a microphone in his hand and describing the hell-fire around him, the bombs and the anti-aircraft fire, the destruction and the havoc below. Ed Murrow manned his post simply because he felt that the American public, to whom he was speaking, had a *right* to *know* what it was like, on the spot, in London that fall of 1940. He was the man who had the individual skill and the technical resources to tell them.

Here is what we heard on our radio sets on September 21 of that year. Murrow's voice was slightly dimmed by the wheeze and static of short wave transmission, but the sound of the bombs and guns he talked about weren't studio sound effects, and his words were sharp and clear. Said Murrow:

"I'm standing on a roof top looking out over London. . . . For reasons of national as well as personal security, I'm unable to tell you the exact location from which I'm speaking. Off to my left, far away in the distance, I can see just that faint red, angry snap of anti-aircraft bursts against the steel blue sky, but the guns are so far away that it's impossible to hear them from this location. About five minutes ago, the guns were working . . . I think probably in a minute we shall have the sound of the guns in the immediate vicinity. The lights are swinging over in this general direction now. You'll hear two explosions. There they are! That was the explosion overhead, not the

guns themselves. I should think in a few minutes there may be a hit of shrapnel around here. Coming in—moving a little closer all the while. The [German] plane's still very high. Earlier this evening we could hear occasional . . . again those were explosions overhead. Earlier this evening we heard a number of bombs go sliding and slithering across to fall several blocks away. Just overhead now the burst of anti-aircraft fire. Still the guns are not working. The searchlights now are feeling almost directly overhead. Now you'll hear two bursts a little nearer in a moment . . . There they are! That hard, stony sound."

Murrow's roof top vigil did not invariably involve the description of battles in the sky. Sometimes his attention was caught by a trivial sight which in some strange way had a peculiar impact all its own. The next night he reported from his perch the following:

"I'm standing again tonight on a roof top looking out over London, feeling rather large and lonesome . . . I can see one or two bursts of anti-aircraft fire in the distance. Just on the roof across the way I can see a man standing wearing a tin hat with a pair of powerful night glasses to his eyes, scanning the sky. Again, looking in the opposite direction, there is a building with two windows gone. Out of one window, there moves something that looks like a white bed sheet, a window curtain swinging free in this night breeze. It looks as though it were being shaken by a ghost. There are a great many ghosts around these buildings in London!"

Never heated nor high-blown, Murrow had the gift of dramatizing whatever he reported. His style was that of understatement. He was calm, terse and highly descrip-

tive. There was a kind of metallic poetry in his words that made his style unique.

In one memorable broadcast he said, "Walked home at 7:00 in the morning, the windows were red with reflected fire and the raindrops were like blood on the panes."

One of Murrow's former staff members recalled the instructions he gave to his news staff:

"The reporter must never sound excited, even if bombs are falling outside. Rather, the reporter should imagine that he has just returned to his hometown and that the local editor has asked him to dinner with a banker and a professor. After dinner your host asks you, 'Well what was it like?' As you talk, the maid is passing the coffee and her boyfriend, a truck driver, is waiting for her in the kitchen and listening. You are supposed to describe things in terms that make sense to the truck driver without insulting the intelligence of the professor."

Talking about his London broadcasts more than twenty years later, Murrow reflected that they involved even more risk than was apparent at the time. "I had to stand on that roof top for six nights in succession," he said, "and make a record[ing] each night and submit it to the [British] Ministry of Information in order to persuade the censors that I could ad-lib without violating security. And I did it for six nights and the records were lost somewhere in the Ministry of Information.

"So I had to do it for *another* six nights before they would finally give me permission—after listening to the second 'tape' of six—to stand on a roof top. So I had a lot of time up there."

None of Murrow's London broadcasts was recorded,

however, for transmission to the United States. They traversed the ocean live. "We were permitted to use them [recordings] shortly before D-Day [1945], and they used them from then onward," recalled Murrow.

Who was this man on the roof, this reporter who spoke with the steel edge of toughness on the one hand and poetry on the other? What conspiracy of fates had made Murrow one of the most respected Americans in England during the *blitz*, so highly regarded that years later on March 5, 1965, Queen Elizabeth II named him an Honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire; and prior on September 14, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson awarded him the Medal of Freedom? Part idealist and poet, part hero and daredevil, reporter and showman, how does a man get to be Edward R. Murrow, on the spot in London during World War II?

His future biographers may penetrate his character more fully than we can, but it's certain that Edward (originally Egbert) Roscoe Murrow, the farm kid born at Pole Cat Creek, North Carolina, on April 25, 1908, and a later resident of Greensboro, North Carolina, never dreamed of the kind of future his fortune had up its sleeve. From Greensboro, Murrow's family moved to Blanchard, Washington, when Ed was six. His father started in Blanchard as a farm hand and worked finally for the railroad in his new northwestern home town.

From his youth, Ed Murrow had to work hard for what he got from life, in a lumber camp, as a driver of a bus, or putting in long hours with a team of surveyors. He worked his way through Washington State College, fooled around with college dramatics and ended his career in school with a Phi Beta Kappa key on his watch chain.

Murrow's success at college led to a full-time job as

president of the National Student Federation. This post brought him to New York City, where he arranged trips to Europe for college students. Murrow managed to wangle a free one for himself. His next position, in 1932, gave him an opportunity to return thereafter to Europe every summer. He was then appointed assistant director of the Institute of International Education, a responsible position for a lad still in his early twenties.

Presently a flood of European scholars—professors, writers and students—who were victims of Nazi persecutions attempted to flee their native lands to the safety of America. The Institute tried to help them in their flight, and for the next few years Murrow was in constant contact with the cream of the old world's intellectual community. Murrow listened to the savants from overseas and, according to his own admission, this experience was like a post-graduate course in living history. "Most of my time was spent with people twenty to forty years older than I was. They took me seriously, and I guess I took myself pretty seriously," Murrow once recalled.

Murrow joined the Columbia Broadcasting System (for whom he eventually worked for twenty-five years) in 1935 as director of talks and special events, which meant, loosely, that he was responsible for most of the educational broadcasting done by CBS and to "sell" the concept of radio for educational purposes to influential citizens in the United States. It was a difficult assignment.

Two years later, however, Murrow's superior at CBS visualized a more productive future for him and promoted him to European Director of the network, a job that the hyperactive Murrow found boring at first, but which must have given him a solid grounding in European history and culture. With headquarters in London, he trav-

ersed the continent arranging cultural broadcasts and attending conferences. He never went near a microphone himself during an actual broadcast. His role kept him strictly backstage.

History had other plans for him. In March of 1938 Hitler's goose-stepping Nazis annexed Austria to the Third Reich. CBS had no reporter in Vienna to cover the event. Murrow was in Warsaw arranging a musical broadcast. He flew immediately to the Austrian capital and made his first international talk on American radio from that city. What did he say?

"This is Edward Murrow, speaking from Vienna. It's now nearly 2:30 in the morning and Herr Hitler has not yet arrived. No one seems to know just when he *will* get here, but most people expect him some time after ten o'clock tomorrow morning. It is, of course, obvious after one glance at Vienna that a tremendous reception is being prepared, and we're planning to bring you an eyewitness account of Herr Hitler's entry into Vienna. We return you now to America."

With the impending war darkening the atmosphere of Europe, CBS then charged Murrow—back in London and not yet thirty years old—with developing a news staff of radio personnel to report the impending hostilities on American radio. Murrow did just this, bringing together men like William L. Shirer, Eric Sevareid, Larry LeSueur, Charles Collingwood, Richard C. Hottelet and Bill Downs. When Murrow's employers in New York complained that his neophytes didn't "sound" right for radio, Murrow's reply was invariably, "I'm hiring reporters, not announcers." His "reporters" eventually became some of the most respected news analysts in the broadcasting industry.

A reporter was exactly what Murrow himself became almost overnight, taking the "This is London . . ." stint under his personal wing.

Murrow's London broadcasts were made under the most inconvenient and hazardous of circumstances. He not only had his troubles on a roof top, but the CBS bureau itself was bombed out of three offices and the windows of the fourth were smashed during an air raid. The network was given quarters at the British Broadcasting Corporation's main London studios which, Murrow said, had previously been "referred to as a 'waitresses' roving room,' which in fact meant that it was a lady's lavatory."

The studio served CBS and Murrow well, although he would frequently have to broadcast in a whisper lest he wake personnel who slept in the studio because nightly air raids prevented them from getting home. Murrow's broadcasts were usually made well after midnight in order to reach the American public in prime evening hours.

To this studio at the BBC's Broadcasting House, Edward R. Murrow brought the vivid recollections of the sights he had seen and the sounds he had heard in his now beloved London. Murrow said of the city, sitting before the microphone in that studio, his voice modulated lest he waken his sleeping colleagues:

"There are no words to describe the thing that is happening. The courage of the people, the flash and roar of the guns rolling down the street, the stench of the air-raid shelters. In three or four hours, people must get up and go to work just as if they had had a full night's sleep, free from the rumble of guns and the wonder that comes when they wake and listen in the dead hours of the night."

Or, speaking of the Londoners, in the spring of 1941:

"Well, they've come through the winter, and they've been warned that the testing days are ahead. Of the past months, they may well say, 'We've lived a life, not an apology,' and of the future, I think most of them would say, 'We shall live hard, but we shall live.' "

In this studio Murrow discovered and developed the knack of recreating in words, delivered with faultless articulation and ingenious timing, the drama and impact of the adventures through which he had gone just a few hours before. Let him describe in part a British bombing mission on the plane *D-Dog* over Berlin, from which he has just returned and which he recreates for us now at his microphone:

(Over Berlin). . . . "The clouds were gone, and the sticks of incendiaries from the preceding waves made the place seem like a badly laid-out city with the street lights on. The small incendiaries were going down like a fistful of white rice thrown on a piece of black velvet. As Jock hauled the *Dog* up again, I was thrown to the other side of the cockpit, and there below were more incendiaries—blowing white and then turning red. The 'cookies'—the four-thousand-pound high explosives—were bursting below like great sunflowers gone mad. And then, as we started down again, still held in the red light, I remembered that the *Dog* still had one of those cookies and a whole basketful of incendiaries, still held in its belly, and the light still held it, and I was very frightened.

"I looked down and the white fires had turned red, and they were beginning to merge and spread, just like butter does on a hot plate. The bomb doors were open, and then there was a gentle upward thrust under my feet and Boz said 'Cookie gone.' A few seconds later, the incendiaries went, and *D-Dog* seemed lighter and easier to handle. I

began to breathe and to reflect again that all men would be brave if only they could leave their stomachs at home. . . .

"The navigator sang out the new course and we were heading home. I looked on the port beam at the target area. There was a red, solemn obscene glare. The fires seemed to have found each other. And we were heading home. Berlin was a kind of orchestrated hell, a terrible symphony of light and flame."

Eventually, of course, the "orchestrated hell" came to an end. The bombers stopped coming, first over London, then over Berlin. Murrow now described for his listeners the London he had known during the darkest days of the *blitz* as it felt the first tremors of peacetime. The tides of war at last kept Hitler's planes away from the British capital, never, as it turned out, to return again.

"There is a dim light in Europe now," said Murrow to his by now vast and loyal audience across the ocean in 1944.

"The blackout is gradually lifting. And when I leave this studio tonight I shall walk up a street in which there is light—not much, but more than there has been for five and a half years. You come to know a street pretty well in that time—the holes in the wooden paving blocks where the incendiaries burnt themselves out, the synagogue on the right, with the placard which has defied four winters, although it's a little tattered and smoke-stained. Tonight there'll be a street lamp just near there, and I shall be able to read the legend. 'Blessed is he whose conscience hath not condemned him, and who is not fallen from his hope in the Lord.' It is a street where in forty and forty-one the fires made the raindrops on the windows look like drops of blood on a mirror. It's an unimportant street

where friends died, and those who lived had courage to laugh. Tonight, I suppose the air raid shelters will be empty, but it will be possible for a man to walk this street without fear of hitting a lamp post or stumbling over a curb.

"Five years and three months since they turned out the lights in the streets! There won't be anything brilliant about the illuminating tonight, but each shaded street lamp will, for this reporter, be like a cathedral candle for those whose faith was greatest when the nights were darkest."

The following April, victory came to the Allies, as Hitler's armies surrendered and the European war ended.

Ed Murrow was soon to return to the United States, to an executive position at CBS, to make history in the development of documentary television and to receive dozens of awards, honors and citations. By the time he joined the United States Information Services, Edward R. Murrow was a living legend, one of the few American broadcasters who dared even to criticize his own employers when he felt they were wrong. He was to become, in a way, the conscience of the American broadcasting industry.

Murrow was not content, however, to live his life in a broadcasting studio or on a TV set. Wherever men were fighting—in Korea, in Suez or in Israel—somehow Ed Murrow and his camera crews were on the spot. Where the excitement was, that is where Murrow wanted to be, whether the action was to be found at Cape Canaveral (now Cape Kennedy), in Washington, or in some remote trouble spot overseas.

Ed Murrow was extremely proud of being called a "reporter"—he often referred to himself on the air as "this reporter"—not a "broadcaster" or "producer" or public

figure. Murrow had never worked on a newspaper (to the dismay of his colleagues early in his career), but he was a reporter to the toes in the finest sense of the word, for a quarter of a century.

Ed Murrow was rarely as happy at home in America as he was when he returned to London, the city whose tortures he had shared during World War II. He once said of wartime London, "I left all of my youth and much of my heart here."

Many of us remember Edward R. Murrow most clearly as we saw him on our TV sets, cigarette in hand, frowning, wishing us "Good night and good luck" at the close of a broadcast.

Among the transcripts of Murrow's London reports during the *blitz*, the following appears at the end of a radio talk he gave on December 24, 1940. As far as we know, this was the first time he said goodbye to his listeners in quite this way. Said Murrow:

"I should like to add my small voice to give my own Christmas greetings to friends and colleagues at home. 'Merry Christmas' is somehow ill-timed and out of place, so I shall just use the current London phrase—'so long and good luck.'"

So long, Edward R. Murrow.

3

THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN WITH THEIR WIRELESS MACHINES

The actual birth of broadcasting is difficult to pin down, unless one can be entirely specific about what one means by broadcasting. To illustrate in a humorous context, we are *absolutely certain* that the first all-Chinese language commercial radio program was broadcast on April 22, 1940, by KSAN, San Francisco, sponsored and directed by Thomas Tong of the Golden Star Radio Company of San Francisco. Or at least we *think* it was. This is a *fact* because it was recorded with care by historians at the time. In the early days of broadcasting, there were few historians around and no one was very interested in the keeping of broadcasting history. Everyone was too busy making it!

As far as we know, the first actual full sound radio broadcast was made by Dr. Fessenden in connection with his experiments, on December 24, 1906. A contemporary account records the event: "Early that evening wireless operators on ships within a radius of several hundred miles [of Brant Rock, Massachusetts] sprang to attention as they caught the call 'CQ, CQ' in Morse Code. Was it a ship in distress? They listened eagerly, and to their amazement, heard a human voice coming from their instruments—someone speaking! Then a woman's voice rose in song. It was uncanny! Many of them called to officers to come and listen; soon the wireless rooms were crowded. Next someone was heard reading a poem. Then there was a violin solo; then a man made a speech . . ."

The program, incidentally, attracted almost no attention whatsoever, largely because no one but maritime radio operators could hear it.

Lee DeForest, frequently called the "father of radio," was responsible for the next series of experiments in radio, among them on-the-spot broadcasts, if you consider singer Eugenia H. Farrar's warbling from a crude transmitter at the Brooklyn Navy Yard on December 16, 1907, as on-the-spot transmission. Again, although DeForest managed to get the Navy interested in his broadcasting device, Miss Farrar's talents were appreciated mostly by naval radio operators, and the event went almost unnoticed.

The next year, DeForest, determined now to stir up some interest on land as well as sea, brought his invention to Paris, France, and broadcast on the spot from the Eiffel Tower itself to a number of receiving stations awaiting his transmission—some as far away as Marseilles.

What did DeForest broadcast on this historic occasion in September of 1908? The great inventor was not con-

cerned much about programming at this point in his career, so, as his biographer tells us, he and his wife fed musical recordings to a Pathé talking machine. DeForest must have talked as well, identifying the point of origin of the broadcasts and asking the receiving stations to notify him if they heard his broadcasts. Many did. The experiment was a success, but again attracted little attention.

On January 13, 1910, DeForest, displaying much more showmanship now, established himself beyond doubt as the originator of on-the-spot broadcasting. He took his wireless machine to the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City where he broadcast an operatic double bill: *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, featuring Enrico Caruso, the leading tenor of his time and perhaps the greatest operatic tenor before or since then. DeForest's biographer says that listeners were stationed at DeForest's laboratory, the Metropolitan Life Building in New York City, a listening post at Newark and at a Times Square Hotel, among other places, and claims that reception was perfect. Reporters from the New York *Times*, *Sun* and *Herald* noted the event with an unexplained lack of enthusiasm and claimed that the broadcast was marred by fading voices, ticking of various kinds and profane interruptions from unidentified sources. Caruso himself was said to have been "slightly amused" at the crude telephone-style broadcasting equipment strung around the Met's vast stage.

Despite its cool reception, there is no question that the lengthy Metropolitan broadcast gave considerable impetus to the development of broadcasting. The word "radio" (derived from the Navy's use of the terms "radio telephony" and "radio telegraphy") began at about this

time to replace the term "wireless" in America (it never did in Great Britain) and came to mean the broadcasting of voices, sounds, and music, rather than dots and dashes, in the public's vocabulary.

Dots and dashes sent through the ether were, however, to be the medium for the next epochal event which was to give far more widespread publicity to this fantastic new invention than Caruso's tenor voice. Here was an episode which dramatized for the public the practical potentialities of the invention of broadcasting on a life or death basis!

David Sarnoff's reporting of the sinking of the new Cunard ocean liner *Titanic* in 1912 has become a legend in the annals of broadcasting history, a legend, incidentally, which has frequently been reported incorrectly by chroniclers of the industry.

General David Sarnoff is today chairman of the board of the Radio Corporation of America, many times a millionaire and seventy-eight years old. It is certain that he doesn't remember all the details of the event or care whether it is reported accurately each time it is retold. Some years later he recalled, "Much of the time I sat there with nothing coming in."

The place where Sarnoff was sitting was in a wireless studio in the old Wanamaker Building in New York City—not a quarter of a mile, incidentally, from the spot where Samuel Morse had invented the telegraph years before. Sarnoff was manning a wireless dot-and-dash installation for the Marconi Company in one of a number of department stores and public places that the firm had hoped would attract public curiosity about radio telegraphy. The date was April 14, 1912, and David Sarnoff was just twenty-three years old, a young-for-his-age but good-

looking living advertisement for the Marconi organization—which was all he was supposed to be.

He also was a crack telegrapher, and when he received a distress signal from the S.S. *Olympic* (not the *Titanic* itself, as many believe) stating "S.S. *Titanic* ran into iceberg, sinking fast," he knew what to do. He stayed on that key, non-stop, for the next seventy-two hours, picking up, mostly, the names of survivors who had been picked up by the *Olympic*, one of the two vessels that had come to the *Titanic*'s aid in her death throes.

After a Turkish bath, Sarnoff rushed to another Marconi station in Sea Gate, on the Brooklyn waterfront, where wireless communication between the other rescue vessel, the *Carpathania*, and the shore had been established. Again, Sarnoff took down the names of more survivors, and, as the tragic news of the loss of the supposedly "unsinkable" *Titanic* spread across the United States, the name of David Sarnoff, the Marconi Company and news of the miracle of wireless spread with it.

That Sarnoff's star immediately rose high in the ranks of the Marconi Company (and that it later rose even higher in the Radio Corporation of America which purchased the American branch of the Company) was no surprise, either to the aggressive, inventive, intelligent Sarnoff himself, or to his co-workers.

Our story now moves from New York City to the town of Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, about five miles from Pittsburgh. Here, in an unimposing wooden frame garage, Dr. Frank Conrad had built a radio station during World War I for the Army Signal Corps, neatly hidden away from the Westinghouse plant in Pittsburgh where Dr. Conrad was chief radio engineer. The station was secreted on Dr. Conrad's premises, one presumes, in fear of enemy inva-

sion. By coincidence it was also located where the inventive Dr. Conrad could tinker with it in his spare time.

Licensed as station 8XK, Conrad broadcast to all the neophyte radio listeners in the neighborhood, and, due to the excellence of his equipment, far beyond the immediate vicinity. Soon Conrad and his two young sons were actually putting on "radio programs" at regular intervals, playing phonograph records (in exchange for a "plug" given to a Pittsburgh Music Store), inviting talented neighbors over to sing, talk or tell jokes on 8XK.

Conrad's listening audience grew as Westinghouse (and other set manufacturers) flooded the market with "do it yourself" radio kits, crystal sets and primitive battery receivers. Local merchants even advertised that their equipment would definitely tune in the Conrad family, and local mechanics and department stores were delighted with 8XK. Conrad's listening audience grew, but his role as a one-man radio station wore on him.

The Westinghouse Company, of course, realized the potential of its chief engineer's time-consuming hobby and in 1920 moved Dr. Frank Conrad to a new broadcasting studio in the Westinghouse plant in East Pittsburgh. At first it was housed under a tent on the roof and finally in a tiny penthouse. The Department of Commerce assigned to the station the call letters KDKA. Conrad was now a *professional* broadcaster.

The station's first program transmitted the results of the Harding-Cox presidential election of 1920. No one seems to know who actually read the returns, because Dr. Conrad himself had run back to his garage at home by broadcast time to cover the new KDKA with his old equipment at 8XK, in case KDKA's transmitter failed to operate. Periods between election returns were filled in

with phonograph recordings and two (note: *two*) banjo players. The audience gathered around their receivers were primarily interested in who the next President of the United States was going to be, not in the entertainment.

From the night of November 2, 1920, through the next few years, almost everything Dr. Conrad did at KDKA made history. Modern radio broadcasting as we know it today was born in the next few months.

By January of 1921, Dr. Conrad was trying his inventive hand at on-the-spot broadcasting. His first remote pick-up was from a church—the Calvary Episcopal Church of Pittsburgh. In April of the year he had transmitted a boxing match from a local arena, and in August KDKA gave its listeners a genuine play-by-play description of a national league baseball game, involving Pittsburgh's home team, naturally.

Broadcasting fever began to seize the magnificent men with their wireless machines. This was a period of bold and enthusiastic experimentation. KDKA tried hoisting its antenna from a lighter-than-air balloon. It did not work. When band music created too much resonance in KDKA's indoor studio, technicians hustled the musicians into the station's old tent, and the music sounded just fine. Rain or shine thereafter, live bands had to broadcast from tents until sound engineers could construct a studio hung with enough sound-absorbent material to kill the echoes of the musical instruments. In addition, KDKA made certain that every visiting celebrity—politician, cabinet member or entertainer—who passed through Pittsburgh spoke on KDKA, including President Harding himself.

During that period when Conrad was the guiding spirit of KDKA, he developed many of the arts and crafts of

radio broadcasting. Under his aegis the profession of "radio announcer" was created. There is little question that the first full-time radio announcer (who did not, like Conrad, announce as well as perform a host of other duties around the studio) was a KDKA employee, Harold W. Arlin. This suave young man is also given credit for having broadcast the first on-the-spot account of a football game between the University of West Virginia and the University of Pittsburgh.

KDKA, it is claimed, was the first full-blown radio station in America—and it probably was, although evidence exists that from August of 1920 the Detroit *News* operated WWJ, preceding by some months the full-scale operation of the Westinghouse station. Other records show that Dr. Conrad's station was in operation—as KDKA—even before this. Evidence exists on both sides of the argument.

The matter is academic. While WWJ was responsible for a number of broadcasting innovations, no member of the Detroit station's management could equal the inventive genius of Dr. Frank Conrad of KDKA for finding new uses for the infant medium and in developing public involvement in broadcasting. Nor did WWJ seize every opportunity (the way KDKA did) to bring to the microphone novel voices, new sounds and new experiences. Conrad, remember, had spent many years before the microphone in that old garage, dreaming of what radio might one day become, and KDKA was his opportunity to make good.

One of the most amazing broadcasts of the time, though, did not come from KDKA, but instead from the fertile brain of David Sarnoff and was transmitted from another

station, WJY, which survived only its first broadcast. This happened in July 1921.

Sarnoff was by now general manager of RCA, and he conceived the idea of a ringside broadcast—in the manner originated in Pittsburgh by Conrad—of the world's championship heavyweight boxing match between Jack Dempsey and a French contender, the charming Georges Carpentier, not much of a fighter, but a colorful figure in the sports world. The fight was to be held in Jersey City, New Jersey, and Sarnoff could find no radio transmitter nearby to broadcast it.

To Major J. Harvey White, editor of the magazine *Wireless Age*, was assigned the task of accomplishing the impossible, the ringside broadcast of the Dempsey-Carpentier bout. First, he borrowed a transmitter which had just been built for the U. S. Navy by the General Electric Company but had not yet been delivered. Second, he hired two technicians to install the equipment. By the time of the opening bell in Jersey City, Major White was ready to begin his blow-by-blow description of the battle.

Major White was a nervous wreck by the time the fight started, according to his own testimony. Sitting like a mother hen over his broadcasting equipment, he had also been drenched to the skin by the time the contest started by intermittent showers which had passed over Jersey City all afternoon.

There are conflicting reports as to what happened next. One observer claims that White broadcast the fight directly from ringside by telephone to the engineer, J. O. Smith, at the transmitter site housed in a railroad shed outside the arena. The other story claims that Major White merely telephoned the results of each round to a typist

in the engineering shack and that Smith read the blow-by-blow reports over the air, giving credit for the broadcast to White.

Whichever story is true, Smith ended up temporarily blinded from staring at the hot tubes in the transmitter, and he severely burned his hand replacing an exploded element in the device. The fight lasted four rounds when the American champion knocked out the French boxer, but the transmitter had been turned on for several hours and was considerably the worse for wear when the contest was over.

Between two hundred and three hundred thousand people, incidentally, listened to the White-Smith description of the fisticuffs over the impromptu station, hastily christened WJY, Jersey City, New Jersey.

In nearby Newark, New Jersey, another station that was to make broadcasting history began operations the following October.

WJZ, owned by Westinghouse, was an epoch-making station. Situated more or less immediately across the river from New York, it had boundless opportunities to attempt on-the-spot broadcasts, although many of its famous "first" programs originated live in Newark. On the evening of February 19, 1922, for instance, the comedian Ed Wynn broadcast his current Broadway hit show, "The Perfect Fool," to a gathering of WJZ's engineers, telephone operators, scrubwomen and lackeys. They constituted the first radio "studio audience" most comedians on radio, including Wynn, felt were necessary to help them "time" their jokes.

Radio concerts by Vincent Lopez' popular orchestra from the WJZ studios had been well received from the station's earliest days. Lopez, an inventive gentleman, got

tired of crossing the river to Newark and eventually put pressure on WJZ's assistant program director Thomas Cowan to transmit the broadcasts live from the Hotel Pennsylvania Grill in New York City where Lopez and his band were working at that time. Western Union rigged a line across the river, and when the impending program was announced on the air (over WJZ, of course), "Within an hour," recalls Lopez, "telephone calls had soaked up every table reservation for the following evening—and the calls kept coming in that night and the next day . . .

" 'Vincent,' said E. M. Statler (the hotel's owner), 'I couldn't build business up like this in a thousand years of hard work. You did it in an hour. I think radio has some real possibilities.' It was the understatement of the century."

Over WJZ's transmitters in those pioneer times came the voices of the first radio stars of every kind. The famous commentator in later years, H. V. Kaltenborn, then a reporter for the Brooklyn *Eagle*, recalls in his autobiography a series of lectures on "current events" he gave over the station starting in April, 1922. Kaltenborn's memories provide some indication of the conditions broadcasters worked under in those days.

"The lack of sensitivity of the early microphones . . . made it necessary to control physical exuberance. Any turn of the head away from the carbon mike would make some words inaudible. For a few early broadcasts my head was placed in a frame, similar to that used by the old-fashioned photographers to prevent movement. This was so exasperating that I insisted on getting on without it. A chalk-marked square on the floor designated the area within which I had to keep my feet."

WJZ's manager, Charles B. Popenoe, was the man

mainly responsible for the introduction to the air waves of early radio celebrities like Jones and Hare, "The Happiness Boys," Bertha Brainard, the Broadway reviewer, and the silver-voiced Milton Cross (still an announcer to this day), who began his broadcasting career as a tenor. Popenoe and his assistant Cowan also experimented with new forms of radio broadcasting, imitating Lee DeForest's 1910 feat of broadcasting grand opera, but this time by bringing the opera company to the broadcasting studio in Newark—and with considerably more success.

Of course, Popenoe also sent his announcers and engineers to pick up remote prize fight contests in New York, and in August of 1922, his engineers even contrived to transmit a full band concert at Lewisohn Stadium in upper Manhattan. WJZ's greatest moment came when Popenoe secured permission to broadcast the World Series baseball games of 1922 between the New York Giants and the Yankees at the Polo Grounds in New York City. The Giants took the series, and gravel-voiced Grantland Rice, a noted sports writer (whose career in radio was to span the next decades until his death on July 13, 1954), conducted a play-by-play description of the game to WJZ's listening audience for five consecutive, thrill-packed afternoons. America was then, as she is now, a baseball-mad nation, and it was the rare professional ball game thereafter that was not given at least local coverage by radio.

By mid-year of 1922 there were well over three hundred radio stations operating in the United States. In those days they were licensed by the Department of Commerce, and each and every one of them had its own staff of originators and innovators, simply because *all* the people who ran *all* of the stations had one thing in common: none had had any experience as broadcasters!

Most of the radio outlets were built for financial profit (although experimental broadcasts were also attempted by scientific laboratories and universities), this profit construed to be whatever modest gains derived from encouraging the audience to buy the latest model radio receiver. Since radio receivers were unlikely to sell unless there were programs on the air, it was largely manufacturers of electronic equipment—like Westinghouse—who were interested in providing broadcasting services. They did not know that profit might also be gained from broadcasting in other ways, although some discussion of the possibility of government taxation on receivers to pay for broadcasting facilities and talent was discussed. (Such a system of taxation was shortly begun in both Great Britain and Canada.)

They also had other ideas about the financial future of radio. Hadn't the great David Sarnoff, among others, predicted that foundations, schools or colleges might subsidize this new medium and pay for programming entirely as a public service. Hadn't other wise men made their guesses that the radio listener might pay directly for the program service received, just as customers of the telephone company paid a flat rate for service and an additional sum for the specific calls they made? The main problem with these guesses, however, was that they didn't specify exactly who would pay the bill for radio broadcasting, why or—more important—exactly how! The broadcasters were unaware, therefore, not only of the many uses to which their own medium might be put but of its financial prospects as well.

They did know, however, that people were listening to them—hundreds of thousands of people, wearing earphones and tuning primitive crystal sets. The rising sale

of radio receivers and the volumes of mail broadcasters were receiving proved that an enormous audience was out there somewhere, and wise investors were flocking by the hundreds to what looked like a great new industry where millions were about to be made. The men with the wireless machines were on the brink of riches.

The trouble was that no one knew where the money was going to come from!

On the afternoon of August 28, 1922, between 5 and 5:10 P.M. in the downtown New York City studios of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company's twelve-day-old station WEAF, an event occurred which solved their problem beyond their wildest expectations.

4

RADIO GETS AROUND

On Wednesday, August 16, 1922, the call letters of station WEAF were heard over the air waves for the first time.

On August 28, 1922, WEAF's first announcer, Vischer A. Randall, introduced the first radio commercial! The station was paid the grand sum of $100 by a real estate developer in Queens, New York, a Mr. Blakewell, to read a ten-minute essay on the virtues of a housing project called "Hawthorne Court." The text of this program has been preserved elsewhere for posterity. Its theme concerned the great American writer of the nineteenth century, Nathaniel Hawthorne (so help us), and its lush prose blended gracefully into a pitch for suburban living in the borough of Queens.

Five real estate broadcasts followed, on five subsequent afternoons, and by the end of the next month an oil company and a travel agency were also paying WEAF to tell its radio audience of their virtues. Other stations around the United States followed the lead and began taking money for broadcasting advertising messages.

Commercial broadcasting did not emerge full blown into the American radio industry. Some business leaders resisted it; audience reaction against the intrusion of advertisements into broadcasting service was strong—just as it is today. Broadcasting leaders turned to advertising in the early nineteen-twenties, however, because it seemed the lesser evil when compared to the two other long range systems of financing radio in America, that is, toll broadcasting (whereby the listener would somehow pay directly for the radio service he received, as he now does for telephone service) or broadcasting subsidized by license fees on receivers and administered either by the government or by a government-chartered civil service agency.

Radio in America of the nineteen-twenties was something like a perpetual motion machine, an alchemist's formula for making gold or a game that hardly ever produced a loser. Broadcasters made fortunes, and advertisers were delighted to see their sales figures rise as the result of radio advertising. And the public—the public was enjoying the cream of American talent, listening to the miracle of radio bring history into their living rooms. One such miracle worker was Graham McNamee. In his modest way, he always seemed slightly surprised that he became, in the years between 1923 and 1927, one of the most famous men in America.

Few people knew what he looked like, but nearly everyone knew his name and recognized his voice. The fact that he was speaking to millions of Americans every time he

made a broadcast was a continuing source of near disbelief to the diffident McNamee in those early years. Yet he became America's greatest on-the-spot reporter of the period.

McNamee came to New York City from St. Paul with vague ideas of becoming a singer, or at least seeing what the big city, in the age of rags-to-riches stories, had in store for this good looking, slightly built youngster. He possessed a modicum of education, little marketable talent and highly uncertain ambitions.

McNamee was born in Washington, D.C. on July 10, 1888. His first job was as a clerk for the Rock Island Railroad at St. Paul. Then he became a salesman for Armour & Co., meanwhile continuing his study of music. He made his debut as a baritone in Aeolian Hall in New York in 1920 and sang on the concert stage in most of the large cities of the country. However, one day in 1923, with the world certainly not on fire from his singing, he found himself without funds and without engagements.

The way McNamee told it, he was walking down Broadway in New York during the month of May in 1923 after a daily stint on jury duty when he passed the A T and T building where WEAF had just moved its studios. Although he had rarely listened to any radio broadcasts, McNamee felt impelled to ask the elevator boy if he could take a look at the new studios. "Sure," said the operator, and he took the young man up to the fourth floor. There, in about the time it takes to tell it, it seems he was auditioned and hired on the spot by Samuel L. Ross, WEAF's program manager who just happened to be looking for someone like McNamee to fill an announcing job on the station. Those were the days when an announcer was pretty much an all-round song and patter man.

Thus do some men have fame and fortune thrust upon

them! Not a reflective person, rarely during his career did McNamee wonder what would have become of him if the elevator man at 195 Broadway had been in a sour mood that day and decided not to take him to the studio, or if he had just kept walking down Broadway.

For the next four years, though, the story of the rise of the career of Graham McNamee and the story of on-the-spot broadcasting are one and the same.

At first, McNamee's experience centered on studio announcing, but his first on-the-spot job was a middleweight bout between Harry Greb and Johnny Wilson on August 23, 1923, shortly after he was hired. He had heard some of Major White's broadcasts, and he was, in his own words, "a very frightened young man who was to broadcast his first, detail by detail, to millions of people" from New York's Polo Grounds.

According to McNamee, "For a second there flashed through my mind the question, 'What was I going to tell all those listening people who I couldn't see and who couldn't see the fight? Simply to say, 'Greb hits Wilson; Wilson hits Greb; Greb hits Wilson again' would be 'blah'; wouldn't interest anybody."

What did he say? He talked. McNamee knew a little about boxing and could distinguish a left hook from a straight right, and so he tried to keep up with the details of the match. At the same time he concentrated on the expressions on the fighters' faces, how they looked and moved and sounded from ringside, the reaction of the audience and the dynamic nature of the sporting event itself.

"Between rounds, like the fighters," said McNamee, "I breathed a little easier. Before the fight I had written, rather self-consciously, a good many sheets on the crowd,

for I knew what it would be like. Now I tore them all up and got down to brass tacks—the real thing. And there was a lot of color in that crowd around me—the sea of faces, the towering stands, the endless rows of spectators, some in coats, others in shirt sleeves, the black varied with white, strangely like the many tiers of keys on a gigantic organ . . ."

It was hardly Pulitzer Prize prose, but McNamee's voice was smooth and authoritative, and he learned that an on-the-spot radio announcer must *keep talking* no matter what happened, and that there was always *something* to talk about. McNamee's listeners obviously ate up every word as he reported events from ringside, bleacher seat, dockside, or parade stand.

"Now they are up again, approaching each other warily, stalking each other like panthers—then diving in—a head jerked back—jerked back so quickly you thought you could hear it snap—a look of pain from Greb, quickly covered by a smile, Wilson down on one knee—the count—up again—now listen to the shouts and shrieks of the crowd—now more flying fists—and a fierce rally the pandemonium of Hell unloosed . . ."

Finally, it was all over. "I expected Greb to win," recalled McNamee, "and when, later, Wilson landed on Greb's head with a terrific blow, and Greb's knees wobbled, with a knockout almost in sight, my jaw flew open with his, like a nut cracker and I was so excited that for a few seconds I couldn't speak into the microphone."

But McNamee recovered his composure and managed to talk—as he always did—for minutes, hours or days on end, if necessary.

Having cut his teeth on a prizefight, McNamee's superiors at WEAF assigned him to "backstop" and assist the

star reporter they had hired to broadcast the 1923 World Series between the Giants and the Yankees, namely "Bill" McGeehan, sports editor of the New York *Herald*, one of the outstanding authorities on baseball in the country. What the *Herald*'s editor possessed in expertise he lacked in lung power. Poor McGeehan lasted through the fourth inning of the third game, and for the remaining contests of the series (which the Yankees won) Graham McNamee was at the microphone calling the plays.

Reprising the difference between a conventional newsman and a radio announcer, McNamee noted in these early days that "there is a marked difference between the newspaper and radio reporter. Although some of the former's work must be done in haste and on the spot, he still has time to absorb, to let impressions sink in, and he isn't bothered *with having to talk all the time.*"

McNamee was well aware of the secret of his own success.

Talk he did when assigned to cover President Coolidge's report to Congress in December of 1923. Speaking from the cellar of the Capitol (where the president's voice from the Senate Chamber above was piped in by wire), McNamee introduced Coolidge on the air. While the latter was talking, however, the announcer thought of all the people who might have tuned in late and took careful notes on the speech. Then when it was over, he reviewed the talk, reading his notes from the back of an old envelope, commenting here and there on what was said. Listener response was enthusiastic.

Now McNamee was a political expert, to his own surprise more than anyone else's! Again, he had proved his mettle by not knowing when to keep quiet.

So expert was he in the political area by now that

McNamee was next assigned by WEAF to cover both the Republican and Democratic nominating conventions of 1924. Not only were his broadcasts going to be transmitted by A T and T's New York outlet, but a chain of eighteen other stations were fed (and broadcast) the programs, blanketing much of America. It was probable that as many as twenty-five million Americans would now hear young Graham McNamee's voice.

McNamee's only radio competitor at the conventions was Major Andrew White, veteran of the Dempsey-Carpentier fight of 1921, who was broadcasting for only two stations, WJZ in New York and WGY in Schenectady. RCA was playing a soft second-fiddle to McNamee and the telephone-telegraph group. Hardly anyone in America knew that Major White was on the air during the conventions.

The way Graham McNamee told it, the conventions were his indoctrination into radio under fire. The Republican convention from Cleveland lasted three days and nominated President Coolidge, who had taken office on the death of President Harding the previous year. The job was simple for McNamee, whose main concern seemed to be turning off microphones around the auditorium which various delegates did not know were "on the air" during their private conversations.

The Democratic convention in New York City's old Madison Square Garden (on Madison Square) was a different story! It lasted fifteen days in the heat of late June; McNamee averaged sixteen hours a day behind the microphone, ad-libbing for long periods as demonstrations for the outstanding candidates Smith, McAdoo, Underwood and Davis filled the massive hall; as delegates fought over political, religious and economic issues and the numerous

dissenters in the Democratic party tried every political trick in the book to prevent their own special candidate from being defeated. In the end, John W. Davis won the Democratic nomination on the 103rd ballot, only to be defeated roundly at the polls the next November by tight-lipped Coolidge who had been nominated so easily and quickly in three days in Cleveland.

"Fifteen days of convention," said McNamee later both of himself and the delegates, "mixed with a lot of sight-seeing might have been pleasant; but fifteen days spent in one hall, with no relaxation or relief in sight . . . got on the nerves. Not being able to leave my booth often, I had to rely on sandwiches myself, and in the years that have passed, I am not able to look at two pieces of bread face to face."

McNamee and the Democratic party were both in pretty poor shape by the end of the convention of 1924, but radio had brought a new dimension to American life. Political conventions were never the same again now that the great American public was privy to their operation.

Wrote the *Saturday Evening Post*, "The Democratic Convention was held in New York, but all America attended it . . . it [radio] gives events of national importance a national audience."

Said McNamee, in a report to his superiors at WEAF, "I wasn't overweight when I started announcing the convention and I lost eight valuable pounds in that little glass enclosed booth . . . There was plenty of excitement and some of the things that happened will never be forgotten. One of them was that Smith demonstration featuring a four-foot siren only three feet away which pumped several horsepower of noise into my ear . . . I suppose I will be hearing it in my sleep forever after."

Tempered in the fire of political conventions, Coolidge's inaugural the following March was a simple assignment for McNamee. Twenty-one stations took part in the A T and T network; RCA had added just one more, WRC, Washington, to its tiny WJZ-WGY chain. McNamee's only problem was that he found himself lost at one point and couldn't find his way back to his broadcasting booth located on the pedestal of one of the statues by the Capitol's steps.

Having finally located it, a policeman succeeded in barring his way for ten minutes before he could convince the cop that he was *the* Graham McNamee who was supposed to be broadcasting the inauguration. McNamee made it to his microphone just in time to start describing the scene when Coolidge began taking the oath, administered by portly Supreme Court Justice William Howard Taft. McNamee was smart enough, at that point, to shut up and let the audience of millions hear the President's reply. The latter's voice was so low, however, that McNamee claimed that he had to answer numerous inquiries afterward, replying that the President's response to Taft's question was, "I do." By this time, when an event of national importance occurred, the American public just naturally expected Graham McNamee to be there to describe it for them.

In the summer of 1926, McNamee got a new employer. RCA purchased the radio holdings of A T and T, which included WEAF and its network, for $1,000,000. The telephone company, never really interested in broadcasting, was convinced it could make larger profits leasing its lines to networks than running stations. It was probably right, as its subsequent profits from line leasing were enormous.

The Radio Corporation of America now had control of the two leading stations in New York City, WEAF and WJZ, the latter having been moved from New Jersey to Manhattan. Using the telephone company's links, the two stations actually represented flagships of the network's two national arms, the "red" network (including WEAF and its old affiliates) and the "blue" network (with the venerable, powerful WJZ in New York and a rapidly expanding group of affiliated stations anxious to share its programming—and its commercial profits).

So the National Broadcasting Company, America's largest broadcasting complex, was born as an offshoot of RCA, which still kept its own interests in the production of electronic equipment and various business activities in other areas of the communications field.

RCA was, of course, properly appreciative of the talent —as well as of equipment—that it had purchased from A T and T. Included in this package of talent was Graham McNamee. It was as a silver-tongued announcer for the National Broadcasting Company that McNamee went on to further fame not only as an on-the-spot broadcaster but also as a top-notch studio performer, even achieving status during the nineteen-thirties as straight man for comedian Ed Wynn on Wynn's weekly comedy program—one of the most popular and fondly remembered of its day.

In May of 1927 a young American, Charles A. Lindbergh, flew alone in his monoplane "The Spirit of St. Louis" across the vast Atlantic ocean. Lindbergh became a world-wide hero, was transported back to the United States on a battleship and was welcomed personally by the President of the United States in a ceremony, the likes of which has occurred neither before nor since. All

America loved "Lindy the Lone Eagle," and that day in Washington belonged to Charles A. Lindbergh alone.

If one looked carefully at the colorful ceremonies, he might spot a lone announcer in the fringe of the crowd speaking into an NBC microphone, describing the event, the crowds, the music, the handshakes, the back-slapping and the general geniality.

There was Graham McNamee, broadcasting to the combined audiences of the "red" and the "blue" networks, not making history but standing right beside it, talking, talking, talking. . . .

Graham McNamee died of an embolism of the brain in St. Luke's Hospital in New York on May 9, 1942, a comparatively young man at the age of fifty-three.

5

VOICES FROM EVERYWHERE

January, 1927, was the first time the nation was actually united by wireless broadcasting from coast to coast. NBC broadcast an on-the-spot program of that year's Rose Bowl football game from Palo Alto, California, on the entire network. The game was aired by all the NBC affiliates, and the hook-up used more than 3,500 miles of telephone wires. Listeners in New York could hear the action in California over WEAF as clear as a bell. The radio networks now literally covered the nation.

Nineteen twenty-seven also saw the beginnings of a rival network which had the temerity to develop literally under the nose of NBC.

William S. Paley created a miraculous empire out of the

Columbia Broadcasting System. It was not born overnight. Whereas RCA's two NBC networks were the end result of years of broadcasting experience of skilled men like Owen Young, its chairman, and David Sarnoff, CBS' guiding genius, Paley, stepped from a cigar factory into broadcasting literally overnight. The young Philadelphian was driven by a fantastic faith in the future of radio (a faith he himself did much to justify) and the determination to put CBS on the map. His degree of success, financial and cultural, is beyond dispute. Probably no *one* American in his time has left his own particular stamp on our society as quietly, as universally, as subtly and as indelibly as William S. Paley.

Among the people attracted to CBS was a young, brash announcer named Ted Husing. Husing was no Graham McNamee. A New York boy and graduate of Stuyvesant High School, Husing, like Paley, had absolute faith in the future of the wireless and wanted to broadcast football games and take his microphone to wherever the action was.

Husing broke into broadcasting in 1925 at WJZ, trained further at RCA's station WRC in Washington, and deserted WJZ in 1927 for United Broadcasting, which then became CBS. Shortly thereafter, Floyd Bennett, a famous American pilot who had flown with the arctic explorer Admiral Byrd, died in an air search for a team of German pilots. In the pouring rain, after getting the approval of the bereaved widow to cover Bennett's funeral for the radio audience, Husing ad-libbed for one hour before Bennett's funeral cortege, unexpectedly delayed, arrived on the scene, trying to keep his microphone dry with a sopping handkerchief. They carried Husing away from the Arlington cemetery with a temperature of 103°, but the

coup he had engineered was a feather in the cap of the new network.

Another Husing "scoop" was the arrival of the great German dirigible the *Graf Zeppelin* on its first transatlantic trip from Europe. As Husing himself told it, "I was to broadcast an eyewitness account. They rushed me to our new contract station WABC, then in Steinway Hall at Fifty-seventh Street [in New York] and Sixth Avenue. There I stood, on a broad ledge twenty stories above the street, often grabbing window washers' handles and leaning out to look up at the great dirigible.

"Once when backing, with my eyes on the airship, I tripped over the trailing wire of the microphone. Rush Hughes, the son of Rupert Hughes, saw my danger. Hooking one arm around the window sash, with the other he grabbed me around the knees. With that support I toppled back to safety, but it was the narrowest escape I ever had."

Husing was to spend his life in front of a microphone, even in the later years of his life, when illness had wracked his body, but this was the kind of derring-do that he enjoyed most—on-the-spot reporting and the skillful, still memorable re-creation of sporting events.

Considerable radio coverage of different kinds was given the arrival of the *Graf Zeppelin.* Not content with a reporter hanging twenty stories above the street, CBS also employed an airplane christened the "Flying Telephone Booth," a four-seater Fairchild outfitted by the Bell Laboratory for the purpose of broadcasting spot news from a bird-like vantage point above the earth. (NBC was not to be outdone. Her ace reporter, Max Jordan, was a passenger on the *Graf Zeppelin* and broadcast his experiences first person after landing.)

Boarding the plane at Hadley Field was the good-natured ace announcer Norman Brokenshire. For awhile the trip was a fiasco. The plane landed at Lakehurst, where the *Graf Zeppelin* was supposed eventually to moor, in order to refuel the small craft. Then off they went again, with Brokenshire making periodic reports to the CBS network on how it felt to sit in an airplane and see nothing but clouds. "Fortunately," he reported many years later, "people flying around in the sky were still sufficiently fantastic to the general public to make good subject matter." And Norman Brokenshire, the clever, genial and popular radio personality, was a joy to listen to, on the ground or in the air.

Suddenly, however, the pilot located the *Graf Zeppelin.* Brokenshire told it this way in his book *This Is Norman Brokenshire.*

"The pilot of the 'Flying Telephone Booth' banked around, dropping down to a position alongside the dirigible. For all the fiction about pilots, that they were unearthly creatures incapable of emotion and without nerves, this one, excited to have hit the mark, let himself fly so close to the gondola in which Dr. Eckner [the captain of the dirigible] stood that, when he opened a sliding window panel and I did the same, hollering greetings, I felt as though I could reach out and shake hands. What the studio relayed as the voice of Dr. Hugo Eckner, greeting the world from American shores, must actually have been a blend of whirling propellers and eddying winds; I did speak to him, however, passing on what I read from his lips to millions of listeners."

Brokenshire was right. Almost anything having to do with aviation was of interest to the radio audience in the

late twenties and early thirties. Abe Schechter, who was in charge of NBC news at this time, described a historic on-the-spot broadcast for which he was responsible, and which didn't turn out exactly as he planned it:

"Parachutes and parachutists having been in the news considerably," said Schechter, "I was receptive when a parachute jumper came in to see me and suggested a novel idea for a broadcast. With the necessary apparatus, including a microphone affixed to his person, he proposed to leap from a high altitude and describe his descent for the benefit of the radio audience . . .

"I never had a chance to find out how the radio audience liked the parachute jumper's description of his trip earthward. For there was no description. My parachutist, unafraid to leap into space from an altitude of over ten thousand feet, had developed mike fright; his vocal chords were practically paralyzed and he was unable to utter a single word during his whole descent."

Neither Brokenshire nor Husing had much to do with broadcasting from airplanes again. The former became a studio announcer and the latter focused his attention on sportscasts.

As the nineteen-twenties ended and the thirties began, the trivial side of on-the-spot broadcasting, the hunting after incoming dirigibles, the coverage of ball games, races, and sporting events began to take a second place to the coverage of increasingly numerous grim events closer to the lives of the American public. Not only the Depression at home but its effects overseas in Europe and the Orient were slowly awakening a nation, anesthetized by the prosperity of the roaring twenties, to the unhappy realities of a world moving through the Depression inevitably toward World War II.

True, the stunt men were still finding new places to bring their microphones. Two years after the stock market crash, Gertrude Ederle, the first female to swim the English Channel back in 1926, reported to a radio audience what it was like to ride an aquaplane while skimming the waves herself.

If a microphone could travel into the sky, and on an aquaplane, why couldn't it also descend into the very deeps of the ocean? In the early thirties, Americans heard the famous naturalist and explorer William Beebe say to them from his bathysphere 2,200 feet below sea level:

"It is absolutely black. Now there are fish two or three feet away . . . It is the most amazing thing now: the amount of life down here. It must be the normal illuminescence of the creatures . . . Here comes loads of little—I don't know what they are—I never saw anything like them." And then, to his tugboat above, "Let's go down some more!" According to Abe Schechter, this broadcast cost NBC a fortune.

Radio was, however, proving itself as an equally versatile medium for covering important on-the-spot news events. In 1930, three hundred and twenty convicts were killed in a devastating fire which consumed the Ohio State Penitentiary. The radio networks covered the event from station WAIU in Columbus. Ted Husing recalled, "None of us were prepared for the horror of it. The Columbus announcers didn't have to throw any synthetic emotion into their voices that night . . . they were so sickened by what they were witnessing. The horror broadcast itself. We heard the roar and crackling of the flames, the shouts of the firemen, the oaths, and trusties and guards trying to effect rescues, sometimes even the distant screams of the poor rats trapped in their cells."

Here the unexpected drama of history had found its way into millions of American living rooms. Other far more fearful conflagrations were to be reported by radio in the coming years, but in the spring of 1930 the Ohio State Penitentiary broadcast was unique and pointed to the way radio broadcasting was to handle the coverage of natural and man-made disaster.

During the early nineteen-thirties, there appeared upon the scene radio's first international correspondent, a dashing and romantic character who couldn't have fit his role more perfectly if he had been discovered by Hollywood's Central Casting Agency. His name was Floyd Gibbons. Gibbons was handsome, over six feet tall and brought to a stranger the immediate sense of adventure. He wore a white patch over his left eye socket, having lost the eye in World War I. Gibbons had been everywhere and done everything, from riding with Pancho Villa in Mexico to exploring the wilderness of Africa, and he knew how to spin his adventures into breathtaking yarns, to the delight of his NBC audience, as Floyd Gibbons, "Your Headline Hunter."

Floyd Gibbons died September 24, 1939, after an up and down career in broadcasting, marked by hirings and firings, practical joking and the same kind of devil-may-care attitude he affected toward his self-made role as an ace foreign correspondent. It was Gibbons, however, who brought American radio its first taste of war in 1932. The Japanese had invaded Manchuria, and Gibbons was there on the spot with an eyewitness report and, most important, the actual sounds of Japanese guns firing at the Chinese masses. Radio had entered the world of international conflict with the boom of those guns.

Floyd Gibbons liked to be known as a war correspondent, radio commentator and foreign news editor. He was born in Washington, D.C., July 16, 1887, and when he was eleven, he was enrolled as a cadet at Gonzaga College in Washington. Having had further public schooling in Des Moines, Iowa, and Minneapolis, he attended the preparatory department of Georgetown University in Washington, from which he was dismissed for a prank he committed in his fourth year of high school.

Floyd went west and secured a job shoveling coal at Tucca, North Dakota, and when possible, he helped the editor of the local weekly. The desire to be a reporter grew strong and he pursued this ambition.

In 1907, he became a reporter for the *Daily News* in Minneapolis. He had successive positions on the Milwaukee *Free Press* in 1909, the Minneapolis *Tribune* in 1910, the socialist *Evening World* in Chicago in 1912 and finally at the Chicago *Tribune* at the age of twenty-five. The *Trib* sent him to cover troop movements along the Mexican border in 1914 and later he covered his first battle there. Gibbons struck up a friendship with Pancho Villa, who outfitted a boxcar for the reporter and attached it to his headquarters train. Later in 1916, Gibbons accompanied Pershing's primitive expedition against Villa.

The Gibbons name had now become synonymous with adventure, violence and flamboyance. As London correspondent for the Chicago *Tribune*, he was aboard the *Laconia* when it was sunk by a U-boat on February 25, 1917. His 4000-word account of the event was printed throughout the country and quoted in Congress. On June 13, 1917, during World War I, he crossed to France with General Pershing's staff and while assisting a wounded

officer at the battle of Belleau Wood he was injured. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre and made an officer in the French Legion of Honor.

Gibbons reported the Irish Revolution in 1919, the Polish-Russian warfare in 1920, the French-Riff hostilities in 1925, the Polish Revolution in 1926, the Japanese War in Manchuria in 1932, the Italian-Ethiopian war in 1935 and the Spanish Civil War in 1936. He was a popular lecturer across the country and went into movies and vaudeville in addition to radio.

As early as 1930, CBS and NBC had broadcast the voice of King George V formally opening the five-power Naval Disarmament Conference in London, and in 1932 both networks covered, by direct broadcasts, the World Disarmament Conferences in Geneva, Switzerland.

In addition, the famous and infamous men and women who were making history for the first time spoke from afar to the entire public via radio. Benito Mussolini, the Italian Fascist dictator, spoke in a halting English to the American nation in 1931, to say, "I should like to contradict rumors spread abroad on the attitude taken by Fascism and the danger it is supposed to represent to the world. Such accusations are groundless! Neither I, nor my government, nor the Italian people desire to bring about another war . . . A war nowadays inevitably would become a general war. Civilization itself would be endangered . . . Italy, let me repeat, will never take the initiative in starting a war!"

Another voice from Italy, translated on the air by the then Monsignor Francis I. Spellman, spoke far more sensibly and prophetically about the years to come. Said Pope Pius XI to the American people on Lincoln's birthday, 1931, "To all creation . . . being the first Pope to

make use of this truly wonderful Marconian invention, we, in the first place, turn to all things and all men and we say to them: Hear O ye Heavens, the things I speak: let the nations give ear to the words of my mouth; hear these things all ye nations; give ear all ye inhabitants of the world, both rich and poor together and harken ye people from afar . . ."

Yes, the radio audience in the United States was beginning to get used to hearing voices—not only the voices of broadcasters, entertainers and celebrities, but voices of the men who were to shape their destiny and make history their plaything.

From Berlin there came the voice of the paranoid Adolph Hitler, speaking to an auditorium filled with 20,000 Nazi party members. "The individual inventor or organizer of human achievement in all ages has been the leader of mankind," ranted *Der Führer.* "It was always the man and not democracy that created values in centuries gone by when democracy destroyed or annihilated the value of individual effort . . . It is sheer madness to assume that the majority can suddenly replace the achievements of the individual . . . If Germany was saved from going to pieces, it was because the defenders of democratic principles were so completely below average, so inferior and dwarflike as to make them unfit to be leaders . . . Our program is the direct contrary of their program of madness and insanity."

Not only were the happy-go-lucky years of prosperity and good cheer finished at home, but the many voices from overseas gave the radio listener much to ponder in the seclusion of his living room. How was his life and the life of his family and friends involved in the blast of guns from Manchuria and the puzzling words from Rome,

Berlin and elsewhere? Was economic disaster at home to be the *least* of his fears for the future?

Two days after Hitler had blasted democracy on the nation's networks as decadent, a new American president took the oath of office on the steps of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. His name was Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The presidential inaugural parade was covered by the networks as an on-the-spot broadcast. However, NBC, for the first time in broadcasting, hired a black limousine and made it an inconspicuous part of the parade. In the limousine was special events newsman George Hicks, broadcasting his impressions as part of the parade. "Prior to this," says Abe Schechter, "reporters were at stationary posts of advantage. Here for the first time, we had mobile coverage."

And millions of citizens, their nerves weakened by three years of depression, uncertain in their hearts about the future and distrustful of their own capacity to survive in a world inclining toward the brink of madness, harkened to the voice of FDR and gained strength and assurance from it.

Millions of us still can hear it in the quiet of our inner selves, as we heard over the radio that March day in 1933:

"Let me assert my firm belief," it said, "that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance . . ."

The great man of American on-the-spot radio broadcasting had arrived at the microphone.

6

"WE ARE BROADCASTING FROM . . ."

Radio had been a political tool for American presidents since Calvin Coolidge broadcast a speech to the National Republican Club in 1924 at the Hotel Waldorf Astoria in New York City. Ten days later Coolidge, whose preference was to keep quiet rather than to talk, addressed the public once more by radio from his study in the White House.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was not the first American president to realize the power broadcasting had to sway public opinion. He was, however, the first president to use it well. His predecessor, Herbert Hoover, had made ninety-five radio "appearances" during the years between 1929 and 1932, just nine less than Roosevelt made during his

first four years in office. But the American public was not very moved by Hoover's oratory. FDR's speeches, on the other hand, are studied and commented upon by politicians and scholars to this day.

According to reporter Ben Gross, the concept of the fireside chat originated in the mind of Merlin H. Aylesworth, president of NBC, who suggested it to Louis Howe, Roosevelt's close friend and secretary, early in FDR's presidential career. Howe sold the idea to the president who must have guessed that he possessed the skill to carry it off.

The first fireside chat was broadcast eight days after FDR took office, in the midst of the "bank holiday" declared by Roosevelt which had closed all the banks in the country and made it impossible for most Americans to touch their own financial savings. Roosevelt's first words at his first White House broadcast indicate immediately how he intended to use radio as an instrument to mold public opinion and facilitate his drastic policies. "I want to talk for a few minutes," began the new president, "with the people of the United States about *banking* . . ."

Roosevelt's fireside chats were actually broadcast from a basement room in the executive mansion that did not have a fireplace. Called the Oval Room, and occasionally used for diplomatic receptions, the chamber was, on this first evening, outfitted with temporary booths for the announcers (one for NBC; one for CBS) and a comfortable desk suitably strewn with souvenirs and curios, for the benefit of photographers and the bank of newsreel cameras which would photograph FDR's reenactment of his talk once he had finished his broadcast. And, of course, a jumble of microphones faced the president, live ones and spares.

Here about fifty people gathered, including radio personnel, photographers, members of Roosevelt's personal and official family and various other favored intimates. What made each fireside chat unique for the listening audience, of course, was partly the president's ability to simplify the complex issues of government into logical and sensible ideas that the average citizen could follow, and partly that FDR gave each listener the feeling that he was talking directly and exclusively to *him.*

Notice, for example, how cleverly FDR approached the complex issue of America's fiscal policy on the evening of that first fireside chat:

"After all," said the president, "there is an element in the readjustment of our financial system more important than currency, more important than gold, *and that is the confidence of the people.*

"*Confidence and courage* are the essentials of success in carrying out our plan. You people must have *faith;* you must not be stampeded [to the banks when they reopen] by rumors and guesses. Let us *unite* in banishing fear. *We* have provided the machinery for restoring our financial system; it is up to *you* to support and make it work.

"It is your problem no less than it is mine. Together we cannot fail!"

Thus were the people of the United States drawn into a partnership with their government in taking action actually to *do* something about the spectre of depression that walked the land. And the radio networks which blanketed the nation were the devices by which this partnership was to be consummated for the next dozen years of the Roosevelt administration.

Some months after FDR started his fireside chats, the

number of temporary announcer's booths in the Oval Room rose to three. A new network had been created in September, 1934, to compete with NBC and CBS—the Mutual Broadcasting System.

In the early thirties, all sources of news-gathering for newspapers were closed to radio broadcasters. They could use neither the Associated Press, United Press, nor the International News Service for purposes of broadcasting, nor was a radio newscaster even allowed to read a news item from a daily newspaper on the air. Because of this state of affairs, Paul White of CBS and Abe Schechter of NBC found themselves in particularly difficult positions, having to cover the news of the day without any news bureau service sources and frequently without any reporters in the field.

Paul White at the time was Director of Publicity at CBS, having come to the network by way of the United Press. Abe Schechter was Director of Publicity at NBC, having had a background with the Associated Press, International News Service and various newspapers. Both men were made Directors of News and Special Events at their respective networks.

White solved the problem of news-gathering by developing the CBS-News organization, with its own staff of reporters stationed in the United States and overseas, an arm of the broadcasting network which eventually grew to considerable proportions and developed many of the major radio and TV newsmen of the nineteen-thirties and forties. Schechter also built a news staff of more than a hundred people, helped make the Lowell Thomas news program famous, and put a great deal of reliance on the telephone as well. "In those strange days of the press-radio war, I considered the telephone the greatest inven-

tion the world had ever known," wrote Schechter in 1941, long after the press services and radio broadcasters had come to terms and pooled their resources.

These two men are credited with having invented much of what we now call electronic journalism. Paul White and Abe Schechter made broadcast reporting mature and it carried over to television. Credit must also be given to Johnny Johnstone of Mutual. White and Schechter pioneered in the techniques of broadcast news writing, quite different from the cumbersome style of the printed page. They put together international news-gathering organizations in opposition to the newspaper press associations.

Schechter stayed with NBC from 1932 to 1942 when he left for active service in World War II. He was a lieutenant colonel in the U. S. Army Air Corps in charge of Army Air Force Radio in Washington, D.C., 1942-43. He then left Washington to join General MacArthur's general headquarters in the southwest Pacific area until the end of the war in 1945 where he was in charge of radio and press transmission for war correspondents assigned to GHQ. After the war, he was Vice-President of the Mutual Broadcasting System from 1945 to 1950. Today, he is president of A. A. Schechter Associates, Inc., in New York. Many of his NBC experiences are reported in his lively book *I Live on Air*, written with Edward Anthony. It was Schechter who was responsible for the exclusive NBC broadcasts of the fall of Shanghai and Nanking during the Sino-Japanese war and the bombing of the United States gunboat *Panay*. Schechter had also arranged the scoop, discussed later on in this book, by which James Bowen broadcast the scuttling of the Nazi battleship *Graf Spee*.

Paul White ended his days in semi-retirement at KFMB

in San Diego, California. Having joined CBS in 1930, he organized the Columbia News Service in 1933. He was convinced about the inevitability of World War II. He organized the best news staff he could find and it served to inform the American public well.

Paul White resigned from CBS after the war, broken in health. He wrote *News on the Air*, still considered one of the best texts on broadcast journalism.

When Paul W. White died on July 9, 1955, Frank Stanton, CBS president, said of him, "The public as well as radio and television newsmen the world over owe Paul White real tribute for his great leadership in pioneering the patterns of electronic journalism as we know it today. His contributions to the finest traditions in reporting will stand as a mark for others to live and work by."

Charles Collingwood in eulogizing Paul White on a CBS news program said, ". . . and what there is of comprehensiveness, accuracy and integrity in the news you get on radio and television owes much to Paul White."

In the early nineteen-thirties America heard many kinds of on-the-spot broadcasts over the airwaves, many of them exciting, some frequently tragic, lurid, sensational and heartbreaking as well.

"Heartbreaking" is the word to describe the kidnapping of the infant son of Charles A. Lindbergh, the young adventurer and aviator who, since his solo flight across the Atlantic in 1927, had been living in the limelight of publicity day and night, virtually a national hero.

Lindbergh himself was a shy man. He neither courted nor enjoyed the adulation that the public had heaped upon him so lavishly because of his history making transatlantic solo flight. He nevertheless accepted quietly his role as a public figure, married the rich and talented

writer Anne Morrow, and tried as best he could to keep out of the public's view while carrying on scientific experiments and working on various business projects. He and Mrs. Lindbergh hoped to find some seclusion in their home at Hopewell, New Jersey, at the time an isolated rural area.

Then on March 1, 1932, Lindbergh's baby son was kidnapped! The details of the sordid crime are of no concern to us here. The baby was found some ten weeks later in a roadside thicket—dead. After many well-publicized wild goose chases after the kidnapper, a suspect, Bruno Richard Hauptmann, was at last arrested in September, 1934. He was tried in Flemington, New Jersey, in 1935 and electrocuted for the kidnapping and murder of the infant in April of 1936.

What *does* concern us, of course, is the attention which the American public gave the crime, the Lindberghs, the accused kidnapper and the cast of characters involved in the case which included the baby's nurse, a colonel of the New Jersey state police and many other individuals whom fate had thrown temporarily into the national spotlight as a result of their role in the event or in attempting to apprehend the kidnapper and bring him to justice.

Naturally and unfortunately, the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby and the events that followed it were headline news stories in every newspaper in the world. Radio networks sent their reporters to each and every location involved in the unsavory episode. Newspaper and radio reporters gathered at the trial of Bruno Hauptmann, and they stayed mercilessly on the story until Hauptmann himself was put to death in the electric chair and the morbid curiosity of the audience was finally diverted by other more grisly horror stories.

Two remarkable radio personalities emerged from the reporting of the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby, and both have their place in any record of on-the-spot broadcasting in this era.

The first was the late Boake Carter, a newscaster with a red mustache and an English accent, both clipped, who entered the kidnapping story as a sideline expert. Carter was critical of almost everything being done by the New Jersey state police, the FBI and everyone else connected with the case, and then when Hauptmann was finally brought to trial, sarcastically critical of the trial itself. There was much justice in Carter's carping, and the public admired his outspoken manner.

Boake Carter had the ability to irritate. It had brought him a great amount of publicity. He is alleged to have told Joseph Kennedy, father of the late President John F. Kennedy, to spurn the job of ambassador to England because, "They'll steal your pants. I know. I was an Englishman myself."

He came to America in 1920 to seek his fortune in the oil fields of Mexico and Central America and held various jobs on dailies in Mexico City, Oklahoma and elsewhere. Eventually, he drifted to the Philadelphia *Daily News* as a rewrite man. Carter became an American citizen in 1933.

One day Columbia's broadcasting station in Philadelphia, WCAU, needed someone to broadcast a rugby match and hired Carter because they could find no one who knew enough about the game to describe it over the air. Thus, he made his radio debut. Later the same station broadcast a simulated on-the-spot report of the Oxford-Cambridge rowing races with Carter airing the event from a studio to the accompaniment of recorded British crowd

noises. This led to broadcasts direct from the newspaper where Carter was employed, and his radio career began in earnest.

Studio officials complained of his British accent. His vocabulary was studded with the jargon of the oil workers of the Southwest and with that of the Fourth Estate. Carter was well aware of the value of a distinctive voice which was unlike any other voice in radio, and also of his particular flair for the dramatic.

However, he was still a local "personality" in Philadelphia, and his opportunity for wider coverage came with the Lindbergh kidnapping case. Dr. Leon Levy, head of the Philadelphia station, called the attention of his brother-in-law, William S. Paley, CBS executive, to Carter's potentialities. Paley wasn't impressed. But when WCAU's mobile broadcasting unit was assigned to the Lindbergh case, Levy refused to permit its use unless CBS employed Carter to broadcast. This clinched the argument and Carter got a nationwide audience. Now all America could hear him sign off with his famous, "cheerio."

While the other reporters and broadcasters were stationed at the scene of the kidnapping in Hopewell, New Jersey, Carter and his two "leg men" set up offices in a hotel in Trenton. Here they were free to operate without being hampered by officials; they could flash over the air every rumor and "tip" that was current in the city. Carter's broadcasts began in March, 1932, and continued until the finding of the body of the Lindbergh boy. His audience increased by leaps and bounds. He became nationally prominent and nationally sponsored.

As the thirties ran out, the prestige developed by Boake Carter during the Lindbergh baby episode began to wear thin, just as his anti-Roosevelt, right wing radicalism be-

gan in time to sound hollow. Eventually Carter found it difficult (and then impossible) to interest a sponsor for his broadcasts, and he left the air, sick and disheartened. Boake Carter was finished. The public who had made him a champion of lost causes overnight forgot him just as quickly.

The story of Gabriel Heatter is different from that of Boake Carter. Heatter was also a radio commentator, and he, like Carter, possessed an asset that his contemporaries could not copy: his voice. Even reading hair tonic commercials, Heatter could so modulate his baritone that the announcements sounded like a matter of life or death. He was popularly known as "the voice of doom" and his ironic opening phrase, "Ah, there's good news tonight . . ." was mimicked by countless night club clowns for many years.

Heatter made his reputation in one night, broadcasting non-stop for fifty minutes without a rest, while a nation waited for the electrocution of Bruno Hauptmann. Here in the New Jersey state prison, sitting at a remote microphone, the facile Heatter performed quite a feat; never expecting to have the air waves for so long he worked from simple notes, reviewing the case, the trial, the individuals involved and their roles in it from the scantiest of prepared script and with a characteristic melodramatic flavor that was to become the Gabriel Heatter trademark from that night onward.

Ben Gross claims that Heatter received more than fifty thousand letters as a result of this *single* broadcast and that his salary jumped to around $400,000 a year in his rapid climb to fame. Gross should know. He is the radio-TV editor of the New York *Daily News,* and in those wild days of the great era of American broadcasting such

salaries were not unheard of for radio newscasters of great popularity.

Heatter came to radio with newspaper training. Born on Manhattan's Lower East Side, he was a reporter by the time he was thirteen. Two years later he was covering Brooklyn, and acting as messenger as well, for Hearst's New York *American*. At that time Hearst was running for governor and thought it might be a good idea to have a boy orator precede his orations. Heatter got the job and went all over New York "trumpeting the virtues of candidate Hearst."

From the *American*, Heatter went to a full-time job on the old Brooklyn *Times*, reporting crime stories. There was a short period when he felt he wanted to be a lawyer and matriculated in the New York University Law School. This ambition lasted only until he got a real "scoop," startling the journalistic world by unearthing the hideout of a prominent embezzling banker. From the *Times*, Heatter went to Hearst's New York *Journal*, where he mostly reported activities in New York's slums and won that day's equivalent of a Pulitzer Prize for his article "Children of the Crucible." From the *Journal*, he went to the New York *Herald*, working as a political correspondent in Albany.

Heatter's success in Albany got him a chance to go abroad as the Paris representative for the Foreign Language Publishers' Association shortly after the war, doing articles on conditions abroad. At this time and later, he was also writing stories and articles under his own name and ghost-writing material for many prominent Americans. It was Heatter's writing that actually got him into radio. In 1932, he did a series of articles for *The Nation*, debating socialism with Norman Thomas, which created quite a stir. Donald Flamm was so excited by them that he

signed him up as news commentator on station WMCA in New York City.

Heatter kept on broadcasting into the 1960s imbuing the news with his own particular flavor. A post-World War II contract signed by him was one of the largest ever given a commentator. It is reported to have been over six million dollars. No one ever doubted that Gabriel Heatter could make the news sound exciting; many people wondered for many years, however, whether the news *was ever* as exciting as Gabriel Heatter made it sound.

The same year that Bruno Hauptmann was electrocuted, 1936, rumblings were heard from the continent of Europe, rumblings which were to be amplified into the deafening roar of total war within the next decade. Fascism was on the march, and in Spain a Fascist government launched a civil war which would cost an estimated million lives during the next three years. Spaniard took up arms against Spaniard in a bloody contest that involved indirectly the major powers of the Allied and Axis countries which were to face each other in a short time in the European theatre of World War II.

A Spanish socialist-democratic government established in 1931 was attacked in 1936 by a revolutionary army headed by General Francisco Franco. His forces, called the Falangists, turned the Spanish nation into a battlefield in a brutal and protracted conflict between rightist and leftist political factions. Franco's Fascists were the advance guard of the Nazi imperialism which was soon to smother all of Europe, and the General received considerable support from Germany and Italy, both also Fascist nations at this time. The Soviet Union, France and Mexico (and many sympathizers in the USA) supported the leftist democratic Loyalists, as they were called,

The Spanish Civil War provided the first real opportunity for American radio correspondents to cover a major armed conflict of any scope on the spot. As a matter of fact, because other events of such importance in Europe distracted the attention of most Americans from Spain, direct coverage of the Civil War was not as extensive as one might imagine. But a few American radio newscasters earned their spurs in Spain, creating a new kind of broadcasting—bringing a foreign war into our American living rooms.

Covering the conflict for CBS—and broadcasting his stirring reports about Europe of the 1930s—H. V. Kaltenborn found himself on the French-Spanish border right in the midst of one of the first conflicts of the civil war itself, a battle for the Spanish border city of Irun. Kaltenborn conceived then and there of reporting the battle by radio from a farmhouse on French soil, immune diplomatically from the conflict, but, by some freak of geography, located right in the midst of hostilities and the recipient of gunfire from both sides in the fight. Kaltenborn guessed that these background noises would be clearly audible to a radio audience.

Having located a French engineer, Kaltenborn had a telephone line strung from the farmhouse to a haystack within clear view of the artillery of both armies. He then climbed into the haystack and tried to call CBS on the telephone line, explaining that he was ready, willing and able to broadcast an on-the-spot report of the battle with genuine sound effects. To his chagrin, the reply he received from the New York offices of the network was, "Stand by. Too many commercial broadcasts. Will call you later."

He waited. His telephone line was twice spliced by

stray bullets, but his French engineer repaired the damage. Finally New York signaled that he might begin, but again Kaltenborn could not get the broadcast out of France. The engineer in Bordeaux (who was to pick up the phone call and relay it across the Atlantic) had gone out for his nightly glass of wine before dinner. Still Kaltenborn waited. Finally the engineer returned and Kaltenborn was on the air.

As for the broadcast itself, this is the way Kaltenborn told it:

"Finally at nine o'clock in the evening we got through and for fifteen minutes described the burning cars, the maneuvers of a small armored train, the shell explosions, and the burning buildings, stopping occasionally to let the listeners hear the peculiar whine of flying bullets and the dull explosion of artillery shells. For this broadcast I received an award from the Headliners Club of Atlantic City. But when I returned to Spain in 1937 my wife went with me into besieged Madrid and into the front lines to keep me, as she put it, 'from doing foolish things.'"

Fortunately for CBS, H. V. Kaltenborn did not stop "doing foolish things." Fortunately, also, he reported no other battles on the spot from vulnerable haystacks, and by the time of the major diplomatic crises of 1938, he was back in the United States where both CBS and the American public needed most his sharp talents as a broadcaster and analyst of international politics. His famous Munich Crisis broadcast was yet to come.

Meantime, at home, however, many other "foolish things" were indeed going on. The Depression was coming to an end. The conflicts of Europe seemed remote from the USA, and by the end of 1936, with Franklin Delano

their tracks. The contestants were finally narrowed down to twenty-two singing mice in the United States (one for each NBC affiliated station) and a number in London, and one big on-the-spot broadcast was to be held in order to discover the world's champion singing mouse, male or female, from a major English-speaking nation.

The publication of this volume marks the thirtieth anniversary of this occasion, and there are few individuals around whose memory has not been tarnished by the many happenings in the years since then. The following account is therefore taken from the London *Times* of May 3, 1937, and reprinted in full. Its importance in broadcasting history should not be underestimated.

"The Singing Mice have sung. All along, of course, as recent correspondence in *The Times* has shown, those acquainted with the accomplishments of mice have had no doubt that sing they would. Now even the unbelievers have heard and are convinced. Mice on both sides of the Atlantic have burst forth audibly into song.

"Well, perhaps it was not quite like that. The broadcast yesterday evening, which was to decide the claims of England, Canada and the United States to possess the sweetest-voiced mouse in the English-speaking countries, found time for a flourish of trumpets, a song in honor of the contesting mice, and a good deal of chaff on the part of the announcers. Beside ourselves with pleasurable anticipation, we waited for the Canadian entrant to begin. But John, alias the 'Toronto Tornado,' was temperamental and refused all offers. Not a puff, not a peep out of him.

"The English entry was a duet between Mickey of Devonport and Chrissie, a Welsh mouse, which goes to show that national talents are not confined to men. This would have been, in any case, a *tour de force*, since other

countries were putting up only solo, or egotistical mice, mice unpracticed in the niceties of teamwork. Safe in the knowledge of their unique position, Chrissie and Mickey might have given some mediocre performance and let it go at that. They did not. They were British mice, they were artistic mice, they were mice of sensibility. So they piped away merrily in the most subtle harmonies, not a whit self-conscious. You just could not tell them apart, and that is saying a lot of duettists.

"America had trouble too. Minnie, from Illinois, has been a glutton for exercise lately, probably deliberately, like film-stars in the bad old days when it was a convenient way of being *hors de combat* at the beginning of a picture they did not want to make. Anyhow, she merely ran around and around and refused to open her mouth. Mikey, from the same state, made up for her. Here was mouse music at its gayest, with not a trace of those intimations of mortality one detects in the lower notes of crooners. All Mikey's notes were high ones, delivered with such virtuosity and vigor that one sees in him the coming mouse Caruso.

"This is not, we may be sure, the last we shall hear of the singing mice. Mouse opera has been suggested already, and there is no reason why recitals by mice should not be popular. There will not be, one hopes, mouse crooners."

The Times was wrong. The International Singing Mouse Contest of 1937 was the last on record—perhaps it will be the last one ever held in this century! And that will be none too long a time say various historians at NBC and the BBC.

Four days, in fact, after the mice warbled and the air waves were clogged with screwball nonsense, the Ameri-

ican radio audience was to be presented with a broadcast so awful and terrifying, it is still regarded as a classic of on-the-spot radio. It took place on the evening of May 6, 1937, and for a few minutes at Lakehurst, New Jersey, it looked as if the fires of hell itself had been unleashed by mortal man.

The construction of dirigibles had been a lively activity here in the United States. The explorers Roald Amundsen and Admiral Byrd had used them in traveling to places difficult to reach by airplane in the twenties. By the middle of the 1930s the United States Navy was experimenting with a number of them, despite the disaster of the *Shenandoah* and devastating accidents to the *Akron* and the *Macon*. The United States Navy maintained great faith in the dirigible as a form of aircraft for both peace and war, and a number of them were in operation around the world.

The Germans, however, prevented by the Treaty of Versailles from building up their Air Force of conventional aircraft, had produced dirigibles one after the other, designed and piloted by the star disciple of Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, the designer of the modern dirigible, namely one Dr. Hugo von Eckner. Von Eckner's pride and joy in the year 1937 was the brand new dirigible (or Zeppelin) the *Hindenburg*, recently constructed in Germany and named after the lately deceased German president and war hero. The *Hindenburg* was the last word in transatlantic luxury, carrying a full complement of passengers and crew, all honored to be part of this important voyage for the glory of Germany across the Atlantic to the United States.

The *Hindenburg* had one defect, common to all dirigibles, and that was the small amount of gas that kept

her in the air and leaked from the sealed sacks that kept her inflated balloon section aloft. Unfortunately, the Germans had had to use hydrogen, a highly inflammable gas, in the balloon section of the *Hindenburg*, rather than helium, a non-inflammable gas which is far superior in any lighter-than-air craft. The Germans had no national helium resources, however, and the United States would not sell her any of her precious supply, partly because it was needed by our own airships and partly because we were forbidden by treaty to trade with Germany any commodity which might be used in warfare; helium was, of course, just such a commodity.

None of the major networks had sent reporters out to cover the arrival of the *Hindenburg* at the airport at Lakehurst on May 6, 1937. They evidently did not think it an important enough news event. Photographers, newsreel cameramen and reporters were present along with civil dignitaries and Navy personnel who were on hand to greet the great new, sleek airship on her maiden transatlantic voyage. The airship was scheduled to arrive in the afternoon, but the weather was poor with intermittent thunderstorms in the area, and the *Hindenburg* did not arrive at Lakehurst until dusk, a few hours late.

One man, a thirty-two-year-old announcer, was preparing to describe into a microphone the arrival of the dirigible, not for broadcast but for the "transcription" library of station WLS Chicago. His words were being recorded on large recording discs by an engineer, and he was in no way prepared for the scene that was shortly to greet his eyes. His name was Herbert Morrison, an announcer for WLS, and as the *Hindenburg* appeared, he described the airship in the rainy early evening, large and shiny, like a giant fish moving through the liquid ocean of the sky

while Charles Nehlson, his engineer, manned the recording equipment.

Suddenly the *Hindenburg*, now being tied fast to the mooring tower by a ground crew, exploded and burst into flame!

Herb Morrison's reaction to the unexpected tragedy is a broadcasting classic. (If you have ever heard Morrison's account, incidentally, you may have noticed the break in continuity after the moment of the explosion. This is because the tone arm of the recording mechanism was blown off its disc by the impact of the blast, to be replaced almost immediately by the alert engineer.)

Here are Morrison's words, just as he said them and just as they were rebroadcast to millions of Americans in the next few hours. They are now history.

"She is practically standing still now. The ropes have been dropped and they have been taken hold of by a number of men on the field. It is starting to rain again. The rain has slacked up a bit. The back motors of the ship are holding her just enough to keep her from—"

(The explosion occurred at this point!)

"Get out of the way! Get this Charley! Get out of the way, please. *She's bursting into flames! This is terrible!* This is one of the worst catastrophes in the world. The flames are shooting five hundred feet up in the sky. It is a terrific crash, ladies and gentlemen. It is in smoke and flames now. Oh, the humanity! Those passengers! I can't talk, ladies and gentlemen. Honest, it's a mass of smoking wreckage. Lady, I am sorry. Honestly, I can hardly—I am going to step inside where I can see it. Charley, that is terrible! Listen, folks, I am going to have to stop for a minute because I have lost my voice."

(Background noises continue for a few moments.)

"Coming back again, I have sort of recovered from the terrific explosion and the terrific crash that occurred just before it was pulled down to the mooring mast. I don't know how many of the ground crew were under it when it fell. There is not a possible chance for anyone to be saved! The relatives of the people who were here ready to welcome their loved ones as they came off the ships are broken up. They are carrying them, to give them first aid and to restore them. Some of them have fainted. The people are rushing down to the burning ship with fire extinguishers to see if they can extinguish any of the blaze. The blaze is terrific, because of the terrible amount of hydrogen gas in it."

On December 28, 1966, Herb Morrison, who is presently news director of WTAE-TV in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, responded to a research questionnaire sent to him by Miss Rosalie E. Dunbar of New York University. We are grateful to both persons for allowing us to quote from the questionnaire which follows:

I. What were your feelings and thoughts at the moment that you were recording the crash of the Hindenburg?

I had been talking, roughly for about eight minutes, telling how beautiful it was as it approached the landing area and then came the shock of the explosion and the mass of flames racing from the stern forward to the passenger cabin and I let out the expression "oh it has burst into flames and it is crashing." I was forced to change my words into ones that would describe the tragedy. As I talked, tears filled my eyes and I immediately thought "this can't be happening, I am telling a lie, what will my mother say . . ." but I kept talking and describing what was happening . . . the

flames several hundred feet into the sky . . . and the molten metal dripping from the sky like searing brilliant drops of rain. I knew in my mind that it was happening, but since you asked what my feelings were . . . it was as though I was telling a lie. My great concern, as you may have learned listening to the recording . . . was that of the humanity, aboard. I yelled "oh the humanity" . . . for it appeared at that moment that everyone had died in the fire and crash. Also I was amazed at how frozen the people were . . . who stood near me . . . they were so shocked they couldn't move or speak. My engineer, Charles Nehlson, kept his head and kept the equipment recording what I was saying. One elderly lady standing beside me, apparently awaiting the arrival of a loved one, started to weave . . . I switched microphone to my right arm . . . and caught her as she swooned . . . but had to keep on talking. If you heard the complete description I gave, you will have heard me say to her, "I'm sorry lady." Someone realized the predicament I was in and came to my rescue and took her out of my arm. It all happened so fast, just a little over thirty seconds . . . from catching of fire . . . until the crash.

II. How did this broadcast affect your later feelings about news broadcasting if at all?

The after affect of the broadcast . . . was one of a keener interest in news. I had gone down to Lakehurst to demonstrate that a person could take recording equipment to the scene of a major event and cover the story without the necessity of waiting for the installation of telephone wires. For a number of years I had been trying to sell the idea . . . and this trip was to

> have been one in which I figured I could. Little did I know that such an event would bring such coverage and prove my point. It also helped open a new way to cover news events because the broadcast of my description was the first time a radio network had used a transcription on the net. It opened the way for the recorded voices of those who made history later. Chamberlain's Munich speech was the second voice . . . and that of President Franklin D. Roosevelt was third. This broadcast gave me the confidence that radio indeed was the method of bringing news to the public in the quickest possible form right from the source. And the introduction of the beep-recordings just made the coverage that much faster. Emotionally, the description of the Hindenburg crash had no later effect on me, despite what some may have thought. I considered it a news broadcast for which I was thankful I had been trained and prepared for. My study of Zeppelins helped pay off.

George Hicks, NBC's man on the scene in New York during the nineteen-thirties, was far luckier, in many ways, than Morrison. His assignments were happy ones, like the maiden voyages of the ocean liners *Normandie* and the *Queen Mary* and the description, in 1937, of the longest eclipse of the sun in 1200 years from its best earthly vantage point, Canton Island in the Pacific Ocean, which took him all around the world.

Hicks had started his career in Washington, D.C., having come there from the West Coast in 1928, fully intending to study at Georgetown University in order to be a career diplomat. A studious, well-mannered youngster, he had picked a suitable career, and he dropped into the

NBC studios of WRC in Washington to get a part-time job. WRC was the training ground for announcers in those days, and Hicks was soon working there full time, doing —among other things—remote broadcasts from a Chinese restaurant where a jazz combo entertained the chow mein lovers. Eventually, Hicks was transferred to NBC in New York where he was taken under the paternal wing of Graham McNamee, Hicks's ideal of a great radio reporter.

Let George Hicks tell you about his experiences in his own words in an interview recorded before his death on March 17, 1965:

"I really got started when Abe Schechter, Director of News and Special Events at NBC, called me into his office one day and offered me an opportunity for unique work. Abe got me out of the announcers pool and put me into Special Events. Here is where I really flourished, thanks to Abe.

"Bob Trout of CBS and I were the two special events announcers in New York who covered feature stories—not sporting events—most competently, I guess, during the nineteen-thirties. Possibly we did it best because we weren't high pressure enough as commercial announcers; I don't know. We became jokingly the 'outcasts of our profession' who found ourselves standing on street corners, holding a microphone and saying—it's a cliché in the trade now—'Here I am standing at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue. It's a beautiful day, and we're going to have a great parade. I can't see anything at the moment, but it's just wonderful to be here.' That was always good enough to use up one-half hour of air time. We enjoyed the scene for as long as it took the parade to come along—if it ever came. Of course, the nineteen-thirties were great

days for welcoming parades for heroes and foreign dignitaries and others. I guess Trout and I were sensitive enough to notice a lot of things around us and keep talking on occasions like this. We got carried away with the glamour of the occasion."

Hicks was famous for another kind of parade and another kind of broadcast during the pre-war period, however. Every Easter Sunday scores of models, show-offs, celebrities and would-be celebrities cavort along New York's fashionable Fifth Avenue in what is known as the "Easter Parade" (not a parade but a promenade), and at least another million or so New Yorkers get dressed in their new spring outfits and take the subway to gawk at the exhibitionists and to stare at each other.

George Hicks used to cover this weird rite for NBC on the spot and in the crowd. Here is how he did it.

"The NBC engineers," explains Hicks, "made a little transmitter that was small enough to be riveted to a high silk hat. This is no great accomplishment today in the age of tiny radios and miniature electronic equipment, but in the nineteen-thirties, before the invention of the transistor, it was a triumph of ingenuity. Around my waist there was a lightweight belt used for shotgun cartridges where the batteries were kept. I carried a microphone in my hand and was actually a walking radio transmitter broadcasting to a nearby NBC remote pickup which sent my signals to the studio.

"Of course, I dressed in the height of fashion, wearing a cutaway coat and a pair of rented striped trousers. I looked as if I weighed at least four hundred pounds with all that stuff. I wobbled down Fifth Avenue trying to describe what was going on, usually with the late Lucius Beebe, the newspaper society reporter, beside me. Nat-

urally, we had people placed or 'spotted' along the side of the Avenue for us to interview. Frequently, I was so bushed Lucius Beebe did most of the interviewing and all I did was say 'Oh yes, that's right Lucius' and carry all my gear from place to place. Nothing—but nothing I've ever done since was quite like those Easter Parades."

Nothing that happened in 1938 appears (in retrospect) to have been as wild and unexpected as a boxing contest that took place in the Yankee Stadium in New York City. Joe Louis, the heavyweight champion, was to meet Max Schmeling, a German fighter of considerable fame, in a fifteen-round match.

The fight was of particular importance to Louis for two reasons. First, Schmeling had lost by a decision the heavyweight crown that he had gained in 1930 in a fifteen-round bout with Jack Sharkey in 1932. Subsequently, Schmeling and Louis met in the ring in 1936 and the Brown Bomber from Detroit lost this fight to the German by a knockout in the twelfth round, two years before Louis became world heavyweight champion. Many people believed that Schmeling could do again in 1938 what he had done in 1936 and thereby gain the championship. So did Schmeling.

Second, Schmeling, a loyal Nazi and follower of Adolph Hitler, had been making insinuations and nasty comments about the fact that Louis was a Negro. Joe was an even-tempered man for a boxer, but such calumny made his blood boil. It was boiling on the evening of June 22, 1938.

Because of the dynamite in Joe Louis' right fist, NBC, for once in its long career, found itself speechless. The fight, in full view of the audience of a packed Yankee Stadium with a capacity of 67,000 spectators and heard by untold millions on radio, lasted for all of *two minutes*

and four seconds! Never in the history of radio broadcasting was so much said about so little as on that evening in June. And never again was there as exciting an on-the-spot sports broadcast!

A young sports announcer, Ed Thorgersen, who had studied engineering in Chicago, journalism in Boston and turned to broadcasting because he did not want to return to college, began the broadcast. It was thought that he would provide between-the-rounds commentary for the Louis-Schmeling bout. He didn't get a chance.

Here is the way it sounded on the radio:

Thorgerson: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. The two principals of the greatest bout of the generation are in the ring, and we're going to listen to what they have to say . . ."

Thorgersen went on to describe the packed arena, switching to the ring where various fighters were being introduced. Then the ring officials were announced and so were both fighters, their weights and the color of their trunks. The referee impressed upon both fighters the responsibility they had to "give the audience one of the greatest fights they have ever witnessed."

Clem McCarthy was now at the microphone. The venerable handicapper frequently indulged in on-the-spot reporting other than the sport of kings. Tonight he greeted his "Boxing fans," gave a short description of the setting and—

GONG

The fight began. The following is McCarthy's description of it word for word. (See if you can read it aloud in two minutes and four seconds!)

McCarthy: "And there we are . . . They get into the

ring right together with Arthur Donovan [the referee] stepping round them, and Joe Louis is in the center of the ring and Max is going around. Joe Louis lets hit with two straight lefts to the chin, both of them light, but as the men clinch Joe Louis tries to get over two hard lefts, and Max ties them up and breaks away clean.

"On the far side of the ring, now, Max, with his back to the ropes and Louis hooks a left to Max's head quickly and shoots over a hard right to Max's head. Louis, a left to Max's jaw; a right to his head. Max shoots a hard right to Louis. Louis, with the old one-two: first the left and then the right! He's landed more blows in this one round than he landed in any five rounds of the other fight. And there Max Schmeling caught him with his guard down and crossed that right hand to Louis's paw, but Louis was going the way of the punch at the time. Now Max is backing away against the ropes, and Louis is following him and watching for that chance. He is crowding Schmeling. Schmeling is not stepping around very much, but his face is already marked. And they step into a fast clinch, and at close range Louis fights desperately to bring up a left to the jaw and a right to the body.

"And coming out of that clinch he got over a hard right and stabbed Max with a good straight left jab. And Max backs away. And missed a right. Louis then tops him with two straight lefts to the face and brought over that hard right to the head, high on the temple. And Max tied him up in a clinch and broke 'round—his back against the ropes there—not too close to the ropes—Louis out, and Louis missed with a left swing but in close, brought up a hard right, a right to the jaw, and again a right to the body, a left hook, a right to the head, a left to the head, a right. Schmeling is going down!

"But he held to his feet! Held to the ropes—looked to his corner in helplessness, and Schmeling is *down!* Schmeling

is down! The count is four—it's—and he's up! And Louis—right and left to the head, a left to the jaw, a right to the head and the German is watching carefully. Louis measures him. Right to the body. A left hook to the jaw and *Schmeling is down.* The count is five-five-six-seven-eight . . .

"The men are in the ring. The fight is over on a technical knockout! Max Schmeling is beaten in *one round!* The first time that a world's heavyweight championship ever changed hands in one round. [This was *not* what happened. McCarthy was a trifle confused.] In a few minutes, I'll try to get those seconds to you. Ed Thorgersen, I want you to have a chance on this broadcast. Everything has shut you out. Get in here and describe that scene. I'm going up to the ring to get the winner."

Ed Thorgersen described the pandemonium in the ring, the crowd. McCarthy signaled that he had his microphone in the champion's corner. The following interview ensued.

McCarthy: Joe, do you know how long it took you?

Louis: No, I don't.

McCarthy: I imagine about a minute and a half.

Louis: That's fine. Well, I won't be gettin' there for to last another round.

McCarthy: Joe, which punch, if any, do you think . . .

The interview lasted a few seconds longer, then McCarthy started to run after Schmeling, who was leaving the ring.

McCarthy: No fighter could have run at his prey faster than Joe Louis went after Max Schmeling and Max . . . Max . . . come over here. Bring him over. Max . . . Max . . . Max Schmeling, bring him over. Officer, get Max Schmeling. Officer, get Max Schmeling over here! Get him . . . bring him over . . . Max . . . It don't look like I can get him. They're crowding him through the ropes on

the far side. He's never even seen us. Max . . . I'm trying to get him . . . Officer, get Max Schmeling for me, will you? I *can't* get him; he's going out of the ring! He came to very quickly, but he was a badly beaten man!

From Schmeling's dressing room, an anonymous announcer got the following:

Announcer: Max, will you say a word for the NBC audience? Just a word, please Max?

Schmeling: Ladies und Chentlemen! I haven't much to zay. I'm very zorry; but I von't make any excuse. But I got sooch a terrible hit the first hit I get in the left kidneys! I vas paralysed, I couldn't even move. I rolled up und it vas all over!

Announcer: Well Max, I'm sorry, that's all I can say.

Max: Und I am zorry.

Well, for those of us who listened that night in June in 1938, nothing has happened in a boxing ring since to compare with the way Joe Louis, a colored boy from Detroit, dispensed with Max Schmeling, one of Hitler's Nazi supermen!

8

CRISIS AT THE MICROPHONE

Nineteen thirty-eight may be called the year that on-the-spot reporting grew up. On March 11, Hitler had annexed the nation of Austria to his Reich. (In Chapter 2, we saw that this was one of Edward R. Murrow's first European broadcasting assignments.)

By September, the Führer's eyes had turned eastward to the nation of Czechoslovakia. On-the-spot reporting reached a new dimension, born of this crisis in Europe, in this month of September.

During this period, CBS carried 471 broadcasts from 18 centers overseas, totaling almost three solid days of broadcasting. NBC carried in excess of 117 broadcasts for a total of twenty-one hours.

CBS clearly "scooped" its rival NBC during this period of the 1938 Munich crisis, although NBC came across with at least two "first" broadcasts ahead of CBS and ahead of the press. One was an interview with British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain when he returned from his Munich conference with the other European heads of state; the other, when NBC's European chief, Max Jordan, received access to the text of the agreement itself at Munich well in advance of CBS and had it on the air while the rival network was still waiting, much to the grief of CBS's reporter William L. Shirer.

The Czechoslovakian crisis itself placed its strain mainly upon the shoulders of three newscasters in Europe and one in the United States. CBS's Edward R. Murrow was in London, more or less directing European coverage for his chief Paul White in New York.

Author and writer Maurice Hindus, expert on Russia, was in Prague, Czechoslovakia, itself, and his broadcasts brought directly to America the confused reactions of the Czech people. For example, when news of the Munich Conference, at which Prime Minister Chamberlain and Premier Daladier of France permitted Hitler to dismember the Czech nation, throw parts of it to Italy and Hungary (as well as grab the Sudetenland for Germany), reached the Czech people, Hindus was on the scene in Prague. Chamberlain proudly reported to the world that he had kept "peace for our time," but here is the way Hindus saw it on the tragic day of September 30, 1938.

"The papers this evening stated the fact that an agreement was reached at Munich . . . The government is breaking the news to the people slowly and cautiously so as to prepare them . . . A leading paper in Prague carried

the headline 'Peace—But What is to Become of Czechoslovakia . . .' Only a few people have as yet learned what has actually happened in Munich. One of them said to me this morning, 'I'm a very old man now. Two weeks ago I had a birthday; I was fifty years old. Today I'm seventy. I have aged twenty years in two weeks.' He added, 'After all, seventy is not such a bad age in which to die.' Another man said, 'We Czechs have always loved freedom too much to become vassals.' These are hectic and serious days in this part of the world. It is all over Europe. For one thing, those who have been watching and studying developments are convinced that it is only the beginning of something too wide and fundamental for any of us to comprehend . . ."

The greatest burden for broadcasting the events which ended at Munich, fell on William L. Shirer, CBS's senior reporter in Europe. Shirer was in Prague when Hitler's first ultimatum was delivered. He returned to his regular beat, Berlin, shortly thereafter, and was on hand in Munich to witness the meeting of the Axis dictators Hitler and Mussolini with the representatives of France and England. His broadcasts are a living history book of the events of the time.

Shirer reported from Munich the evening before Hindus had described the Czechoslovakian reaction to the agreement in terms distinctly at variance with Hindus'. Here was the way it looked to veteran reporter Shirer on September 29, 1938, from his vantage point in Germany:

"It took the Big Four [Germany, Italy, France and England] just five hours and twenty-five minutes here in Munich today to dispel the clouds of war and come to an agreement over the partition of Czechoslovakia. There is

to be no European war after all! There is to be peace and the price of that peace is, roughly, the ceding by Czechoslovakia of the Sudeten territory to Herr Hitler's Germany. The German Führer gets what he wanted . . . And that's the end, after just five and a half hours of talking here in Munich today of Bohemia's [part of Czechoslovakia] one-thousand-year-old frontiers and, of course, what is left of Czechoslovakia becomes another kind of state altogether . . . The original plan of the Big Four—to go into Europe's other problems standing in the way of a really lasting peace once the Sudeten problem was solved and the danger of war staved off—seems to have been dropped. If the statesmen can iron out the last little difficulties tonight, as they expect to do . . . they will go home having saved the peace of Europe, at least for the time being, in a really absurdly easy manner and certainly at no great expense for themselves."

Heartbreaking? In the light of what was to come, Shirer's report next to that of Hindus' the next day is little short of tragic viewed more than a generation after the event.

Shirer's on-the-spot coverage of the Munich Conference is a broadcasting classic. Yet William L. Shirer (who was years later to become one of the outstanding authorities and scholars on the Nazi German government) was annoyed at his own coverage from Munich, and considered it—at the time—a failure!

In his *Berlin Diary*, Shirer figuratively kicks himself because Max Jordan of NBC "badly scooped" Shirer of CBS because Jordan "got on the air a full hour ahead of me," said Shirer, "with the *text* of the agreement—one of the worst beatings I've ever taken." Shirer claims that Jordan had access to Hitler's personal radio studio where the

conference had taken place, wangled a copy of the agreement from one of the members of the British delegation involved, and was on the air long before Shirer had even seen a copy of the document. Shirer's superiors in New York telephoned to tell him to save his breath at the time he was ready to report the terms of the tragic pact. NBC had already broadcast them!

Shirer licks his wounds by noting that he had been on the air an hour or so *before* the official text had been released, giving the American audience "all the essential details" of the Munich pact, and he notes that Edward R. Murrow in London flashed the news of the actual signing to the United States in advance of NBC. But Shirer had "goofed" nevertheless.

The fourth major responsibility for CBS's coverage of the Munich crisis fell upon the shoulders of H. V. Kaltenborn in New York City. He was literally the clearing house through which all the events of these three weeks in December ran as they were distributed to the networks, interpreted and discussed. During the period from September 10 to September 30, 1938, Kaltenborn made 102 broadcasts from two minutes to two hours in length, interviewing newsmen, statesmen and men in the street by transcontinental two-way radio hook-ups.

Kaltenborn reports that at no previous time had Americans stayed glued to their radio sets as they did during the Munich crisis. "Never before had so many listened so long to so much," he reported. Portable radio receivers had only lately been introduced to the market and many of them were sold this September as people listened in homes, offices and huddled in groups around radio on city streets.

During the period, Kaltenborn rarely used a script.

Since he never knew when he would be called to the microphone, he had to extemporize his newscasts almost entirely. In his words about this, he writes:

". . . News bulletins were handed to me as I talked. Speeches of foreign leaders had to be analyzed and sometimes translated while they were being delivered. In addition, split-second timing, always essential, became one of the physical requirements of network operation. I had to keep a constant eye on the control room for signs telling me when I was on or off the air. Sometimes when I had just launched into an analysis of some foreign leader's speech I was given a signal to wind up my talk in exactly one minute. This meant that I had to conclude my remarks in some sort of orderly and logical fashion as I watched the seconds tick away on the studio clock. On other occasions I was told to comment on a new development for exactly three minutes before the network switched to a foreign capital. Then suddenly they would discover that connections with Europe could not be made at that time and the engineer would signal me to continue my comments and expand them until further notice."

Kaltenborn slept on an army cot in one of the offices and lived off containers of coffee and sandwiches brought into CBS's New York studios on Madison Avenue. Kaltenborn, of course, drew upon his years' experience as a lecturer and newspaperman to carry on exhaustive day after day broadcasting of this kind. His knowledge of German was useful as well.

The commentator sat at a table where he had total command of a button which could break into the whole CBS network of 115 stations at any time. Kaltenborn in-

terrupted horse races, comedians and even the Archbishop of Canterbury at prayer covering the Czech crisis, commenting on the events that day by day seemed to be leading Europe to war, only to be saved by the sacrifice of a helpless nation at the fiasco of the Munich pact of September 29, 1938.

Kaltenborn himself put the whole series of events in a nutshell when he told a national audience after the pact had been signed by the leaders of the French, German, Italian and British nations:

"Hitler always says after each of his conquests, 'Now, no more. All is well.' But there has always been more and there may be more still. On one occasion Sir Robert Walpole, who was Prime Minister of England two centuries ago, said when the British people rejoiced because he had kept them out of war: 'Today they ring the bells. Tomorrow they will wring their hands!' "

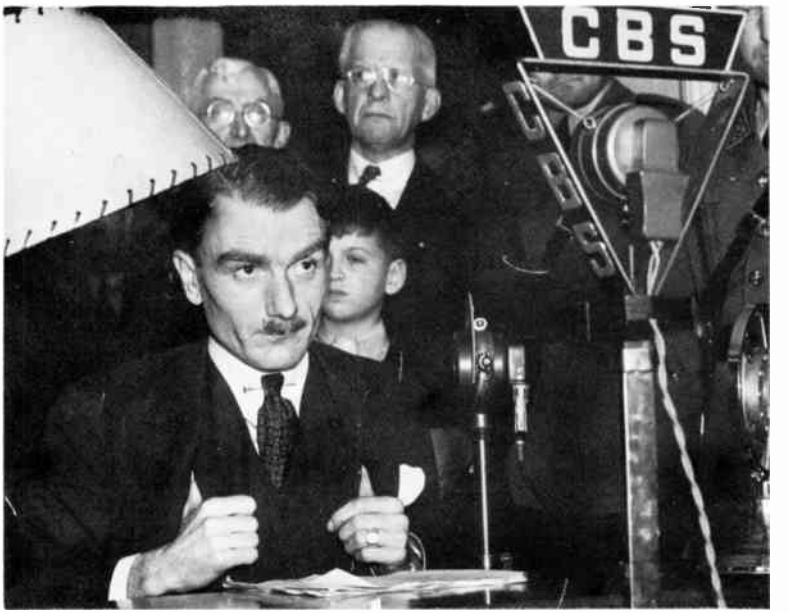
H. V. Kaltenborn had a precise, clipped delivery on his radio news broadcasts which was familiar to millions of Americans for some thirty-three years. He died June 14, 1965, at the age of eighty-six. He delivered his first radio news analysis in April, 1922, and retired from radio and television in September, 1955. His opinions, sprinkled through his newscasts, frequently aroused controversy, and he once admitted that he was often wrong in his views, but he contended that his long-range batting average was good. He refused to use notes or prepared material for his broadcasts. "I would say whatever came into my head," he explained. "However, I had my head trained so that I didn't get into too much trouble." However, he did get boiled by Harry S. Truman in 1948 for his presi-

CBS photo

Richard E. Byrd, first man to fly over the South Pole broadcasts to the nation in 1929.

CBS photo

On February 12, 1931, a powerful shortwave radio station was opened in Vatican City, personal triumph for Guglielmo Marconi (center), father of radio.



CBS photo

Boake Carter of CBS News at the Lindbergh baby kidnap trial (1935).

CBS photo

H. V. Kaltenborn (center) talking to soldiers in the Spanish Civil War (1936).

CBS photo

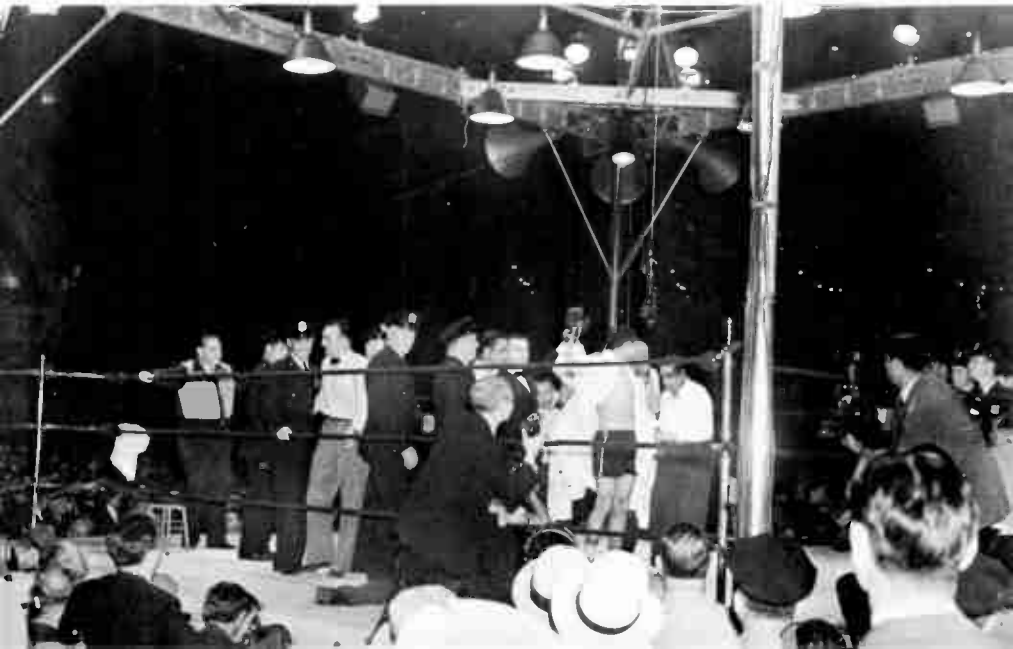
Ted Husing using a portable transmitter, microphone and periscope, all on pole stuck into ground, during a golf tournament (1937).

CBS photo

Bob Trout at the Easter Parade in New York City, March 1937. He wears a portable microphone around his neck and a portable transmitter in his hat.

CBS photo

Joe Louis–Max Schmeling fight at Yankee Stadium, June 1938. Clem McCarthy at the microphone.



NBC photo Aftermath of the Hindenburg Zeppelin tragedy, May 1937.

CBS photo

Ted Husing broadcasting from an airplane, viewing the Hindenburg disaster at Lakehurst, New Jersey.

CBS photo H. V. Kaltenborn, shown at work and rest periods during the Munich crisis in Europe—the longest marathon single broadcast in the history of on-the-spot reporting (1939).

CBS photo

President Roosevelt broadcasting one of his famous "fireside chats" from the White House (May 1939).

Eric Sevareid, CBS war correspondent, upon his return to the U.S. after the fall of Paris (1940). *CBS photo*

On December 7, 1941, Japanese planes struck without warning at the U.S. Fleet, anchored at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. *CBS photo*

CBS photo

William L. Shirer broadcasting from Europe prior to the Allied invasion of Italy, October 1943.

NBC photo

Graham McNamee at the scene of the Normandie fire at Pier 88, North River, February, 1942.

CBS photo In 1943 Edward R. Murrow was in one of the Allied bombing planes that smashed at Berlin.

CBS photo Paul W. White, CBS Director of News Broadcasts, talks with his overseas staff during the D-Day invasion.

CBS photo

Robert Trout and Quincey Howe broadcast the news of victory in Europe from the CBS newsroom.

(Top)—An ominous cloud mushrooms following the explosion of the atom bomb (1945). (Bottom)—On the battleship U.S.S. Missouri, during the surrender ceremonies in Tokyo Bay, with General Douglas MacArthur (left).

CBS photo

CBS photo Edward R. Murrow (center) in an on-the-spot broadcast from England during World War II.

CBS photo

Arthur Godfrey, whose broadcast of the funeral of President Roosevelt, brought tears to the eyes of the nation (April 1945).

CBS photo

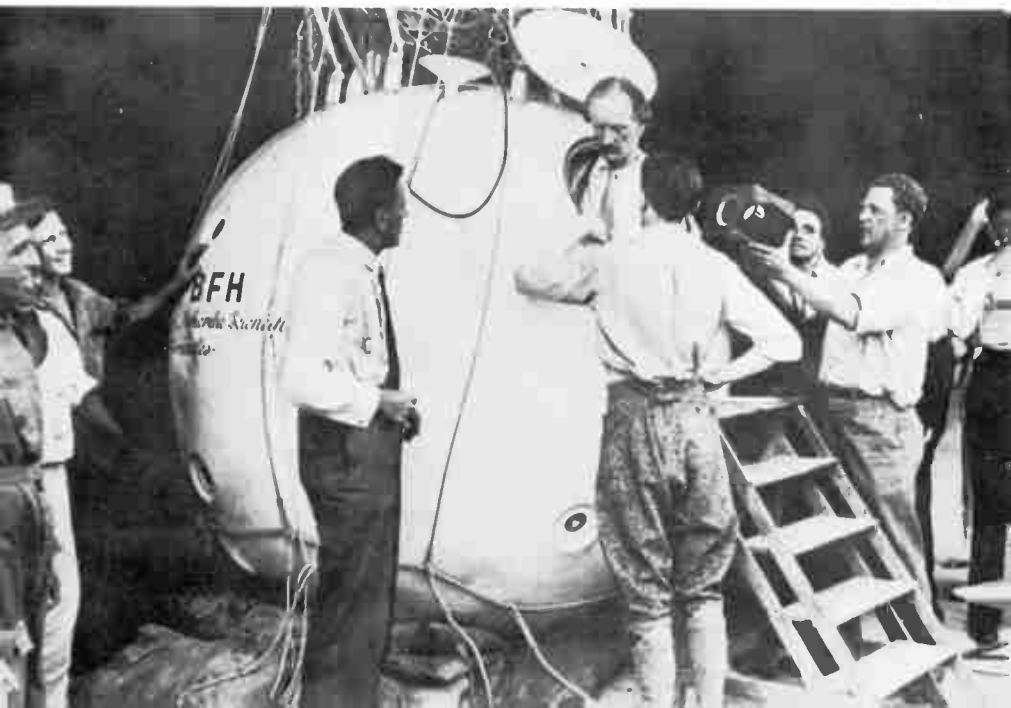
John Daly in an on-the-spot coverage of an air action in World War II.

CBS photo

Charles Collingwood at the mike aboard the U.S.S. Enterprise (November 1945).

Professor Auguste Piccard, Belgian scientist, preparing for his bathysphere descent into the ocean (1946).

CBS photo



CBS photo

At the typewriter, Webley Edwards at War Correspondent's Headquarters in the Pacific.

Harry S Truman holds up early edition of *Chicago Daily Tribune* declaring Thomas Dewey the winner in the 1948 elections.

CBS photo

NBC photo

Graham McNamee, one of NBC's all-time great sportscasters, interviews Babe Ruth at Yankee Stadium.

Alan Shepard monitors space shot during "Project Mercury." July 21, 1961.

CBS photo

CBS photo

Norman Brokenshire at an old-type microphone in the late 1920s.

CBS photo

William S. Paley, Chairman of the Board, Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc.

NBC photo

A. A. Schechter, first Director of News and Special Events, National Broadcasting Company.

RCA photo

Brig. General David Sarnoff, Chairman of the Board, Radio Corporation of America.

NBC photo

Max Jordan of NBC in the 1940s.

NBC photo

Ben Grauer, Veteran NBC announcer.

NBC photo

Gabriel Heater, whose "Ah, there's good news tonight," captured the largest listening audiences in the U.S. during World War II.

NBC photo

Elmer Davis, considered dean of the news editors, went to Washington to head the Office of War Information. (1942).

WDAF photo

All five WDAF-Radio personalities—Ed Muscare, at console, surrounded by (l. to r.) Gene Davis, afternoons; Fred Everett, evenings; Dan Henry, mornings; Martin Gray, all-night host.

WDAF photo

Ed Giller, program manager and John Kowas, director of publicity.

Farm director Jim Leathers out in field talking to farmers.

WDAF photo

Jim Leathers broadcasts direct from the Livestock Auction at the Kansas City Stockyards.

WDAF photo

dential election-night prediction that Thomas E. Dewey would be swept into office. President-elect Harry S. Truman the next day satirically mimicked in public the precise and clipped reporting of Kaltenborn. The two men later exchanged friendly quips over the broadcast.

With the German invasion of Poland in September of 1939, nearly a year after the Munich pact, Britain and France surrendered their hopes for "peace for our time" and declared war on the Nazis.

The war was nearly two months old when two remarkable examples of on-the-spot reporting demonstrated how radio could record history in its own exciting and unique manner.

The first major naval engagement of the war perked up the ears of millions around the world. In the middle of December, off the coast of Montevideo harbor in Uruguay, the German battleship *Graf Spee* met three British light cruisers in a dramatic and unexpected battle.

Let James Bowen, the only newsman in Montevideo harbor who had a microphone and a short-wave transmitter at his command, tell the story just as he told it on NBC on December 14, 1939. (Uruguay was at this time, of course, a neutral nation; hence, her seeming indifference to the battle raging under her nose.)

"This is James Bowen coming to you from Montevideo in Uruguay, a city which has been the scene of great excitement during the past twenty-four hours, experiencing the first naval battle of this war to be fought in South American waters . . . The crowds at the beaches were treated to a scene of war such as they will probably never see again in their lives. Guns flashing, cannon booming, everything pertaining to war at sea was right in front of them.

"The British cruiser *Exeter*, escorting a French liner, found herself confronted by the German pocket battleship the *Admiral Graf Spee*. The *Exeter* had the disadvantage . . . of having only six-inch guns against the *Graf Spee*'s approximately twelve-inch. She entered into battle, and after about four hours of fighting was assisted by the British light cruisers, *Ajax* and *Achilles*, also equipped with six-inch guns.

"At this time, the *Exeter* went out of battle with light damage . . . but gave a good account of herself by firing her final shots at the *Graf Spee*'s sighting tower, crippling her forward gun turret mechanism and damaging her to quite an extent. The *Graf Spee* then tried to escape from the *Ajax* and *Achilles* in a smoke screen. It was close to practically the entrance of the port of Montevideo, where she took refuge in calling the German Ambassador. . . ."

What was the captain of the *Graf Spee*, Germany's best known (and supposedly most deadly) pocket battleship, to do? If she docked at Montevideo—a neutral port—international law demanded that she stay there for the duration of the war. If she limped out to sea, she faced certain death under the guns of the warships waiting for her.

Captain Hans Langsdorff, probably acting on orders from Hitler, blew her up and sank her! An ignominious end for one of the prides of Germany's fleet.

The decision was three days in coming. Then, on Sunday, December 17, 1939, after evacuating the personnel by barge and launch to the German cargo ship *Tacoma*, the captain, standing in a motor launch and with tears streaming down his face, pushed a button on a remote control device that exploded his ship and sent her to the shallow waters of La Plata Bay.

James Bowen was on the scene again to describe the event for NBC. Here are his words, excerpted from his breathless, incredulous eyewitness description of the sinking of the ship.

"We have just seen the *Graf Spee* exploded five miles from the coast. The ship has been scuttled. . . . The ship is moving now, rolling from side to side. There goes another explosion! The after turret has gone up. Evidently the powder magazine has caught fire. She is going down. She is going down by the stern! The stern is now completely under water. Flames are still shooting up in the air, and there are great clouds of smoke. . . . The explosions continue intermittently as though additional bags of powder or chemicals or arms, just reached by the heat or flames, are going up . . .

"There has been a tremendous amount of excitement here all day. I have been going back and forth, being pushed around here on the docks. I had to cut off on one broadcast due to almost falling into the water with the amplifier, the microphone and the rest of the radio equipment . . .

"A tremendous crowd—the estimates run from seventy thousand to two hundred thousand—have been pushing around the docks all day long . . .

"The crowds are just about shoving us into the water. We are in a bad way! But we will do the best we can . . . We know more or less what is going on, but we don't want to tell you what we think is going on. We want to tell you what we can see . . .

"The *Graf Spee* seems to be settling a bit more at the moment. It is possible that the rest of her will disappear from view . . .

"We will be back on the air later."

Judging by the sounds from South America, World War

II was about to begin with a vengeance. Actually, the *Graf Spee* incident was *one* act of armed engagement in the midst of a calm and uneasily peaceful beginning to the years of hostility which were to follow.

In Europe, the French General Staff, convinced that any invasion from the east would travel as armies always traveled, by land, put their faith in the Maginot Line, a network of pillboxes, concrete trenches and underground tunnels that were supposed to stop the Germans, should they decide to invade.

Hitler also built *his* equivalent to the Maginot Line, a defensive string of armaments on the French-German border called the Siegfried Line, the main function of which was the supposed protection of Germany against invasion by the French army.

In those days, World War II was called a "phony war," because it looked as if Hitler had been paralyzed by his earlier conquest (which he decidedly had *not* been) and as if the British and French were not about to initiate any aggressive action (which was more or less true at the time). The result appeared to be a stalemate.

All of this is background to the following on-the-spot report by Max Jordan on Christmas Eve, 1939, *direct* from—of all places—Hitler's own Siegfried Line, with the permission, incidentally, of the German High Command, and the cooperation of the German Broadcasting Bureau which supplied Jordan with the necessary engineers and equipment. Surrounded by twelve soldiers, here is what Jordan said from the Siegfried Line on December 24, 1939:

"Hello NBC—Max Jordan calling from *Bunkershausen!* My listeners won't find this name listed on any map, for

it's located in what you might call no man's land. I am speaking to you from a fortified military zone which is part of the famous Siegfried Line, opposite France's Maginot Line.

"It's now nine o'clock in the evening and pitch dark. It's a rather cold winter night.

"I spent the day visiting these parts. The courtesy of the German High Command made it possible for me to look around freely. What I'm now telling you has *not* been censored. I have just seen pillboxes and fortifications of all kinds, barbed wire fences and gun towers, climbed over cat-walks to the very banks of the River Rhine, and could clearly see the French border on the other side. But everything is amazingly quiet. If not for rifle practice of the French which resounded from afar, I might have been sightseeing in peacetime, in a zone reserved perhaps for Army maneuvers.

"As a matter of fact, this very afternoon German soldiers stood on one side of the river playing Christmas Carols on their accordians. To these familiar tunes French soldiers sang lustily on the other side, and to show their appreciation, they set up Christmas trees on their pillboxes, clearly visible on the German side, and shouted 'Merry Christmas' across the water—in German, mind you, for most of the French troops in these parts are Alsatians entirely familiar with the tongue of their opponents . . .

"Yes indeed, it's a strange war! Here I am in the very trenches, linked up with America by a special cable which the German broadcasting officials have installed for NBC. And I am to tell you of Christmas in *Bunkershausen.* Bunker, you see, is the name of that new type of iron-enforced, concrete pillbox, thousands of which form the Siegfried Line. I am standing in front of one of them. It's dark now, but in the daytime this bunker looks like an inconspicuous elevation in the soil, like a small hill covered with fir trees and shrubbery. Only when coming

closer can one distinguish it as a fortification. For we are here at the front. Should the French by any chance feel like dropping a few bomb-shells on this wintry scene, you would hear them explode in the course of our broadcast . . .

"But I don't anticipate any such static . . . Let me take you inside. I'm holding a portable microphone and will now walk through the entrance. It's a small passageway. So small, as a matter of fact, that I must bend very low in order not to knock my head against the concrete walls . . ."

This was Christmas, 1939.

By spring 1940 the "phony war" would be over!

Max Jordan and his brother reporters with microphones were about to hear plenty of static, made by guns and bombs, large and small, and the screams of countless men, women and children.

9

RADIO AT WAR

By the time spring came to the year 1940, there was nothing "phony" about World War II. It was real, all right—a real orgy of invasion, *blitzkrieg* and victory for the German Army. First to fall in April were Norway and Denmark. In May, Holland and Belgium fell to Hitler's armies. NBC scored a scoop on this broadcast.

On the fourteenth of June, 1940, the heart of the free world was to stop beating for an instant as the German armies marched into the city of Paris and occupied it without opposition. As the German radio announced, "The complete collapse of the entire French front from the Channel to the Maginot Line . . . destroyed the original intention of the French leaders to defend the capital of

France. Paris, therefore, has been declared an open city. The victorious troops are just beginning to march into Paris."

Americans at home heard the voice of Free Paris for the last time—until the city's liberation years later—from the voice of a newspaperman who had just recently been hired by CBS. He was new to the microphone and unsure of himself as a broadcaster, as he reported the approach of the Germans to the ancient "city of light now darkened by wartime blackouts." The neophyte broadcaster's name? Eric Sevareid. Here is one of his first reports, a new voice to American listeners, about to say goodbye to the beautiful city of Paris on June 9, 1940, under the heel of the Nazi invaders.

Said Sevareid:

"This is Paris at midnight. It's been a great day for the moving and packing industry in Paris. At the time of the Battle of the Marne in 1914, the Germans were equally close to the city. I don't know how many more radio broadcasts I'll be making from this Paris studio. If there is an interruption, we'll try to continue with facilities installed in other towns further south. I do not think there will be any *deliberate* attempt to hide the real state of affairs from the people of Paris. They are as calm as could be expected. They are a fatalistic people. It is this quality which makes Frenchmen stand half-naked in this wilting heat, feeding their red hot guns until literally crushed by German tanks."

Within hours, Sevareid was on his way out of the besieged city in an automobile on the jammed roads from Paris to Tours. Recently, he recalled the fall of Paris back in 1940, and he is still affected by the impact of the

tragedy to this day. "The life simply ran out of the city. She was like a beautiful woman lying in a coma. The life-blood just was draining out of every vein, every street," he noted. The fall of Paris is an event Sevareid can never forget, a reminder of the time, a generation ago, when he was a fledgling broadcaster reporting what seemed to him the destruction of everything decent in Europe. Obviously, he could neither share—nor understand—the fatalism he noticed in the French people.

Eric A. Sevareid, broadcaster and author, was born in Alva, North Dakota, on November 26, 1912. He started out as a copy boy on the Minneapolis *Journal* in 1931. Later he became a reporter for the Minneapolis *Star* in 1936-37. His next job took him to Paris as reporter and city editor of the Paris edition of the New York *Herald-Tribune* in 1938-39. He was also night editor of the United Press, Paris, in 1939. From there, it was a short trip to the Columbia Broadcasting System's offices in Paris. He returned to the U.S. from Europe in 1940.

On his return, he told reporters: "After you've been through this thing they call total war you're apt to have different standards. When you've seen the homes of civilians destroyed, hospitals bombed and helpless women and children killed in the streets and in air raid shelters, you have a new idea of what's important. I don't think I'll ever care much about non-essentials again. I don't believe I'll ever again be impressed by phonies—either in Europe or here at home."

Now Hitler demanded of the French a treaty of surrender. In order to underscore the irony of history, the Führer chose the very spot near Paris, in the Forest of Compiègne, where, on November 11, 1918, the Germans surrendered to the French army of Marshal Foch in World

War I. In fact, Hitler even insisted that the representatives of France give in to him in the *very private railroad car* (preserved in the Compiègne woods as a monument) belonging originally to Foch, *on the very spot* (the car had to be moved for this purpose to suit Hitler's whim) where the 1918 surrender had taken place. And Hitler's orders were carried out to the letter!

William C. Kerker of NBC described the turned-tables setting of the surrender for the American audience. Said Kerker, at this grim, historic moment, ". . . Well, it was just twenty-one years and eight months ago that Compiègne was the scene of the signing of an armistice, and today [June 21, 1940] we are right here on the very same spot. It is the same car which was used that time, the same table, the same chairs, only this time everything is reversed. Where Marshal Foch sat that time, now Hitler sat. Where the German delegates had their place, now the French plenipotentiaries are seated. Everything is reversed. Then it was Germany who was asking for an armistice, and now it is France who is making her bid for an armistice to German military officials. We are in the midst of a hurried turn of events which have been unleashed by Hitler with a kind of furious prodigality and unconcern for world opinion. Barely six weeks ago, he let loose with the biggest show in his career. And in this space of time, the clock of history has been set back almost a quarter of a century. And today we have witnessed the reversal of time!"

The actual description of the signing of the armistice at Compiègne was broadcast over a combined all-network hook-up in the USA by CBS's William L. Shirer. Various versions of this broadcast, dressed up and given poetic elaborations and remarks of significance concerning Hitler,

have appeared in print elsewhere. They may be more neatly written than the original, but Shirer's cool, knowing report of what he saw before him in that little clearing in the French forest as Hitler stood on French soil, with the French at his feet, is a classic of on-the-spot reporting without benefit of an editor's pencil, or even of Shirer's second thoughts and hindsight.

Said Shirer:

"The armistice negotiations began at 3:15 P.M.

"A warm June sun beat down on the great elm and pine trees and cast pleasant shadows on the wooded avenues as Hitler, with the German plenipotentiaries at his side, appeared. He alighted from his car in front of the French monument to Alsace-Lorraine which stands at the end of an avenue about two hundred yards from the clearing here in front of us where the armistice car stands.

"The Alsace-Lorraine statue was covered with German war flags so that you could not see its sculptured work nor read its inscription. But I had seen it many times in the post-war times, and doubtless many of you have seen it—the large sword representing the sword of the Allies, and its point sticking into a large, limp eagle, representing the old empire of the Kaiser. And the inscription underneath in French saying, 'To the Heroic Soldiers of France . . . Defenders of the Country and of Right . . . Glorious Liberators of Alsace-Lorraine.'

"Through our glasses we saw the Führer stop, glance at the statue where the famous armistice car stood, observe the Reich flags with their big swastikas in the center. Then he strode slowly towards us, towards the little clearing. I thought he looked solemn; his face was grave. Yet there was a certain spring in his steps for the first time, as he walked towards the spot where Germany's fate was sealed on that November day of 1918, a fate which, by

reason of his own doing, is now being readied to change here on this spot. And now, if I may go over my notes which I made from moment to moment this afternoon—

"Now he reaches the little opening in the Compiègne woods where the armistice was signed and where another is about to be drawn up; he pauses and slowly looks around. The clearing is in the form of a circle some two hundred yards in diameter and laid out like a park. Cypress trees line it all around—and behind them, the great elms and oaks of the forest. This has been one of France's national shrines for twenty-two years.

"Hitler pauses, and gazes slowly around. In a group just behind him are the other German plenipotentiaries: Field Marshal Göring, grasping his field marshal's baton in one hand. He wears the blue uniform of the air force. All the Germans are in uniform, Hitler in a double-breasted grey uniform, with the Iron Cross hanging from his left breast pocket. Next to Göring are the two German army chiefs—Colonel General von Keitel, chief of the Supreme Command, and Colonel General von Brauchitsch, commander-in-chief of the German army. Both are just approaching sixty, but look younger, especially General von Keitel, who has a dapper appearance with his cap slightly cocked to one side.

"Then we see there is Erich Raeder, Grand Admiral of the German Fleet. He has on a blue naval uniform and the invariable upturned stiff collar which German naval officers usually wear. There are two non-military men in Hitler's suite—his Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, in the field-grey uniform of the Foreign Office; and Rudolph Hess, Hitler's deputy, in a grey party uniform.

"The time is now, I see by my notes, 3:18 P.M. in the forest of Compiègne. Hitler's personal standard is run up the small post in the center of the opening in the woods.

"Also in the center is a great granite block which stands some three feet above the ground. Hitler, followed by the

others, walks slowly over to it, steps up, and reads the inscription engraved in great high letters on that block. Many of you will remember the words of that inscription. The Führer slowly reads them. And the inscription says, 'Here on the Eleventh of November 1918 Succumbed the Criminal Pride of the German Empire . . . Vanquished by the Free Peoples Which it Tried to Enslave.'

"Hitler reads it and Göring reads it. They all read it, standing there in the June sun and the silence. We look for the expression on Hitler's face, but it does not change.

"Finally he leads his party over to another granite stone, a smaller one fifty yards to one side. Here it was that the railroad car in which the German plenipotentiaries stayed during the 1918 surrender was held—from November 8 to 11. Hitler looks down and reads the inscription, which reads, 'The German Plenipotentiaries.' The stone itself, I notice, is set between a pair of rusty old railroad tracks, the very ones that were there twenty-two years ago.

"It is now 3:23 P.M. and the German leaders stride over to the armistice car . . . The Germans stand outside the car chatting in the sunlight. This goes on for two minutes. Then Hitler steps up into the car, followed by Göring and the others. We can see nicely through the car windows. Hitler enters first and takes the place occupied by Marshal Foch the morning the first armistice was signed . . . Four chairs on the opposite side of the table from Hitler remain empty. The French have not yet appeared. But we do not wait long.

"Exactly at 3:30 P.M. the French alight from a car. They have flown up from Bordeaux to a nearby landing field and have driven here by auto. They glance at the Alsace-Lorraine memorial, but it's a swift glance. Then they walk down the avenue flanked by three German army officers. We see them now as they come into the sunlight of the clearing.

"General Huntzinger, wearing a bleached khaki uni-

form, Air General Bergeret and Vice Admiral Le Luc, both in dark blue uniforms, and then, almost buried in the uniforms, Mr. Noël, French Ambassador to Poland . . . the one single civilian of the day. The French plenipotentiaries pass the German guard of honor, drawn up at the entrance to the clearing. The guard snaps to attention for the French, but does not present arms.

"The Frenchmen keep their eyes straight ahead. This is a grave hour in the life of France . . . Their faces are solemn, drawn, but they are the picture of tragic dignity.

"They walk stiffly to the car, where they are met by two German officers, Lieutenant-General Tippelspirch, Quartermaster General, and Colonel Thomas, chief of the Führer's headquarters. The Germans salute. The French salute. The atmosphere is what Europeans call 'correct.' But you'll get the picture when I say we see no handshakes—not on occasions like this . . .

"Now we get our picture through the dusty windows of that old *wagon-lit* car. Hitler and the other German leaders rise to their feet as the French enter the drawing room. Hitler, we see, gives the Nazi salute, the arm raised. The German officers give a military salute. The French do the same. I cannot see Mr. Noël to see whether he salutes or how.

"Hitler, as far as we can see through the windows just in front of us here, does not say anything. He nods to General Keitel at his side. We see General Keitel adjusting his papers and he starts to read. He is reading the preamble to the German armistice terms. The French sit there with marble-like faces and listen intently. Hitler and Göring glance at the green table top.

"This part of the historic act lasts but a few minutes. I note in my notebook this: 3:42 P.M., that is twelve minutes after the French arrive, we see Hitler stand up, salute stiffly with hand upraised. Then he strides out of the drawing room, followed by Göring, General Brauchitsch, Grand

Admiral Raeder, Herr Hess and at the end Joachim von Ribbentrop. The French remain at the green-topped table, and we see General Keitel remains with them. He is going to read them the detailed conditions of the armistice.

"Hitler, Göring and the others do not wait for this. They walk down the avenue towards the Alsace-Lorraine monument. As they pass the guard of honor, the German band strikes up the two national anthems, *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles* and the *Horst Wessel* song. The whole thing has taken a quarter of an hour, this great reversal of an historical act."

Shirer, incidentally, noted in his diary for June 21, 1940, the comment that he broadcast this amazing scene as best he could. "It made," he wrote, "I think, a good broadcast."

It made history!

William L. Shirer, an accomplished broadcaster and reporter, has since become a distinguished writer of history.

The early 1940s were history-making days. The Battle of Britain, the "orchestrated hell" in Ed Murrow's words, the bombers over London and the British countryside began in the following July. All of this has been described in Chapter 2. There is no need to repeat it here. If the average Englishman did not yet know the "phony" war was now real, all he had to do was travel to London to view the destruction of the blitz or, later, to see the tragic devastation Hitler's bombs were causing in cities like Coventry and Birmingham. If there were Americans who thought that the war was still "phony," all they needed to do was listen to the remarkable broadcasts of the Man on the Roof, Ed Murrow himself, risking his life

nightly to awaken Americans to the holocaust that was moving ever closer to their own front doors.

To the surprise of the citizens of the United States, the blow was struck through our back door! On December 7, 1941, at 1:25 P.M. New York time, 7:55 A.M. Hawaiian time, the Japanese air force attacked our naval bases in the Pacific Ocean on the Islands of Hawaii.

At NBC, a program of dance music featuring bandleader Sammy Kaye called "Swing and Sway" was interrupted by H. V. Kaltenborn with these words: "President Roosevelt said in a statement today that the Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, from the air. I'll repeat that—President Roosevelt says that the Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii from the air. This comes to you from the NBC newsroom in New York."

Over at CBS headquarters on Madison Avenue it was a youthful, shocked John Daly who had to break into a Philharmonic concert with the news.

"The Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, by air, President Roosevelt has just announced. The attack also was made on all naval and military activities on the principal island of Oahu."

Both added up to the same news: along with countless men and women, American radio was now to enter the time of its most exhausting test.

The paradox of war is that, while it impels men and women to acts of barbarism, it also draws from them their finest instincts and exercises their capacity for the glory we call heroism.

So it was for American broadcasters as they went off to fight in World War II.

10

"THIS IS THE FRONT . . ."

Wartime radio!

Someday a scholar will devote a dozen years to chronicle the entire story of radio broadcasting during World War II. The study will include broadcasts by the Axis powers, Italy and Germany, the great propaganda work of the British Broadcasting Corporation, the stirring home-front "morale" broadcasts of the Russian radio stations, and the beginnings of the Voice of America in the United States. It will also tell the story of the Axis propagandists like the infamous "Lord Haw-Haw" (who was hanged for his activities), the Japanese-American "Tokyo Rose," and the strange double-talk broadcasts on the Italian radio by the American poet Ezra Pound.

The on-the-spot reporting in this chapter tells only a fraction of radio's story in World War II. These are the highlights, the voices in the night of men with microphones dodging bullets, trying to keep sheltered from bombs, frequently dog-tired and rarely certain that what they were saying would *ever* be heard. For example, the following eyewitness report of the bombing of Manila in the Philippines was broadcast to a stunned nation on Pearl Harbor night:

"Hello NBC. This is Bert Silen speaking from Manila. And this time, I've got a *real* scoop for you. Manila has just been bombed! In fact, right now it is *being* bombed! Without warning, Japanese bombers started bombing Fort William McKinley, Nichols Airfield and the RCA transmitting station at three o'clock without any warning. Right now the moon is shining—absolutely full. It stands out like a mirror and it is no wonder that every bomber could pick out any spot around this part of Manila tonight. It wasn't the fault of the blackout, there isn't a light shining any place, but old man moon just wouldn't stay blacked out."

An amusing sidelight to the war in the Pacific concerning Bert Silen was told to us by Abe Schechter. Silen broadcast to the very last minute from Manila on an open circuit to NBC as the Japanese entered the city and took it. Silen was literally grabbed off the microphone by Japanese soldiers and was imprisoned in a POW camp in the Philippines. A couple of years later Schechter, in charge of communications for war correspondents at General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters when the Philippines were reinvaded by American forces, was privy to information that surprise night raids were to be made on the

Japanese POW camps to liberate American and Philippine prisoners. In one of the camps, Bert Silen was found and Schechter had him brought to information headquarters. After a short debriefing, Silen was put on the air broadcasting again on an NBC circuit, and he began his broadcast this way: "As I was saying the last time when I was so rudely interrupted. . . ."

Americans heard a lot of bad news from the Pacific. We lost the Philippines to the Japanese. General Wainwright defended the island fortress of Bataan against the overpowering Japanese until he was forced to surrender his command to the enemy on April 8, 1942. His broadcast the next day to his troops—and to the world—is one of the most powerful ever recorded. Wainwright's voice was slow and distinct, filled with subdued emotion. Said he from his front line headquarters:

"This is Lieutenant General Wainwright. Subject: surrender. It became apparent that the garrisons of these forces would eventually be destroyed by aerial and artillery bombardment and by infantry supported by tanks which have overwhelmed Corregidor. After leaving General Homma with no agreement between us, I decided to accept, in the name of humanity, his proposal. You will therefore be guided accordingly, and will—repeat: *will*—surrender all troops under this command to the proper Japanese officers. This decision on my part, you will realize, was forced upon me by means entirely beyond my control!"

In the name of humanity? General Wainwright did not know the fate to which he was subjecting his soldiers. Thirty-five thousand prisoners (including Filipino troops) were herded in the infamous "Death March" to their

prison compounds. Many died along the way; others died in the camp. One survivor escaped and made his way to Allied microphones to tell the story of the death march to the American radio audience as he had lived it. It made grisly listening.

"We started the death march in groups of one hundred, about three or four thousand of us in line, marching by fours—about three Jap guards to a hundred of us. Didn't see any officers. Most of those superior privates of theirs, men with two or three stripes on their uniforms. They'd slap our soldiers across the face, to beat them up.

"I saw one man carrying a new pair of shoes. He sat down to take off his old shoes. The Japs came up and took away both pairs. That lieutenant walked seven days in the death march and when he arrived at the end of the journey, he didn't have feet—just a mass of infected blisters.

"I saw a Jap truck pass and watched a Jap poke his rifle butt out and knock one of our officers into a ditch. I saw a tank deviate its course to hit a marching American prisoner and literally crush him into that road of death.

"Nothing to eat all day and nothing to drink. Some of the men drank from water buffalo wells, they were so thirsty. I thought what most of us thought, 'why in hell did I surrender?' We thought it would be a blessing if we were shot!

"I saw an enlisted man go insane from the sun and malaria. The last I saw the Japs were hitting him with those blunt rifle butts. A well-trained pig wouldn't stand it. I saw dead Americans and Filipinos in the ditches at the side of the wood far behind the lines. They'd been killed at the surrender. The doctors, half dead themselves, took care of the dying. The only way you could tell a live

American from a dead one was to see whether his heart was beating."

There was much bad news. But, with the American entry into the conflicts, reports both from the Pacific and from Africa and Europe (where we had joined the British in their fight against the Germans and Italians) began to change for the better. In October of 1942, the Allies, led by Lieutenant General Bernard L. Montgomery, met and defeated an Axis army commanded by the Nazi General Rommel, reputed to be the greatest military strategist of his time. At his victory at El Alamein, Montgomery spoke by radio to his troops, and his words gave confidence to civilian populations in all the Allied countries, because it meant the Italian-German army was on its knees, and that the North African coast had been freed from German domination.

"I feel I would like to speak," said the British Montgomery with his British composure, "to all who have served and fought with me during the last few years. What I have to say is quite simple and very short. I would ask you to remember those of our comrades who fell in the struggle. They gave their lives that others might have freedom, and no man can do more than that. I believe He would say to each one of them 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'"

Good news came from the Pacific as well. There was the battle for the Gilbert and Marshall Islands, for instance, early in 1944, the first territory into which the Japanese had moved after Pearl Harbor. The battle for Kwajalein in February of 1944 was just one of the many American victories in the Pacific—a dirty war fought on

an obscure coral atoll against an enemy skilled at this kind of warfare. Here is a soldier-reporter, telling you how it looked on Kwajalein. Behind his voice you can hear the sound of guns. The invasion of the Kwajalein beachhead has just begun.

"The troops landed here about fifteen minutes ago. I don't know whether I sound scared or not, but I am . . . Lightning and just everything in the world is going off around this place . . . and, boy, this is really a hot place, and these charges keep coming over here, boy, and they come awfully close—awfully close. The Marines have landed. The situation is *not* in their hands as yet. However, we *have* hopes.

"The Marines have started a full raid now . . . They're going in to a lot of fire, *but they're going in*, not stopping for anything. (Off mike: "Who?"—"Where?") Well, I'll be doggoned! Well, this island! You wouldn't believe that a thing would be living on it, and here is a *chicken*, just come over the hill right down in our shell hole, very nonchalantly pecking, scratching around in the sand, not singed a bit! That's good, isn't it? Of course, all the group of men who were moving around very cautiously forward are all getting a big laugh out of it. All the men!

"It seems to me I read about something like that happening in another battle not long ago, where the men who were under stress and . . . wasn't it in Tarawa? I think it was . . . where the men were almost to the breaking point and the men caught in a terrible crossfire and they were on a pier, and then a chicken crossed the line of fire and broke the spell. And so I think that maybe someone set these chickens up here. Maybe that's the USO or something of the sort! Because a good laugh now and then helps a lot, especially here where everybody is under strain, more or less!"

Magnificent news came over the radio on June 6, 1944, along with some of the best broadcasts of the war. Americans heard it at 3:15 A.M., Eastern War Time, with this announcement from Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces in England. "Under the command of General Eisenhower, Allied naval forces, supported by strong air forces, began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France." The invasion of Europe—D-Day—had come! It was the beginning of the end of Herr Hitler, his Italian allies having surrendered to the Allied forces some time before.

Perhaps D-Day's greatest broadcast was made by George Hicks, one of the first correspondents to cross the English Channel with the Allied invasion forces. Here is the way D-Day looked in part through the eyes of reporter George Hicks as he broadcast for the combined American networks from the invasion flagship *Ancon* on June 6, 1944, just off the French coast:

". . . Here they go again! Another plane's come over . . . right over our port side . . . Planes are making an arc right over our bow now . . . Tracers are heading into the clouds before their bursts . . . Tracers still going up . . . and now the plane is probably gone beyond . . . Looks like we're gonna have a night tonight! . . . yes sir! boys! . . . Another one coming over . . . and it pulls up right alongside of us . . . Streams of tracer . . . crossfire coming out of all the small ships and the large as well . . . Something burning is falling down through the sky . . . and it's circling down . . . Maybe a hit plane . . . (sounds of intense firing for several minutes—crew voices heard inaudibly in the background shouting) . . .

"There he goes . . . They got one . . . They got one . . . A great blotch of fire came down and is smouldering

now just off our port side in the sea . . . smoke and flame there . . .

"We've had a few minutes pause . . . The lights of that burning Nazi plane are just twinkling now . . . in the sea and going out . . . and the tracers start up again, and there's warning of another coming in . . .

"Now ten past twelve and the German attack seems to . . . died out . . . To recapitulate, the first plane that was over that we described at the beginning of the broadcast was a low-flying German, probably a JU88, that was leading the flight and came on the convoy in surprise, we believe . . . because he drew up and only fired as he passed by, and perhaps he was as surprised as we were to see each other, and there seems to have been no damage to the amphibious force that we can discover . . . One bomb fell astern of this warship a hundred and fifty yards away . . . A string of rockets were fired at a cruiser beside us on the port side . . . No damage was done and gun member 42 at our port just beside the microphone shot down the plane that fell into the sea on the port side . . . It was Ensign William Shriner of Houston, Texas, who is the gunnery control officer, and Seaman Thomas Spira of Baltimore, Maryland, handled the direction finder . . . It was a first kill for this gun . . . and the boys were all pretty excited about it . . . a twin-load 40 millimeter anti-aircraft piece . . . They're already thinking now of pinning a big star on their turret . . . They'll be at that first thing tomorrow morning when it's daylight . . . Meantime now the French coast has quieted down . . . There seems to be no more coming into it . . . All around it is darkness and no light or no firing . . . Now ten past twelve the beginning of June 7, 1944 . . . This is George Hicks speaking. I now return you to the United States."

Years later, Hicks reminisced with friends about his

famous invasion broadcast. "Reporters were assigned different positions, and I was on a ship called an H.Q. ship because it was directing landings on Omaha beach. There were about thirty other broadcasters, but I was lucky. My recorder worked! The scene was recorded, and a speedboat came every six hours and picked up the copy and anything else. My recording happened to be in one of the first sacks to London.

"I used a *film* recorder which the Navy brought in. It was put on the air and played and replayed. The other fellows were on the beach and, like the reporters in airplanes, had nothing to report. They weren't lucky enough to get a good view of a scene that was vivid.

"My recording went on for fifteen minutes," explained Hicks. "Dozens of reports. I kept stopping and starting recording. I started at 9:00 P.M. and kept on to midnight, editing as I went. I was on top of a ship fitter's shed on top of the deck. I guess I was a pretty good target, but it was black dark and just a maelstrom of noise and shell fire and streamers of tracers and rockets and all sorts of things. I was so scared that my voice was so dry and my tongue was sticking to the roof of my mouth, that having something to do was a godsend. I had no idea the recorder was working because they taped over the little illuminated dial so that it couldn't be seen. One of the Navy electricians ran it for me and *he* didn't even know how to run it, so I just talked because there was nothing else to do!"

Charles Collingwood of CBS was one of those "unlucky" reporters who was based on the Normandy beach during the invasion. He saw less than Hicks, less action, less war drama, but his report was thrilling. Here is the way D-Day looked to him:

"This is Charles Collingwood. We are on the beach today—on D-Day! We've just come in. We caught a ride in a small boat which came in from our LST load with a thousand pounds of TNT—half a ton of high explosives on this beach which is still under considerable enemy gunfire.

"While we have been here we have just seen one of the strangest and remarkable sights so far. Two great fleets of over a hundred gliders have gone overhead, towed by C-47 transports. They hauled right over the beaches and it seems as though the German gunners, amazed at this incredible sight, have stopped firing on the beach now because it's quiet here.

"This is the way the beach looks, which was hit by our troops about twelve hours ago, early this morning . . . Since that time we have been able to bring in quite a bit of equipment. There are various trucks and jeeps and motor vehicles of all kinds here. There are also anti-aircraft guns. We've reached the sea wall in many places . . . a naval party has just come in from the shore and begun to unload our TNT which is taking a load off my mind . . . I asked one of the sailors how things were going, and he said it was pretty rough. I asked him how far the troops had gone in on shore and he said that they'd got five or six miles inshore, which sounds as though they're making good progress.

"He said that the beach was still under considerable gunfire . . . The —uh— boys—are apparently having a pretty tough time on the beaches. It's not very pleasant, it's exposed, and it must have been a rugged fight to get it . . . Looking out to sea, all we can see of the vast invasion fleet which was assembled before us are the silhouettes of the big warships, the battleships and cruisers which have been putting a steady bombardment against the enemy positions all day . . .

"We came in from the transport area where our ship

is . . . We came in through choppy seas, with every second wave breaking over the ship and drowning us with spray . . . and everybody in this little boat is soaked through and through. The salt is caked in our eyebrows. Every time we lick our lips we taste the salt. Our hands are cold and chapped . . . The recording machine which the Navy loaned us along with us here is absolutely inundated with spray. Somehow or other Gene [the engineer] has made it work. I don't know what—he was down there polishing it with his handkerchief. He doesn't know how either . . .

"We're standing here! It's an absolutely incredible and fantastic sight. I don't know whether it's possible to describe it to you or not. It's late in the afternoon and the sun is going down. The sea is choppy and the beach is lined with men and materials and guns and vehicles of all kinds. On either side of us there are pillars of smoke perhaps a mile—two miles away which are rising from enemy shelling . . .

"This place even *smells* like invasion. It has a curious odor which we always associated with modern war. It smells of oil and high explosives and burning things.—Oh, thank you. C'mon over here—

"One of the sailors has just come in with a handful of sand, because he heard us say awhile ago that what I wanted to do most was to get ashore and reach down and pick up a handful of sand and say, 'This is France and I've got it in my hand! France, at last, after four years!'"

On August 25, 1944, American troops, following Free French troops, marched back into the beautiful city of Paris, France, exactly four years, two months and eleven days after its capture by the Nazis. The cheers of an excited crowd can be heard behind this joyous broadcast, the first on the spot from the newly liberated city of Paris:

"This is John McVane of NBC in Paris. The bells you can hear are the bells of Notre Dame Cathedral. They just began ringing about two or three minutes ago, and they are ringing a chime of Thanksgiving that French troops have entered the city.

"We came in this morning with the first correspondents in the first American car to come in with these troops and we've just had a big street fight here right in the square in front of the Cathedral.

"And now all the church bells in the city are beginning. I can hear three or four more churches, and I'll let you hear them. (The sounds of bells are heard.) We just had a big fight here in the square in front of Notre Dame, and we were all lying on our stomachs and hoping for the best. But we hope that's all over now and that these bells that we hear are a sign that the last German has left and Paris is cleaned up. You can hear the crowd laugh here. (In French) Are you happy? (The sound of cheers is heard.) Now I see a pretty nurse here. (In French) Are you happy?

"Nurse (in French): Oh, yes, *very* happy!"

The war was coming to an end, slowly and painfully to the soldiers fighting it and to the Americans following the progress of the Allied armies on their radio sets. But in the perspective of history, the Allied victories came one after another and many other cities in addition to Paris heard the cry "liberation." General MacArthur had landed on the Philippines during the first week of January in 1945. On January 31 this short report was broadcast from Luzon Island, and it captured the mood of the Pacific war as the year began.

"This is Pat Flaherty of NBC, speaking to you from a mobile transmitter in central Luzon in the Philippines. For

the past three days I have been in contact and have been visiting with a large number of liberated American prisoners of war. There is only one way to express it. For the past three years these men and women have been through hell, but they took the worst the Japs had to offer and came up smiling and wisecracking. As one corporal put it, 'We're in the tall cotton now!' "

In Europe in February of 1945, the news broadcasts anticipated the victory in Europe. How hearts jumped when Americans heard on-the-spot reports like this:

"This is James Cassidy of NBC with the American forces in France. Today, American forces in strength are within actual sight of Germany. Some of them in patrols have already crossed into Germany itself. I learned that the American patrol had gone over the border when I went up to the front lines of the Third Army late last night. Because of heavy enemy resistance which we met at Nancy, I was unable to proceed further. But early today, with advance units of the Third Army, I was able to look across into Germany itself, a vivid demonstration of how far this tremendous army has gone and how fast it has traveled."

One of the decisive battles in the Pacific was the capture of Okinawa, a principal Japanese possession in the Ryukyu Islands. We invaded it on April 1, 1945, and this was the last land campaign in the Pacific war. Okinawa is a name thousands of ex-servicemen remember as well as their own. It was a ghastly, costly battle—in men and materials—but it was also a great American victory.

The following broadcast was made from Admiral Turner's flagship off the coast of Okinawa on April 2,

1945. It is less interesting as a description of how the Pacific war was fought than as a vivid first-hand description of the kind of battlefields on which our forces had to fight, and of the demoralizing discovery that the land we liberated from Japanese capture seemed hardly worth fighting for—except that it had tremendous military significance and little else.

"This is Don Pryor of CBS off the coast of Okinawa. It's seven A.M. now. A few Japanese planes came around last night, but as far as I could see, and I had a pretty good vantage point, they caused no damage in spite of the fact that we are closer to the Japanese homeland and to the China coast than Berlin is to London.

"Apparently, thanks largely to the American carrier task force and to the B29s, Japanese air power has been badly damaged. The targets certainly are here.

"Not many hours ago, I stood on a hilltop on Okinawa and looked out over the East China Sea and saw with wonder and amazement the terrible power we have massed to take this island. This alone is fabulous when you see it from that angle. Ships of every kind and shape and purpose crowd each other, and you can't see the end of them. And these ships here off the Western beaches are only a *part* of those involved in this amphibious operation . . . This awesome, power-packed armada that no man can see at its full might, *that* is what we mean when we say that 1400 ships are taking part in this conquest. I was frankly and deeply moved by even this small glimpse of it . . .

"If this power of ours is so impressive . . . you can imagine its effect on the simple, Japanese-indoctrinated peasants of Okinawa. You would have to see it in their eyes to know what I mean . . . For all practical purposes, in their way of life . . . They are living now, here, 1500 years ago . . . Everywhere you go you see this contrast

—the time of Genghis Khan and the twentieth century, side by side

"On the beach, it is strictly USA, 1945. Alligators, tanks, heavy guns and GIs, swearing and grinning and working hard. A hundred yards beyond: the Orient in 500 A.D. . . .

"Over toward the center of the island, I came upon a village, a desolate place called 'China.' This was the epitome of Okinawa's hopeless poverty. You can express it in terms of money. The whole island produces about 90 yen a year per person as against 219 yen in Japan itself where poverity is the general rule.

"Or you can express it in terms of this village of 'China.' Many of the homes were in tatters, and all of them—as in all the other villages we saw—had been left deserted in great haste and were made of a kind of clay brick, sometimes of nothing but a kind of bamboo slats covered over with a heavy thatch. In most of them, the only rugs were bamboo mats, the only furniture a wooden cabinet or two, very old and very worn. In one of them, a fairly large two-room house, we found the dead ashes of a recent fire in an earthen pit on the floor in what must have been the kitchen . . . Through the middle of the village ran a narrow road, really a tiny lane big enough for a jeep, worn down by centuries upon centuries of use . . .

"While we were there, a line of soldiers swung down the lane, some of them leading little native ponies about the size of a shetland, with their guns and packs slung over the animals' backs. Already they are past the miserable village of 'China.' Perhaps in the next few days they will encounter the strong force of Japanese soldiers, supposed to be somewhere on this island. Perhaps in a little while, when they reach South and get to the capital town of Naha—with its 60,000 people—they will find something less sordid than the changeless degradation of this forgotten neighborhood."

Meanwhile, in Europe, American forces were occupying foreign villages also, moving day by day toward the advancing Allied Russian army from the East. The two great armies joined in late April in 1945. Richard Hottelet of CBS literally "scooped" every other foreign correspondent in his eyewitness report of the meeting. Here is that joyful broadcast of April 27, 1945, when Hottelet could hardly control his excitement, from First Army headquarters in conquered Germany:

"The American and Russian armies have met! They made contact at 1:32 Wednesday afternoon on the banks of the Elbe River, northwest of Dresden.

"There were no brass bands, no sign of the titanic strength of both these armies. The Americans who met the Red Army were a couple of dust-covered young lieutenants and a handful of enlisted men on their jeeps on reconnaissance. For days we had known the Russians were near, but we did not know where . . . So our divisions stood along the Mulde River and waited for the Russians to crawl over the nearest hill. The Russian commander seems to have had the same idea. He ordered his troops to stop on the line of the Elbe River. Between our forces was a twenty-mile gulf of unknown territory.

"On Tuesday we sent jeep patrols probing deep out ahead of us over dusty country roads, through crowds of German civilians fleeing westward from the Russians and through groups of German soldiers who kept their rifles and machine guns in their hands and did nothing.

"In the town of Riesa, a Sixty-Ninth Division patrol spotted some Russians and that was it. Some hours later another lieutenant got to Torgau on the Elbe and crawled out to the middle of a wrecked bridge, brought back some Russian officers to division headquarters and that's just the way it was—as simple and untheatrical as that. Just

some men meeting, shaking hands, patting each other on the back, overjoyed to see each other.

"Since then the division and corps commanders have met, but it was fitting that the front line troops made the first contact . . . These are the sort of men (on both sides) who have fought their way half-way around the world to reach this moment, to meet and complete the destruction of a common enemy."

The enemy was almost destroyed. He was on his knees, in both Europe and the Pacific, and World War II was about to end. There remained a few minor details to be cleared up—details like atom bombs, surrenders and peace treaties!

11

VICTORY ON THE AIR

Most of the news that flashed through the ether in 1945 was fine news for the American people. It was news of retreating enemy armies, peace and peace treaties, the drama of victory and the light-heartedness of success and victory.

Nineteen forty-five was a great year to be alive—if you were an American who had survived the war and you were old enough and wise enough to recognize that you were living through a turning point of history. Wherever your radio set was, in your living room, your car, the ship or submarine on which you lived, or at the military front, it was to sing for you the sweetest songs of success that our country had ever known.

Your radio was also, quite unexpectedly, going to bring the bitterest news imaginable. It came over the air in the late afternoon of a balmy April day in the United States. More than twenty-one years later, a tape recording of the announcement still maintains for us its feeling of utter impossibility, of shock, of complete incredulity. In fact, we do not even need the recording itself to recreate those words that have been seared into our consciousness. We were listening to CBS when the voice of John Daly broke in:

"We interrupt this program to bring you a special news bulletin from CBS World News. A press association has just announced that President Roosevelt is dead. The president died of a ce- [here Daly's voice shook] cerebral hemorrhage. All we know so far is that the president died at Warm Springs in Georgia."

That was all.

And that was really all there was to the story. Later we discovered that the president had fallen ill at about 2:00 P.M. while he was having his portrait painted, that his last words were, "I have a terrible headache," that he fainted and did not regain consciousness until he expired at 4:35 P.M. In less than three hours, Harry S. Truman became president of the United States.

They played funeral music on the radio and actors read Walt Whitman's poem "Oh Captain, My Captain," but nothing reduced the pain or helped the stunned nation live through its days of grief.

From Warm Springs, a radio announcer described the scene as the president's casket was placed aboard a train to be taken to Washington. Warm Springs was home to

Roosevelt; there was his "little White House," and the clinic where he received therapy—as thousands of others did—for his crippled legs. That very evening Roosevelt had planned to attend a minstrel show to be performed by patients of the clinic.

Said announcer Frank Gaither over CBS the next morning:

"We'll attempt to give you as good a word picture of the procession as we possibly can, as it arrives bearing the body of the president to place it aboard the special car for his departure from this little Georgia town that came to love him beyond the measure of words . . . When we arrived in Warm Springs last night we found a town whose people were standing about in shocked silence, many with unashamed tears . . . Everyone, all feel a personal loss in the passing of a great and good friend . . .

"Now we will take our microphone out into the little crowd that has gathered here on the side of the special presidential train in which they will place the remains of President Roosevelt. The crowd is small because it has been restricted only to officials and friends . . .

"The sight that greets our eyes now as we look down the highway towards the foundation is one continuous line of parachute troopers on one side and infantry soldiers on the other side of the highway, standing at stiff attention . . . Now you can probably hear the band which has come within range of our microphone . . .

"The band has taken its stand now on the opposite side of the road . . . (Drums begin beating a tattoo.) We see now the color guard coming in sight. Still more troops . . . Pulling over now behind the pallbearer guard, we can see the casket, flag-draped [there is a complete silence; the announcer is whispering]; directly behind the hearse comes an honor guard of soldiers and sailors . . .

The doors are being opened now and the soldier, marine and sailor guard are assisting to withdraw the casket. Following directly in the second car behind the hearse, we notice Mrs. Roosevelt has just been helped from her car, assisted by Mr. Steve Early [Roosevelt's press secretary]. She's standing directly in front of us, and directly behind Mrs. Roosevelt is Fala being led on a leash. And [the announcer's voice continues haltingly] the other dog in the Roosevelt family, a red Irish Setter, I believe, is being led on a leash behind Fala. Mrs. Roosevelt has passed to our left now and has gone to the front of the car which bears the president's casket . . . The casket has been very easily passed through the window of the car and the president is now back in his presidential special train—in the last car of this eleven-car train for the last time."

Later, in Washington, on CBS Arthur Godfrey described the funeral procession in a voice choked with tears. In his way, Godfrey was expressing what all of us felt. Said the red-headed announcer in a tearful, bass monotone:

"The drums are wrapped in black crepe and are muffled, as you can hear. And the pace of the musicians is so slow. And behind them, there are Navy boys. And now, just coming past the Treasury, I can see the horses drawing the caisson. And, most generally, folks are havin' as tough a time as I am to—see it. And behind it, behind it, is the car bearing the man on whose shoulders now falls the terrific burdens and responsibilities that were handled so well by the man whose body we're paying our last respects to now. God bless him, President Truman! [Crying obviously now.] We return to the studio."

Franklin D. Roosevelt did not live to hear, on the White

House radio, those words on May 7, 1945, which would have cheered him to the marrow:

"The National Broadcasting Company delays the start of all its programs to bring you a special bulletin. It was announced in San Francisco half an hour ago by a high American official, not identified, as saying that Germany had surrendered unconditionally to the Allies—no strings attached."

Roosevelt would probably have laughed at the inappropriateness—but correctness—of the "leak" from an official in San Francisco concerning a war in Europe. But FDR would have found great satisfaction in the following eyewitness description, given by a British Broadcasting Corporation reporter for broadcast in England but which was aired in the United States also, of the actual surrender of Hitler's army and navy at Allied headquarters at Reims at 2:41 in the morning of that day in May, 1945.

"Hello BBC. I am reporting from Supreme Headquarters. Yes, I saw it! In the small hours of this morning, May 7, 1945, I saw the formal acknowledgment by Germany's present leaders, military leaders, of their country's complete and utter defeat by land, in the air and at sea.

"At exactly 2:39 a.m. the Germans entered the room amid a complete silence. That was very soon broken by the activities of the photographers. General Jodl came first, an elderly, slightly bald man of medium height with a thin red-tipped nose and protruding ears but with some dignity of bearing. He was wearing a field grey tunic with gold epaulets, riding breeches of the same color with a vivid red stripe down the side and riding boots. Admiral Friedeburg followed in sober navy blue and then the aide-de-camp brought up the rear.

"The three advanced to a table where they were met standing by the Allied delegates. General Bedell Smith then invited them to be seated in a gesture that showed neither warmth nor incorrectness. In fact, the American's face remained like a mask throughout.

"And then came the signatures, both the principals using fountain pens provided by General Eisenhower. They were streamlined gold-capped affairs of American style.

"And the German party left the room. They were immediately taken to another room where General Eisenhower and his deputy Air Chief Marshal Tedder were awaiting. The interview *was* brief. No salutes—only a formal bow from either side. 'Have you understood the terms?' asked Eisenhower. 'Yes,' said Jodl. 'Will you carry them out?' Again the answer was, 'Yes,' And that was that. The Germans were in the room for exactly two minutes."

The news was received differently all over the world. Here is Charles Collingwood in Paris telling us how the French responded:

"Paris victory celebrations are in full swing. They aren't yet and may not be very riotous and hysterical, but they're going on. They are neither as fervent or as automatic as the scenes that followed the liberation, but, for the first time *since* the liberation, there's a real sense of happiness and well being abroad in this city. The people of Paris are physically too exhausted to throw themselves into the wild and uproarious celebrations one might have expected . . . What it will be like tonight is hard to say because Paris is a nighttime town . . . But today most people are content just to stroll in the sunshine and feel good."

Ed Murrow in London discovered a bittersweet first

reaction, gaiety masking the essential seriousness of VE Day:

"As you walk down the street, you hear singing that comes from open windows. Sometimes it's a chorus and sometimes it's just a single voice raised in song. 'Roll Out the Barrel' seems to be the favorite. Only the pigeons walking along the ledges of the blitzed buildings seem unperturbed and unaware. Many women are wearing flags in their hats. Some are even draped in flags. At times, someone will start to shout. There's no reason for the shout, but it's taken up at once. There are no words—just a sort of rumbling roar.

"London is celebrating today in a city which became a symbol. The scars of war are all about. There is no look of serious, solemn faces. Their thoughts are their own. Some people appear not to be part of the celebration. Their minds must be filled with memories of friends who died in the streets where they now walk and of others who have died from Burma to the Elbe. There are a few men on crutches, as though to remind all that there is much human wreckage left at the end. Six years is a long time. I have observed today that people have very little to say. There are no words."

From the land of the vanquished at Lüneburg, Germany, Bill Downs reported:

"This V-Day has started out quietly here in Lüneburg in the British sector. The convoys continue to run across streets and the long, long line of surrendering Germans and liberated Allied war prisoners and slave laborers stream back to the rear areas.

"The people of Lüneburg are going about their business as though this was just another day . . . It may be V-Day

for the Allies, but it's surrender day for the Germans. The people I saw this morning look like they're trying to ignore the whole thing. The shops are opening up, and already the long lines at the food stores are collecting. Ex-Nazi *hausfrauen* with their baskets and string bags begin the queuing that has plagued all of Europe since the Nazis went on the warpath . . .

"It's a beautiful day here. The weather could not have been more perfect for a surrender celebration. But right now there's very little celebrating . . . The army is too busy to celebrate. The millions of German soldiers must be kept moving to the concentration areas. The liberated Allied prisoners must be evacuated and somehow the slave laborers who look to us for help must be housed and fed. But I have an idea that tonight there will be a hot time in Lüneburg!"

The grimmest report of all came from Ken Lamerk, on Okinawa, where the Pacific war against the Japanese continued unabated:

"It's been about twenty-four hours now since the first word of the German surrender was received at Okinawa.

"Because the initial announcement came in the middle of the night, many of the men in shore and aboard the ships didn't hear it for several hours. This morning the news passed over ship public address systems and from command post to command post, from foxhole to muddy foxhole.

"There were few shouts—few displays of emotion. To many, it was just another day of fighting against the fanatical Japs. What many were feeling around the world, the fighting man here realized for the most part within himself . . .

"But for the soldier, sailor or marine, flattening himself

against the ground in front of a battleground fortification in which the Japs hung on tenaciously, there was little time to do much thinking. He was too busy ducking the mortar and artillery shells.

"It has been a miserable day on Okinawa! The rain has been pouring down turning everything into a quagmire of the stickiest mud imaginable . . . But the news that Germany has surrendered has raced across the island . . . The news has changed nothing in the actual fighting. Tonight again Jap suicide planes may be over to keep all of us awake as they try desperately to dive into our ships . . . We all know that the final victory day is far closer, but we say to those of you at home—almost to a man—'Have your celebration, but don't forget that there is still another Victory Day *we* have yet to celebrate!' "

That Victory Day was not long in coming. The immediate events which caused it were the two most spectacular military operations ever attempted in history: dropping the atomic bomb from an American airplane on August 6, 1945, on the Japanese city of Hiroshima and the subsequent use of another atomic weapon against Nagasaki on August 9.

The use of atomic power for bombing purposes undoubtedly shortened the Pacific war and saved many American lives by eliminating the strategic need for a land invasion of the Japanese islands. It was also, many believe, a most cruel and barbaric act against non-belligerent civil populations, many of whom were children. Nobody knows for certain how many Japanese were killed by the atomic bombs. Estimates for Hiroshima run from 80,000 to 200,000 people; for Nagasaki 39,000 to 74,000. Many were injured or maimed for life by radiation poisoning.

To Americans who lived through the birth of the "atomic age," the bomb was just another "miracle weapon." The bomb and its explosions in Japan meant the war would soon be over, and the voice of Webley Edwards over CBS from Guam on August 8, 1945, was bright with enthusiasm as he explained how the bombing mission against Hiroshima had been carried out.

"The men who have applied the greatest weapon ever developed, the atomic bomb, are closed-mouthed, serious, and highly impressed with the world-shaking magnitude of what they have done.

"We talked with Colonel Paul W. Tibbets, Jr., of Miami, Florida, pilot of the B-29 that dropped the first atomic bomb in history. We asked him how he felt about it, and he said he didn't feel anything much, but you knew from talking to him that he sensed the meaning of that 'bombs away' . . .

"The explosion was a big ball of fire. Anyone not having dark glasses would have received a visual shock several miles away. One of the crew members said, 'My God!' when he saw what happened. 'What had been Hiroshima was a white mountain of smoke, and when we saw it first it was already up to 25,000 feet. About a thousand feet off the ground it looked like boiling dust. It extended over most of the city churning down there! And the center of the impact was *in* the center of the city. And the boiling continued several minutes as we watched. Then the mushroom of smoke broke off and another developed below. This one bomb is the equivalent of a 2,000 B-29 raid.' "

Momentarily, everyone expected World War II to end. News services, reporters, radio announcers, wire service operators, editors, photographers were straining every

nerve, ready to jump the moment that it was announced that the Japanese were ready to surrender.

This is the way it sounded on CBS:

"Columbia's news headquarters in New York August 14, 1945, Bob Trout speaking. This is the supreme hour: 7:00 P.M. Eastern War Time. The correspondents at the White House have entered President Truman's office. The British Prime Minister is about to begin his broadcast. The Japanese have accepted our terms fully. That is the word we have just received from the White House in Washington, and I didn't expect to hear a celebration in our newsroom in New York! But you can hear one going on behind me! The Japanese have accepted fully the surrender terms of the United Nations! This, ladies and gentlemen, is the end of the Second World War. It is not, of course, the official V-J Day, but the United Nations on land, on sea and in air to the four corners of the earth and seven seas are united and are victorious . . ."

What was there for any announcer to say that matched the intensity of the on-the-spot reaction going on within the heart of every American in the nation? Webley Edwards, broadcasting on CBS from Guam summed up some feelings:

"Even after all the false ones, the official word came as a quick throw . . . Early morning here. We've been celebrating in a semi-official way all night. Guam is definitely along with you in celebrating the end of the war . . . So now we've heard, it's official. So now the last of the renegades gives up . . . In a little while the wild rejoicing and the bright shouts will begin. We will pound one another on the back. We will throw our hats in the air.

Some will get drunk and some will want to laugh and sing and cry all at once for sheer relief.

"But right now is the hour we've been waiting for since the morning of December 7, 1941. Like the soldier who has just finished a grueling battle and laid down and fallen asleep on his arms, a reaction of unutterable weariness comes upon us.

"I remember that morning at Pearl Harbor like it was yesterday! I remember the blackness in our hearts as the bombs fell and the Jap planes roared down the highways and strafed automobiles to pile them up in broken heaps. I remember the smugness and cockiness of the enemy. He had been pretty smart all right! He had caught us napping and struck with a sneak blow. He hurt us bad. We hadn't been ready . . .

"Well, that's the way it is here in Guam right now. We're thinking about those hard days—and in just a moment we'll start celebrating!"

It was also Edwards who stood on board the battleship *USS Missouri* on September 2 to watch the actual signing of the peace treaty with Japan and to report the ceremonies on the spot. Here is the way he began his broadcast:

"Attention the peoples of the world! World War II is about to come to its official closing. We're on the Pacific Fleet flagship the *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay for the signing of the surrender of Japan—three years, eight months and twenty-five days since the attack on Pearl Harbor! We're twenty-seven hundred miles from there, but we've come much further than that by way of the Central Pacific, the Marianas and the Philippines.

"The Japanese delegation has just arrived—military men in formal military uniform and civilian dignitaries in for-

mal attire. Lined up before us are more officers and men with high-ranking stars and gold braid than have been assembled in this bay for a long time.

"The deck of the *Missouri* stretches out before us. We're on the veranda deck. Its great guns are pointed skyward to allow more room for the Army, Navy and Marines and representatives of the nations who are here: the United States, China, the United Kingdom, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Australia, Canada, France, The Netherlands and New Zealand . . . Here comes the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur!"

The surrender documents—two of them: one in English and one in Japanese—were signed by MacArthur, the Japanese representatives and, in turn, the various representatives of the United Nations. It was a brief, formal ceremony.

In conclusion, Edwards said:

"And so now, we have peace in the world. Symbolically, during the latter part of the signing of the document of the representatives of these Allied nations, the sun, which had been hidden behind the clouds here in Tokyo Bay up to almost the very end of the signing, came through the clouds and we had sunshine. And it shined down on the assembled might of the vast Allied fleet here in this broad stretch of water. Old Mount Fujiyama, which has seen many strange things in this strange land, has looked down now at one of the most momentous surrenders in all the history of the world. Perhaps—and let us hope—that this is the last surrender."

Despite the hope of Webley Edwards, Mount Fuji did

not look down upon the "last surrender" that day. It looked merely upon the end of a great war!

Men were to keep fighting, and other armies were to sign other surrenders during the next two decades in every continent in the world and always in the hope that *this*, at last, was the end. It has not been—so far.

But Mount Fuji, as it looked down upon Webley Edwards and his CBS microphone, was looking down upon the last of the great on-the-spot radio reports in the history of the American broadcasting industry. Technology was about to take a giant step ahead. Television was around the corner, and the microphone now in Edwards' hands would soon be hurled into outer space. Times were changing.

The World War II peace treaty saw the end of one era in broadcasting and the startling beginnings of another.

12

VOICES FROM SPACE

Our story takes a turn here, rounding the corner out of the past, rushing ahead toward the contemporary scene.

After World War II radio was still a potent force in American life, but on-the-spot broadcasting was not the same. Reporters with microphones during the Easter Parade were merely amusing anticlimaxes to the front-line broadcasters of the day before yesterday, symbols of radio's finest hour.

Radio commentators continued their daily rounds. Some of the best of them broadcast nightly: Raymond Gram Swing, Quincey Howe, Eric Sevareid, Edward R. Murrow, Elmer Davis, Gabriel Heatter, Lowell Thomas, H. V. Kaltenborn, Howard K. Smith and a host of others. But, as time passed, their ranks thinned. Some became

network executives like Ed Murrow; Raymond Swing went to work for the Voice of America. Most of them stayed in their studios and let younger, less-talented men chase after stories on the spot. They wrote (or had written for them) their scripts. They were now authorities—experts at a distance. They lectured, wrote books, participated in panels and seethed with opinions.

Then there was television.

TV crept onto the American landscape after the war. Never mind the startling statistics of its growth. By 1948, coast-to-coast live broadcasts were made. By 1950, TV-viewing was a favorite middle-class activity. By the end of the 1950s, more than 90 percent of our American homes had at least one TV set. Many had two or more. Color TV was on its way "in."

Stations mushroomed. About 500 TV stations—along with booster outlets and cable transmissions—blanketed the nation. Radio stations grew too; from 943 in 1945 to well over 5,000 AM and FM outlets on the air today. But the new radio was a radio of fast-talking disc jockeys and hourly news reports, read from press association teletypes, or specialized highbrow broadcasting aimed at a sophisticated audience. It was fast paced, tape-recorded and neurotic, like the era in which it grew.

The radio networks became decreasingly important to this increasing number of independent local radio stations and their listeners. Television was the national medium for advertisers now. The big companies deserted radio in the early 1950s and began paying for the enormous budgets necessary in the production of television shows. "Pay $20,000 for a few commercials?" many an advertiser asked incredulously fifteen years ago. Little did they know what was in store for them!

They had no idea how the American economy was to boom upward in the decade to come, how the gross yearly national product was to rise into the billions, how our American standard of living was to rise and how new markets were to be created for consumer products and services that we, the audience, had never even dreamed of!

How could anyone have anticipated twenty years ago that national sponsors would be willing to underwrite the cost of half-hour TV shows with "unimpressive" audiences (of, say, twenty million viewers!) that cost $80,000-$90,000, or that they would vie with one another for the *right* or privilege or honor of sponsoring so-called spectaculars that cost as much as a *quarter of a million dollars each?*

Radio broadcasters in their richest salad days had not dared to *think* in these terms. They are routine matters for today's TV executives.

Many of radio's better broadcasters, accordingly, left the sound studios and went into TV. There they made new professional lives for themselves. Some were successful and some were not. They all had a lot to learn in a new medium offering new challenges.

A man like Ed Murrow was no exception. He tired of executive life at CBS and wanted to get back into broadcasting. With Fred Friendly he did a series of record albums, bringing history to the listener from the recorded voices of those who made it. He called the series *I Can Hear It Now.*

From this concept, he started a radio program called *Hear It Now,* but by the early 1950s the show had grown eyes and was called *See It Now.* Murrow continued his nightly network radio news program for many years, but

he rose to new fame and new accolades because of *See It Now* and his other television program, *Person to Person*, on which he interviewed various celebrities every week in their own homes.

On-the-spot reporting continued into the television age, but it stood for something new now. Little by little, the motion picture newsreel was transferred from the movie theatre to the home TV screen. On-the-spot reporting for TV was recorded first on film—silent or with sound—quickly developed and edited and added to network or local video news programs. The newscaster was usually the narrator of these nightly newsreels, stopping his narration wherever live sound was used in the filmed sequences.

Three main differences were (and are today) apparent between these newscasts and the motion picture newsreel of the 1930s and 1940s—which subsequently vanished from most movie house screens in America. The old movie newsreels were produced weekly and could therefore be carefully and artfully edited. More than one narrator was frequently used, and only the major news stories were covered each week. TV newsfilm is rarely well edited, since new film is needed daily and the pressure of time on newscasters is enormous. (The exception is TV "news specials" like *The Twentieth Century* or the old *See It Now* programs which received the same loving care theatre newsreels once did.) It is frequently narrated "live"—or on tape—by a newscaster who must follow the action on a monitor (or TV set) in front of him, and all kinds of news, important, trivial, local and national, are covered nightly, rather than once a week.

At first nearly all on-the-spot TV coverage was on film which, in the early days, was supplied the networks by newsreel companies (who did not seem to be aware that

they were cutting their own throats) or special news "services" like *Telenews* which sold a daily live film package to network TV outlets.

Eventually the large TV networks bought out the news service companies and put long-time newsreel organizations (like Pathé News) to rest, gobbling up their equipment, personnel and—probably most important—their priceless film libraries of newsreel clips that went back to the early 1900s. The TV news staffs were in the film business now, like it or not, and editors, cutters and other film personnel moved over to TV.

Film was dependable, but it was also slow. True, a news story shot in London could be developed and edited on a transatlantic plane and be shown on American TV networks within hours of shooting it, but it was slower than those transatlantic radio broadcasts from London during the war.

There were two ways of solving the problem of speed. Transatlantic TV using earth satellites like Telstar is one way the transmission of television news may be speeded up. Another was the introduction of TV tape-recording to the industry. TV tape mobile units could cover a news event; the director could edit as he went along; and the tape might be broadcast the minute he got back to his TV station. Or a remote unit could beam a TV show over a closed circuit cable or microwave relay (the latter, up to a distance of fifty miles) to a TV station for instantaneous transmission or for taping.

All in all, TV on-the-spot reporting of live events is remarkably fast today, but it is still somewhat slower than radio was in the great days of broadcasting. This lag is temporary. Technology will solve the problem as new methods of TV wave propagation are developed and as

TV recorders are miniaturized so that they will soon be as small as a portable typewriter with an 8mm movie camera attached. And you won't have to wait long to see this electronic miracle in action. These words are being written in first draft of this book in longhand on an evening in October of 1966. By the time this book is published, and you read it, such a gadget may well be in use by professional telecasters all over the country! In fact, you yourself may own one or be planning to buy one! And even more novel technological electronic miracles are just around the corner.

As the radio broadcasters found out at the end of World War II, we are living in a time of great change. Change is, in fact, the only thing of which we can be absolutely certain!

How did the development of TV and introduction of newsreels to TV affect radio's man on the spot?

TV changed him entirely. Or was it TV alone? Did something else also happen to radio? Had sound broadcasting reached such a pitch of fever and excitement during the war that it could never again recapture the excitement of the early days? Certainly, there could never again be a Dempsey-Carpentier fight, a Louis-Schmeling bout, a Man on a Roof, an eyewitness report from the Forest of Compiègne or even a Singing Mouse Contest. When H. V. Kaltenborn retired, there was no young talent around who *might* have replaced him, and it was the same story with the passing of Graham McNamee, Ted Husing, and Ed Murrow.

Robert Trout, though, was still around. Yes, Robert Trout was still behind that microphone and he still is today. Camera crews had gone off to report the Korean War, to cover the debates on the floor of the United Na-

tions, to spy on the presidential nominations and to cover by TV our national elections. But Trout was still broadcasting on the CBS radio network—despite an occasional fling at TV, a medium on which he never looks very happy.

In the words of one of his colleagues, Bill Beutel of the American Broadcasting Comany, Robert Trout is "the most consummate professional in the business." Trout epitomizes the cool, unruffled reporter who accurately broadcasts the news, often broadcasting for hours at a time without either a pillow or a script to lean on. He has been broadcasting since the early 1930s and has covered on the spot the major political conventions and campaigns in the United States, in addition to such historic events as the coronation of George VI, the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the end of World War II.

In 1935 he joined WABC (WCBS) in New York after a career in local radio where with Paul White and Edward R. Murrow and one secretary he made up the CBS News and Special Events staff. (Today CBS has more than 400 full-time employees.)

Where was radio in the TV age? Well, it was still in business as far as Trout was concerned. Millions of Americans were still listening to their radios. They had to. Can you watch TV while you drive a car? Can a woman iron shirts and watch TV at the same time without burning one collar in six? How many people watch TV on the beach? A few, but most listen to radios. The tiny transistor radio sets came along in the 1960s and radio went everywhere people went. Countless Americans were listening, and while there were people listening, Bob Trout was talking to them.

Radio was on hand on February 20, 1962, when Marine Lieutenant Colonel John Glenn, Jr., circled the earth three times in a manned orbital flight to become America's first "man in outer space."

Radio coverage of the Glenn orbital flight was notable for two reasons. First, tapes of Glenn's own transmissions by radio back to earth were put on the air—*after* they had been edited by NASA security officers—so that neither military secrets nor the more intimate problems of the inconveniences of space travel were discussed on them.

John Glenn's report as he looked out of his ship, the *Friendship 7*, is something of a broadcasting classic, even in its highly edited state. This is it:

"Lift off. The clock is operating. We're under way . . . We're all okay. It's getting bumpy around here . . . Backup clock is started . . . Flight path is clear . . . Some vibration area coming up here now . . . We're smoothing out some now . . . Getting out of the vibration area . . . My path is very good . . . Cabin pressure is holding at 61 okay . . . Cabin pressure holding . . . Have had some oscillations but they seem to be dense . . . G's [gravitational fields] are building to six . . . I could see the tower [the launching tower] go . . . I saw the smoke go by the window . . . Staging tower went right then. Have the tower in sight. Way out . . . Now, flight path looks good. Steering is good . . . Understand everything looks good. She's starting to build a little pitch . . . Sight path is very good . . . and I feel fine . . . Capsule is turning around. Oh, that view is tremendous! . . . Turn-around has started. Capsule is turning around and I could see the booster during turn around just a couple of hundred yards behind me. It was beautiful!

. . . Understand 'Go' for at least seven orbits . . . This is *Friendship 7;* can see clear pack of big cloud pattern across towards the Cape. Beautiful sight! . . ."

There was a moment—just a moment, mind you—when radio coverage of the Glenn flight sounded like old times, an echo of war-time coverage with a bit of George Hicks, Charles Collingwood or Ed Murrow thrown in. Of all places, it came during newscaster Stuart Novins' coverage of the reaction of the people of New York City to Colonel Glenn's remarkable achievement. Here was the flavor of old-time on-the-spot radio and it evoked a ghost or two in the memories of more than one listener. Said Novins to Dallas Townsend at Cape Canaveral (now Cape Kennedy):

"The streets of New York City, Dallas, have been extraordinarily empty today as the inhabitants of this city—which likes to think of itself as cynical and sophisticated —have been glued to their radio and TV sets. Just a few minutes ago, as you gave us the voice of 'Shorty' Powers announcing that the capsule was on the deck of the [rescue destroyer] *NOA* and Glenn was in excellent condition, the tall office buildings that huddle together here in mid-Manhattan practically burst into snowfalls of ticker tape and shredded paper. The windows of offices all around us are open. The people inside, who obviously haven't been doing very much work today, standing there applauding and throwing anything that won't bounce out of the windows! Thousands of people have been standing in Grand Central Station where CBS News has been presenting a minute-by-minute report of the launch, and there has been generally great applauding and cheering."

Is the day of on-the-spot radio over?

In a way it is, we think. Certainly the *great* period when radio really recorded history is finished. The page is full. The leaf was turned when World War II was over and the on-the-spot reporters turned in their war correspondents' uniforms for civvies, then, a few years later, turned in their microphones entirely for sound movie cameras. This was progress, and we can neither halt, change nor bemoan it.

There is no doubt that the great period of on-the-spot reporting by radio has passed into history. This is why this book was written: to record some of that history, to recapture some of that excitement and make it live again for many readers who probably never knew (or cared) that radio was once the most exciting medium of communication that man had up to that time invented. For the listener, they were thrilling times, those hours spent in rapt silence, concentrating on the voice from far away coming from the odd piece of furniture that talked. They were not so long ago that we cannot remember them distinctly and we feel a sense of loss in their passing. But they have passed, make no mistake.

What about on-the-spot radio now? Does it die off like the Dodo at the hands of TV? Are the magnificent men with the wireless machines museum pieces?

The answer, oddly, is "no!" *On-the-spot radio is more significant in American broadcasting today than it ever was. There is more of it, done for more reasons by more different kinds of people than during the great period when radio recorded history. And it is possible that more people listen to it also, and perhaps they like it better now than they ever did.*

On-the-spot radio is still with us.

It's just a little different—that's all!

13

ON THE SPOT RIGHT NOW

Just to show how different it is, and why, let's take Kansas City, Missouri, and station WDAF.

The Chamber of Commerce will tell you that Kansas City, Missouri, lies in the "Heart of America," less than 250 miles from the geographic center of the nation and right smack on the historical center. They'll remind you of Kansas City's history as a frontier city, its role in the nineteenth century as a "jumping off place" for our Western pioneers and their wagon trains, and its growth into a modern and prosperous agricultural clearing house and industrial center today.

Ask John Krivas about Kansas City, the City of Fountains, and he'll tell you it's in the center of radio's Golden

Circle which covers a population of 5,140,375 individuals and/or 1,480,871 families. He'll say this because he was born and raised in Kansas City (Kansas), because he believes the Golden Circle really exists and because he is promotion director of WDAF radio which, he'll also say, "exclusively serves the Golden Circle of mid-America twenty-four hours a day."

John is a graduate of Rockhurst College (1957 with a B.S. in Business Administration) who started with WDAF as a mailboy back in 1951, and outside of reserve duty in the Army, he has worked for the station ever since. He'll tell you all you want to know about WDAF and more.

"We're located here on Signal Hill and have been in these studios since I first came to work for the station," says John. "WDAF is an old station. It actually began broadcasting in 1922 and joined the NBC network right at the beginning, in 1925 or 1926, I guess that was. For many years—up until 1958—it was owned by our local paper the Kansas City *Star*, but now it's part of the Taft Broadcasting Company which runs a string of Midwestern radio and TV stations.

"As far as competition here in Kansas City is concerned, we'd like to think we don't have any, but there are nine AM and thirteen FM radio stations in the area, and they do represent competition. So does our own TV station, as a matter of fact, and the other two commercial channels and the Educational Television station, KPRS, also.

"But maybe you ought to meet Ed Giller, our program director. He'll tell you more about WDAF."

Ed Giller is *not* a Midwesterner, but he has settled down comfortably with his wife and children in a suburb of Kansas City. His background includes college at a large Eastern university and tours of duty in various ca-

pacities at a number of broadcasting stations in New York City and upstate in Ithaca and Binghamton, New York.

Corpulent, balding and untiring, Ed Giller looks and acts a good deal older than he is. He has also managed to pack a lot of experience into a few years, both behind the microphone and as a radio executive.

Says Ed, "Let me tell you a little about WDAF and what we are trying to do here and how we use on-the-spot broadcasting today. I'd say that in many ways we are typical of an American radio station today, August 24, 1966, in what we do. Then you can meet some of our people and see for yourself."

Ed Giller leans back in his chair.

"We call this station an 'easy listening station.' The bulk of our programming is made up of music—drawn, I suppose, from the top sixty or seventy records sold across the nation. You may not like it; I may not like it, but it's what people listen to. In addition, we try to cover the news as completely as possible. We have a large news staff that we share with our TV outlet, WDAF-TV, seven newsmen and three writer-editors. Now, some of our national and international news we take directly from the NBC line; this originates in New York and in Washington, D.C., and brings our listeners the voices of men like Huntley and Brinkley and the complete news facilities of NBC. Our own people prepare other non-local and local material that we receive over one or another of our teletypes from the Associated Press, the United Press International and the Western Union wire which specializes in weather reports. All on-the-spot broadcasting is handled by our own employees. Particularly weather broadcasts. We have a number of direct lines and a teletype direct to the U.S. Weather Bureau in Kansas City, and sometimes we phone

for reports on the weather from a private weather forecasting firm."

Ed Giller grimaces at the next question.

"Why the emphasis on weather? Because Kansas City is right in the middle of the tornado belt, that's why. From March through August all of us walk around with our fingers crossed hoping a tornado won't wreck half of Kansas City, the way it did Topeka."

Ed turns to a tape recorder and threads it.

"Here, listen to this recording. This is the way WDAF covered our last tornado on April 19, 1966. Notice also," says Ed Giller with a good deal of pride, "how tight our broadcasting is. No waits; fast cuing, even when we cover a tornado. Of course, when you listen to this you must remember that none of us knew what to expect that afternoon. The tornado, it turned out, did a lot of damage to property, but miraculously no one was hurt. We like to believe that was in part the result of WDAF's on-the-spot reporting of what was *really* happening, preventing panic and informing the people in the path of the twister to take proper cover."

Of the tornado coverage recreated on the tape recorder, John Krivas wrote the next day in a press release:

"*For two hours and seven minutes*—all regular programming on WDAF was cancelled. WDAF's News Director remained at his post at the *Weather Wire* reporting the sightings of *Tornadoes* and funnel clouds, both confirmed and unconfirmed just as they were received on the wire.

"*WDAF News Personnel* were out in the field in four WDAF News Cruisers surveying the situation in the affected areas of the southern edge of Kansas City relaying reports to our News Director, who used these reports with information received from the Weather Bureau.

"Throughout the tense evening WDAF handled all reports in a straightforward manner, so as not to alarm, but yet inform the public fully of the urgency of the *Weather Alert*. Take cover procedures were continuously reviewed.

"When the *All Clear* was sounded by WDAF at 9:10 P.M. you could almost feel an area sigh of relief—*No Damage or Destruction* of any consequence—*No Loss of Life* . . . another *Tornado Alert* had gone by the boards, and life began to return to normal.

"In all the *WDAF Team Effort* of commendable and professional reporting of the *Facts About Tornadoes* provided Kansas citizens with another reason why they depend on WDAF for the News.

"P.S. If you've never lived in *Tornado Alley*, or experienced a *Tornado Alert*, it really is a terrifying experience."

Included in the tape coverage was the breathless on-the-spot description by a mother who had just picked up her son from school and had sought shelter back in the school as the storm began. On the tape also are identified and unidentified voices speaking over the telephone, weather reports from the studio, and on-the-spot reports by newsman Ken Robinson talking on his two-way radio from the scene of the tornado's devastation.

When the tape ran out, Ed sighed.

"And ten years ago everybody was saying radio was dead! I ask you, is that dead radio? Half the population of Kansas City was listening to WDAF on their transistors in the southwest corners of their basements—southwest corners are supposed to be the safest places when a tornado passes over."

"At least we *hope* they were listening to WDAF," adds John Krivas. "You're never certain about exactly who is listening to what in this business."

"I'll tell you who you ought to talk to," says Ed, "Bill

Leeds our News Director. My secretary, Alice Newman, will be glad to show you the news room and introduce you to Bill."

WDAF's newsroom serves both WDAF's radio and TV operations. It is a jumble of TV cameras, phones, desks, weather maps, a panel of speakers called "Traffic Central," typewriters and teletypes. Bill Leeds put down a phone in the corner where his desk is located.

Bill is a curly-haired, solidly built man with steel-wool eyebrows who first worked for WDAF in 1947, put in a tour of duty with NBC News in New York, and came back to Kansas City in the early 1960s to head WDAF's news staff. As he talks, the phone keeps interrupting him. Bill Leeds is a busy man.

"News is where you find it," says Bill. "We have four mobile units, and remember, I have to worry about TV news as well as radio. On-the-spot radio can come from anywhere, any time over a phone, or from a walkie-talkie, or from a remote set-up around town, or even from an airplane we sometimes put into use. We'll put a man on the air from anywhere. TV is another story. A film crew and an audio man have to go out—or at least someone with a camera and lights. Radio is more flexible. What time is it now?"

The question was rhetorical. At least four clocks indicated that it was 11:05 A.M., Central Standard Time.

Bill continued, "In just one minute Ron Johnson will be on WDAF radio on a line from the Kansas City Board of Trade. Ron doesn't work for us. He's the public relations man for the Board of Trade downtown. He's on the air on the spot for one minute twice a morning at 8:58 and 11:06 A.M. Want to catch him?"

Bill flicks a switch and a voice comes over a speaker. It is Johnson with a list of statistics about cotton and

wheat futures. The noise of telephones and the activity on the floor of the trading exchange at the Board of Trade is clearly audible.

"Don't ask me to translate all that stuff about soy bean futures into English," says Bill laughing. "It's financial language, and the floor of the exchange is like the Stock Exchange in New York, except that trading in futures is a darn sight more risky than trading in just stocks and bonds. Plenty of our listeners are interested in what Ron is saying, because there is a lot of speculation in futures here in the Kansas City region and all over the country for that matter."

Ron Johnson had signed off and an announcer was now talking about orange juice. Bill Leeds pushed a switch and the newsroom was relatively quiet again.

Bill Leeds was on his feet. "If you really want to see—I mean hear—or watch—some interesting on-the-spot broadcasting, why don't you go on down to the famous Kansas City stockyards? That's where they auction off the cattle. Our farm director, Jim Leathers, is down there, and he broadcasts right from the auction at 12:10. You're in luck because these cattle auctions are only held once a week and today's the day. I just hope you don't mind the smell of the stockyards!"

The Kansas City stockyards are indeed world famous and the smell does linger. Outside the entrance to the Kansas City Livestock Exchange building, you'll see a row of water faucets where the cattle ranchers can wash their boots before entering the building—rows and rows of pens, railroad sidings and the hustle and bustle of yard activities.

Jim Leathers has an office on the sixth floor in the building from which he frequently broadcasts farm news, but on auction days he's on duty in the auction pit and

bleachers on the ground floor talking to farmers, sizing up the cattle for sale and estimating prices. Jim's secretary, Nora Seestead, a farm lady herself, keeps her eyes peeled for the rest of the farm news about which Jim broadcasts every day.

Jim works hard. He is up at four in the morning, in time for his 5:45 A.M. broadcast, *Better Farming*. He is on the air again on WDAF at noon and his afternoons are usually spent following through one farm story or another for his broadcasts. Jim was born and raised on a farm, attended the Kansas State University where he majored in economics, and he worked for the Kansas City Livestock Market Foundation for seven years before he turned broadcaster for WDAF.

"This is a pretty specialized job I do here, broadcasting farm news," says Jim. "But farming is pretty darn important in this Kansas City area. Eighteen percent of the income that one local tax firm handles in filling out forms comes from farm interests, they tell me. That's a lot of money. There's quite a call for what I tell the radio audience, and I try to call the shots pretty much as I see them."

Jim points to the pen where the cattle auction is in progress. "See that cattle down there? I'd guess about twenty-five hundred head of beef animal will pass through there today. I'll be on the air in a few minutes telling farmers how the market is so they'll know how much cattle is going to pasture, how much is going into the feed lot to be fattened for slaughter and how the beef picture looks in general for the coming months.

"Real farm reporting like I *hope* I do requires quite a bit of editorializing. That's the advantage I have of doin' these broadcasts right here on the spot at the stockyards. I get a chance to visit with the folks who come in to buy or sell cattle and get the 'feel of the market,' I suppose

you'd call it. I spend as much time studying people as I do studying animals, because it's the farmers and what they think and do that controls the market.

"I'd compare farm reporting like I do it with sports reporting. Now, which would you like better, a broadcast right from the game or one from the studio where a fellow just tells you the score? Farmers want to know the score too, and we bein' here at the yards lets them know I'm in continual contact with other farmers, that I have a chance to visit with them and . . ."

Jim looks at his watch. "Holy smoke," he says, "I'll miss my broadcast chattering with you."

Jim Leathers takes his place behind a WDAF microphone in the airless wooden booth built for him by the Market Foundation at the top rear of the bleachers. He pulls a pile of paper from his jacket pocket. "That's my air-conditioning!" he says, pointing at an overworked six-inch electric fan which blows hot air around the fetid booth. Jim gets his broadcast cue from a radio receiver tuned to WDAF which he flips off as he begins talking, apparently ad-lib without a script and just his little pile of market figures in front of him.

"This is Jim Leathers with the WDAF report on the livestock markets coming to you from the Kansas City stockyards," Jim begins. "Well, we've had a good morning here today . . ."

Jim Leathers will continue his broadcast for twenty minutes, talking about hogs, lambs, fertilizers, grain, feed, beef and the weather to his audience of farmers who, in Jim's words, "might be out there listening to me on a transistor radio ridin' a tractor. You can even listen to the radio while you're milking a cow—if the milking machine doesn't make too much noise!"

Bill Griffith is another WDAF newsman who broadcasts on-the-spot news for WDAF. Bill *looks* like a reporter, the kind of veteran news hawk you see on TV who grew up in the "news game." Bill is thin, grey-haired, slow-moving and efficient. You get the feeling that there is little wasted time or motion in his life.

Everybody at WDAF tells you that "nobody knows local politics like Bill Griffith," and Bill will even tell you that he's had more than one offer to run on the political treadmill himself. But he would rather stand on the sidelines, just as he has for many years, first as a newspaperman, now as a radio news reporter and editor, the unofficial "Dean of Kansas City's Political Newscasters."

The City Hall is one of the largest buildings in downtown Kansas City and, according to Bill, one of the tallest municipal buildings in the United States. Bill Griffith knows the building like the back of his hand, from its parking lot in the basement where he leaves the station wagon (calling in "ten-eight" to WDAF to indicate that he is turning off the two-way radio) to the top story where the City Council is supposed to meet this afternoon.

Bill nods hello to a half-dozen people as he makes his way to the City Clerk's office and ambles up for a leisurely chat with one of the staff. Satisfied with what she tells him, he exclaims, "Well, that's my story for this afternoon! No news at City Hall! Everybody's out of town or on vacation. The City Council is meeting to take up a minor matter or two. Why don't we look in on that? I have to tell the folks *something* over the radio."

The City Council meets in a large hearing room on the twenty-ninth floor with a beautiful view of the Missouri-Kansas landscape. Only a few members of the Council are present, as well as a few city lawyers and two repre-

sentatives of the Fire Department. Councilman Robbins, an intense, youthful, obviously sharp man, asks the firemen a few incisive questions, and the other two Council members join in the questioning. They agree to take the matter up with the City Council when it is in full session. During the fifteen-minute discussion, reporter Bill Griffith had been sitting on the edge of the councilman's table, throwing in a suggestion and comment now and then.

Without a word, Bill Griffith ambles to the small conference room (called a "caucus room") behind the hearing room. Closing the door, he dials WDAF's phone number and asks for an engineer to record a thirty-second report. Effortlessly he phones in a review of the conversation he has just heard between the firemen and the city councilmen. Hanging up the phone, he says, "It isn't much of a story, but they've got it on sound tape down at the station now and they can fit it into this afternoon's programs wherever they want. I use the phone mostly for this kind of broadcast. If something really hot is going on at the City Council, I'll bring along a walkie-talkie, stick the antenna out the window and talk into that. Let's get back to the meeting. Something may be happening but I doubt it."

Bill is right. Nothing is happening. On the way down in the elevator he mutters, "This is about the least productive committee day I can remember." Back in the station wagon, Bill calls in again to the station newsroom. "Ten seven," he says, signifying he is at his two-way mobile phone again. Bill drives from the City Hall garage and parks near a filling station a few blocks away. He reaches for the microphone for the two-way radio again. "Griffith here in number three. Give me a minute of tape for the City Council." The voice coming through the speaker in-

dicates that he is now being recorded. "This is Bill Griffith of WDAF news, reporting to you from outside City Hall on this afternoon's City Council meeting. It was an uneventful day; most of the standing committees did not meet, but three matters were brought up before the Council. First . . ."

The broadcast from the two-way mobile phone has gone out on the air in time. Meanwhile, Bill Griffith has just received another assignment on the two-way phone. He's off to cover it, hoping he'll still have enough time to get back to the studios on Signal Hill to prepare his six o'clock news report for television.

How does Bill like being an on-the-spot reporter in Kansas City? "Well, it has its good days and bad ones. More bad than good, maybe. But there's plenty more money in radio reporting than in working on a newspaper, and you can quote me on that."

Back with Ed Giller, WDAF's Program Director. Ed has a few further thoughts about on-the-spot broadcasting. "This is the television age, but there are still plenty of things radio can do and places it can go that TV can't. Radio can react quickly and so can its listeners. You can't watch TV while you're driving a car or working, but you can listen to radio. It can really keep you in touch with what's going on in your community.

"You've seen some of the on-the-spot broadcasting that WDAF does. We also do play-by-play on-the-spot sports. We prepare documentaries, actualities on the spot from the city and its environs. Sometimes these are circulated throughout the other Taft stations in the Midwest. We cover the horse show, the garden show and other such events.

"One of our unique on-the-spot formats is a program we

call Immediate News. This is a program sponsored by the City National Bank and Trust Company. Anything that happens in the news, outside of our regular newscasts and tornado news, of immediate interest is put on the air without delay. Our regular programming is interrupted in the interest of public service. The Immediate News program has been awarded the Radio Program of the Year Citation and our sponsor has been named sponsor of the year by the Radio Council of Kansas City."

Ed was now taking us on a tour of the station. "We employ twenty-nine engineers," he said, "and one chief engineer. Six work exclusively on radio, the others rotate among the AM, FM and TV operation. Our recording control room has four Ampex tape machines, two turntables for production purposes, and two tape cartridge machines. Lots of automation.

"There are some other kinds of remote broadcasts we do, of course. This week our disc jockey, Ed Muscare, is doing his afternoon show from the Ward Parkway Shopping Center. Ed Muscare is a New York boy who does trick voices on his show and is helping to plug a World's Fair attraction that is set up right now in the shopping center. A lot of the kids who listen to him have gotten quite a kick out of his personal appearance.

"And have you met Gene Davis? He's the host of our *Brunch Downtown* morning show. Every six weeks it moves to a different location in downtown Kansas City. This week we're broadcasting from the Garden Tea Room at Macy's. Why don't you drop down there in the morning?"

Macy's Tea Garden is right next to Macy's book department. A predominantly female audience gathers here for free coffee and hot Danish pastry for an hour of "breakfast clubbing" with Gene Davis, a friendly, good-looking

extrovert. Gene's guest for the morning is a young crooner named Nick Noble who is currently appearing at Kansas City's Playboy Club. Tom Rizer, a top organist in Kansas City, provides the music for *Brunch*. He improvises well enough for Noble to get through "Strangers in the Night" and one encore with practically no rehearsal and to do a creditable job. The audience, obviously enthusiastic, gives Noble a generous measure of applause. Gene Davis runs *Brunch* informally, reading commercials now and then, interviewing females, young and old, and sounding as if he enjoys every minute.

After the show Gene is considerably more serious. "It's old radio—the kind of stuff people like. I guess maybe twenty-five thousand people listen to *Brunch* on and off. That's quite an audience for a live radio show these days."

Gene sips a cup of coffee. "So you fellows are writing a book about on-the-spot radio! Now, I'll bet that's a fascinating subject: the war and Edward R. Murrow and the *Hindenburg* and all that exciting stuff! I guess radio is different today, but everything is different. After TV came along, radio was never the same again, was it?

"I started in radio in Akron, Ohio, a good number of years ago and now, after fourteen years, you want to know something? I've gone back to college! So has my wife. We've decided we want to get degrees. Our kids are growing up now. Our oldest, a boy, is fourteen and we have two girls thirteen and nine. Both of us go to college nights, at our age!"

"Why?" Gene smiles at the question. "I can't tell you why, do you know that? I don't think either of us knows. Maybe I want to get out of this business someday. Maybe I want to become a teacher. Maybe it's just because everything changes so fast that I want to learn to change with it. Maybe I just can't picture myself at the age of eighty

doing remote radio shows from downtown Kansas City."

Gene looks uncomfortable. He would rather talk about *Brunch Downtown.* "But how did you like the show? Can't Nick Noble put over a song? And isn't Tom Rizer a whiz on the organ?" Gene takes another swallow of coffee. "Before I forget, will you fellows send along a copy of that book of yours when it comes out? I'll bet the history of on-the-spot radio is *something* to read. Radio was once—a great institution! Once upon a time it made history, didn't it?" says Gene Davis.

"And one more thing. I'll be glad to pay for the book!"

John Krivas, Ed Giller, Bill Leeds, Ron Johnson, Jim Leathers, Bill Griffith, Ed Muscare, Gene Davis are a typical cross-section of the hundreds and thousands of on-the-spot broadcasters working today in the more than 5000 radio stations in America. And the news operations and know-how at WDAF are representative of the operations and know-how at these many stations.

The sense of responsibility and dedication of these reporters and editors are of the highest calibre throughout the country. Of the many stations that your authors visited in search of on-the-spot materials for this book, the single dominant impression we came away with in every instance is the devotion to duty that now pervades the profession. This is to be expected. For the heritage of the past decades of on-the-spot reporting in radio has been an inestimable one of heroics and ingenuity, devotion and dedication, imagination and guts. The seeds of yesteryear have yielded a rich harvest today. And the current practice of on-the-spot reporting promises an even brighter future for the Graham McNamees, the H. V. Kaltenborns, and the Edward R. Murrows of tomorrow.

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Index

About the Authors

George N. Gordon was born in New York City and received his Ph.D. from New York University. During his long and varied career he has worked as a professional actor and director, (he graduated in 1947 from the Yale Drama School) magician, mind reader and ventriloquist. He has written or co-authored six books on subjects ranging from educational television to applied psychology. Dr. Gordon has been an associate professor at New York University where he was acting chairman of the Department of Communications in Education. At present he is Director of the Communications Center at Hofstra University in Hempstead, Long Island, New York, holding the rank of full professor.

Irving A. Falk was born in Paterson, New Jersey, where he went to school through the secondary level and then continued on through undergraduate and graduate school at New York University, Yale and Columbia respectively. His career as an information editor-writer-professor has taken him to Broadway, off-Broadway, Washington, D.C., New York, New Haven, Petersburg, and Hollywood. He is presently Associate Professor in the School of the Arts at New York University where he is assistant to the Chairman of the Television, Motion Picture and Radio Department. He has produced and directed hundreds of broadcasts, and he received a merit of citation for THE URBAN LEAGUE PRESENTS on its one-thousandth broadcast in the winter of 1966. He has edited and co-authored several books, all dealing in one way or another with TV and radio.