

RADIO NEWS WRITING AND EDITING

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HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS



New York
London

RADIO NEWS WRITING AND EDITING

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L-W

Persons associated with the mythical radio station MIDD and the newspaper Midland Times, as well as news characters in this book, are fictitious. Any resemblance of these to living persons is coincidental.

To My Wife

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Preface

TEACHERS as well as students and workers in radio journalism have felt an urgent need for a teachable, readable and practical text in radio news writing and editing. To fill that need is the purpose of this book.

While it is intended primarily for use in university and college courses, the book is not entitled "radio journalism" lest it contribute to the confusion caused by loose application of the term which raises the questions: Is "radio" or "journalism" predominant? Does it consist of news reporting, writing and editing, or speaking? Is its major tool the typewriter or microphone? Is its product news or comment? These questions pose a realistic problem for journalism instructors entering a professional field shared by classes in dramatics, speech and various branches of newspaper work.

Any tactical problem becomes solvable only when it is reduced to a specific method of operation. It is just this reduction which the author attempts. The book deals directly with the preparation of news to be broadcast. It makes no pretense of blanketing three whole industries—press, radio and theater—or even one of them. Emphasis is on processing rather than gathering or delivering news, and on straight news rather than comment. Such limitations alone make it possible to produce a text coherent in a course of study, basic for the beginner and practical in performance for the worker.

With the boundaries of the text thus staked out, "radio journalism," as dealt with hereinafter, may be defined by answering the questions as follows:

Q. Is "radio" or "journalism" predominant? A. Journalism.

Q. Does it consist of news reporting, writing and editing, or speaking? A. Writing and editing.

Q. Is its major tool the typewriter or microphone? A. Typewriter.

Q. Is its product news or comment? A. News.

Radio news writing and editing in itself is a full-fledged course, career and craft. At the same time it may be regarded as an elemental and integral part of radio journalism in all its phases.

For the sake of simplification and specific instruction, the text centers about members of a staff writing and editing newcast copy. The work of these writer-editors typifies the radio news-processing vocation in its pure form. Many writer-editors, especially in smaller stations, also serve in related capacities as reporters, announcers or commentators. The writer-editor needs to know something of these separate but allied techniques. They are touched upon frequently in the pages of this book.

The author strongly suggests that the radio news student take full, separate courses in news reporting and in microphone delivery.

With singleness of purpose the author has resisted temptations to wander and go visiting in these or other fields too long at a time. Academic and professional experience teach that such journeys mean superficial observation and end with little real value to anyone. The true aim of the book is to serve as a guide and manual to proficiency in one—and only one—activity. As set forth in the title, that is “Radio News Writing and Editing.”

The author is indebted to The New York News for material used in the book. He wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of Allen Martin, who edited the text, Eldorous Dayton, Mike Kaplan and Richard Owen. Finally, he is grateful for the valued editorial assistance of his wife, Dorothy B. Warren, to whom the book is dedicated.

C. W.

Foreword

To give both instructor and student a logical pattern of procedure, *Radio News Writing and Editing* is composed of thirty-two lessons, each divided into four parts, as follows:

1. Text—for study.
2. Shop talk—for discussion.
3. Practice—for exercises.
4. Assignments—for homework.

The topical matter in the chapters has been selected with a view to well-ordered distribution of lessons in accordance with the credit given. The thirty-two chapters correspond to the weeks in two semesters of a school year. They are so arranged that the book may be used in a one-semester course by combining I and II, III and IV and so on into single lessons. Lectures, discussion, exercises and homework may be modified accordingly.

If three hours a week are devoted to the course, a workable plan is for the teacher to lecture during a one-hour period and to devote a two-hour period to practice, with a half-hour round-table discussion preceding the laboratory work. This ratio—one hour for lecture, one-half hour for discussion and one and one-half hours for practice—can also be applied to courses of one or two hours a week.

The study of each chapter should be assigned at the class period preceding the lecture and laboratory periods dealing with the contents. Homework also should be assigned in advance.

A good deal of the raw material for practice must come from newspapers. Current copies for clipping should be available to the student either in the workshop or at home. He also should have access to radio receiving sets at both places. Supplies of used news scripts may be obtained from local radio stations or from radio news services.

RADIO
NEWS WRITING
AND EDITING

CHAPTER I

The News Takes Wing

From Tongue to Type to Telephony. In the beginning man imparted knowledge solely by word of mouth. For ages he could communicate only within the range of his voice. Then he learned to write. Print multiplied his message. And finally he found a way to speak words, most of them previously written, through space to all choosing to listen. Thus, writing, talking, sending and hearing combine to make modern radio.

As such things are reckoned in historical time, it was only a minute ago that science blazed the way for this momentous merger of cultural achievements. The birth of telephony occurred in 1875 when Alexander Graham Bell twanged a clock spring and sent the sound over a wire. In 1901 Guglielmo Marconi succeeded in flashing the letter "S" across the Atlantic without a wire. In 1909 dots and dashes crackled this news through the ether from Labrador: "Stars and Stripes nailed to Pole. Robert E. Peary." Four years later, in 1913, Marconi propelled the human voice across three miles of space and the advance from wireless to radio telephony was completed.

Thereafter the use of radio as a medium of mass enlightenment and entertainment was certain. During the '20's it captured the public imagination and loudspeakers entered the American home to stay. Today listening to the radio occupies more of the people's daily hours than anything except work and sleep.

America Hears the First Newscast. The name of the first news scriptman is unknown. Indeed, it is doubtful whether he ever existed as an individual, for his job came into being gradually as a link between news reporter and news announcer.

However, there is no doubt when news broadcasting, as we understand it today, began. The tiny acorn of today's great oak of radio sprouted in Pittsburgh in 1920. As early as 1916 Dr. Frank Conrad, an engineer, had set up a seventy-five-watt experimental transmitter in his garage. He broadcast talk and music to a few amateur wireless operators. The station took the call letters KDKA and on November 2, 1920, KDKA sparked out the returns from the Harding-Cox election. The Pittsburgh Post telephoned the news bulletins to a one-room studio where the engineer and announcer sat together. Some five hundred-odd curious persons with crystal sets and earphones listened. That was the first scheduled broadcast and first newscast in this country. It is considered the official take-off of modern radio.

Thereafter "firsts" tripped over one another's heels. Americans suddenly became radio-conscious. Millions of them tinkered with battery receivers, straining their ears to hear distant signals. It was not uncommon, in the spirit of neighborly competition, to stay up all night and feverishly record the call letters of faraway stations.

But soon the fun of hearing station identifications wore thin and the public called for something more exciting. The stations, some now organizing into networks, met the demand.

The Stunt Era Comes and Goes. Sports fans on July 2, 1921, heard a ringside report on the Dempsey-Carpentier fight. Both the World Series and the Army-Notre Dame football game were broadcast in 1923.

By this time the spot newscasters had learned that they could take their microphones into all manner of places; and just as the first talking movies used almost anything that made a noise, so the announcers vied with one another in a dizzy display of the new novelty. Some of this was pure razzle-dazzle. Radiomen went up in balloons and down into tunnels, mines and submarines. They fried

HIGHLIGHT EVENTS IN RADIO NEWS HISTORY

- 1901** — Marconi sends letter "S" by wireless across the Atlantic.
- 1909** — Peary transmits wireless message: "Stars and Stripes nailed to Pole."
- 1920** — Station KDKA broadcasts Harding-Cox election returns to audience of five hundred.
- 1921** — Dempsey-Carpentier fight broadcast from ringside.
- 1922** — Newspaper-radio war begins.
- 1923** — Army-Notre Dame football game and World Series broadcast.
- 1924** — Audience of twenty million hears results of Coolidge-Davis-LaFollette election.
- 1932** — Nation listens to news of Lindbergh baby kidnaping.
- 1934** — Press-Radio Bureau formed for twice-daily bulletins of "transcendent importance."
- 1935** — Microphones lowered into Vesuvius crater at height of stunt era.
- 1938** — Listeners increase as Munich fails to halt Hitler; Press-Radio Bureau expires.
- 1939** — Newspaper-radio war ends; newscasts stabilized on regular schedules to report war in Europe.
- 1941** — Radio reports Pearl Harbor attack and start of war with Japan hours before newspapers go to press.
- 1945** — Peak audiences hear news of V-E and V-J Days.
- 1947** — Radio news programs continue to hold top listener interest in peacetime.

The First Era of Radio News.

eggs on the sidewalk to catch the sizzle. They lowered microphones into the crater of a volcano. On-the-spot stunt newscasting continued as a fad for several years, but it died away as the thrill-weary public sought more dependable and regularly broadcast information about news events.

Another presidential election in 1924 demonstrated the speed and power of the radio as a disseminator of news. The United Press, in cooperation with client newspapers including the *Chicago Tribune*, *Cleveland Press*, *Detroit News*, *New York Sun* and *Pittsburgh Press*, broadcast the complete results in the Coolidge-Davis-LaFollette contest over the WFAF network. Twenty million people learned the name of the victor by radio before they saw it in a newspaper.

Radio and Press Collide. The stage now was set for a bitter but futile struggle between the purveyors of news by air and the purveyors of news on paper.

In the early '20's newspaper publishers had been complacently tolerant of radio, viewing it as a novelty in entertainment but of no great consequence as a news medium. But now they began to look upon it with alarm. Would the home receiving set now replace the home newspaper? Many publishers mistakenly thought so.

The press and radio went to war specifically on the issue of broadcasting news. The press controlled the primary sources of the news and moved to choke the supply lines to radio. Radio possessed the new outlet and fought back by going out for its own sources of supply. The counterattack was successful.

For nearly a decade the complex combat between press and radio continued. As early as 1922 the Associated Press warned its member papers that the broadcast of AP news by "radio telephone" was a violation of AP bylaws. It fined the *Portland Oregonian* one hundred dollars for using AP reports for radio in the 1924 election. The UP and International News Service joined in putting restrictions on the use of their dispatches in 1932.

The newspapers tried to keep radiomen from reading their headlines and stories. One court held that the paper did not own the

news after publication, although a higher tribunal ruled that such lifting was unfair competition.

These and similar moves failed to dam the torrent. Enterprising newscasters spent small fortunes telephoning headline celebrities for their stories. An epidemic of "telephonitis" was a feature of the stunt era. Unquestionably there was a good deal of guesswork and sensation mongering as well as a good many genuine radio scoops. One network then began to provide its own correspondents, and independent stations started to send out their own reporters. Trans-radio Press Service and later the Radio News Association were founded expressly to gather news for radio. As the dam leaked and trembled, the press sought to save it by means of a sluice gate.

Late in 1933 the American Newspaper Publishers Association, AP, UP, INS, CBS and NBC formed the Press-Radio Bureau to provide to radio two daily news reports and bulletins of "transcendent importance." The makers of the plan acknowledged the right of the public to learn news promptly and also recognized the newspapers' inability to serve properly invalids, shut-ins, the blind, persons in remote places and those on vacation trips.

The two regular reports were limited to five minutes each. They were not to be broadcast before 9:30 A.M. for morning news or before 9 P.M. for evening news. This delayed the bulk of the news until the papers printed it, and it planted within the plan the seeds of its own destruction, for wordage volume and quick delivery are essential to newscasting.

Press-Radio started on March 1, 1934. It broke down bit by bit as a demand for fifteen-minute newscasts and more frequent bulletins mounted. The time restrictions were modified. More and more news was considered of "transcendent importance." Trans-radio and new radio news services continued to grow. The beginning of the end came in 1935 when UP and INS began to service radio stations with news which could be sponsored. The AP followed suit later. The war was over. The press yielded.

The Press Enters Radio. Even before the advent of the ill-fated P-R plan, some newspaper concerns were joining the enemy and

investing in radio. By 1939 more than two hundred of the ~~eight~~ hundred-odd American stations had newspaper interests identified with their ownership.

Now fresh problems arose. The Federal Communications Commission moved to stop further issuance of licenses to newspapers on the ground that joint ownership would tend toward monopoly over the channels of communication. The move was challenged and the ban lifted with the discovery that newspapers were in an advantageous position as a result of long experience to render public service, particularly in the production of radio news. The number of newspaper-owned and -affiliated stations grew steadily until they included about one-third of all in the nation.

Meanwhile, newspapers without stations of their own began to cooperate with existing stations in presenting the news. These mutual arrangements operate today in every metropolitan center and in many smaller communities.

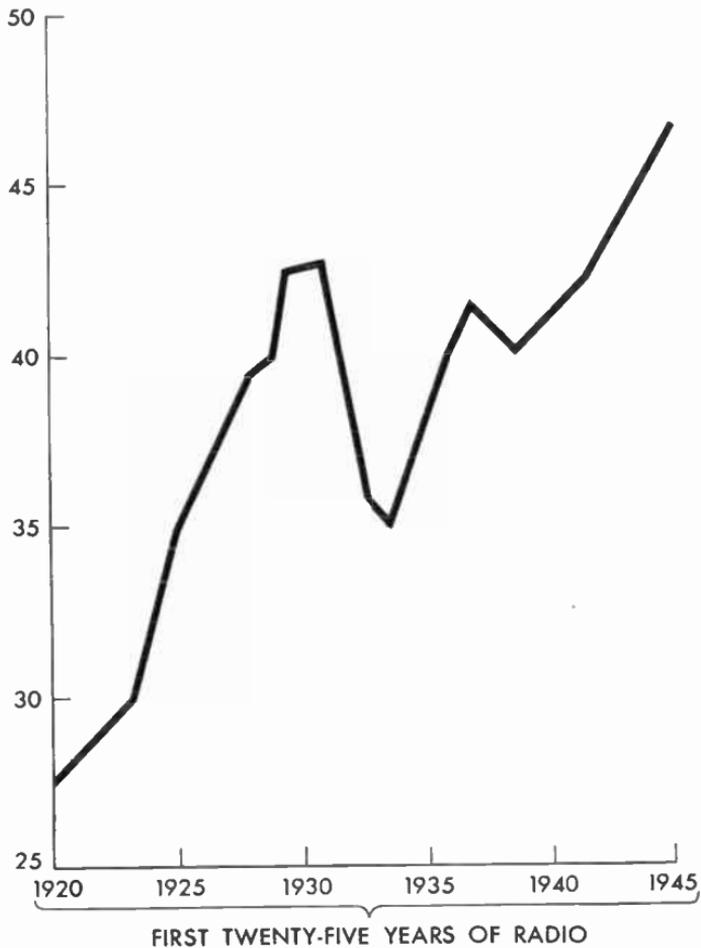
Thus, while competition for advertising continues, the conflict over news production and dissemination has died out. Robert McLean, publisher of the *Philadelphia Bulletin* and president of the AP, revealed in 1944 that nation-wide surveys indicated that the broadcasting of news, including local news, appears to have stimulated the circulation sales of newspapers wherever the event broadcast catches the interest of the potential reader. "The publishers," he said, "have much to gain and nothing to fear from radio in its competition for the attention of the reader."

Another authority, Frank E. Tripp, general manager of the Gannett newspapers and radio stations, put it this way: "The radio is the news bulletin board, the newspaper is the referable printed record—the textbook of the news. Both are essential."

In 1938 the Munich conference demonstrated that the public wanted both radio and newspaper news. There were more newspapers sold than ever before and there was more listening to radio than ever before. Munich proved that the American listener is neither deaf nor blind. He both listens and looks. He absorbs the news as quickly as he can get it by air and then reads and rereads it in his newspaper.

RADIO DID NOT STOP NEWSPAPER GROWTH

MILLIONS
OF COPIES



Daily Newspaper Circulation Trend.

Exit the Extra Edition. With speech traveling on waves with the swiftness of light, radio is supreme in one elemental phase of news dissemination—speed. News is a highly perishable commodity. It occurs yesterday, today or in the future and diminishes in value as the clock goes round. In short, news must be new.

The invention of movable type speeded the distribution of intelligence on paper a thousandfold and the rotary press put the modern newspaper on an hour-to-hour schedule. But so urgent is news in America, where rapidity is a characteristic of the people, that this kind of publication proved too slow to meet competition. Such big events as elections, natural catastrophes, deaths of prominent persons and championship sports called for irregular or extra editions. Usually these special hurry-up issues carried only a brief report replated into a regular run.

The cry of "Extra!" became commonplace on the streets as up-to-the-minute editors fought to be "first with the latest." But in radio not minutes but seconds are firsts. When loudspeakers began to bring bulletins into the living room between ticks of a timepiece, the era of the extra edition ended. A bit of the excitement went out of the city room, but few tears fell in the business end of the newspaper plant, for extras had never been profitable.

In the spring of 1939 New York City dailies moved up the sporting final deadlines to 5:30 P.M., a half hour earlier than before radio began to give baseball scores. Commented *Editor & Publisher*: "Newspapers will continue to report the games but without the breakneck effort that tradition demanded in the past."

Typical of radio's conquest of speed was its supremacy with the great stories involving Charles A. Lindbergh. News of the Lone Eagle's flight to Paris fell on American ears with startling effect, and few will forget the suspense of the Lindbergh baby kidnap hunt. In reporting these and similar stories radio displayed a breathless quality unmatched by the cold type of a newspaper.

Nevertheless, stimulated by public eagerness, newspaper sales rose to new heights after each radio news triumph. By contrast, the spectacular speed of the sound medium spotlighted the indispensability of the sight medium. The air bulletins whetted but did not

satisfy the appetite of the news-consuming populace which wanted to read the whole printed record. Radio's condensation and instantaneity underscored the newspaper's fullness and permanence. Perhaps for the same reason that a person who attends a ball game or a wedding likes to read about it afterward, the radio listener likes to read about what he already has heard on the air.

Radio Goes to War. At 2:26 P.M., Sunday, December 7, 1941, a new era opened in radio newscasting. In homes across the land the Sunday papers had been read and lay heaped on the sofa. Drowsy after Sunday dinner, people listened listlessly to the usual programs. And then, suddenly, came thunderclap words: "Pearl Harbor has been bombed!"

Any lingering doubt as to the necessity of newscasting disappeared in the smoke of the explosions. With no Sunday afternoon newspapers, millions sat before their radios in stunned silence, intent on every syllable of the shocking story. People suddenly realized that the newscast was an intimate personal link to the government and the outside world. Meanwhile, reports of the tragic and epochal events of the afternoon were streaming into newspaper offices which were as quiet as churches on Monday. Printers, stercotypers and pressmen were home with their families listening to the radio. Had it been possible to round up a force, an extra could hardly have been produced before 5 or 6 P.M., which verged on publication time of the first edition of the Monday morning papers. As a result, five to eight hours elapsed before the biggest story since Gettysburg was in printed form in the hands of newspaper readers.

Radio had become of age. It shouldered its adult responsibilities and manfully went to war. With their sons and daughters in the armed services, tense, war-worried families day after day listened to the tidings of battle brought to them by steadily expanding news programs. At any hour of the day millions of wives and parents listened to up-to-the-minute information from our forces in Europe, in the Pacific and on the high seas, to news from the world capitals, to any scrap of knowledge about loved ones overseas. Audiences

skyrocketed to unprecedented heights on D-Day, V-E Day and V-J Day.

During the war the public formed fixed habits of listening to news programs. It became possible to get news on the air day or night at the twirl of a dial. At any given hour a sizable segment of the population was engaged in hearing it.

The history of communication has few chapters to compare with the rise of radio news during World War II.

Today and the Future. With the end of the war came a widespread feeling, both inside and outside the radio industry, that the public would turn to more relaxing radio fare and away from the workaday, less exciting news of a peacetime world.

The prophets of doom were wrong—just as they had been wrong when they foresaw the destruction of newspapers by the radio. Survey after survey in the early postwar years showed news programs continuing to hold top place in listener preferences. Newspapers, too, continued to increase their circulations. The war was over, but not the appetite of the public for news—swiftly delivered as well as fully presented and interpreted.

With the passing of the emotional crisis of the actual fighting, it was natural that the dramatic type of commentator should be in less demand and that news interest should tend to shift from the international to the home scene. This resulted in more emphasis on local rather than foreign news and on straight news rather than highly interpretive comment. But the radio newscast remains a necessity in the American home—as American as apple pie, ice cream, baseball and the Fourth of July—as homelike as the aroma of breakfast coffee, the feel of a favorite chair. To millions it is part of their daily lives—a welcome storyteller from far places, a visiting neighbor, an experienced guide, a true friend.

Radio news is here to stay!

SIOP TALK

1. What were the methods of news communication before the newspaper and radio?

2. Why did newspaper publishers fight radio in the 1920's, and by what methods?
3. What does radio provide in news dissemination that newspapers are unable to offer, and vice versa?
4. Do you think that joint ownership of the only newspaper and radio station in a community tends toward monopoly inconsistent with the public interest?
5. If you were to be deprived of news by radio or news by newspapers, which would you choose to retain? Why?

The Range of Radio Newscasts

Variety in News Conveyance. So far in this book "radio news," "news programs" and "newscasting" have been used as general terms. It now becomes necessary to partition the newscast, to identify its divisions and to catalogue them in an orderly way.

News may be defined broadly as hitherto unconveyed reports of those activities of mankind calculated to interest, inform or entertain the public. There are several legitimate and successful modes of news conveyance by radio. Some are adopted and adapted from the press. Others are designed to utilize the peculiar values of the human voice and the mobile microphone.

This diversification has resulted in a tangle of terminology typical of a young and growing industry. It is not the aim of this book to create or modify nomenclature. Time and custom alone will do that. However, it is the purpose of the book to provide instruction in the writing and editing of straight news. In order to chart the course, it is mandatory to make more or less arbitrary groupings of all newscasts.

The procedure will be to look briefly at the more highly specialized members of the radio news family and thus, by elimination, approach our objective—processing of the straight newscast. Gen-

crally speaking, the examination will be from the top to the bottom of a pyramid. The types of newscasts discussed first are comparatively rare and remote from the straight newscast, which is a basic form underlying all of them.

Dramatization, Round Table and Interview. Because they convey news to the listening public, these programs are newscasts. While the element of freshness or newness in the news usually is faint, the drama quality is strong. A distinguishing characteristic of the group is that two or more speakers participate, as against a single speaker in other newscasts. Thumbnail descriptions follow:

Dramatization. Here the arts of the theater are applied directly to news events, often with a biographical background, which provide the subject matter for one or a series of re-enactment playlets. The script is rehearsed and presented by a cast of professional players with the aid of music, sound effects and other techniques of the dramatic narrative.

Round Table. As indicated by the name, the round table is a debate on a current controversial issue with educational under-tones. Usually a director and three speakers take part. The script is outlined but seldom memorized, since the producer seeks to simulate spontaneity. The forum is a round table plus audience participation. A chairman or moderator presides. He is assisted by two or more guest speakers. Members of the audience speak at random when they can obtain the floor, as in a mass meeting of the town-hall variety.

Interview. The interview is a question-and-answer dialogue related to the newspaper interview and to the radio quiz. Two persons participate—the interviewer, who outlines the program and draws up and asks the questions, and the interviewee, usually a celebrity, an expert or an eyewitness, who answers them. Sidewalk interviews, wherein uncoached persons reply to questions on a sub-

ject of current interest, shade into the radio quiz, for entertainment only, and into the forum. The two-person, question-and-answer formula frequently combines with the commentary or straight report, with the interviewee as a guest of the interviewer. This combination is often used to present topical newscasts with special audience group appeal such as farm, homemaking, Hollywood, religious and sports programs.

Reporting From the Scene. This form of news conveyance is known as spot newscasting. The word "spot" has three professional meanings. In newspaper parlance, spot news is hot or fresh news. In radio, spot means a short period on the air and is used in such expressions as "dead spot" and "spot announcement." A spot newscast means an on-the-spot or on-the-scene newscast by a radio reporter who is an eyewitness. This also is called a "remote" or "remote pickup," in contrast to an in-the-studio presentation.

During the stunt era, firsthand reporting of news and novelty events ran riot through the ether. Early audiences enjoyed the thrill of vicariously viewing the sights and hearing with their own ears the sounds of almost anything happening as it happened. When the novelty appeal wore thin, spot newscasting narrowed to the covering of particular news events.

The spot newscaster is the speed king of mass communication, challenged only by the television camera. But while he conveys news instantly, his scope is limited.

At least ninety per cent of the news breaks beyond the reach of a microphone. Crimes, such as a bank robbery or murder, serve as examples. In order to cover an occurrence outside the walls of his studio, the spot newscaster must have advance notice and there must be time to transport and set up equipment.

At scheduled sporting events such as baseball and football games and horse racing, the spot newscaster is at his best. Millions follow the play-by-play or blow-by-blow action through his eyes and lips. Suspense sustains listening interest and tension is tightened in contests where the denouement may come unexpectedly, as in a prize fight.

FORMS OF NEWS ON THE AIR

SPECIAL NEWS

News + Drama = Dramatization

News + Discussion = Round Table

News + Dialogue = Interview

News + On-Scene Delivery = Spot Newscast

GENERAL NEWS

News + Comment = Commentary

News - Comment = Straight Newscast

Six Types of Radio News Programs.

Other kinds of scheduled news events which qualify for spot newscasting—sometimes with several microphone men at strategic points—include conventions, inaugurations, conferences, legislative proceedings, parades and such miscellaneous events as cornerstone layings and ship launchings. Presentations of public addresses may call for some on-the-scene newscasting.

Unscheduled news events such as storms, floods, fires and explosions may bring a spot radio reporter to the scene. However, time elapses between the first stage of the event and the arrival of broadcasting facilities, and direct reporting is restricted to the range of the senses. Hence, the newscast often becomes a series of ad libbed introductions, interviews and straight announcements plus sound pickups.

Broadcasts by correspondents covering developments at foreign or domestic news centers, explorations and other distant events may be classified as spot newscasts, although they are often combined with comment and straight reporting.

Comment and Straight News Groups. By an elimination process we now have closed in our discussion until the comment and straight newscasts remain—two classifications so closely related that they mingle in a twilight zone. They also divide into subclasses which may unite the functions of both.

A common characteristic of these newscasts is use of the written script processed largely from news previously gathered from primary sources, written in newspaper style and transmitted by newspapers and press services. Comment and straight newscasts draw their main supply of news from this common origin. However, it is processed and presented in different ways.

The words *newscaster*, *commentator*, *analyst*, *reporter* and *announcer* often are used interchangeably and the work of the anonymous *writer-editor* is not clear to the layman as a distinct operation. For professional purposes this work of preparing news should be considered as separate and apart from that of presenting news, a speaking task which may or may not be performed by the processor. Definitions follow:

Straight News Group

Writer-editor. A person who processes news without direct personal comment.

Announcer. A person who delivers news prepared by writer-editors.

Reporter. A person who processes and delivers news without direct personal comment; hence, a combination writer-editor and announcer.

News Comment Group

Commentator. A person who processes and delivers news with direct personal comment.

Analyst. A commentator who leans toward objective analysis rather than personal interpretation.

Any person using the microphone to deliver any kind of newscast is a newscaster. The term reporter is used here in a restricted and specialized sense to distinguish the straight newscaster from the commentator. As more generally used, the word reporter means a person who covers news for either radio or press.

Within the comment group the commentator and analyst are temporarily separated. One influential broadcasting organization has made the distinction in order to de-emphasize personal comment. However, as commonly understood, the analyst is a commentator objective in his interpretations of the news. They can be regrouped according to individual functions.

Speaking

Those who speak before the microphone are the announcer, reporter and commentator. The one who does not speak is the writer-editor.

Writing and Editing

Those who write and edit are the writer-editor, reporter and commentator. The one who does not write and edit is the announcer.

Personal Commenting

The one who places direct personal comments in a script is the commentator—or analyst. Those who do not are the writer-editor and reporter. Since he merely reads a script prepared by another person, the announcer of course does not inject direct personal comments.

These definitions are important. In fact, they are vital to the student starting a radio journalism career. Speaking news and processing news call for sharply different talents and training. A man or woman can be a writer-editor and be barred—say by a lisp—from announcing. And a man can be an announcer and be barred—say by inability to typewrite—from writing and editing.

The distinction may go much deeper. To be successful as a writer-editor a man must be basically trained in news selection, writing style and editing—the attributes of the newspaper writing reporter, rewrite man and copyreader. He need not be trained basically in the vocal arts, that is, in the attributes of the actor or public speaker. The radio announcer, reporter and commentator, however, require training as speakers behind the microphone.

Now let us eliminate the announcer and consider the news-script processing function—a task for the writer-editor, reporter and commentator. Here are essential cohesion and unity. Basically the same training in news selection, writing style and editing is required for processing any news script. The commentator must be a sound writer-editor. The writer-editor must be a potential commentator—an expert on personal comment, if only to identify and exclude or disguise it.

The true and only distinction between processing by the commentator and processing by the writer-editor rests on the word *direct*. The former may comment directly. The latter may comment only indirectly. This slight but significant cleavage will become clearer as we proceed.

The News Commentary. Resuming our look-at-and-lay-aside procedure, let us next examine the one phase of the commentary

which sets it apart from the straight newscast—direct personal comment. Again we must pick our way carefully through a labyrinth of words:

<i>analysis</i>	<i>forecast</i>
<i>appraisal</i>	<i>gossip</i>
<i>background</i>	<i>guesswork</i>
<i>bias</i>	<i>inference</i>
<i>conjecture</i>	<i>information</i>
<i>deduction</i>	<i>innuendo</i>
<i>distortion</i>	<i>interpretation</i>
<i>editorializing</i>	<i>opinion</i>
<i>elucidation</i>	<i>propaganda</i>
<i>evaluation</i>	<i>prophecy</i>
<i>exhortation</i>	<i>view</i>

A mere listing of these words underscores the question: What is proper and improper comment?

The problem roots into the very nature of news. It was inherited in part from the newspaper, where the controversial words include *platform*, *policy*, *crusade*, *editorializing*, *slanting* and *coloring* and the commentators are editorial, column and by-line writers.

Two nonpress factors enter the radio picture. Because the number of licenses is limited, a radio station or network, unlike an individual newspaper or chain of papers, does not have an editorial policy or point of view apart from that of other stations. Second, the voice individualizes presentation to a far greater degree than print. By voice alone the speaker can register his feelings, giving to words his choice of meanings. Thus, while the owner and publisher may dictate or supervise direct personal comment in the newspaper, this prerogative in radio devolves upon and is exclusive to the commentator himself.

Recognizing these radio peculiarities, the National Association of Broadcasters in its Code of Self-Regulation gives us a guide through our word labyrinth. It specifies as improper, editorializing, coloring, expounding of opinion. It specifies as proper, analysis and elucidation. Bias is blacklisted.

Anyone turning his radio dial will discover that the Code is an

THE ETHICS OF NEWS BROADCASTS

News broadcasts shall not be editorial.

This means that news shall not be selected for the purpose of furthering or hindering either side of any controversial public issue, nor shall it be colored by the opinions or desires of the station or network management, the editor or others engaged in its preparation or by the person actually delivering it over the air, or, in the case of sponsored news broadcasts, the advertiser.

The fundamental purpose of news dissemination in a democracy is to enable people to know what is happening and to understand the meaning of events so that they may form their own conclusions and, therefore, nothing in the foregoing shall be understood as preventing news broadcasters from analyzing and elucidating news so long as such analysis and elucidation are free from bias.

News commentators as well as all other newscasters shall be governed by these provisions.

From the
Code of Self-Regulation
of the
National Association of Broadcasters

Proper and Improper Handling of News.

ethical standard and like such standards in any profession is not always adhered to. Honest men slip over the line sometimes. And there are unethical commentators just as there are quacks and shysters.

The Commentary v. the Straight Newscast. There is a good deal of shop-talk rivalry between the commentator on the one hand and the radio reporter and writer-editor on the other.

The commentator is apt to place his group on a pedestal by citing the renown of the "name" commentators. These are the men whose extraordinary skill and dynamic personalities win network contracts and national audiences. It is true that commentators' names go on the air while many reporters and most writer-editors are anonymous. However, many straight-news men, impervious to the lure of personal glamour, become honored, influential, high-salaried network and metropolitan station and press service editors and executives.

More pertinent to our subject may be the contention by a commentator that the privilege of using the personal "I" at will gives him greater freedom of expression. Use of "I" is denied in the straight newscast. However, the right to inject direct personal comment, when viewed as an obligation, may at times become a distinct disadvantage. Such comment consumes precious space on paper and time on the air. Unless the particular news calls for it, the comment is an impediment. When the fact itself is urgent news not previously broadcast—say the unexpected death of a President—comment is ridiculous. Unfettered by any obligation to comment directly and personally, the straight man may use the space and time thus saved to convey his news more swiftly and completely. He too may claim a greater freedom of expression.

Again, the commentator may maintain that the straight man answers only the questions *Who? What? Where? and When?* while he, the commentator, alone answers *Why?* That is fallacious on its face, for all news scripts are replete with answers to the question *Why?* Unless he is an expert in his own right—say an experienced soldier analyzing military tactics—the commentator is no better

qualified to tell *Why?* than the straight man. For the latter, like the former, may sum up the opinions of the most expert authorities. The commentator spends a good deal of time in research, but he has no monopoly on sources of information. They are open as well to the straight man.

In shop-talk debates the straight man may argue that his news is fresher because *When?* is a secondary consideration with the commentator, who requires time for research and therefore often comments on aging events. Here the counterargument by the commentator is that speed alone is inadequate for complicated news requiring clarification. Further, the well-versed commentator is able to use news that breaks fairly near to his deadline, even to ad lib effectively on dangerous and delicate subjects.

It will now be seen that the dispute tends to dissolve and disappear in the absence of professional pride. The fact is that both commentator and straight man are dealing in one commodity—public intelligence. They wrap it in slightly different packages.

Time will tell whether the commentary is destined to drop in public favor. Certainly straight news will never lose its popularity. It is deeply rooted in the democratic formula, the American way of life. At present there is an ample market for both kinds of packages. To the mass of listeners—who have the final say-so—the variations seem to be more imaginary than real.

The Straight Newscast. We have now reached our goal—the straight newscast—and to orient it we must again guard our terminology.

The straight newscast is so called for want of a better expression. *Straight* is derived from the parlance of the press, where it means sound, solid, self-evident news written in a straightforward style, as contrasted to feature articles or editorial matter treated in a special style. *Straight* is not wholly adequate as applied to the newscast since it wrongly conveys an impression of stiffness and stiltedness, perhaps from mental association with *strait-laced*, *strait jacket*, *straight whisky* and *straight ticket*. The adjective *formal* as used in formal newscast accentuates the error.

Neither are the nouns *summary* and *digest*, as in news summary and news digest, wholly acceptable alternates except as applied to a one-, two- or three-minute series of so-called bulletins or headlines. These are not true newscasts. There should be no suggestion of abridgment or condensation in the straight newscast, which may and should be replete with human interest, flexible, blended, informal, complete and rounded out so as to satisfy fully the desire of the listener.

What, then, is the positive definition of the straight newscast? Ask a veteran and he probably will suggest that you switch on your radio and listen to one. To embody a definition in a glib phrase is difficult, for its scope is as limitless as that of news itself.

In many ways the straight newscast may be regarded as the common denominator of all radio news programs, for it displays the qualities of each one. It dips deeply into dramatization. All the world's a stage and the straight newscast covers the global scene. It resounds with the clash of minds as at the round table and in the forum. It quotes from the outstanding interviews of the day and hour. When big news is breaking fast it displays the breathless quality of the spot newscast. Its bulletins record the mightiest moments of history. And, as we have seen, it shares in all the clarification values of the commentary except direct personal comment.

Unquestionably, the straight radio newscast ranks with the most versatile and effective means of thought conveyance devised by man. It is toward the preparation of this fascinating instrument of communication that we now direct our study.

SHIOP TALK

1. Identify and discuss the merits of several current dramatized news programs, round tables, forums and topical newscasts.
2. List each of the stories on several newspaper front pages. How many could have been covered by an on-the-spot newscaster?
3. What is editorializing as distinguished from commenting?
4. Should a news scriptman as well as a news microphone man be by-lined on the air?
5. Discuss the techniques whereby a writer-editor may clarify and interpret the news.

CHAPTER III

Work for Writer-Editors

Breaking in by the Beginner. "How do I get started?" "What about a job?" "What will it pay me?" "When can I win promotion?" "What is the prospect for the future?" These questions, naturally, are in the mind of the student contemplating a career in radio journalism.

He will find no simple and ready-made answers. There is no magic method for entering and winning success in any occupation. Only this general advice can be given honestly: Know yourself. Analyze your likes and dislikes. Decide as soon as you can what kind of job you want. Study and train for it. When you are ready, go after it. Seize any opportunity to start at the foot of the ladder. Accept a modest salary. Then prove yourself willing, capable and worthy of advancement.

One finds fairly well-beaten paths into the older professions such as law and medicine. Not so plainly marked are the ways of entrance into more modern occupations not yet so clearly defined. Radio journalism is fairly new. It has been made complex both by its newness and by the fact that it still draws some of its workers from other institutions—in particular, the press. However, it is now dividing itself into separate jobs, each calling for special abilities.

This trend toward specialization was indicated in Chapter II. It will continue except in small radio stations where duties always will overlap and cut across several allied fields. This means that the

beginner, once he has started in the general direction of radio journalism, should chart a course leading toward ultimate expertness in at least one specific activity.

Responsibilities and Rewards. Radio news writing and editing, while basic and elemental for all radio newsmen, is in itself a single and specialized activity. As such it requires hundreds of writer-editors.

To become one of them you need not be a born journalist gifted with any kind of genius. A natural bent and a broad educational background are advantages. But more important is energy. There is nothing so difficult about the job that it cannot be mastered by a close study of methods and their application in prolonged practice.

You must be able to work steadily whenever need arises, sometimes under pressure. You should be willing to submit to supervision and to collaborate cheerfully with other people. You must be able to subordinate personal opinion to objectivity. You must listen carefully, read critically and write constantly. Never—on duty or off duty—may you become mentally lazy. These are the demands of the job.

Veteran writer-editors scoff at talk about glamour or romance in their work. But they like it—most of them avidly—and few could be lured elsewhere. All of them, at one time or another, have felt the pulse of power, the throb of life in their work that only newsmen feel. There is something about any form of news handling which fires the imagination and satisfies the creative impulse. This feeling is strong in the radio newsman. There is an emotional uplift in a piece of radio script well done. By the choice of a word or the twist of a phrase the writer knows that he stirs excitement and touches responsive chords in the minds of his listeners.

His daily dealing in significant and up-to-the-minute facts teaches him to think coherently and express himself clearly. He is as well informed as any contemporary. By necessity he stands off and looks at life as it is in historical perspective. As a result, at home and among his friends and neighbors and in his community, he usually is listened to with respect.

These are among the inherited responsibilities and intrinsic rewards of the radio writer-editor.

Pay and Promotion. On the whole, salaries for writer-editors compare favorably with those of other skilled occupations and professions. They insure a somewhat better than average income.

The pay scale, of course, is influenced by the length of experience, the location of the working area and the needs of the individual employer. Wages in the smaller places range from thirty to fifty dollars a week, in medium-sized places from fifty to seventy dollars, and in the larger places from seventy to one hundred dollars. Pay checks of a hundred dollars and upward are not unusual in the major newsrooms. These are the incomes of experienced men and women. The beginner starts lower, but can reasonably hope to reach an experienced status in three to five years.

How far a writer-editor may travel upward depends upon his own ability and promise. Within his own newsroom he may become an executive editor and thereafter move into a more responsible managerial post. Should his talent lie in the typewriter rather than on the desk, he may be able to transfer with profit into commercial continuity or dramatic writing. Or should it point to the microphone, he may switch to the ranks of the commentators. Work as a writer-editor provides to the person seeking promotion experience valued in many occupations allied to his own.

Yes, Women Are Wanted! Sex plays no proper part whatever in the selection and employment of radio news writer-editors. Women are on a par with men in every respect and compete with them, not on the basis of sex but only, as with other women, on the basis of production.

The argument that women are at a disadvantage in this work grows out of failure to distinguish between the functions of processing and of speaking news. While she may be ranked by some as a man's inferior behind the microphone, there is no question of the woman's equality behind the typewriter.

A well-defined public prejudice exists against women as general

**POSSIBLE PROMOTIONS
OPEN TO SCRIPTMEN**



VIA TYPEWRITER

Dramatic Script Writer
Commercial Continuity Writer



VIA DESK

Executive Editor
Program Director
Station Manager



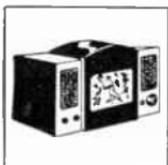
VIA MICROPHONE

Commentator
Topical Newscaster
Spot Newscaster



VIA FACSIMILE

News Writing and Editing
News and Picture Make-up



VIA TELEVISION

News Preparation
News Telecasting

Opportunities in the Radio News Field.

news announcers, reporters and commentators. Somehow the male voice seems to carry more authority. This prejudice is reflected in surveys of radio stations showing that one-third will not employ women in newsrooms and two-thirds will not use them for reading news. This kind of survey is inconclusive. As was pointed out, in many smaller stations the writer-editor must also be a part-time announcer, as the operators of these stations are aware when asked if they employ women. Second, such a survey is incomplete if it fails to cover the network, news service and newspaper radio newsrooms where microphone work is not called for.

In the newsrooms of the latter agencies women work alongside men, writing and editing general news with equal competence. The average male writer-editor may be more skilled at handling news of, say, sports and finance. But the average woman is more skilled at handling news of fashions and homemaking. A woman can learn to handle a World Series game just as well as a man can learn to describe an Easter parade. And both do.

In delivering as well as preparing topical newscasts in which the news is deliberately selected to appeal to one sex or the other, the proficiency of men and women is again balanced about equally. If anything, a woman has a slight advantage because of the concentration of the feminine audience during the daytime hours. There is no comparable concentration of the male audience during the twenty-four-hour period.

Prospects for the Future. In choosing a career, the young man or woman may well look beyond a job, pay and promotion and contemplate the more distant possibilities in his position. The outlook at this time seems to be limitless.

The business of preparing news for broadcast in its very nature beckons to those who look not to the past, but to the present and future. It wants youth, imagination and enterprise. It is part of the fabric of modern living and a symbol of the changing world.

News is the Number One commodity of radio—a young and growing industry. Its conveyance is a well-organized part of broad-

casting. It is here to stay. Its growth has been fast and will be faster.

Further, the medium—radio—is linked directly to electronics, a scientific marvel of the century. In a later chapter television and facsimile will be discussed. It is sufficient here merely to mention them to indicate what the future may hold in opportunities. Unless the signposts are all wrong, radio newsmen should be in an excellent striking position as the electronics frontier advances in the years ahead.

Training To Be a Writer-Editor. In earlier days the typical radio news processor stumbled into his job more or less by accident. As we have pointed out, the new craft continues to draw employees trained for something else—in particular, newspaper work.

More and more students today are deliberately choosing and preparing for careers as writer-editors. If you are one of these you must:

1. Learn how to judge radio news values.
2. Learn how to write news for radio.
3. Learn how to edit news for radio.

Is newspaper training or experience necessary? This is an if-y question analogous to these: If you can navigate a sailboat, can you navigate a steamboat? If you can raise sheep, can you raise horses? If you are a diagnostician, can you be a surgeon? Or if you are a lawyer, can you be a jurist? In each case the foundations—navigation, animal husbandry, medicine and law—are similar, but the specialties are different. So it is with newspaper and radio news training. Certainly newspapermen know how to judge, write and edit news. Many of them have specialized first in news for print and then in news for radio.

Unquestionably newspaper training goes a long way toward preparation for radio news writing and editing, but there is no sound reason a radio scriptman needs to specialize first in news for print. However, the foundation skills are the same and must be acquired in one way or the other. The beginner should aim to acquire them from whatever facilities are available to him.

Is radio speaking ability required before you can be a successful writer-editor? Not necessarily. It is helpful but not mandatory. For all practical purposes the writer-editor without personal experience may learn what he needs to know of the microphone with an announcer serving as his mouthpiece.

Where To Get Started. News is processed for radio in newsrooms attached to four kinds of places. These are:

1. Newspapers.
2. Press services.
3. Networks.
4. Stations.

Would-be radio journalists often are told that the only place to start is at a local radio station in a small city. This advice has merit, but how much merit depends upon the beginner himself.

Several hundred stations in the United States operate on one hundred- and 250-watt power. These stations employ small staffs—some only one or two men—with overlapping duties. Employees may do some work as writer-editor, reporter and announcer, as continuity writer, actor or music selector, with even clerical chores on the side. These jack-of-all-trades positions are not to be scorned. They are specializations in themselves, for they require the not-too-common ability to do several kinds of work moderately well and often lead to management and ownership.

Part-time or vacation work in either a radio station or a newspaper office, small or large, has experience value for the student. He also may gain experience and perhaps a contact for a job by sending to home-town stations and papers news items about students from those towns.

The start-in-a-small-station advice should be well taken by speaking radiomen. Indeed, it is virtually impossible for an announcer to reach the metropolitan and network studios without serving an apprenticeship in a station of humble wattage.

However, the idea that a person bent on becoming an expert writer-editor must nibble at every one of the manifold jobs in a radio station is no more sound than the notion that to be a success-

ful newspaper reporter he must learn how to set type, run a hand press, solicit advertising and take pictures.

There is no reason properly trained news processors may not go through the front door directly into jobs in the radio newsrooms of newspapers, news services, networks and large stations. These agencies, like the smaller stations, have their lesser jobs for the rawest recruits. They employ clerical help, office boys and girls, and junior writers with the object of training those worthy of advancement.

Radio newsrooms need and want expert writer-editors and are willing to pay well the people who can do the work. More and more they are demanding those with thorough training.

Points Where News Is Processed. We have mentioned the four kinds of places in which radio writing and editing is done and discussed the work in small stations. Let us now move closer to the work of the writer-editor in newsrooms attached to newspapers, press services, networks and the larger stations. In order to understand the locations of these newsrooms it is necessary first to trace the flow of the main news stream from its origin.

The staff of a radio newsroom does very little, if any, firsthand covering of news originating outside the office. Only to a limited extent is the radio industry engaged in news gathering. Spot newscasters, of course, are present at the event they report. Radio correspondents, abroad and in key cities, cover some of their own stories, and networks use a few regional and local correspondents as supplementary news sources. Finally, in small and medium-sized towns mostly, a station minus a newspaper connection may do some covering of local and regional news sources such as police and fire stations. This often consists of checking by telephone rather than personal visits. It also may engage its own group of correspondents in neighboring communities.

These forms of primary news coverage are exceptions to the general rule. They make only a fractional contribution to the vast volume of news wordage pouring daily through the nation's loudspeakers.

In the late '30's, as recounted in Chapter I, the press surrendered

after its fight to keep news off the air, and one of the concessions was to make available to radio its highly effective news-gathering facilities. These facilities today provide the bulk of news used by radio—at least ninety per cent of the total.

It is gathered originally by the same army of reporters which supplies it to the newspapers and press services. Locally, these reporters are mostly newspaper employees. Their stories reach the press associations either through their papers or from themselves as correspondents. In the larger cities and more important news centers, of course, the services use their own reporters and correspondents.

The news services are the main channels of intercity, interregion and international news. Their wire circuits cross and crisscross the nation, feeding both press and radio. Along these channels of news are the four strategic points where it is processed for radio.

Processing by News Services. Three major American press services, also called wire services, operate in the United States. These are the Associated Press (AP), United Press (UP) and International News Service (INS). The AP is owned and co-operatively controlled by member newspapers. UP is a privately owned news agency, selling its service to any who will buy. INS, the Hearst news service, markets its service in the same way as UP.

AP and UP, in addition to making their own newspaper wire outputs available to other processors, have their own auxiliaries for translating news from newspaper into radio style. The processing subsidiary of AP is Press Association (PA). That of UP is the United Press radio bureau. INS offers its complete news report to stations as well as newspapers. All three press services produce special, dramatic and topical scripts and records for their clients.

Another radio news agency is Transradio Press Service (TP). Organized in 1934 when it appeared that radio would have to gather its own news, TP has continued in operation. It serves processed news to stations primarily, but has a few newspaper clients.

At many of the main and regional offices of the press services we find the writer-editor at work processing straight newscast copy for radio delivery.

RADIO NEWS SUPPLY LINES

REPORTERS AND CORRESPONDENTS



PROCESSING POINTS



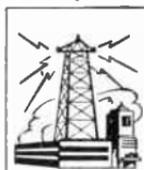
Newspaper



Press
Service



Network



Station

WRITER-EDITORS AT WORK



MEN AT MICROPHONES

News—From Origin to Listener.

Other News-Processing Agencies. We also find the scriptman on duty at points downstream from the news services. In the opinion of most radio executives raw news prepared solely for newspaper publication needs processing in some measure before it reaches the microphone. Much of the processed copy needs to be sorted, cut down here, expanded there, dovetailed, molded and streamlined into finished newscasts. All this activity calls for writer-editors.

Each of the major networks supplies news programs to its clients. These are the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) and the Mutual Broadcasting System (MBS). Several regional networks, such as the Yankee in New England and the Don Lee on the Pacific coast and a few state and local networks, also process news. Here again are writers and editors at work.

Processing to a lesser degree takes place in the individual stations, many of which supplement their PA, UP, INS, TP or network news with the work of their own scriptmen in order to round out news programing to fit their own areas.

We now have discussed the processing places, with one important exception. That is the newspaper subscribing to one or more news services and owning or associated with a radio station. A typical example is *The New York Daily News*. This paper uses AP newspaper wire copy and its own news-gathering facilities to bring in news for processing. It provides round-the-clock newscasts. Here, as in the PA and UP radio bureau newsrooms, is straight newscast processing in pure form. That is, the writer-editors start with raw, newspaper-style copy and turn it into script ready for the announcer.

In one significant way such a newsroom is closer to the radio "situation" than those of the press services. The latter, preparing script for many stations and communities, necessarily must generalize their product. Further, their output is so voluminous that the duties of the individual worker are somewhat restricted. He is not in such close contact with specific station and audience problems as his counterpart in the newspaper radio newsroom.

Because the newspaper radio newsroom is ideally suited to the purpose, we shall use such a newsroom as a theoretical workshop in which to study equipment, personnel and operations.

SHOP TALK

1. Discuss the educational experience requirements of radio news writing and editing as compared to those for law, medicine, engineering and teaching.
2. Do you think the preference for men for news microphone work is justified? In what radio fields do women excel?
3. Is microphone or newspaper experience more valuable to a radio writer-editor?
4. Exactly what is meant by "processed" news?
5. Where are the main concentrations of jobs for writer-editors?

CHAPTER IV

Inside the Newsroom

The Midland "Times" and MIDT. The student may now consider himself employed as a writer-editor on the radio news staff of MIDT, a mythical radio station in the nonexistent city of Midland in the state of Centralia, somewhere in the United States. MIDT is owned and operated by an imaginary newspaper, the *Midland Times*.

The *Times*, a morning paper, is a member of the Associated Press. MIDT uses the AP newspaper wire service as a main source of raw material for its newscasts. Also available to the MIDT news department are local and regional news stories covered by and written for the *Times*.

Our radio newsroom is adjacent to the city room of the *Times*, and the studios and radio transmitter of MIDT are in a building several blocks away. Scripts are sent to the studios by teletype. There are direct telephone lines between the newsroom and studios.

Commander in chief of the newsroom is Radio News Editor Jackson. In other newsrooms the department head may be known as the managing editor, broadcast editor or newscast editor. Jackson supervises a staff of fifteen persons, including himself. He also shares in the supervision of teletype operators and announcers. The editorial staff consists of an assistant editor, writer-editors, copy boys and girls. The latter in some newsrooms may be called office boys and girls. The staff members are:

Radio News Editor—Jackson.

Writer-Editors—Kerr (assistant editor), Mrs. O'Connor, Watts, Roberts, Harris, Goldstein, Miss Thurston, Miss Armstrong, Hanson, Baird, Miss Wiles.

Copy Boys—Daniels, Miss Ewald, Adams.

This staff provides MIDT with complete straight newscast service. MIDT is on the air from 6 A.M. until midnight seven days a week. Its newscasts consist of four fifteen-minute shows and thirteen five-minute shows a day. Although these form the backbone of MIDT's news programing, they are supplemented by commentaries, topical, spot and other newscasts arranged and handled by MIDT's special events department separately from the work of the newsroom.

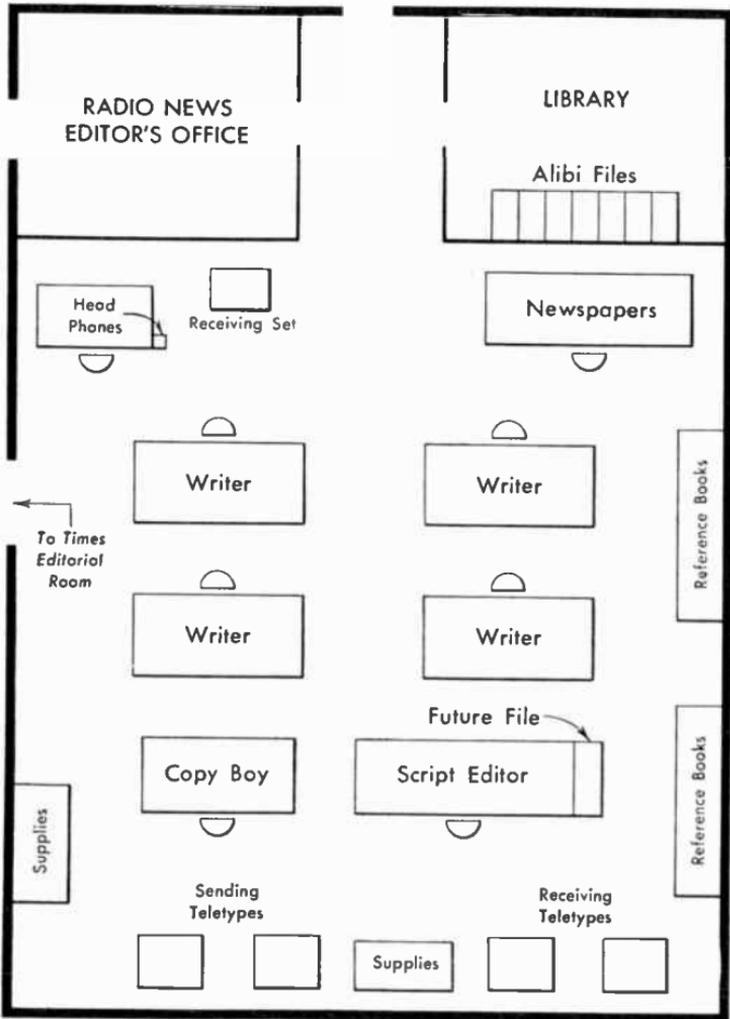
A Look at the Newsroom. The Midland Times-MIDT organizational setup probably is not duplicated in detail anywhere. However, it carries out nearly all the operations essential to radio news writing and editing. Its creation on paper enables us to step closer to the scene and to enter a specific, although imaginary, radio newsroom performing the functions we wish to study at close range.

At first glance the MIDT newsroom may seem to be a place of noise and confusion. There are desks with typewriters clattering. One worker bends over copy with a pencil. Another moves to and fro across the room.

Arranged for convenience are a radio receiving set with earphones hanging alongside, file cabinets, bookcases and mail bins. On the walls are calendars and maps, and electric clocks with sweep-second hands in motion, all showing the correct time to the second. Scattered about the desks are trays containing carbon paper and copy, copies of current newspapers, scissors, jars of paste and containers for paper clips. In one corner are several teletype machines which seldom stop chattering. Voices and the occasional ringing of teletype and telephone bells add to the assortment of sounds.

However, there are few of the eccentric and rowdy phenomena

MIDT RADIO NEWSROOM LAYOUT



A Typical Workshop.

many laymen have been led to expect in a newsroom. There is no leaping about or shouting. The voices are rather quietly discussing news values, a geographical point or, perhaps, the meaning of a phrase. The activity is methodical and purposeful. Electricity lurks within the room. At times it crackles with intensity. But the more exciting the news the less apparent are the outward signs of confusion. An efficient newsroom is geared to operate under strain with coolness and precision.

Every piece of equipment in the room is there as a tool for practical use. As our study develops we shall become familiar with each of them. First, it is convenient to discuss one of the most important—the main instrument connecting the newsroom to its lines of communication.

How the Teletype Operates. As indicated by its name, the teletype is an automatic typewriter for sending and receiving words transmitted from a distance by electrical impulse. The carrier ordinarily is a wire. Wireless transmission, however, is practical and wireless teletype systems are spreading around the world.

The teletype has largely replaced the Morse code telegraph method in transmitting news. The older method required both a sending and a receiving operator, the latter to transcribe the dot-and-dash sound signals into typewritten copy. Teletype transmission needs only the sending operator. Anyone can tear off the sheets from the receiving teletype or printer.

The sending operation is comparatively simple and can be performed fairly well after a few days of practice. However, trained operators are needed for fast sending and for keeping the machine in working order. Sitting at a keyboard, the operator types as at a typewriter, although at a regular tempo. The keys perforate a moving paper tape, something like a player-piano roll. This tape goes through an automatic transmitter which also sends to the line impulses recorded by the receiving printer without use of the tape, making the transmission instantaneous without the momentary tape delay.

The writer-editor needs to know nothing technical about the

sending teletype. That is the operator's job. However, if called upon to dictate to the operator he needs to understand something of the pace of the machine. Dictation will be discussed later.

The receiving printer resembles a typewriter minus the keyboard. Words, lines and paragraphs are typed on paper of standard typewriter width which is fed from rolls or boxes of folded paper. Several duplicates may be obtained by using two- to five-ply carbon paper rolls. As the spool of paper thins, a red edge warns the supervisor when it is time to insert a fresh roll.

The newsroom worker should know the speed of the teletype. Modern radio news machines transmit sixty words a minute. That means three hundred words in five minutes and 3600 in an hour. These figures become significant in relation to the volume of copy sent or received.

Receiving printers usually have a bell which calls attention to an imminent bulletin, correction or story of exceptional importance. Thus the person stripping the printer need not watch it constantly. The warning bell distinguishes between routine and extraordinary wordage. A printer also may be equipped with a signal light to give a noiseless warning to the eye.

In the MIDT newsroom are two regular teletypes and spares. One, a receiving machine, brings in AP newspaper-style news. The other, a sending machine manned by an operator, transmits finished script copy to the MIDT studios.

Other Sources of Information. Newspaper wire copy rolling out of the AP receiver brings a steady stream of raw material into the MIDT newsroom. From this hopper come most of the biggest and latest stories as well as run-of-the-mine ore for transmutation into the oral style. Still more ore for the processing smelter is provided by other instruments. These include scissors and paste, radio earphones, file cabinets, mailboxes and telephones.

In the earliest era of broadcasting, an announcer might grab the nearest and latest edition of the local paper, carry it to the microphone and read aloud the headlines and excerpts from any column that struck his fancy. This crude pilfering soon ended.

MIDDY has access, of course, to its affiliated paper, the *Times*. Some but not all of the news from this source reaches the air before it is printed. From the city desk the radio newsroom gets a few items telephoned in by reporters and some duplicates of type-written and proof copy as it is prepared for the early editions at night. Printed copies are available as soon as they are off the presses.

Every modern radio newsroom is equipped with a receiving set for monitoring its own and other stations on the air. If an important speech or other pronouncement by a public official is broadcast over MIDDY and advance copy is not at hand, someone may be assigned to listen and take notes for use in writing the next newscast. Although he may not rebroadcast any part of a script from a rival station, listening enables an editor to know whether he is being scooped and to evaluate his own sources.

The radio newsman should clearly understand and conform to the governing codes, both written and unwritten, with regard to appropriating news. Moreover, the radioman should be even better armed against the violation of news property rights and better versed in the spirit of fair competition than his newspaper cousins because he originates little if any news himself, because his medium "publishes" so swiftly and because his codes of conduct are not so well defined by the courts as those of men in the older industry.

Unfair competition means breaking the rules of the news distribution game by exploiting news obtained at the expense of money and labor by another and diminishing its value to him. It is not countenanced by honorable adversaries. Neither MIDDY nor any other upright newscast organization will knowingly be a party to it. Ethics aside, it is just not common sense to serve your readers or listeners secondhand news. If you do so continually, you will lose your listeners.

News by Mail and Wire. A good deal of printed material reaches the radio news editor by mail. Most of it is glanced at and discarded, but from it is gleaned some newscast copy.

Public relations offices and men supply more or less well-pre-

THE VARIOUS SOURCES OF NEWS

PRIMARY

RECEIVED FROM	HOW RECEIVED
Press Service.....	Teletype
Midland <u>Times</u>	Phone and Copy

SECONDARY

Public Relations Offices and Press Agents.....	Mail, Phone and Messenger
Future File.....	Daily Inspection
Clipping Library.....	Reference and Research
Tipsters.....	Interviews

Where MIDT Copy Originates.

pared copy to all kinds of publicity outlets, including radio news rooms. Governmental agencies, social and civic organizations add to this flow of paper information. Handouts are numerous and often contain legitimate and valuable news. A job of the editor or his assistant is to winnow it out and use the portions suitable for newscast purposes.

Since it is primarily a rewriting rather than a news-covering office, the radio newsroom of the MIDT type obtains little news by telephone. Except perhaps to get weather reports or some other brief information available locally only by phone, the instrument is seldom used for fact-gathering.

Unsolicited telephone news tips are followed up only if highly important. They usually are passed on to the newsroom's covering agency. This may be the local office of the news service. In the case of MIDT it is the *Times* city desk.

Look in the Library. Straight newscast producers probably do less research work than writers of any other kind. This is because they ordinarily have before them more detail in each story than they require. They usually write an entire series of fairly brief items in each script. Hence they have little need or time for browsing.

However, a library is helpful in looking up background material. Under rare circumstances when urgent copy is too scant, an adequate library is a friend indeed. For example, a bulletin announces the unexpected death of a prominent person. You want his age, address, names of survivors and high lights of his life at once. You—or the copy boy—can get them quickly from the library.

Small libraries may consist of only a few encyclopedias, dictionaries, almanacs, histories, biographies, atlases and yearbooks, or these plus a few clippings. MIDT is much better equipped. It not only has the quick reference books at hand but also has access to the *Times* editorial library, or morgue. Here are stored thousands of clippings from past issues of the paper, dated and filed under names and subjects. Often one or two of the latest clippings will give a writer just what he needs at a glance.

The wise radio newsman makes it his business to know exactly what is in his library and how to use it without fumbling.

A Fountain of Facts—the Future File. A future file is a collection of clippings and memorandums filed chronologically. From its folders the script editor, from shift to shift or day to day, extracts reminders of events and anniversaries to occur on that day.

Historical parallels, seasonal and holiday story ideas and other script features are to be found in almanacs and on calendars. Here we shall mention a few sample future file items to show how the system works. Today's folder, let us say, tells the script editor that:

It is Friday the thirteenth.

This is the twenty-first birthday of Midland's quadruplets.

There will be a partial eclipse tomorrow.

On this date a war began.

Midland High School plays a championship basketball game tonight.

A kangaroo goes on exhibit at the zoo.

Fifty years ago Midland was burned.

School vacation starts Monday.

Today is the wedding day of two Hollywood stars.

Each of these bits of information is a potential story in a script. Some of them are timely only today. Others, noted on permanent cards, go back into the future file for use year after year. Into the future file go stories to be held for release at a certain date and hour. These appear automatically at the proper time for consideration by the script editor.

A complete file can be operated within an ordinary filing cabinet drawer. Index tabs divide the drawer into the twelve months. Behind the tabs for the current and next month are folders tabbed one to thirty-one for dates within these two months. As a new month begins, the emptied folders for the month just closed are placed behind the tab indicating what has now become next month. Contents in the folder for the latter month then are distributed by dates. Single folders are kept for several years ahead. On January 1 the contents of these in turn are distributed by days and months.

Thus the future file is a perpetual fountain of facts. What comes out of it, of course, depends on what is put in. Fresh clips and cards are fed into it constantly. It requires supervision and attention but it is well worth the effort.

The Script Alibi File. We shall look into one more cabinet as we tour the newsroom. This is the alibi file. Its voluminous sections and individual folders are indexed by years, months and dates somewhat like the future file. It contains copies of scripts which are kept for reference and as a matter of record. The alibi file, a newspaper device, gets its name from the fact that the written record may provide an "alibi" or "out" for a writer charged with inaccuracy.

In a tray on top of or near the cabinet, the copy boy places each typewritten and teletyped script after it goes on the air. These are transferred daily into a folder tabbed with the date. After scripts for several months or a year have accumulated they are sent to a vault or storeroom for permanent filing.

Scripts used within the last few hours are required currently for checking and rewriting and for the information of incoming workers who need to know what has been going on the air. Those of older vintage remain on file for reference in event of a question, complaint or dispute over their content at some time in the future.

We now have nearly completed our inspection of the newsroom—its staff, teletype machines, newspapers, radio receiving sets, mailboxes, telephones and filing cabinets. The uses of two pieces of equipment remain for discussion. They are not overlooked because they are so ordinary, for they are the most vital of the working instruments in the newsroom, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter. They are timepieces and typewriters.

SHOP TALK

1. How much of its broadcast day should a station devote to news programs? Does MIDT provide too much news? Too little? About the right amount?

2. How many newspapers do you read daily? How many should a working writer-editor read?
3. What is unfair competition in the appropriation of news?
4. What percentage of news do you think is originally supplied by public relations offices and men? Would you, as an editor, use a hand-out of obvious advantage to a press agent?
5. List and discuss dates on the calendar which have news interest, aside from national holidays.

CHAPTER V

Timepieces and Typewriters

Clocks—and More Clocks. Father Time is the absolute monarch of radio, and all connected with broadcasting are his vassals, including the workers in the newsroom.

Radio folk are clock-conscious—much more so than the average person who often says but seldom means, “In just a second,” “Wait a minute” or “I’ll be back in an hour.” Indeed; radio itself serves as a sort of public timekeeper. People rely on it to compare with their own time and to regulate their activities. Most studio clocks are automatically corrected hourly by an electric impulse which makes adjustments to the fraction of a second.

As an integral part of broadcasting, the entire system of news preparation and programing depends upon exact and ceaseless adjustment of wordage to time. Few mistakes can be tolerated, for to be careless about the clock is to invite catastrophe. The keys of the typewriter must keep pace with its rotating hands as though they were geared together.

All who handle news know something about deadlines and space limits. Sometimes with only a few minutes to spare, the newspaper writer must adjust copy so as to “cut it down” or “pad it out” because type will not stretch. This co-ordination of time and space is speeded up and highly intensified in radio news writing and editing.

The newspaperman keeps an eye on the minute hand. More often the radio newsman looks at the third hand, which sweeps

around the dial every sixty seconds. Once typed, newspaper words remain fixed in the same relative space. Not so the words typed for radio. They must be spoken as well as written in conformity with the clock.

Radio workers are concerned with more clocks than one. If they are connected with network programs they are aware that clocks read differently in the Eastern, Central, Mountain and Pacific time zones. When it's dinnertime in Los Angeles it is nearing bedtime in New York. Summer daylight saving time further complicates radio programing.

Still other clock-faces haunt the writer-editor dealing with world-wide news and writing much of it in the present tense. He must know or find out when it is simultaneously dark in Chungking and dawn in Moscow, or Tuesday in Melbourne and Monday in Honolulu. Time to the listener is the time shown by his own clock. Reporting a round-the-world flight, say, the writer continually needs to translate other time into local time. Guesswork may scramble his yesterdays, todays and tomorrows.

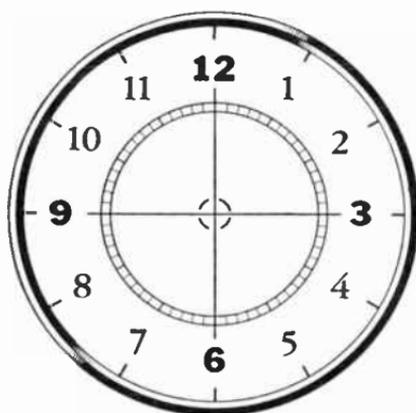
Some radio stations have clocks showing reverse time. At WNEW, New York, for instance, there are seven clocks with faces calibrated counterclockwise. Each is geared to tell how much time is left in a quarter-hour period.

Units of Radio Time. Literally, the *log* or program schedule of a radio station is built on the face of the clock. Traditional measuring points are the quarters of any given hour, written as follows:

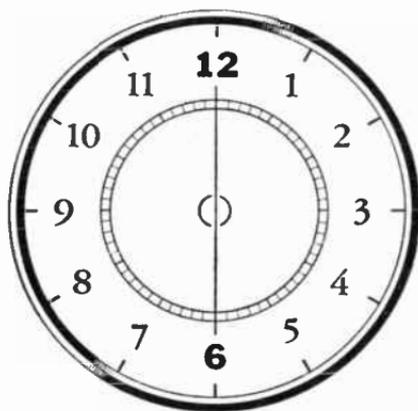
TIME	MEANING	SAMPLE
:00	<i>On the hour</i>	2:00 P.M.
:15	<i>A quarter past</i>	8:15 A.M.
:30	<i>Half past</i>	6:30 P.M.
:45	<i>A quarter to</i>	11:45 A.M.

The broadcasting day is broken up into these basic fifteen-minute segments which visually resemble a pie cut into four equal parts, up and down and straight across. For longer programs the hour is broken into two thirty-minute segments. For shorter ones

STANDARD RADIO
CLOCK APPORTIONMENT



FOUR FIFTEEN-MINUTE PERIODS



TWO THIRTY-MINUTE PERIODS

How an Hour Is Divided.

a fifteen-minute segment is divided into five-minute units. These in turn may be divided into time packages of one, two, three or four minutes. Finally, a single minute can be similarly cut pie-like into seconds.

Nearly all network shows and a majority on most stations are blocked into fifteen-minute segments and end with a break of twenty to forty seconds at each quarter hour. This brief hiatus permits telephonic and engineering adjustments for switching to the next program. During the pause the station identifies itself by giving call letters and location. Sometimes there is a time signal and a brief spot announcement or an extra ad-libbed paragraph of credit to a sponsor. A few bars of a theme melody are used to avoid a *dead spot* or *dead air*—a period of silence. These bits of sound are not necessarily confined to :00, :15, :30 and :45. Although customary at the quarter-hour breaks, they also are heard at the end of shorter programs or parts of programs.

Shows go on and off the air in accordance with the second hand of the clock. There is nothing quite so embarrassing in radio as a program that ends too quickly except one which runs over the time limit. Only programs of overwhelming listener interest, such as a speech by the President or urgent news, are allowed to encroach on another scheduled program.

The significance of time in the studio is symbolized by the sign language used by a director to regulate a program on the air. Drawing the hands apart slowly, as in stretching a rubber band, means "Stretch it out." Turning the hand clockwise, with index finger extended, means "Speed it up." If a program is proceeding exactly right, the nose is touched. This means "It's on the nose."

Length of News Periods. From time to time broadcasters talk of "expanding the clock" by redividing the dial into shorter segments. One plan would cut the pie into six ten-minute pieces. Another would slice fifteen-minute segments into wedges of one-five-three-five-one minutes during the morning hours, and so on. Such novel setups have not been tried on a large scale because the

fifteen-minute segment system apparently is flexible enough for the industry as a whole.

Generally speaking, newscasts fit into the traditional radio time pattern. Scheduled news programs go on the air in periods of a half hour, a quarter hour, ten and five minutes. In rare cases they run as long as a full hour or as short as three minutes.

The ideal length of newscasts is a topic often debated and not yet settled. Fifteen minutes is a popular news period. However, there was for some time a distinct trend toward more frequent and shorter newscasts, especially those of five minutes. It is to the advantage of the writer-editor to be prepared to produce newscasts of any desired length with facility.

While regular news programs are logged like music and other entertainment, news developments cannot always be foreseen in advance. Unexpected events of paramount importance may call for unscheduled flashes, bulletins or special newscasts. Bulletins sometimes are slipped into a break. Otherwise, such nonregular scripts either cancel a program on the log or interrupt one on the air.

The MIDT Newscast Schedule. Our station MIDT is on the air from 6 A.M. to midnight, so its broadcasting "day" is eighteen hours long. On a normal day slightly more than three of these hours are devoted to regularly scheduled newscast periods, appearing on the log as follows:

7 A.M. 5 M	1 P.M. 5 M	7 P.M. 5 M
8 A.M. 15 M	2 P.M. 5 M	8 P.M. 5 M
9 A.M. 5 M	3 P.M. 5 M	9 P.M. 5 M
10 A.M. 5 M	4 P.M. 5 M	10 P.M. 5 M
11 A.M. 5 M	5 P.M. 5 M	11 P.M. 15 M
12 N. 15 M	6 P.M. 15 M	

It will be observed that each newscast starts when the minute hand of the clock points straight up. On the hour is a favorite place on the clock for news—especially for brief presentations at

STATION MIDT NEWSCAST SCHEDULE

6 A.M.			12 N.		15M.	6 P.M.		15M.
:15			:15			:15		
:30			:30			:30		
:45			:45			:45		
7:00		5M.	1 P.M.		5M.	7:00		5M.
:15			:15			:15		
:30			:30			:30		
:45			:45			:45		
8:00		15M.	2:00		5M.	8:00		5M.
:15			:15			:15		
:30			:30			:30		
:45			:45			:45		
9:00		5M.	3:00		5M.	9:00		5M.
:15			:15			:15		
:30			:30			:30		
:45			:45			:45		
10:00		5M.	4:00		5M.	10:00		5M.
:15			:15			:15		
:30			:30			:30		
:45			:45			:45		
11:00		5M.	5:00		5M.	11:00		15M.
:15			:15			:15		
:30			:30			:30		
:45			:45			:45		

Five- and Fifteen-Minute Regular Programs.

short intervals—with half past as another popular choice. Many stations like MIDT place regular newscasts at these easy-to-remember clock points on the ground that listeners wish to hear news frequently and do not want to be bothered by hunting up a printed program, that dialing habits become fixed. To hear a given program, a listener must ascertain the specific type of show he wants, know where to put his dial and determine the time. If the stations plan it that way, listeners learn to take the three steps as simply as opening a newspaper or lighting a cigarette.

It takes but a glance at a watch or clock to tell the time. Some clocks strike the hour and half hour. Further, time signals come from the radio itself. Station points on the dial soon are memorized; and the more frequently and regularly newscasts go on the air, the easier they are to locate.

So important is regularity that some stations broadcast news around the clock, on the hour or half hour, twenty-four times a day, even though audiences are slim during the normal sleeping hours. The advantages are obvious. To get the news listeners need not even know whether it is morning, afternoon or night. If the minute hand is straight up or straight down, news is on the air.

MIDT's fifteen-minute newscasts are timed to reach the big getting-up, lunch-hour, home-from-work and going-to-bed audiences. Why more news is desired at these times will be analyzed more fully later on. On the whole, the MIDT schedule of four fifteen-minute newscasts at news audience peak hours and thirteen five-minute shows at other day and evening hours is typical.

Factors in Script Arithmetic. The radio writer-editor must be not only a clock-watcher but also something of a mathematician, at least to the extent of being able to compute relations between units of time on the clock and space on paper. Each newscast is an individual problem in script arithmetic. The problem is to provide to the announcer reading matter in sufficient quantity—just enough but not too much—to be read in the allotted time. It is evident at once that three factors are involved:

1. Pace or reading speed of the announcer.

2. Amount of copy in the written script.
3. Actual length of script time on the air.

At a glance it would appear that these factors may be determined with exactitude, but this is not the case. There are slight variables in each one. However, tested formulas based on averages enable the writer-editor to fix the variables by approximation and thus arrive at a practical answer to his problem. Let us see how it is done.

Pace of the Announcer. The voice of the announcer is the printing press of the air. With the exception of extremely rare sound effects or music, his spoken words are the sole medium of news conveyance. So at the start of our problem, we must fix as nearly as possible the number of words he speaks per minute.

Extensive tests made by The New York *Daily News* and Station WNEW found the ideal pace for straight newscast announcers to be 175 words a minute. The results of these tests coincided with similar rate tests conducted at the University of Indiana, where 140 words a minute proved to be too slow and two hundred words a minute too fast for retention of the basic facts by the average listener.

The rate of 175 words a minute for news delivery does not mean that it is the best for any kind of radio talk. Individual microphone men, including commentators, range from extremes of 120 to two hundred words a minute. Some are most effective with slow pronunciation and long pauses; others, with staccato-like speed. Then, too, the subject matter of a script may influence pacing. A rapid-fire debate, for instance, goes faster than a sermon or a talk to children.

Within a straight newscast the composition as well as the subject matter may have a bearing. If words are short and easily pronounced, the announcer is able to read faster than when the words are long and the sentences are complex. An announcer reading a fast-moving action story such as the description of a boxing bout might speed up, whereas he would slow down with a series of election returns lest they slip by the ear too swiftly.

However, variations in subject matter tend to balance them-

selves within a script containing several kinds of news items. To the extent that they fail to do so they must be deliberately controlled by the announcer. In an organization like that of MIDT where the newscast time is fixed, announcers must adjust their delivery close to the words-per-minute rate agreed upon, since it is impractical for writer-editors constantly to alter the length of scripts to fit the speaking pace of each individual announcer. If each announcer is permitted to speak at his own pace, this means that optional copy must be provided for the faster ones. In many newsrooms no attempt is made to standardize the pace of announcers. In these newsrooms it is customary to add to each newscast optional lines or items which can be read or left out, or deliberately to overwrite, indicating with parentheses or brackets material which may be dropped.

A better-arranged and finer-balanced script can be prepared if the rate of delivery is uniform and wordage is strictly controlled at the news desk.

In the MIDT newsroom the rate of delivery is 175 words per minute. This figure is basic in the space-time arithmetic problem which we now may proceed to solve.

Fixed Portions of the Script. We already know the length of the MIDT news periods in terms of radio time segments. For example, news programs appear on the program schedule during the five minutes from 7 to 7:05 A.M. and the fifteen minutes from 8 to 8:15 A.M. All news programs fall into five- or fifteen-minute segments. By simple multiplication, five times 175 and fifteen times 175, we find that we need 875 words to fill five minutes and 2,625 to fill fifteen minutes.

The actual five- and fifteen-minute periods, however, are not wholly filled by the reading of news items. Time within each period is required for spot announcements and for portions of the script which are fixed in length if not in content.

The number and time-length of commercial sponsors' announcements preceding, following and within a radio program vary widely according to the type of program, station policy and availability of

sponsors. Generally speaking, commercial spots are limited to one or two in a five-minute period and two to four in a fifteen-minute period. Some stations, including MIDT, prohibit "middle" commercials which interrupt any news period.

MIDT news programs are not for sale. Instead, they are sponsored by the *Midland Times* and the time ordinarily used in advertising is consumed by announcements identifying and on behalf of the *Times*. These are called open and close announcements. The wordage of these announcements is fixed and the content is changed only slightly from hour to hour and day to day.

The five-minute newscast open reads: "Good morning (afternoon) (evening). It's . . . o'clock and time for the latest news brought to you every hour on the hour by the *Times*, Midland's first newspaper." This is the close: "You have just heard a news program compiled by the *Times*, Midland's first newspaper. Regular newscasts come to you every hour on the hour from 7 A.M. until 11 P.M. Flashes and bulletins are broadcast at once. To be up-to-date on all the news all the time, listen to MIDT and read the *Times* every day."

Within the structure of the MIDT newscasts are two other segments of fixed wordage but changeable content to be included in the script arithmetic. These are a recapitulation of the first items in the script, called "headlines," and a weather report.

For the moment we are concerned only with the wordage rather than the content of these script sections. The word counts are as follows:

	5 M		15 M
Open	25	.....	75
Close	50	.....	150
Headlines	30	.....	90
Weather	70	.....	210
Totals	175	.....	525

At an average delivery rate of 175 words a minute it will be seen that within the five-minute show one minute is required for fixed script sections. Three minutes are needed for these sections

within the fifteen-minute show. Simple subtraction leaves four and twelve minutes respectively to be consumed by news stories or items proper. Translated by our word-time factor—one minute equals 175 words—we have found the item wordage totals to be seven hundred and 2,100. By the same method the time length or wordage of any radio talk program can be determined if one or the other is known.

We are ready next to adjust microphone delivery to the typewriter keyboard and copy paper. We shall use the five-minute newscast for illustration.

Adjustment of the Typewriter. The obvious way to type exactly seven hundred words would be to count the words. Just as obvious is the fact that such a procedure—comparable to a grocer counting out peas or beans one at a time—is too slow and laborious to be practical. The grocer uses a standard measuring unit—a pound or a quart. Units for counting typewritten words are lines and pages of copy.

It is necessary for a radio newsroom manager, if possible, to standardize his typewriters so that all produce identical characters. Otherwise each writer will be using a different unit of measurement.

Most typewriter characters are in one of four sizes: elite or small, pica or medium, great primer or large, all capitals. Elite type is too fine for several clear carbon copies except on flimsy paper. A few newsrooms prefer great primer or capitals, but machines with these characters are comparatively rare and hard to service. Pica machines are commonly employed for radio script work and their use is specified or implied in this discussion. Also in common use is the standard-size typewriter paper measuring eight and a half by eleven inches.

To solve our problem of script arithmetic we now must set forth these typing rules:

1. Leave margins of one and a half inches at the top and bottom and a margin of one inch at the left side of the page.
2. Triple space.

3. Average three paragraphs to a page.
4. Indent five spaces at the start of each paragraph.

There are reasons for these rules other than to control wordage. Wide margins and triple spacing are needed to allow room for typed corrections and to give the editor space for copyreading with a pencil. Three paragraphs to a page provide units handy for composition and easy to read. Five-space paragraph indentations are made swiftly on the typewriter and are adequate for visual separation of paragraphs.

A word of caution is in order for both typist and copyreader. If either one deletes or adds with a pencil any substantial wordage, he must compensate to avoid running too short or too long.

The Problem Is Solved. All the controls necessary to adjust typewriter to the microphone as nearly as possible are now at hand. A typist using a pica machine and standard-size paper and obeying the four typing rules produces approximately 175 words on a page. Thus one typewritten page equals 175 words or one minute of delivery time.

This is the final answer which we have been seeking. It enables us to produce a model page of copy as shown on the accompanying chart. By following the steps outlined, anyone with any kind of typewriter may devise his own rules, provided that he ends with a model script page representing a definite period of time on the air.

Once the model page is at hand, the word-count and time problem is forever solved. Word counting is unnecessary. By glancing a few times at the model—and soon thereafter from memory—the writer can automatically and without thinking type a script of the length desired. If one copy page equals one minute on the air, two pages equal two minutes, four pages equal four minutes, and so on. The law of averages will even up variations in word and line lengths.

In devising the page-minute yardstick we also have learned that one typewritten line equals slightly more than ten words and so we have foot and inch rulers for shorter sections of a script. We are now able to make up an exact “balance sheet” for the five- and

TYPEWRITER COPY FOR ONE MINUTE ON THE AIR

The purpose of this illustration is to show how a page of typewritten copy in a radio news script can be made equal to one minute of delivery time on the air. In this chart, of course, the typed page is reduced to the scale of the book page.

This typewriter has pica type. The actual size of the sheet is eight and a half by eleven inches. Margins are one and a half inches at the top, bottom and left-hand side of the sheet. There are three paragraphs and seventeen lines on the page. Counting the short lines at the end of each paragraph as half-lines, the average number of words per line is slightly more than ten. The total number of words on the page is 175.

The fixed delivery speed is 175 words a minute. Therefore, this page equals one minute on the air and may be used as a basic unit in solving the problem of script arithmetic. Such a model sheet may be prepared in any typewriter.

A Standard Copy Page.

fifteen-minute news programs which are broadcast over Station MIDT.

The Script Balance Sheet. Earlier in this chapter we set forth the wordages of fixed sections in the MIDT newscasts. These are now brought into the balance sheets, together with the pages of regular news items freshly written in whole every hour. Here are the balance sheets:

FIVE-MINUTE SHOW			
	Words	Pages	Minutes
Open	25		
Close	50		
Headlines	30		
Weather	<u>70</u>		
	175	1	1
News Items	700	4	4
Totals	<u>875</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>

FIFTEEN-MINUTE SHOW			
	Words	Pages	Minutes
Open	75		
Close	150		
Headlines	90		
Weather	<u>210</u>		
	525	3	3
News Items	2,100	12	12
Totals	<u>2,625</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>

Since some of the word counts are approximate, these balance sheets are not mathematically perfect, but they are amply accurate for all practical purposes.

No numbers of pages are given for the fixed fragments of the script. As a matter of fact, the open and close, repeated show after show, are read directly from fixed copy in the hands of the announcer. They are not handled at all by MIDT writer-editors.

Headlines and weather are prepared for each newscast by the writer, but each is placed on a separate page of copy paper apart from the main news pages of four and twelve sheets respectively for the five- and fifteen-minute shows.

Elasticity on the Air. From the point of view of the writer-editor we have dealt satisfactorily with the script arithmetic. His routine and unchanged job is to follow the model script and to produce four or twelve pages of typewritten news items. It may be pointed out that the MIDT model script is equally practical whether it is transmitted by teletype or handed directly to the announcer.

We must now return once more to the studio, where the sweep hand of the clock regulates every sound which enters the microphone. MIDT news announcers strive to pace their reading at the 175-words-a-minute average. And naturally all scripts of average length with average delivery time come out on the nose—five or fifteen minutes precisely.

However, despite all precautions the human factor is bound to result in occasional errors and slight deviations in the speed of delivery. Since silence cannot be tolerated nor can the next program be delayed longer than a few seconds, the studio requires some kind of elastic period or cushion which can be stretched slightly either way. This elasticity also is required between programs for telephonic and engineering operations.

As previously pointed out, many newsrooms provide the announcer with a few spare news items to tack on if needed, or permit him to omit several lines or items. But if a five-minute MIDT script falls short thirty seconds or less, the gap is filled by strains of music. Similarly, a gap up to one minute may be filled after a fifteen-minute newscast. To complete an overlong five-minute news show, the MIDT program director will delay the next program up to fifteen seconds, and to complete a fifteen-minute news show, up to thirty seconds—but no longer. These are the extreme limits. If either kind of show threatens to extend beyond

them and the next program is urgent, the news announcer is compelled to lop off the newscast and steps are taken to prevent a repetition.

SHOP TALK

1. Look at the clock and determine what time it is in New York, Chicago, Cheyenne, San Francisco, Honolulu and London.
2. Do you personally prefer to hear a five-minute or a fifteen-minute newscast? Why?
3. Do you like the MIDT news program schedule? If not, how would you rearrange it, using the same total amount of time?
4. If you had only half the total news time used by MIDT, what newscasts would you delete and shorten?
5. Do you think it is better to compel announcers to deliver news at a fixed rate than to permit them to read at their own rate? Why?

CHAPTER VI

News Script Mechanics

Why Mechanics Come First. The ultimate aim of the radio news scriptman is to become a wise and clever judge of news values, a swift and colorful writer, a deft and sure-handed copy-reader. These call for creative if not artistic craftsmanship of a high order.

Unfortunate perhaps for the beginner is the fact that proficiency in any such brainwork must be preceded by careful and sometimes tedious memorizing of rules and restrictions. The apprentice needs to realize that reason lies behind these regulations and that they must be accepted until they are understood. All actual newsrooms have such rules and they are certain to be met with on the job.

In the two preceding chapters we studied some of the rudimentary mechanics of the radio newsroom. Before reaching a study of the delicate mental work of appraising, phrasing and revising news we must learn more of the specific mechanical techniques of script writing and editing and once again survey the script job as a whole.

To practice properly, an artisan first needs to be able to put together a framework for the object he expects to make. Later on, as this framework construction becomes routine, his mind is free for the creative work of building and decorating.

Typewriting Clean Copy—Fast. A typewriter is the chief and constant working tool of the scriptman and ability to operate the machine well is a prerequisite to radio news processing.

Typing is more important in the radio newsroom than in the newspaper office. An average reporter may turn out one thousand words a day, and a rewrite man two or three thousand. The regular daily output of MIDT writers is 17,500 words. This means that one writer may produce three or four thousand words during a work trick. With deadlines more frequent, the microphone likewise demands faster typing as well as more volume than the printing press. Also, in script writing it has been shown how handling the typewriter is an important factor in solving the script arithmetic problem. It serves as a calculating machine as well as a literary instrument.

The touch typist usually has an advantage in rewriting because he can look at his copy rather than his machine as his fingers move. Long practice, however, makes any typist facile and fast enough for script writing so that nontouch typists are not necessarily handicapped. Plenty of two-to-six finger operators are able to write forty to sixty words a minute.

Fairly clean copy—that is, typing without too many X'ed-out words, interlineations and pencil changes—is a requirement in script arithmetic as well as a boon to the copyreader and teletype operator. Errors in typing as well as penciled corrections are erased, of course, if the script is transcribed through a teletype. If not, the typing must be virtually flawless and corrections clearly legible to insure good reading by the announcer.

If he has time the writer should retype unclean copy, but this is seldom possible. If he cannot turn out reasonably clean manuscript without overhauling, he is simply not competent at his job.

Typewriters in the radio newsroom should be kept in good repair at all times. They receive hard service. If the space bar jumps, it will throw off the word count. If the ribbon tangles or the carriage jams, adjustment should be made at once. Ribbons need frequent changing. Spare machines should be ready for use in emergencies.

How To Start the Copy Page. In the MIDT newsroom a copy book consists of three sheets. The original and first carbon duplicate go to the script editor and the third copy is retained on the

desk of the writer. The original and first carbon are clipped together with a carbon sheet between, so that the script editor may keep a corrected page after sending the corrected original to the teletype operator. The writer, of course, needs his duplicate for reference as he continues writing. The MIDD sending teletype also produces an original and two duplicates. The original teletyped script and the original typewriter script go to the alibi file. Writer and script editor receive the teletype duplicates and thereafter wastebasket their typewritten pages.

Look now at the chart in Chapter V. Set your left typewriter margin at one inch. Insert the copy book. In the blank space at the top, place the following:

Page 1 7 A.M. Harris Kerr

The pages are numbered from one on solely to show the order in which they move from writer to script editor to teletype operator. 7 A.M. is the time the broadcast goes on the air—not the time the show is written. Harris is the writer, Kerr the script editor.

The open, of course, already is in the hands of the announcer. Your script begins with the first news item to be read. Drop down one and a half inches from the top of the page and indent five spaces. You are now ready to start typing the script proper.

Numbering the Items. An item is a story or section of a story dealing with related subject matter. It is in the form of a paragraph usually containing from two to ten sentences. A single sentence item is wasteful and should be used sparingly. The three-paragraph or three-item page is convenient for all handlers—writer, editor, operator and announcer. The latter may scissor the four paragraphs from his teletyped script into handy “takes,” each about the size of a typewriter page.

Items are numbered in consecutive order. You now type the figure “1.” with the period and you are ready to begin the first sentence. The second item is number “2.,” the third number “3.” and so on.

Proceed next to type the first three items, triple spacing, indent-

FIRST PAGE OF SCRIPT COPY

Page 1 7 A.M. Harris Kerr

1. Webster defines it as a season that begins with the vernal equinox. It's time for the first robin -- and for flowers and showers. All right, you guessed it. Spring is here -- officially! It arrived at exactly 6:33 this morning. So says the weather man. And, just to start the season right, he promises fair skies and balmy air today.

2. It is a cheerless dawn, however, for a score of merchants in Clay City. Fire caused by a defective stove started there last night in the Pioneer Drug Store. The flames destroyed six buildings in the four hundred block on High Street. Damage is estimated by Fire Chief John Kemp at thirty thousand dollars.

3. From another part of the state -- Capital City -- comes word that Governor Boland will sign at once the Federal aid super-highway bill now on his desk. The sponsor, Senator Joseph Dunn, says that he has a letter from Boland approving the measure. The bill calls for a new six-lane turnpike from Midland to Mercerville and widening of State Road Seventy-seven.

more

How To Start the Script.

ing and leaving the one-inch margin on the left side of the page. You may refer to the chart in this chapter.

Do not divide a word at the end of a line. In letter writing and other forms of composition it is proper to make such separations between syllables but not in radio news writing. It makes copy-reading more difficult and causes the reader to hesitate. If a word overreaches the right-hand margin, strike it out and spell it in full at the start of a new line.

Complete the last item on the page. Double space or single space near the bottom of the page for a line or so rather than carry the tag end of an item over to the next page. Or, better, strike out the item started too far down and begin again on the next page, single or double spacing there to make up the lost wordage.

To finish the page—if more pages are to come—type the word *more* in the lower right-hand corner. Do not capitalize the word or put it in quotation marks or parentheses. This is wasted effort. By typing it on the right side down from the end of your last sentence you reach it without shifting your carriage back to the left. The word *more so* placed means that there will be at least one more page.

You now have finished typing one full page of radio script copy in accordance with MIDT newsroom rules. Use this general form from now on for all your practice copy.

The numbering plan in the fifteen-minute script is a logical extension of that for the shorter newscast. Visualize the longer show in three five-minute parts written separately. Number the first part as you would a five-minute script—"1.," "2.," "3." and so on. Number the second part "30.," "31.," "32." and so on. Number the third part "60.," "61.," "62." and so on. This allows up to twenty-four items in each group. The announcer in reading automatically jumps from one group of numbers to the next.

To avoid confusion we will for the present confine the further discussion of script mechanics to the simpler five-minute newscast.

Script and Copy Slugs. The word *slug* is widely and loosely used in connection with press and radio news copy of various sorts.

It comes from newspaper parlance, where a slug is a one-word name given to a story, such as "RIOT," and is used for the life of that story by writers, copyreaders and typesetters. It also is called a *guideline* or *slugline*.

There are two kinds of slugs in the MIDT newsroom—copy slugs and script slugs. A copy slug is a word or words red-penciled at the top of each piece of story raw material. We are not concerned with copy slugs at the moment. A script slug is a figure, letter, word or abbreviation typewritten and teletyped on processed copy to specify the disposal of a section of a script.

The item numbers "1.," "2.," "3." and so on are script slugs in their simplest form. For example, "2." specifies that this item is to be read by the announcer after item "1." and before item "3."

Before we talk about other more complicated script slugs, let us pause to make clear the vital importance of these conventional and mandatory symbols or signals whereby the script author and editor compose and control the various parts of a newscast in the same way that an admiral maneuvers the many warships in his fleet. By means of slugs writer-editors start, insert, kill, replace, add to, end and otherwise manipulate sections of a script as it moves from typewriter to microphone.

The person who writes the script is not the last to deal with it. In fact, he is only the first in a line of four—himself, the editor, teletype operator and announcer. These individuals change frequently. The work of all depends upon the unerring use of slugs which never vary in form. Each slug must mean exactly the same thing to each person all the time. Anyone using wrong slugs or inventing new ones on the spur of the moment invites chaos.

One simple example will suffice. Assume that the writer uses the slug "8." when he means "3." The item is a humorous one about a cat up a tree, whereas "7." and "9." are two sections of a story about the death of a prominent citizen. The chuckle is scrambled into the obituary. One such blunder is one too many.

Slugs Are for the Eye. So important are script slugs that they must never be overlooked and must be correctly understood at a

glance. A slug may call for a libelous item to be killed. Or it may call for the announcer to rearrange the script or break into his delivery while he is on the air. In that event, he must see and act on the slug in a fleeting fraction of a second.

For item and headline numbers as well as for slugs amending those numbers it is convenient to type them after the five-space indentation at the beginning of a script section. Each is followed by a period and two spaces. These script slugs are called *period slugs*.

For the more critical slugs of an emergency nature and for certain slugs heading or ending a series of script sections, an eye-catching form is used. These slugs are typed in capital letters preceded and followed by two-hyphen dashes and are called *dash slugs* to differentiate them from period slugs. They are placed apart from reading matter flush with the left-hand page margin, thus:

-- SLUG --

Admittedly, to type a slug in this form requires extra time, but the time is well spent, for it insures attention by the reader. In reading, the eye travels from left to right. Thus a slug at the left is seen before the subject matter which follows. The two-hyphen dashes make the slug stand out in bold relief. As a final precaution all slugs of this variety usually are spelled out in short form so that if a letter or two is mistyped in haste there is less likelihood of error than there is in mistyping a numbered or single-lettered slug.

More About Script Slugs. We now are ready to describe and define several script slugs in constant use by MIDT scriptmen. For convenience we shall divide them into our two classifications—period slugs typed at the start of a paragraph, and dash slugs typed in the two-hyphen dash form and placed at the left side of the page.

Suppose you wish to insert an item between two items already written or sent, the finished items being “7.” and “8.” You slug the new item “7A.” which means to place it after item “7.” and before item “8.” The slug “7B.” means place after “7A.” and before item

“8.” In the same way you may insert “7C.,” “7D.” and so on down the alphabet.

Next, here is how to replace an item already sent. Use the letter “S” for substitute. Assuming that you wish to replace item “4.” you slug the rewritten or new item “S4.” which tells the announcer to eliminate “4.” and use “S4.” in its place. In the same manner you may replace “4A.” with “S4A.” “S” used in front of any slug—number, letter, word or abbreviation—means to use this as a substitute for the script section indicated.

Let us now look at a few dash slugs and their meanings:

- HEDS -- *Headline recapitulations follow. Read after body of script.*
- WEA -- *Weather report follows. Read after headlines.*
- END -- *End of any script section.*
- 875 -- *Entire five-minute show, totaling 875 words, is completed.*

There are three headlines numbered “1.,” “2.,” “3.” and typed under the --HEDS-- slug like numbered news items.

The slug --END-- is the most common and useful slug of all. It means: This is the end of the foregoing section of typed matter. It is used to mark the end of the open, the main body of news items, the headlines, the weather report, the close or any other script division. The slug also imposes special orders on the writer, teletype operator and announcer. After using --END-- the writer must leave the rest of his sheet blank and start a new one. At the --END-- slug, the operator must “hike” his paper roll so that it can be torn or scissored just below the slug. Thus the --END-- slug automatically divides the teletyped script into paper lengths convenient to handle.

The slug --875-- is used only once in a script. It signifies that enough—and no more than enough—wordage is in the hands of the announcer for a five-minute newscast. After --875-- is sent, no wordage may be deleted or added without compensation to keep the show at 875 words. It is presumed, of course, that the open and close, totaling seventy-five words, already are in the an-

nouncer's hands and that they are not included in the script prepared and sent hourly to MIDT.

A good many other slugs are needed for extra fast operations and for special kinds of scripts. These will be taken up later on. However, they are merely elaborations of the forms already discussed. We now have in hand all the slugs needed to write an ordinary five-minute newscast such as the one which appears in Appendix III.

Variance in Script Rules. The system of typing, numbering and slugging set forth in this chapter does not purport to be that of any existing newsroom nor should it be accepted by the student as inflexible.

There is in existence no standard system of script mechanics in radio newsrooms. Every executive editor has his own ideas and each radio news organization, like each newspaper, has its own regulations. It behooves the beginner to study and learn without delay those in the office where he is employed. Don't try to tell your superior, "This is the way I learned to do it" or "They do it this way where I come from," unless you want to invite a scowl and a gruff order, "You're working here now and the right way here is our way." Find out the "right way" first and you will avoid trouble.

MIDT rules governing punctuation, the form of numbers, names, titles, abbreviations and other matters having to do with mechanics rather than literary style will be specified as the book continues. These, too, are empirical.

The author believes that it is necessary to be specific to meet the needs of practical instruction. Through practice with any one set of rules the student should come to understand the reasons for them and thereby become better able intelligently to adapt himself to those he may find wherever his work takes him.

SHOP TALK

1. Do you think a nontouch typist should learn the touch system before entering the radio news business?

2. What is the difference between copy slugs and script slugs? Cite examples and make up lists.
3. In what vital ways do script slugs differ from newspaper slugs or guidelines?
4. Why should items in a fifteen-minute script not be numbered consecutively from "1." to the end of the script?
5. Do you know of numbering and slug systems differing from those used by MIDT? Compare and discuss them.

CHAPTER VII

What's News—and Why?

Is It News or Not? One morning as pressure slackened a bit in the MIDT radio newsroom, a new copy girl, Eve Ewald, looked over the shoulder of John Kerr as he worked. Kerr, as script editor, was selecting raw material for current newscasts.

Before him lay a pile of assorted copy—teletyped takes torn from the AP printers, typewriter duplicates from the *Times* city desk, mounted clippings from the *Times* and mimeographed publicity releases. Kerr swiftly sorted the material piece by piece. He merely glanced at one and slid it into his wastebasket. Another he read with more care and laid it aside. On the next he penciled a note and underlined one paragraph. He handed it to a writer already typing and gave him a few brief instructions. In a few minutes the pile vanished and Kerr relaxed.

“Tell me how you do it,” said the copy girl.

Kerr replied, “Oh, I just take the news I want and throw away the rest.”

“All right,” said Eve. “But what is news?”

The veteran writer-editor frowned and hesitated before answering: “News is something we put on the air. Why don’t you read a script and find out for yourself?”

Like Kerr, many a seasoned newsman is unable to define glibly the product which he handles expertly every day. The deceptively

simple four-letter word "news" refers to a substance so tenuous that it at once embraces the doings of the entire human race and touches the thoughts and lives of the humblest individual.

News is defined in Webster's dictionary as "a report of a recent event." Synonyms are "tidings" and "intelligence." News may be described more fully as reports, hitherto not made generally known, of those activities of mankind calculated to interest, inform or entertain the listening or reading public.

For the moment, let us be content with these general observations on the question, "What is news?" and proceed to examine its most important component parts.

Affinity of Radio and Press News. With the growth of radio from a novelty into a major medium of mass communication there has developed a steadily widening breach between the methods of preparing news for newspapers and for newscasts.

This disparity, however, arises largely from the differences between the eye and the ear and is not caused by any conscious public demand for one kind of news from the loudspeaker and another kind from the printed page. People listen to news programs for the same reason that they buy newspapers—to find out what's going on.

The basic elements of news are immutable and the criterion for determining what is and is not essentially newsworthy is the same whether the news is spoken, printed, telecast or sent by smoke signals. That criterion is "news interest." And there is surprising accord as to the events which possess that interest, for at any given hour on any day you will find the headlines in American newspapers and the major news on the radio to be remarkably alike.

As a result, a man from Maine who gets most of his news from his radio has no difficulty whatever in talking about current events with a man from California who relies largely on his daily newspaper to keep posted. They find their knowledge of world and national events to be identical, and each may cite and discuss parallel local events reported by his local station or newspaper which are alike save in geography and nomenclature.

Isolating the News Elements. Since the basic radio and press news selection standards coincide, it is proper here to summarize the analysis of news elements as set forth for student reporters in the author's *Modern News Reporting*. The reader familiar with that book will recognize the remainder of this section as adapted from Chapter IV, "The Stuff That Makes News."

The ten elements in the chemistry of the news laboratory are: (1) Immediacy. (2) Proximity. (3) Consequence. (4) Prominence. (5) Drama. (6) Oddity. (7) Conflict. (8) Sex. (9) Emotions. (10) Progress. Discussions and illustrations of each follow.

1. *Immediacy.* Almost everything in the news columns of a newspaper or radio news program happens today, yesterday or in the future, for the value of the highly perishable commodity called news diminishes as the clock goes round. News, first of all, must be new. So important is the time element that a few minutes—even a few seconds on the radio—may change the value of a story. Other elements being equal, last-minute happenings receive the most attention.

The rule of immediacy does not necessarily embrace the full text of the story. A writer frequently sets forth in the body of his item relevant background material previously printed or broadcast, but except in rare instances he cites the newness of the news by the use of the present tense or the words "today," "yesterday" and "tomorrow."

The immediacy rule does not necessarily apply to the time of occurrence, but only to the time of disclosure. History, it has been said, is not news. On the contrary, it may be big news. Every newscast in America, for example, would mention and quote a newly discovered speech of George Washington. No matter how old it is, the script writer may give an up-to-the-minute touch to his story by the simple process of pointing out that it has just become available for broadcasting. He may utilize any one of a hundred handy words or phrases such as "discloses," "reveals," "reports," "announces," "divulges" and "charges" to show that something is new.

2. *Proximity.* Every person is more interested in himself than in anyone else, and next to himself in the things that concern his family, his occupation, his friends, his clubs and church, the places he goes, the amusements that fill his leisure time, the street accident he witnesses, the game he watches, the party he attends, the speech he makes, the activities in which he personally participates.

The word used most in telephone conversations is "I." Shown a map of the United States, 447 out of five hundred men looked first at the location of their home town. Handed pencils and asked to write—anything—460 out of five hundred women college students wrote their own names. Your own name is the most exciting thing you can see in print or hear on your radio. Next come the names of your friends, your neighbors, anybody or anything known or familiar to you. Not even the most modest person escapes the pull of the personal. The hopes and fears and aspirations of ourselves and our friends—these, by the simplest law of nature, concern us most. The daily record of our neighborhood and our community is close to the top of things that matter.

So the value of news varies in proportion to the proximity of its listeners. Recognizing this pull of proximity, radio stations devote generous parts of their newscast time to stories of distinctly local flavor and writer-editors constantly *localize* whenever possible. The closer they can bring news home to particular listeners, the greater its value.

3. *Consequence.* By the term consequence is meant import or significance, hence breadth of appeal. Simple addition places news of an incident affecting ten thousand persons higher in the scale of values than news of one affecting a hundred.

The actual passage of a law or its interpretation by a court may be a dull and technical procedure, but nevertheless it may intimately touch the lives of many. It may be of slight importance to John Citizen that the streetcar company and its employees are at odds, but when the radio tells him a strike may force him to walk to work tomorrow morning or he may have to pay two cents more to

ride, the news enters the zone of personal application in every household.

Suppose Midland's waterworks has been put out of operation by a breakdown of machinery. As quickly as it can get the facts, MIDT will broadcast the answers to these questions: How long will the reservoir supply last? Is cistern water safe to drink? What will the fire department do? Will the swimming pools be closed? Should garden sprinkling be stopped? It is apparent that the machinery breakdown is news of consequence.

4. Prominence. Widely heralded persons, places, things and situations known by reasons of wealth, social position, achievement or far-flung publicity possess a strong recurrent interest sufficient to command an eager audience as long as they remain in the public eye.

Prominence may be intense but of short duration, like that of a political campaign. Or like that of the atom bomb, it may exert a constant pull on popular attention, showing little abatement month after month and year after year. If the President of the United States, a popular film star, a great industrialist, or the world's heavyweight boxing champion meets with a mishap—even if one of them ventures an opinion on a newsy topic—the public demands the details. The doings of the Four Hundred never fail to intrigue the four million.

Will Brown, a Midland grocer, declares that all reckless motorists should be sent to jail. That is no news at all, for Will Brown is only an irresponsible busybody. But let Chief of Police Thomas Green say the same thing and the statement becomes news. Green is a responsible somebody who can—and probably will—do something about it.

Everyone loves heroes, celebrities and dignitaries. Their activities afford a vicarious escape from the humdrum of ordinary life. The listener in imagination projects himself into the private life of each one he hears about.

Consider the news pull of places. A couple is married. News?

Perhaps, but more interesting if in the Little Church Around the Corner and vastly more so if atop the Washington Monument, the Statue of Liberty or the Empire State Building. Hollywood, Reno. Broadway, Death Valley, Pikes Peak, Wall Street, Coney Island and the Loop further illustrate the pull of places. Similarly, things carry news appeal. A Stradivarius violin, a prize-winnig novel, a Rembrandt painting, a splinter from the Cross, or Captain Kidd's treasure chest are random examples. You may apply the measuring rod of prominence to situations in the same way. When the temperature soars, the polar bears at the zoo get into the news. Before Thanksgiving, the price of turkeys is news because turkeys are soon to decorate the holiday board.

Thus on every possible occasion the news is swung about prominent names, places, events and situations.

5. *Drama.* All the world's a stage, all the men and women in it merely players; and the radio news scriptman, holding a mirror to the scene of human performance, catches and reflects the drama of real life.

In his description of such colorful events as a military parade, the launching of a warship or a civic reception, the writer sets the scenery for an act which he unfolds with its own cast of characters. The more picturesque the background and more dramatic the action, the better the story. There is no escaping the fact that the public loves a good show. Drama draws spectators and crowds make news. Anything which moves the crowd to laughter, tears or cheers interests everyone.

Two of the strongest elements common to the stage, screen, storybooks, news pages and radio news programs are mystery and suspense, the piling up of action toward a climax. Just as a theater audience or detective novel readers puzzle over what will happen next, so the public wonders and gossips over the probable events of tomorrow.

Comedy plays a diverting role in the drama of news. Humorous incidents, related skillfully, add sauce and flavor to the newscast menu. Seriocomic byplay is perhaps the most difficult of all news

THE TEN ELEMENTS OF NEWS



The Chemistry of the News Laboratory.

material to put into words, but it provides many a *lift* in newscasts and is highly valued by script editors.

Suspense creates and expands news appeal. Mine disasters, political campaigns and criminal trials demonstrate the quality in established form. But even a trivial event, by virtue of its uncertainties, may have a long run in the news. A wild duck built a nest alongside a causeway in a big city. As she hatched her eggs and raised her brood despite the perils of traffic, she gained at first local and then nation-wide attention in the newspapers and on the radio.

6. *Oddity*. Paraphrasing Phineas T. Barnum's famous saying, "The public likes to be fooled," we may say that the public certainly likes to be astonished. Anything which causes a listener to exclaim, "Well, well, what do you think of that?" and his wife to add, "For heaven's sake!" wins time on the air. Consider these as topics for a newscast:

A bridge player with thirteen spades loses the bid.

A policeman's star stops a bullet.

Icebergs appear as far south as Boston.

Twins are born in a taxicab.

A "dead" man appears at his own funeral.

The tallest, smallest, bravest, meanest, purest, prettiest—in fact, the "-est" of any kind—makes superlative news.

Coincidences, strange theories, catchy slogans, caves and treasures, exposés of ghosts or supposed miracles, and oddity in its thousand and one forms become grist in the news mill. Human curiosity is insatiable.

7. *Conflict*. Before the dawn of history, conflict—combat between animals, men or armies, of men against nature, of mind against mind or of any power against another—intrigued men and women. And civilization has but thinly venerated the primal instinct for battle.

Listen to a sportscast to find the competitive element in generous doses. Boxing, wrestling, football, baseball and virtually every other sport re-enact the hand-to-hand, weapon-to-weapon and wit-

to-wit struggles of our ancestors. A fight spells action which everyone can understand.

Physical struggle represents but a small fraction of the sum of battle. In a sense, all life is competitive, an unending series of mental, moral and physical contests. The strife of a husband and wife over the custody of a child, the battle of heirs for an estate, the sparring of attorneys in the clash of a man against the law, the struggle of a physician to save a life, the rivalry between businessmen in money-making—all these appear daily in the gallery of the news. A war between major nations creates the most significant and far-reaching news of a lifetime. Conflict energizes each of these situations.

8. Sex. To ignore sex would be to omit a news element almost as powerful as conflict, for sex is a directive force in human life. It sweeps irresistibly through the news of the day.

The word as used here does not mean the more erotic types of sex stories which are barred from the radio as well as from many newspapers. It refers instead to the universal interest of men and women in themselves as distinguished one from the other and in their relationships—in romance, marriage and divorce.

All the world loves a lover and “heart interest” is a part of the plot in photoplays, magazine stories, popular songs and radio serial dramas. It also is a part of the plot in many a real life story and thus weaves itself continually into the news pattern.

Weddings, debuts, social affairs of all kinds illustrate the sex motif in routine occurrences. Let a king abdicate a throne for “the woman I love” and you have news of major magnitude. To a certain extent the term sex as a news element also indicates the special interests of womankind such as beauty, fashions and etiquette. Entire sections of newspapers are devoted to these subjects and they receive even more attention in radio programming because of the heavy concentration of feminine listeners in the daytime hours.

9. Emotions. Drama, conflict and sex all grow in the deep soil of our instincts. In fact, they are manifestations of primary emotions. However, the term emotions, cited as a news element for

want of a more specific and inclusive word, is used to cover the gamut of other human responses such as the innate desire for food, clothing, shelter, comfort, pleasure and leisure; the universal interest in children and animals; the ebb and flow of hate, fear, pride, jealousy, ambition, sympathy and generosity in human affairs.

Human interest pertains to that type of news which deals frankly with the more colorful emotions. In this field lies the reporter's "acre of diamonds." When a story depicts a man or woman in the grip of strong emotion it builds a bridge into the life of every other man or woman who ponders it.

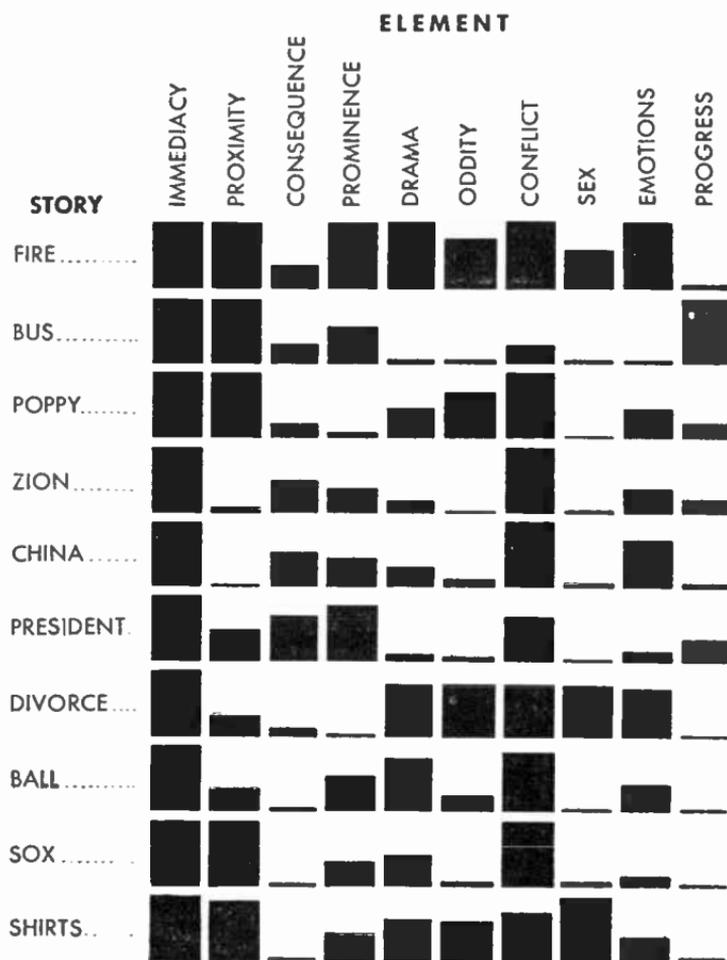
Listener sympathy responds to helplessness, suffering, loneliness and the anxieties of unfortunate folk. Stories of tragedy tug at the heartstrings, and those of sudden wealth or other good luck arouse feelings of gladness sometimes mixed with envy.

The fascination of children and animals gives these two subjects specific places in that part of the news which arises from instinctive emotion. A child left on a doorstep, a four-year-old wandering away from home, the rescue of a little girl from a fire, the antics and escapades of youngsters are of absorbing concern everywhere. Little less enthralling are stories of animals, especially in cities where few except dogs, cats and horses are seen outside of zoos. Frequently a kitten up a tree, a monkey scampering from his cage or a dog whimpering on his master's grave crowds into the forefront of a news script while more noteworthy happenings are escorted to seats in the rear.

10. *Progress.* The onward and upward march of civilization is chronicled step by step in newspapers and radio news programs. It is by them that significant changes in the established order of things are first recorded.

Closely allied to the consequence element, the term progress refers especially to scientific achievement in the laboratory, the observatory, the industrial plant and around the council table. The discovery of the sulfa drugs and penicillin, radar development, researches into atomic energy and new experiments in the realm of international relations illustrate news of current progress.

AN ANALYSIS OF BASIC NEWS FACTORS



Based on Script in Appendix III.

The news writer follows closely as the frontiers of human culture advance. His mind and typewriter become the filters through which technical and complex material drains into the mind of the listener. It is his task to interpret, simplify and popularize.

News Values and the Writer-Editor. The outline of elements just completed rationalizes, to some extent at least, the thought processes behind the work of finding, gathering, writing, judging, rewriting and editing news.

Few if any news handlers are aware that they are equipped with a set of yardsticks whereby they measure newsworthiness. Like Kerr, they just "know" news values and let it go at that. Nevertheless, the yardsticks do exist and are constantly in use.

It is doubtful whether there exists in the apprentice training programs of either schools of journalism or newsrooms any specific and separate course of instruction in basic news values. These values must be and are learned coincidentally with study and training for positions in which they are applied—the newspaper positions of reporter, rewrite man, city editor and copyreader and the radio positions of reporter, writer-editor and commentator.

A person in training for any one of these positions gradually attains the know-how which enables him not only to distinguish news at its sources but also to sort out, choose, revise and discard news at his particular point along the processing line.

We have seen that the radio writer-editor does not find or gather news at its source. He, like the newspaper rewrite man and copyreader, works midway on the line along which the stream of news matter flows. Yet, like the other members of the news-handling fraternity, he must consciously or unconsciously know the ten news elements. We hope to make them increasingly clear as we begin to weave the incorporeal stuff that makes news into visible patterns of words, sentences and scripts.

SHOP TALK

1. Compose individual definitions of news. Apply them to stories on the front page of a newspaper.

2. Do you agree with the statement that the elements of news are the same however conveyed to the public? Discuss ways of conveyance other than by radio and newspapers.

3. Analyze the elements in several stories, using as yardsticks the ten elements discussed in this chapter.

4. Select three events from American history and point out the elements which would have made them major news at the time they occurred.

5. What do listeners to news programs want, and why? Should the radio give them what they want?

CHAPTER VIII

Select the Simple Word

It Looks Easy—But Is It? To test your style of expression, try this little experiment. Here are several well-known and widely quoted sayings. Read them carefully, making a mental note of the thought conveyed by each one:

“Let there be light.”

“The die is cast.”

“I am the state.”

“Don’t give up the ship.”

“Health is wealth.”

Now take the statements one by one and rephrase each in your own words. Write down your version if you like. Then compare it with the original. At a glance each of the sayings appears to be almost childishly simple. Yet, as your test will show, it is not easy—indeed it is well-nigh impossible—to couch the same thought so effectively in diction of your own choosing.

What is it about these gems of expression that sets them apart and causes them to endure? Are they composed of extraordinary words? No. The words are all monosyllables. Are the sentences compound or complex? No. Each consists of no more than five words. What, then, is the secret of their strength?

The answer, of course, lies in the very plainness of the style—the use of phraseology so clear and direct that it conveys the

thought instantly and effortlessly. Each word wings its way straight to the mark.

Clarity Comes First. Style is the mirror of thought. To fashion that mirror without cracks or flaws so perfectly that the onlooker is aware only of the scene it reflects—and unaware of the mirror itself—is the true aim of writing in all its forms.

The writer's job is to make himself understood. Every word, sentence and paragraph should be chosen so that the meaning, rather than the phraseology, first enters the mind of the reader or listener. Unless the content is clear, writing is wasted effort. Good writing, then, calls for clarity. Clarity is a combination of simplicity, dignity and vividness. Of these three cardinal style virtues, simplicity is basic, for without it neither dignity nor vividness can be attained.

Is it easy to write with clarity? Far from it! On the contrary, it is one of the most difficult of the arts and proficiency comes only from a resolve to learn and from unremitting practice. As every successful writer will testify, application counts more than aptitude. There is unanimity among stylists on the point that the attainment of clarity is at once essential and difficult. Let the beginner heed these words of literary masters:

Burke—The truly sublime is always easy, and always natural.

Wilkins—The greatest learning is to be seen in the greatest plainness.

Coleridge—The words in prose ought to express the intended meaning; if they attract attention themselves, it is a fault.

Hare—When you doubt between words, use the plainest, the commonest, the most idiomatic.

Colton—Nothing is so difficult as the apparent ease of a clear and flowing style.

Hazlitt, perhaps, makes the point best when he says: "Anyone may mouth out a passage with a theatrical cadence, or get upon stilts to tell his thoughts. But to write or speak with propriety and simplicity is a more difficult task. Thus, it is easy to affect a pompous style, to use a word twice as big as the thing you want to ex-

press. It is not so easy to pitch upon the very word that exactly fits it."

Use Everyday Language. To write with simplicity is the "difficult task" of all who translate thoughts into written words. And of those who write, none need to learn the lesson of simplicity more thoroughly than those who expect to prepare news for the radio audience.

The simplest, most direct and forceful prose in the English language came into being with the creation of the modern newspaper in the middle of the nineteenth century. An innovation on the literary scene, "newspaper style" became an instrument previously unmatched as a medium of mass communication. Some of it still is above the popular reading level, but the keynote of newspaper style at its best is simplicity.

But the newer form of news writing, radio style, outsimplys that of the press for three reasons. First, the radio audience is more heterogeneous and its collective education is slightly more limited than that of newspaper readers. Second, the reading vocabulary of the average person is about three times as large as his speaking vocabulary. A reader may be able to recognize or puzzle out the meaning of a word in print which he would miss if he heard it spoken. Finally, spoken news lacks the retainability or retention quality of print and therefore must be so simple that it is grasped immediately and understood without a second or third reference.

These differences are deep and fundamental. They account largely for the distinction between press and radio news writing style. They will be analyzed fully later on in this book.

Let us again emphasize the point that while both newspapers and newscasts use the common parlance—the vernacular of, by and for the people—the former print in language which the ordinary person reads and writes, and the latter are broadcast in language which the ordinary person speaks and hears.

Speaking and hearing require less intelligence and education than reading and writing. A baby hears and speaks long before he can read and write. Millions of adult illiterates unable to read or

write their own names can carry on a normal conversation and understand radio talk. The radio audience consists of the literate and illiterate, the young and old, the educated and uneducated, sophisticates in the cities and innocents in the backwoods.

It becomes clear, therefore, that the scriptman should fashion his writing style from the speech of ordinary people as used in the home, field, factory, store and office, over the back-yard fence, on the sidewalk, in the subways, at baseball games and bridge parties.

To take an obscure idea, a complex operation or a mixed array of facts—facts about politics, diplomacy, taxes, love, religion or art—and to present it in the unadorned, everyday language of John and Jane Jones—that is the routine job of the radio writer.

Look for the Homespun Word. A picture of an elderly Chinese hangs on the bulletin board of a Detroit radio newsroom. Under it the news editor has noted: "Old Chinese newscaster say, 'Use Small Words To Tell Big Story.'" Another news editor advises beginners, "Never use a dollar word when a nickel word will do," and puts price tags on words as shown in the accompanying chart.

A word study of radio speeches broadcast by the Ohio School of the Air showed that twelve per cent of the words used were unknown to twenty-nine per cent of the listeners. Many of the unknowns were key words. Among them were "aspire," "concentrate," "abstain," "feasibility," "amenable" and "ramifications."

As a general rule, in radio writing as in other writing, the shorter the word, the better. However, to suggest that writing be restricted to short words would be absurd. Some news editors, with fingers pencil-cramped by making little words out of big ones, have put an ironclad taboo on words of more than three syllables, only to find writers resorting to such headline words as "rap," "sweep," "comb," "loom" and "probe" in a frantic effort to conform.

Ours would be a dull language if we tried to restrict it by counting syllables. Many of our best words would wither and die from disuse, and with their passing our ideas would degenerate into the primitive.

The sensible rule is to choose a short and easy-to-understand

A FEW SAMPLES OF DOLLAR AND NICKEL WORDS

\$1⁰⁰

5¢

purchase buy
 summon call
 indignation anger
 transmit send
 remark say
 exhibit show
 require need
 physician doctor
 lacerations cuts
 populace people
 purloin steal
 deceased dead
 attempt try
 terminate end
 antagonist foe
 assist help
 sufficient enough
 ponder think
 volume book
 residence home
 antagonize oppose
 category class
 comprise include
 deem think
 feasible possible

\$1⁰⁰

5¢

peruse read
 contribute give
 depart leave
 inaugurate begin
 interrogate question
 remunerate pay
 possess own
 facilitate help
 aperture hole
 obtain get
 witness see
 contusions bruises
 fracture break
 imbibe drink
 inquire ask
 conceal hide
 expedite hasten
 visage face
 prevaricate lie
 beverage drink
 vouchsafe assure
 trepidation fear
 cognizant aware
 incarcerate jail
 inundate flood

A Lesson in Simplicity.

word if you can find one, but to use a longer word if you need it for clarity.

For the same reason that he searches for winning words, the good writer tries to keep his word groups or phrases simple and unaffected. Often you can trim a long and loose phrase into a terse word or two. For example:

POOR	BETTER
<i>take into custody</i>	scize
<i>was the recipient of</i>	received
<i>hold a conference</i>	meet
<i>take action</i>	act
<i>place under arrest</i>	arrest
<i>affix his signature</i>	sign
<i>put in an appearance</i>	appear
<i>adjured them to the effect</i>	told them
<i>hold a meeting</i>	meet
<i>along the line of</i>	like
<i>venture a suggestion</i>	suggest
<i>with the result that</i>	so that
<i>in the event that</i>	if
<i>made his escape</i>	escaped
<i>prior to</i>	before

Not brevity alone but simplicity is the goal of the good writer. Substitution of a single affected word for a phrase of several simple words results in such expressions as “retired” for “went to bed” and “arose” for “got up.”

Sometimes in radio writing, padding is purposely placed within phrases to provide a smooth transition from one item to the next or to make a sentence sound well rounded. This calls for skill too subtle to discuss at this stage, when the beginner is learning to lay bricks before he paints the roof.

“We,” Contractions and Pronouns. In this discussion of words, pointers are in order concerning several word peculiarities in newscast as against newspaper style. Each one of them is attributable to differences between spoken and printed language.

Both the editorial “we” and “us” and the intimate “you,” while generally barred from newspaper stories, are natural and often necessary to radio writing. An earlier chapter pointed out that the commentator may use the personal “I” in comment. The straight newscast writer may not do so. However, the latter from time to time does need the editorial “we,” not to voice a comment, but to indicate “we,” meaning the group of writers, editors, announcers and managers who produce and deliver the newscast. In the same way the intimate “you” refers to the listeners in general. Examples of proper use follow:

We now bring you the latest report on . . .
The Mayor has asked us to announce that . . .
You’d better wear your rubbers this morning . . .
If you are figuring out that income tax report . . .

Because radio news always tends toward the conversational style, contractions are liberally sprinkled through scripts. While talking we seldom say “he will,” “I am” or “they are.” The elisions “he’ll,” “I’m” and “they’re” are more natural. Apostrophes improve copy as follows:

POOR	BETTER
<i>He will introduce . . .</i>	<i>He’ll introduce . . .</i>
<i>The man he is looking for . . .</i>	<i>The man he’s looking for . . .</i>
<i>It is futile to fight . . .</i>	<i>It’s futile to fight . . .</i>
<i>They do not have time . . .</i>	<i>They don’t have time . . .</i>
<i>It will be a sad Christmas . . .</i>	<i>It’ll be a sad Christmas . . .</i>

In still another way the radio writer must watch his pronouns. In any prose this is a sound rule: Do not use a pronoun to refer to a noun that has not been used for a considerable space or if there can be doubt even for a moment as to the antecedent of the pronoun. Repeat the noun. A sentence like this is uncertain: “He told his father that he would soon be rich.”

In radio news writing the noun or name needs to be repeated much more frequently than in prose for silent reading. Listeners

cannot backtrack. If you start an item with a name or a noun and the announcer slurs it, the name or noun is gone forever. And if, thereafter, you refer only to "he," "she," "they" or "it," the rest of your item so confuses the listener that at the end of the story he has just a jumbled impression that somebody or something did something somewhere. Repeat the name, the title, the noun or some other identification several times as you proceed.

Cure Your "Composition-itis." One of the literary ills widespread among young writers is known in news offices as "composition-itis" or "theme-itis." This is the urge to use high-flown words and purple phrases for plain things just to give the impression of knowledge.

Symptomatic of the ailment is the impulse to call a house a "residence" or "domicile," an actor a "thespian," a fire a "conflagration," a road a "thoroughfare for vehicular transportation," a woman a "daughter of Eve," a man a "specimen of humanity" and a cat a "feline." This kind of writing gives the grotesque effect of five-year-olds parading in grownups' clothing.

Composition-itis is by no means confined to high-school and college students. It is found flourishing among untrained writers of all ages. Frequently such affected elegance breaks out in public places and official papers.

Probably proud of his mental struggles to put ordinary things on a cultured plane, some officeholder during the war black-outs penned this prize for store-window posters, "Illumination is required to be extinguished on these premises." He meant, "Lights must be turned off in this place."

Edgar Dale, in the *Ohio State University News Letter*, cites this classic example of rhetorical gingerbread in a pamphlet issued by the National Resources Planning Board: "It is sometimes alleged that a complete system of social security would ultimately have the effect of discouraging self-reliance and even fostering unemployment by destroying the incentives to industry, by removing the rough but salutary influence of discipline." Dale suggests that this means: "Some say that if you guaranteed people a job and an old

age pension, they would get lazy, lose their self-respect, and not want to work. They also say that if you're not afraid of losing your job you won't keep on your toes."

But once again we must warn against going too far toward oversimplification lest we kill rather than cure. If a conductor on a train rejects a commuter's July ticket on August 2, saying that it has "exceeded the date of expiry," it may be that just this particular phrase and no other will exactly fit the case.

Stop, Think—and Specify! The temptation to wander into the wonderland of grandiloquence often leads the unwary writer, in the words of Longfellow, to "mistake buttercups in the grass for immeasurable mines of gold under the ground." The buttercups are balderdash; the buried nuggets, specific terms which create concrete word images.

To call a stewpan a stewpan instead of a "cooking utensil" and a hotel a hotel instead of a "hostelry" is a sign of common sense too rarely found in the apprentice anxious to air his erudition. He is not content with the banal remark that "a man went fishing" when he is well able to declare that "the fisherman sailed out to seek his scaly sustenance." Nor does he refer to a "barber" when he can conceive of such a choice description as "proprietor of a ton-sorial emporium." He prefers "remove your outer garment" to "take off your coat" and "may the superior contestant emerge victorious" to "may the best man win." Such phrasology may be ornamental to the eye and sonorous to the ear but often it is a vacuum to the mind.

Before you write—think! Then write in the language you use to think with. Think of what you did today. Do you phrase it this way in your mind: "I journeyed to my institution of enlightenment"? No, you just tell yourself you came to school. Here is a safe rule: Don't use words until you understand them well enough to think in them and use them in impromptu conversation.

If you think "sparrow," don't write "bird." If you think "penny," don't write "coin." If you think "lunch," don't write "repast." If you think "desk," don't write "article of furniture." If you think

“clam,” don’t write “succulent bivalve.” If you think “flowers,” don’t write “floral offerings.”

Steer Clear of Stereotypes. Patiently seeking to simplify, the harassed student writer may turn in despair to trite and threadbare words and expressions. These overworked formulas are known in the news shop as “bromides” or “stereotypes.”

True enough, many people use these dusty, dry and decrepit expressions as a substitute for thinking. To them sobs are “heart-rending,” adventures are “hair-raising,” brides are “blushing,” hopes are “high,” solos are “rendered,” hints are “helpful,” speed is “breakneck” and baby boys are “bouncing.”

You can predict the oral reaction of such a person to any given topic. Everything to him is “red as a beet,” “sound as a dollar,” “hard as a rock,” “hungry as a bear,” “big as a barn,” “mad as a hornet,” “good as gold,” “stubborn as a mule,” “pretty as a picture,” “crooked as a corkscrew,” “sharp as a tack,” “cool as a cucumber,” “brave as a lion,” “guilty as sin,” “straight as a string,” “strong as an ox,” “fresh as a daisy,” “fat as a pig,” “high as a kite,” “honest as the day is long,” “wet as a hen,” “dry as a bone,” “sweet as sugar,” “green as grass” or “smart as a whip.”

He always is in “deadly earnest” or “blissfully ignorant.” He gives “heartfelt thanks” and undergoes “acid tests.” He “works like a Trojan” and “sleeps like a top.”

At the risk of boredom let us look at a few more of these clichés which long since have lost their force through repetition:

a host of good friends
burn the midnight oil
monsters of the deep
dull and sickening thud
hit the nail on the head
one of the outstanding
beggars description
in this day and age
tripped the light fantastic
eke out an existence
spread like wildfire

sinews of war
classic profile
powers that be
patron of the arts
domestic bliss
in the last analysis
imagination runs riot
sleep of the just
in one fell swoop
long arm of the law
conspicuous by his absence

<i>officiating clergyman</i>	<i>checkered career</i>
<i>struggling mass of humanity</i>	<i>after due deliberation</i>
<i>beat a hasty retreat</i>	<i>tired but happy</i>
<i>high-powered motor car</i>	<i>doomed to disappointment</i>
<i>sought his downy couch</i>	<i>long-felt want</i>
<i>goes without saying</i>	<i>luxuriously appointed</i>
<i>bolt from a clear sky</i>	<i>the proud possessor</i>
<i>last but not least</i>	<i>too funny for words</i>

Turning out copy under pressure and racing against the clock, the best of writers now and then fall back on the handiest words and the most familiar phrases. But a lazy thinker who repeats platitudes like a parrot is guilty of sheer stupidity. He soon finds that stereotypes are no substitute for simplicity.

Don't Be Genteel or Technical. The young writer with a notion that he should help lift the literary level of the proletariat sometimes sallies forth singlehandedly on a cleanup crusade. He haughtily rejects the ordinary and natural word that first suggests itself and finds a synonym, perhaps a foreign equivalent. Having discovered a word of learned origin, he shows off the new acquisition as often as he can.

With nice-Nelly discrimination he substitutes "limb" for leg, "domestic" for servant, "ere" for before, "sufficient" for enough, "the military" for soldiers, "interment" for burial and "obsequies" for funeral. You may easily increase this list of genteelisms for yourself:

GENTEEL	NORMAL	GENTEEL	NORMAL
<i>welkin</i>	<i>sky</i>	<i>serviette</i>	<i>napkin</i>
<i>amour</i>	<i>love</i>	<i>endeavor</i>	<i>try</i>
<i>anent</i>	<i>about</i>	<i>assist</i>	<i>help</i>
<i>distingué</i>	<i>striking</i>	<i>hither</i>	<i>here</i>
<i>dentifrice</i>	<i>toothpaste</i>	<i>close</i>	<i>shut</i>
<i>indisposed</i>	<i>ill</i>	<i>wend</i>	<i>travel</i>
<i>edifice</i>	<i>building</i>	<i>proceed</i>	<i>go</i>

Closely akin to the writer of genteelisms is the one really possessing special information who presumes to improve the vocabulary

of his listeners by using learned terms. If you force people to guess the meanings of technical and foreign words, they merely stop listening.

Is Slang Okay? Textbooks on English composition classify word usage at three levels: formal, popular and slang. The radio newsman most of the time writes at the popular, common and colloquial level.

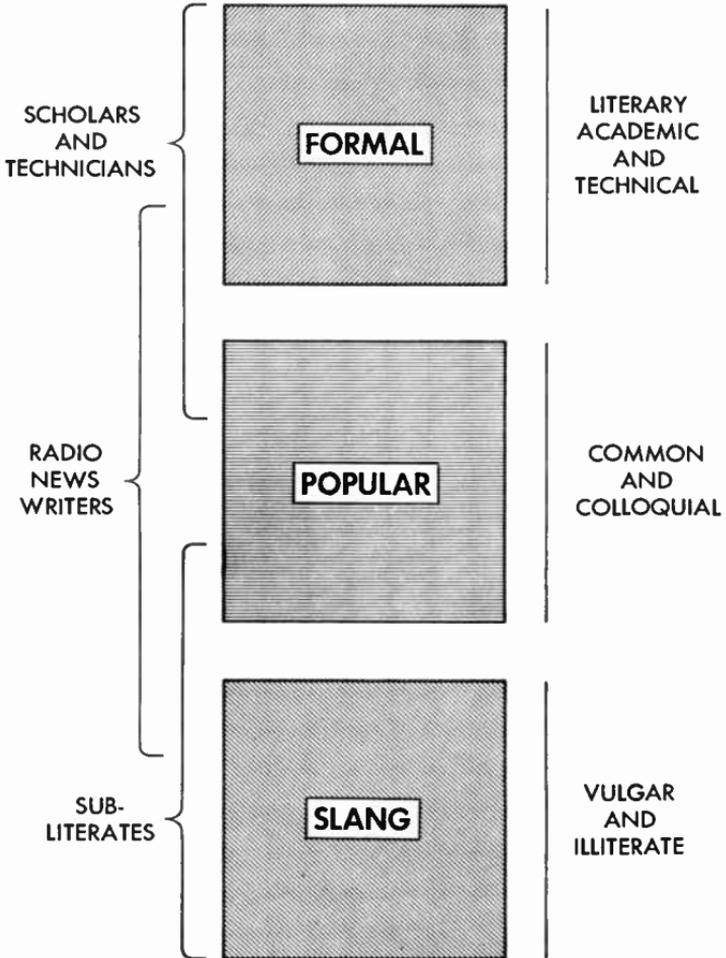
Whether he descends to slang depends upon the meaning given to the word slang. Webster defines slang as "language comprising certain widely current terms, having a forced, fantastic, or grotesque meaning." Under that definition no slang may be properly admitted in any form of discourse. All agree that such illiteracies as "you ain't," "that there," "them fellows," "you hadn't ought," "we was," "these here," "has went" and "can't hardly" are uncouth and unfit as are all vulgarisms.

Further, the jargon or argot of a particular group may be as puzzling to a mass audience as the most meticulous literary or scientific diction. A person not familiar with automobiles would be just as mystified by the shop talk of mechanics greasing a chassis as by an expert discussion of an internal combustion engine. Teen-agers talk in words invented today and discarded tomorrow, sometimes meaningless to their elders.

To the extent, however, that slang refers to the body of pungent, breezy, witty and picturesque phraseology used and enjoyed daily by the majority of ordinary people, it is not only permissible but necessary to effective radio news writing. Any "thou shalt not" aimed to shut off this freshest of living and lively language from radio writers is academic nonsense.

Spoken language is not confined to last year's dictionary. It not only lives but grows by the addition of words or by the employment of words in new senses and combinations. Picturesque expressions popping into prominence today often find their way into colloquial and common usage next year. Present-day radio news writers pluck them from popular speech and put them to use while they still pack a punch.

THREE LEVELS OF WORD USAGE



The Range of Language.

Entire volumes have been written to show how the formal English of colonial days has developed into the language of modern America. Every stage in our history and every facet of our way of living have contributed to the mother tongue. These contributions continue.

Let us look, for example, at the new strain bred into our vocabularies by the war. Among the expressions unknown in 1940 were "bazooka," "black-out," "commando," "ersatz," "foxhole," "GI," "walkie-talkie," "sad sack," "scabee," "pinup girl," "jeep." Pause for a moment and try to conjure up exact equivalents for one of these words—for instance, "jeep." Slang? Yes, soldier slang. But is there any better word to describe a jeep than "jeep"?

Such words as "radio," "bus," "jazz," "coed" and "movies" have been coined from popular speech during our lifetimes. Can we dispense with any of them?

Simplicity and Sincerity. In this chapter beginning radio news writers have been told to do this—but not always—and not to do that—except sometimes. Any discussion of style must include such reservations. It may only indicate and suggest. It may not enjoin. One more reservation is now in order.

Write with simplicity, yes, but do not write childishly. Above all, never give your listeners a hint that you are "talking down" to them. Nothing stirs audience antagonism so swiftly as a patronizing pose by the writer or speaker wearing a mantle of superiority.

Remember that simplicity is but one of the elements of clarity, the others being dignity and vividness. We shall discuss these more at length in later chapters, particularly in "Accuracy and Objectivity" and "Color in Sound." However, in connection with the warning against "writing down," it may be pointed out here that dignity means good taste, good manners and good will on the part of the writer. Perhaps a better term than dignity would be sincerity.

Write in the simple language of your listeners, not as a know-it-all condescending to stoop to the level of the proletariat but as a friend talking to equals. Simplicity and sincerity must go together.

SHOP TALK

1. Quote several famous sayings from history and literature and discuss their simplicity of style.
2. Why is the collective education of the radio listening audience slightly lower than that of newspaper readers?
3. Think of as many "dollar" words as you can in a few minutes. Change them to "nickel" words.
4. Compose and discuss a list of stereotyped expressions not mentioned in this chapter.
5. Define slang. Is it proper to use slang in conversation? In letter writing? In radio news writing?

CHAPTER IX

Sentences To Be Spoken

A Glance Back and Ahead. With the beginning of this chapter on sentence structure our study leaves the elementary stages and moves forward into the more advanced aspects of radio news writing and editing. It may be well to pause and look back over our progress thus far.

At the start we surveyed the craft and the people in it. Then we entered the workshop and learned how to handle the tools. Next, we inspected and studied raw material—news. Finally, we discussed the rudiments of writing style.

We have made no effort so far to differentiate between newspaper and radio news values. Fundamentally they are the same. Nor have we drawn any material line of demarcation between the style of writing for the ear and for the eye, for the printed page and for the microphone. The choice of simple words and phrases which we have stressed is necessary to clear communication of thought through any medium.

Now, in dealing with sentences, we come for the first time to a definite parting of the ways from our professional cousins—all who write for print—and from our professional brothers—the newspaper reporter, rewrite man and copyreader.

The radio news sentence, as prepared for delivery over the air, is a radical departure from the sentence as composed for any other purpose. So significant is the departure that this chapter marks our

initial step into the specialized techniques of a separate and skilled occupation.

Sentences for the Eye and Ear. A sentence, in grammar, means a set of words so related as to convey a completed thought. It has in it, either expressed or understood, a subject and a predicate, and in written form it is marked at the close by a period, question mark or exclamation point. Sentences are simple, complex or compound.

Unity is the first principle of sentence composition. If a sentence contains several statements, these need to be closely linked. Long straggling sentences, without grammatical plan and covering too many ideas, are a palpable violation of unity in writing for any purpose.

Unity, however, can be achieved in a sentence written for the silent reader but lost when it is spoken aloud to a listener. Further—and this is the nub of the matter—the loss of unity is more likely if a sentence is freighted with news.

Let us put it another way. When you have a printed page before your eyes you can read as slowly or as swiftly as you like. If you reach a puzzling group of words you can glance at them again. The radio sentence is heard once and then it is gone forever. If you miss the point while reading, you can reread as many times as necessary. The printed page is a permanent record. But if you do not understand every radio sentence as it is uttered, you lose the sense of the talk. Its purpose is defeated.

The sentence in news copy is by nature heavily laden with thought-provoking facts—more so than in any other kind of non-technical discourse. An interval must be allowed for each of these facts to register as a word image on the mental screen before the next one crowds it out.

Here then, the speaking of news differs from, say, the speaking of a sermon or a fiction story. The listener may miss part of a sermon or tale and still not lose the sense of it. This is not so with a newscast, in which ideas follow one another like links in a chain. For want of a single link the chain breaks in two. The radio news writer by his skill in forming sentences sees to it that no link is lost.

The Key to Sentence Structure. In any kind of composition, as we have seen, simple words are good words and simple phrases are good phrases. Simplicity in sentences, as well, is a mark of good writing. Any series of words, phrases and clauses, if scrambled together and stretched long enough, becomes gobbledygook. Here is an example to confuse even the trained eye of a scholar:

The experimental attitude, substituting detailed analysis for wholesale assertions, specific inquiries for temperamental convictions, and small facts for opinions whose size is in precise ratio to their vagueness, has, within the social sciences, in morals, politics and education, caused the disappearance of pre-experimental notions because they became increasingly irrelevant to the situation discovered, and with their detected irrelevance they became unmeaning and uninteresting.

Simplicity is desirable, yes, in every sentence for every purpose. However, the sentence prepared for speaking and hearing needs to be simplified far more than one prepared for silent reading. Radio news sentence structure probably is the least complicated to be found anywhere outside of kindergarten books.

“Chop it into shorter sentences” is likely to be the first order barked at an apprentice writer in a radio newsroom. He will hear the same order many times—and finally for the last time if he fails to obey it.

Word-weary editors sometimes send a beginner to the Bible for a lesson in the virtues of simplicity. There you will find the classic sentence: “Jesus wept.” In Genesis the story of the creation is told in 797 words. Consider a passage from the Sermon on the Mount:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

A LESSON IN
SENTENCE SIMPLICITY

From the Sermon on the Mount

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Gospel of St. Matthew, VI: 24-29.

Can anyone improve these sentences—make them clearer, more moving, more impressive? They say just what they mean with no loss of value while passing from the mind of the speaker to the mind of the listener.

Use Lengthy Clauses Sparingly. A clause is a subject and a predicate and their modifiers used as part of a sentence. In the sentence, "If the strike is called, the men will quit work," the two groups of words separated by the comma are clauses. Again, the sentence, "The man jumped from the running board and ran down the street" is made up of two clauses joined by the conjunction "and."

Clearly, there can be no taboo against clauses in radio news sentences. They must be and are used in even the simplest discourse. A sentence written for the average eye may well contain three or four clauses. But the average ear cannot follow more than two or three without losing the sense of the sentence. Examples from newspaper and radio copy follow:

PROPER FOR THE EYE

Last night, shortly after taps were sounded, a violent wind and thunderstorm struck the 3rd Regiment camp, uprooting trees, blowing away 50 tents and causing other damage estimated at \$10,000.

Declaring that the streets of Midland are designed for the horse and buggy, the superintendent argues that they are outmoded in this era of skyscrapers and automobiles. The widening of Forest avenue, he believes, would give the city at least one modern answer to the traffic problem.

BETTER FOR THE EAR

Last night a violent wind and thunderstorm struck the Third Regiment camp. Breaking shortly after taps were sounded, the storm uprooted trees and blew away fifty tents. Other damage is estimated at ten thousand dollars.

Antrim declares that the streets of Midland are designed for the horse and buggy. The Superintendent argues that they are outmoded in this -- the era of skyscrapers and automobiles. Antrim believes that the widening of Forest Avenue would give the city at least one modern answer to the traffic problem.

When writing for the ear the restrictive clause should be favored in general over the nonrestrictive type. Here is the difference:

RESTRICTIVE

The veteran right-hander who pitched the Blue Sox to a five-nothing victory got a big cheer from the crowd.

The huge ship which crossed the Atlantic in five days slipped through the fog like a gray ghost.

NONRESTRICTIVE

The crowd gave a big cheer to Wentworth, the veteran right-hander, who pitched the Blue Sox to a five-nothing victory.

Like a gray ghost through the fog came the huge ship, which crossed the Atlantic in five days.

Note that the restrictive clause is an integral part of the subject of the sentence. It does not have to be set off by commas. The nonrestrictive clause takes commas and is a hurdle when spoken. When choosing clauses, use the restrictive type by preference.

Misplaced Clauses Cause Trouble. Picking up a book or a newspaper, the reader always sees and reads a sentence as a whole. Turning on his radio, he often hears just a fragment of a sentence. A misplaced clause may give him a grotesque perversion of fact.

This kind of incident is not infrequent. The home of Mayor Nelson of Midland has been guarded by a policeman named Patrick Flynn. The policeman commits suicide. Preparing the story, the writer begins, "Patrolman Patrick Flynn who was assigned to guard the home of Mayor Nelson shot and killed himself today." More than one listener tunes in his radio just in time to hear ". . . Mayor Nelson shot and killed himself today." Trouble ensues. It could have been avoided by writing, "The policeman who was assigned to guard the home of Mayor Nelson, Patrolman Patrick Flynn, shot and killed himself today." Better yet would be two sentences: "Patrolman Patrick Flynn shot and killed himself today. It has been the job of Flynn to guard the home of Mayor Nelson."

Even the most experienced writers will misplace an identifying clause sometimes with disastrous results. Such an error was made in a radio press bureau story reporting the death of André Citroën,

MIXUPS CAUSED BY MISPLACED CLAUSES

The maid, who is employed by **SOCIALLY PROMINENT MISSUS PERCY CLAYTON, IS CHARGED WITH SHOPLIFTING.** She will be arraigned . . .

—○—

. a police dog, owned by **JUDGE ROBERT MORTON, HAS BITTEN SEVERAL CHILDREN,** according to the police.

—○—

.. to become Missus Harold Bledsoe tomorrow. The best man is to be a business partner of **THE MAN SHE WILL MARRY, LAWRENCE LANCASTER.**

—○—

The ship, christened by **MISS ALICE THOMPSON OF MIDLAND, WILL BE TURNED OVER TO THE NAVY** in March.

—○—

A patron of the theater, managed by **B-F HARMON, CARELESSLY DROPPED A LIGHTED CIGARET WHICH CAUSED THE FIRE.**

A Danger in Radio Sentences.

the French automobile manufacturer, widely known as the "French Henry Ford." The story started, "Paris—André Citroen, the French Henry Ford, died today in a hospital . . ." The country was flooded with the false report that Henry Ford had died.

To avoid such a blunder, put the qualifying clause first in the sentence. For example:

CONFUSING

Mrs. Henry Brown, sister of Senator Simon Latour, was granted a divorce today . . .

Roger Stanhope, an employee of the Midland Coal Company, is accused of conspiracy . . .

CLEAR

The sister of Senator Simon Latour, Mrs. Henry Brown, was granted a divorce today . . .

An employee of the Midland Coal Company, Roger Stanhope, is accused of conspiracy . . .

The danger in misplaced identification clauses threatens not only when listeners tune in their radios. Many persons in the radio audience are listening to news with half an ear. Their attention is suddenly focused by a well-known name such as "Simon Latour" or "Midland Coal Company." They have missed the first part of the sentence and grasp only the latter part. It is the duty of the writer to be on guard and to place his clauses carefully.

Beware of Inside Modifiers. Unless a clause knits closely into a sentence the radio news writer should avoid it. One or more such clauses, inserted in the body of a sentence to be spoken, may make the sentence difficult to speak naturally and give a disjointed and jarring effect on the ear. Try reading these sentences aloud:

At the next session of the City Council, now scheduled for Thursday, a new zoning ordinance, Alderman Clyde Timmons announced, will be submitted for action.

The crisp, cool weather of the last few days, according to Robert M. Bennett, head of the United States Weather Bureau, should continue in Midland, where the temperature has ranged from fifty-five to sixty, over the week end.

Assuming that the information contained in the modifiers is important, there are two steps to get rid of them: (1) Place the source

modifier at the start of the sentence, and (2) use separate sentences. Watch how these rules work out:

Alderman Clyde Timmons announced that a new zoning ordinance will be submitted to the City Council for action. The next session of the Council is scheduled for Thursday.

According to Robert M. Bennett, head of the United States Weather Bureau, the crisp, cool weather of the last few days should continue in Midland over the week end. The temperature here has ranged from fifty-five to sixty during the last few days.

Placing the source modifier at the start of a sentence is merely writing as most people talk. Many sentences in ordinary conversation begin "I said," "He said," and so on. The use of separate sentences is also characteristic of everyday talk.

Do Away With Dangers. A dangler in radio news terminology is a qualifying or dependent clause used to identify the source of a statement and placed like a dangling tail at the end of a sentence.

The dangler is an unwanted stepchild in newspaper writing. Confronted with the rule that he should play his trump card first and trying to crowd his most significant words in the forefront of a lead sentence, the reporter or rewrite man often is all but compelled to write:

All the resources of the Police department will be used to halt the current wave of burglaries in Midland homes, *Thomas Green, head of the department, said today.*

Frank Patterson defeated Merton C. Logan by nearly two to one in the Democratic runoff for the nomination, *according to returns from 120 of the state's 254 counties.*

Seventeen graduate scholarships have been awarded by five universities and other institutions in the United States and Canada to Midland college graduates this year, *it was announced by President Ralph Cummings yesterday.*

An inspection at the burned Midland Dairy company plant showed no justification for reports that a firebug started the blaze. *an investigating committee informed Fire Chief Ralph Chambers today.*

The foregoing sentences are typical of those which may be found in almost any daily newspaper. The remedy for the radio news writer is to place the source modifier at the start of the sentence and to use separate sentences if necessary. He would rewrite the examples as follows:

Police Chief Thomas Green said today that all the resources of the Police Department will be used to halt the current wave of burglaries in Midland homes.

The count is half complete in the Democratic runoff for the nomination. Returns now are in from 120 of the State's 254 counties. They show that Frank Patterson has defeated Merton C. Logan by nearly two to one.

President Ralph Cummings announced that seventeen graduate scholarships have been awarded this year to Midland College graduates. The awards have been received from five universities and other institutions in the United States and Canada.

An investigating committee gave to Fire Chief Ralph Chambers today the results of an inspection at the Midland Dairy Company plant, which was burned last Saturday. The committee found no justification for reports that the blaze was started by a firebug.

Transitional Words First. Generally speaking, the rule of placing modifiers at the beginning rather than within or at the end of a radio news sentence holds good for transitional words such as "however," "nevertheless," "moreover," "furthermore" and "also."

Poor: *The police order, however, provides that . . .*

Better: *However, the police order provides that . . .*

Poor: *Operation will begin, nevertheless, at . . .*

Better: *Nevertheless, operation will begin at . . .*

Poor: *The chairman ruled, moreover, that . . .*

Better: *Moreover, the chairman ruled that . . .*

Poor: *Ice cream and cake, furthermore, were free . . .*

Better: *Furthermore, ice cream and cake were free . . .*

Poor: *The dispatch says, also, that . . .*

Better: *Also, the dispatch says that . . .*

If placed in the middle of a spoken sentence these words break the thought and destroy smoothness of delivery. At the start of the sentence they blend in naturally.

As we advance in writing practice it will be seen that not only transitional words but phrases, sentences and whole paragraphs are treasured and used constantly within a newscast in order to secure continuity. Placing the words mentioned at the start of sentences is merely an ABC step in the development and use of coupling pins.

Sentences—Short, Medium and Long. At this point in the discussion of sentence structure the student, impressed with the demand for shorter sentences, may have concluded that brevity alone insures sound structure. This does not hold true. The question "How long should a sentence be?" is like "How long should a man's legs be?" Lincoln answered, "Long enough to reach the ground." A sentence should be long enough to state the thought.

From time to time radio news editors, just as they have tried to limit the number of syllables in words, have limited the number of words in a sentence. One editor, after struggling to break up a piece of copy burdened with tortuous clauses, ordered it rewritten in sentences of no more than ten words each. This is what he got back:

The strike began at six o'clock this morning. Three hundred workers left their benches. Production of furniture stopped in five factories. These include the plant of the Jones Furniture Company. This factory employs 150 men. The union demands a forty-eight-hour week. It also wants a pay increase of five cents. This means five cents an hour. One company official says the manufacturers will not yield. The spokesman was H. K. Jones. He owns the Jones factory. Picketing started at once. Thirty policemen have been assigned to keep order. Chief of Police Thomas Green sent them to the plants.

What is wrong? Obviously the ten-word sentence rule has resulted in a choppy, staccato and monotonous effect as irritating as long and involved sentences. An average of, say, fifteen to twenty words or one and a half to two typewritten lines would be more

reasonable, but it is clear that no arbitrary word limit on sentence length can be adopted. Sentences may be fairly long or short, with gradations between. Neither is better than the other, for each length has its own purpose.

More practical would be a rule that would eliminate all extremely long sentences and call for short and medium-length sentences to be alternated. Such alternating usually tends to secure emphasis by contrast, especially if the writer uses the longer sentence for the most part to unfold his thought, and the shorter one to enforce it.

However, the most sensible rule is none at all except that the sentence must sound right when spoken. Short sentences sound right when the objective of the writer is to denote motion and speed in fast-action copy. Medium-length sentences sound better when the copy pertains to matters for more deliberate thought and deeper consideration.

Occasionally a long sentence written and spoken with balance conveys a well-rounded thought more satisfactorily on the air than in print.

Avoid Short-Cut Sentences. It is a standard and proper practice in newspaper writing and copyreading to omit or delete every word which seems to clutter up copy and blockad style without conveying a visual image to the reader. Many of these words are natural to the spoken language and need to be retained in radio news script.

Starting a lead sentence with the indefinite article *a* or *an* is frowned upon in some newspaper editorial rooms. Others go so far as to taboo the use of the definite article *the* as the first word of a story. In radio writing, as in conversation, the articles are used freely. Illustrations follow:

Newspaper Style: *Fire of undetermined origin . . .*

Radio Style: *A fire of undetermined origin . . .*

Newspaper Style: *Wind reaching gale velocity . . .*

Radio Style: *A wind reaching gale velocity . . .*

Newspaper Style: *Search for two escaped convicts . . .*

Radio Style: *The search for two escaped convicts . . .*

Newspaper Style: *Passage of a tax bill . . .*

Radio Style: *The passage of a tax bill . . .*

Approved by the newspaper reader but annoying to the radio announcer and listener is short-cut phraseology eliminating the prepositions *on* and *at* and the relative pronouns *as*, *which* and, especially, *that*. While these connective or reference words are often slurred and blurred, they belong in copy to be spoken. Read the following examples aloud rapidly:

Newspaper Style: *The parade was Labor Day.*

Radio Style: *The parade was on Labor Day.*

Newspaper Style: *It was five o'clock in the morning.*

Radio Style: *It was at five o'clock in the morning.*

Newspaper Style: *He will vote the same ticket he voted before.*

Radio Style: *He will vote the same ticket as he voted before.*

Newspaper Style: *She thought she was in the right.*

Radio Style: *She thought that she was in the right.*

Newspaper Style: *They passed the bill he proposed.*

Radio Style: *They passed the bill which he proposed.*

Newspaper Style: *The pilot said his plane was damaged.*

Radio Style: *The pilot said that his plane was damaged.*

Must Sentences Be Complete? The radio news writer seldom thinks in terms of grammatical rules. Indeed, a few years after his school days he is likely to look blankly at the mention of an infinitive or a participle and to scratch his head over the meaning of an adverbial clause. While he conforms by instinct to most of the rules of rhetoricians, he violates one without a second thought if it suits his purpose.

One of the primary rules of grammar is that every sentence must have a subject and a predicate. This rule goes overboard frequently in radio writing, in which partial and incomplete sentences often are effective. For example:

Eviction. A city without space for the homeless. Restless nights of broken sleep with his wife and four children in an automobile.

~~Futile days seeking a job which would give his family a place to live. Finally -- amnesia.~~

Wear the chinchilla, of course. Not the long cape. Just the sports model. And those casual diamonds. For the National Horse Show this year is going to be informal.

We've had glass windows. Glass dishes. Glass tablecloths. Yes, even glass bathtubs. And now, of all things, glass bedsprings.

More than a million people are at Coney Island. They're in the water, on the sand, under the sand, on the boardwalk. Playing ball. Crunching peanuts. Drinking pop. Looking for lost kids. And just enjoying the sunshine.

The incomplete sentence is characteristic of conversation. Perhaps one sentence out of three uttered by two persons engaged in an exchange of thought is never brought to a grammatical stop. It is left in mid-air because the hearer understands the omitted words and, impatient to speak himself, breaks in on the other. Often a speaker, in conversation or on the platform, in effect completes a sentence by a lift of the eyebrows or a shrug of the shoulders. The gesture is more eloquent than words.

To a limited degree a radio announcer can show his meaning by intonation although his gestures are unseen. Therefore, in the use of incomplete sentences, the radio script is more restricted than person-to-person or speaker-to-crowd talk, but far less so than formal writing.

Incomplete sentences may not be used just anywhere. They have to be built up to. And they can easily be overdone. But there is no reason whatever they should be forbidden. They are a legitimate tool of the radio news writer.

Here again the question for the writer to ask himself is, "Does it sound right?" To discover whether it will "sound right," the experienced writer constantly is mentally reading his sentences aloud as he writes them. So habitual is this write-and-test procedure in radio newsrooms that often the writer's lips will move as he reads, with an audible mumble. Thus he finds out for himself exactly how a sentence is going to sound when spoken by the announcer. If it

sounds wrong he will strike it out and keep on rewriting it until it "sounds right" for the air.

SHOP TALK

1. Should a news script sentence on the average be shorter than other script to be read aloud? Explain your reasons.
2. Compose and discuss examples of misplaced clauses which might mislead listeners just tuning in.
3. Locate in a newspaper a half dozen paragraphs with danglers. Rephrase them orally in radio style.
4. Why is it good practice to give the source or authority at the beginning of a script sentence?
5. Do you think a newspaper office rule against starting a lead sentence with "the" is warranted? Why is the article used in radio copy?

CHAPTER X

Write As You Talk

Words—To See or Hear? “Spoken speech is one thing, written speech is quite another. Print is the proper vehicle for the latter, but it isn’t for the former. The moment ‘talk’ is put into print you recognize that it is not what it was when you heard it; you perceive that an immense something has disappeared from it. That is its soul.”

This observation was made by Mark Twain in a letter written to Edward Bok many years ago. The radio then was still to come. Twain’s comments, however, are pertinent in a discussion of radio news writing, for the microphone and the loudspeaker, after all, are merely mechanical megaphones for “speech.”

The great humorist probably referred to the appearance in print of one of his own inimitable after-dinner or platform talks. As he points out, when “talk” is put into print “something” is lost. Of course, the reverse is equally true. When “print”—or anything written for the eye—is put into “talk” you likewise perceive that “something” is lost.

“Print”—that is, typewritten, teletyped or printed matter prepared for reading—is the raw material of the news writer-editor. His task—indeed his primary task—is to process this material in such a way that the missing “something” is restored as the script is read aloud for ears to hear.

A Revolution in News Style. Radio’s restoration of ear appeal in the presentation of public intelligence has brought about the

most radical departure in news writing style since the appearance of the modern newspaper story during the war of 1861-64.

Use of the mouth as a news conduit is nothing new. For countless centuries before the advent of an alphabet, man relied on his vocal cords when he wished to communicate something of importance to someone else. The town crier predates the printing press which gave birth to the newspaper. But on its arrival the newspaper became virtually the sole news vehicle in America and so remained until the radio era.

It was practically impossible for a citizen of the year 1924 to think himself back into a newspaper-less age or for a journalist to conceive that once again news might be written, as if on a parchment scroll, to be proclaimed aloud. Yet, even then, thousands of radio set owners were hearing the results of a presidential election, and a revolution in news style had begun.

Like many a new creation, radio news style is a fresh blend of several old and familiar ingredients. Something new has been added, but not a great deal. It retains a large number of the characteristics which distinguish the newspaper story from other kinds of writing. At the same time it is a partial return to the manuscript of the town crier. And it bears resemblance to the text of a platform speaker, the manuscript of a playwright and the scenario of a motion-picture writer. Finally, it is flavored by the familiar and fluent utterance found in person-to-person conversation.

It was chiefly the introduction or, more appropriately, the reintroduction of the oral elements and their blending with the newspaper style that marked out radio news script as a new form of expression in journalism—the first in nearly a hundred years.

Can the Gap Be Bridged? Despite the retention of many press story characteristics, radio news style has definitely parted company from newspaper style, and year by year the breach has widened.

In the earliest days of radio the newscaster naturally tried to adapt the old to the new. He simply read aloud the headlines and lead paragraphs from a front page and then, perhaps, skimmed through and read from the women's, sports and business pages.

~~Complaints from listeners with offended ears demonstrated that~~ something was wrong and the crude custom of newspaper microphone reading soon went into the discard. Instead, radio tried out writers assigned to process news specifically and solely for the tongue and ear. The experiment was an immediate success. Gradually a majority of the radio stations with newsrooms, the press associations and newspapers with radio outlets fell into line and today the special staff processing operation is well established.

Old methods die hard. There still is extant a belief that news copy can be prepared so that it will serve both newspapers and radio stations. One of the chief proponents of this view holds that "there is no mystic gulf separating good writing for the eye and good writing for the ear." He contends that "readability" is the keynote of all good news writing.

In recent years there has been a strong move by newspapers and press services to make copy more "readable" by doing away with abstract words and long, complicated sentences. This simplification process has won readers by making printed stories more understandable. It tends to bring press language nearer the spoken popular tongue. This reform is long overdue and all to the good.

However, it seems clear to this author that to the extent the move has changed style it has done so by making newspaper style more like radio style, and *not the other way around*. To some extent it has made newspaper words and sentences more like radio words and sentences but it has not changed the traditional newspaper concept of the inverted pyramid construction of facts in a story. Radio does not use the inverted pyramid structure.

For this reason the gap between newspaper and radio style is too wide to bridge on a large scale unless a majority of newspapermen alter their view of how news stories should be arranged for print—an event not likely to happen.

This author believes that other less fundamental but nevertheless irreconcilable differences between the two styles do exist. Indeed, to set forth these differences is one of the primary objectives of this book. Several of them are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

FIVE FUNDAMENTAL REASONS WHY STYLES DIFFER



PRESS

- 1. Organ of Perception **EYE**
- 2. Range of Vocabulary **LARGE**
- 3. Ability to Retain. **PRESENT**
- 4. Influence of Personality... **ABSENT**
- 5. Influence of Crowd **ABSENT**



PLATFORM

- 1. Organ of Perception **EAR**
- 2. Range of Vocabulary **MEDIUM**
- 3. Ability to Retain **ABSENT**
- 4. Influence of Personality **STRONG**
- 5. Influence of Crowd **STRONG**



RADIO

- 1. Organ of Perception **EAR**
- 2. Range of Vocabulary **SMALL**
- 3. Ability to Retain **ABSENT**
- 4. Influence of Personality **LIMITED**
- 5. Influence of Crowd **ABSENT**

An Analysis of Three Styles.

Is It "Listenable"? That is a question the radio writer must ask himself over and over again. It confronts him constantly.

The question before the newspaper writer is, "How will it look in print?" As his lines and paragraphs climb from the typewriter the reporter or rewrite man visualizes them in type. In his mind's eye he sees the product in its final form. The very shapes of the words and sentences reflect themselves on his mental screen and he tests them by looking at the screen, projecting himself into the role of a silent reader.

Not so the radio writer. He sees the actual typewritten lines and paragraphs but he uses no mental screen, for he is writing as if to a blind person. His testing devices are his own lips and tongue. It is not at all uncommon in a radio newsroom to see a writer moving his lips and to hear him whisper and mumble as he reads half-aloud. This whispering and mumbling is merely testing in a low voice to find out whether a passage is suitable to tongue and ear.

In this testing procedure the radio writer takes a double role. In imagination he becomes both the speaker and one of the audience. Vicariously his vocal organs are those of the announcer, while his ears are those of the listener who will hear the announcer's voice. Thus, as he writes, he repeatedly answers the question, "Is it 'listenable'?"

What makes copy "listenable"? Already we have learned the value of simplicity in the choice of words and in the construction of sentences. We now go forward to a study of other characteristics of the oral style.

The Personal Approach. We use the expression "oral" frequently in this book, meaning ideas to be spoken by word of mouth as contrasted to those written for silent reading. A more specific term "aural," meaning for the ear alone, is needed to distinguish microphone from platform style.

We tend to think of radio listeners as the "audience"—a mass of several thousand people assembled as in a church, theater or meeting hall. A moment's reflection will show the fallacy of this conception. The unseen radio audience consists of individuals and small

groups of usually not more than three or four persons, most commonly in a living room at leisure and engaged in talking casually, reading, smoking, knitting, just plain loafing, and listening. Many in the audience are alone, sitting in an armchair, or perhaps eating lunch or driving a car.

People thus situated are unable to see the movements, gestures and facial expressions of the speaker. His personality is impressed upon them by his voice alone. Further, crowd psychology is completely absent. The infectious quality of mass emotional reactions and responses such as those expressed by cheers and laughter is well known to experienced public speakers. A partial substitute is provided by a studio audience for some types of nonnews radio programs.

Your "talk" as a writer—the messages you place in the mouth of the announcer—should therefore be friendly, sincere and, to a large degree, in the easy and spontaneous conversational style to which folk in little, intimate groups of two or three are accustomed. It is a me-to-you relationship.

Consider yourself as a neighbor or a guest in an average home. You have something you want to say. You wish to hold attention for five or fifteen minutes. No one can interrupt or ask questions. It is up to you to say what you wish and to leave each auditor with the personal feeling that he has heard something interesting, informative and worth listening to.

Under these circumstances obviously the best approach is friendly—at times almost chummy—and the best style of presentation is simple, unaffected narration. You have a story to tell. Use the personal approach. Tell it naturally as to a good friend.

A Thrice-Told Tale. Forget for a moment or so that you are reading this book and imagine yourself in a home in the Ferndale section of Midland. It is late afternoon. John Smith has just come home from work. He is a bit excited, and no wonder for he has witnessed something worth telling about. He is the bearer of news. Listen as he exclaims to his wife:

"Say, Mary! Do you know what I just saw? A bad smashup right

~~over here at the corner of Fourteenth and Maple. Auto hit a truck. One fellow was killed and another one hurt. Yeah, I just came from there. Big crowd around.~~

Mrs. Smith interposes: "For goodness sake! Right here in Ferndale! What happened?"

Smith continues: "Well, I was walking along with Joe Brown and we saw this fellow in a coupé going about sixty come through a red light at Thirteenth. I said, 'Joe, he's going too fast.' And, boy, he was! Just then a truck—big furniture truck—turned in on Maple, headed north. The fellow in the coupé swerved around another car and straight into that truck. Wham! Sounded like a bombshell. Next thing I knew the coupé was upside down and the driver underneath. Dead as a doornail. They say his name was Henry Dixon. Runs a feed mill. The truck driver was just shaken up, I guess, but they took him to the hospital."

Let us now leave the Smith home and glance ahead at tomorrow's *Midland Times*. Here is how the story starts:

Henry Dixon, 32, owner of the Quality Feed mill, was killed instantly when his automobile collided with a truck at 14th street and Maple avenue, late yesterday. The truck driver, Samuel Wingate, was taken to Grant hospital with slight head injuries.

Radio Station MIDT carried the story the previous evening as the first item in its 6 P.M. newscast. Here is how the item began:

First, we bring you a late report from the Ferndale police station. An accident at the corner of Fourteenth Street and Maple Avenue has taken the life of Henry Dixon, owner of the Quality Feed Mill. Police say that Dixon's coupé collided with a truck driven by Samuel Wingate, who is an employee of the Ferndale Furniture Company. The car driven by Dixon turned over, killing him instantly. Wingate is in Grant Hospital with minor head injuries.

Warming Up the Listener. Glance back over the three versions of our story as told by Smith in conversational style, as reported by the *Times* in newspaper style and as broadcast by MIDT in radio

style. Do you detect any basic differences? There are several. However, at this point, let us consider just one—the way the story was started.

Dixon died. That is the main news fact. All else is secondary. Keeping this in mind, compare the three openings:

SMITH	TIMES	MIDT
Say, Mary! Do you know what I just saw? A bad smashup right over here at the corner of . . .	Henry Dixon, 32, owner of the Quality Feed mill, was killed instantly when his automobile collided . . .	First, we bring you a late report from the Ferndale police station. An accident at the corner of . . .

In conventional newspaper style, the *Times* story starts with the climax. It hurls the main fact straight into the eyes of the reader without preliminaries. The writer followed the traditional formula of the five W's—Who? What? When? Where? and Why?—in his lead paragraph.

Smith did nothing of the kind. Can you imagine his exclaiming to Mrs. Smith, "Henry Dixon, thirty-two, owner of the Quality Feed Mill, was killed instantly when his automobile . . ." and so on? Of course you can't. People don't talk that way. How did Smith begin? This way: "Say, Mary! Do you know what I just saw?" Thus he gave Mrs. Smith a moment to catch her breath and prepare herself. Next he transported her mentally to the scene with, "A bad smashup right over here . . ." And finally came the main fact, "One fellow was killed . . .," but not until the fifth sentence.

Now we are at the nub of the comparison. How did the news-cast item begin—like Smith or like the *Times*? It started, "First, we bring you a late report from the Ferndale police station. An accident at the corner of . . ." The point now should be obvious. The *Times* version stands out alone and apart. The Smith and MIDT versions are essentially alike. Put them side by side and see how they correspond:

SMITH	•	MIDT
Say, Mary! . . . I just saw		First . . . late report . . . An
. . . A bad smashup . . . at the		accident at the corner of . . .
corner of . . .		

Yes, the phrases match. They match because Smith and MIDT both sought to prepare the mind of the listener with a warmup—a device fundamental to the oral style and common to everyday talk and radio news writing, but foreign to conventional newspaper style.

Why the Warmup? To grasp the meaning and purpose of the warmup, consider these facts. A person reading to himself from a retainable page may and does adjust the incoming flow of information to his own speed of perception just as he adjusts a water faucet. He does so by merely reading as fast or as slowly as the sensory stimuli sink into his brain. But a person listening to a speaker has no such control. The incoming flow of information is governed entirely by the speaker, and the listener is at his mercy. If the listener stops to reflect upon what has been said, the speaker leaves him behind and the connection has been broken.

We repeat—and herein lies a reason why the gap between newspaper and radio style can never be bridged—a recipient of printed news can control the rate of inflow with his eyes, but the recipient of spoken news cannot control it with his ears.

Holding a newspaper, the reader usually glances first at the headlines of a story or perhaps at an accompanying picture or map. These are visual warmups. Then he reads the first paragraphs. If they hit too fast, too hard, too overwhelmingly, he slows down, looks back, rereads and then goes ahead. He keeps his attention on the words for such time as he needs to absorb their meaning fully. Some people read with painstaking slowness, literally spelling out word by word; others read and comprehend whole paragraphs at a time. The eyes do it.

But the listener has no stop-and-go traffic signal system. It is true that John Smith could repeat if Mrs. Smith missed a point, but there is no word-for-word repeating in a newscast. The listener has

no control whatever over the speaker. If he blurts out the climax of a story in his opening words, it may be like flashing words on a movie screen which, unlike the newspaper page, is not retainable. Half the audience fails to catch on to the meaning of the words in time and the result is frustration and anger.

To guard against this danger—to protect the listener—the radio writer uses the warmup which, together with a reasonable delivery rate, insures understanding by a majority of the listeners. You will learn more about the warmup as used to introduce individual items in a later chapter entitled “The Structure of the Story.”

Putting the Source First. The reasons for the warmup also explain why the radio news sentence often begins with a statement of the news source, while the newspaper sentence more often withholds the origin announcement and tacks it on at the end. This point was mentioned in the preceding chapter. Here are further illustrations:

RADIO

The Mayor says *that the parking ordinance will be strictly enforced.*

A dispatch from Moscow reveals *that the parley has been called off.*

The statement concludes -- *“Therefore, I have submitted my resignation.”*

NEWSPAPER

The no-parking ordinance will be strictly enforced, the Mayor said.

The parley has been called off, according to a dispatch from Moscow.

“Therefore, I have submitted my resignation,” the statement concludes.

If you will refer back to the accident reports you will note that Smith gave his source almost at once in the phrases “what I just saw” and “I just came from there.” His source was himself. He was an eyewitness. Likewise MIDT introduced the source before the main fact with the phrase, “report from the Ferndale police station.” The *Times* mentioned no source at all in its lead paragraph, but probably credited the Ferndale police further down in the story.

The source of the news serves as part of a *warmup to prepare the* listener for facts to follow. How often do you hear in conversations such phrases as "I said," "She said," "They say," "I read in the paper that" and "My boss told me that"? Almost invariably such phrases, specifying the source, come at the beginning of a sentence.

Thus, in placing the source first, the radio writer again aligns himself with the conversationalist and departs from newspaper style, which in itself was a departure from the earlier oral style.

The Transition or Coupling Pin. We return once more to the Smith household to listen in as the Smiths talk about the doings of the day at the dinner table. The excitement over the automobile accident has subsided and Mrs. Smith is recounting her more prosaic experiences:

"Well, John, right after you left this morning the window washer finally came. He said he's been very busy and just couldn't get here last week. He charged me thirty cents a window but he got them bright and clean. By the way, he showed me where some of the screens need repairing.

"When I went outdoors, it was too nice a day to stay home. So I decided to go downtown.

"And while I was walking over to the bus stop, who do you think I ran into but Lucy Steiner? You remember the Steiners, don't you? They used to live next door to us on Tenth Avenue. She's their oldest daughter. Married now and has two children of her own.

"She was going downtown, too, so she went shopping with me. I wanted to see about some shirts for you. I got two for \$3.75 each at Waples'.

"Speaking of shirts, I think I'm going to change laundries. Mine is just too hard on shirts. And one of my best tablecloths came back this week torn to pieces and the driver says it was worn out anyway. What do you think of that?"

Notice the phrases in italics. These are *transitions* or *coupling pins* used spontaneously by the conversationalist to link his own

thoughts and to transport the listener by easy stages from one idea to the next. Similar devices are used by the radio news writer for the same purpose—to secure continuity.

Observe how naturally Mrs. Smith linked the window washer, outdoors, her trip, Lucy, shopping, shirts, laundry. Her coupling pins strung one word-picture to the next like so many beads.

The mental kit of the radio news writer is well stocked with transition words like “and,” “also,” “meanwhile” and “however”; phrases like “turning to,” “speaking of,” “in the national news” and “back in this city”; and sentences like “Now we bring you the local news” and “Here’s a glance at tonight’s sports news.”

The entire newscast may be likened to a train made up of engine and cars. The warmup is the forerunner or cowcatcher of the engine or first news item. The writer uses coupling pins to put the train together and make it a unit.

We have now introduced two radio news style fundamentals—the warmup and the coupling pin—and again we move ahead, reserving more detailed discussion for an advanced chapter entitled “Coupling Pins and Continuity.”

Favor the Present Tense. We now come to a third important difference between newspaper and radio style—the use of tenses. Broadly speaking, the newspaper writer is confined largely to the past and future tenses, whereas the radio writer leans to the more natural and zestful present and perfect tenses.

In normal conversation the average person uses the present tense heavily—so heavily that multitudes of the less literate customarily relate past events in the present tense, thus: “So when he says that, I say he’s wrong. Then this other fellow butts in and says I don’t know what I’m talking about. So I tell him to keep still.”

The radio writer may not be so colloquial. If an event occurred in the past he usually is compelled to use the past tense. Further, he must maintain a proper sequence of tenses and may not shift carelessly between the present and past, thus: “The fireman shouted to attract her attention, but she started to jump, not heeding his warn-

COPY FOR WRITING IN THE PRESENT TENSE

QUOTATIONS AND PARAPHRASES FROM



**Letters and Written Statements and
Announcements**



Court Decrees, Documents and Records



Press Service Dispatches When Credited



Newspaper Stories When Credited



Books and Magazines

Kinds of Present Tense Raw Material.

ing. He shouted again. This time she hears. She remains in the window and waits until the ladder reaches her." Throughout this passage the past tense should have been used.

It is necessary to retain the same tense while writing about the same specific act. However, tense may be rightly shifted from sentence to sentence if each recounts a different act, thus: "The Governor arrived (past) in Minneapolis this morning. He now is (present) on his way to Washington where he will see (future) the President tomorrow."

Leaning toward the present tense, the radio writer never should miss a chance to use it for statements which are permanently true and independent of time. Examples:

POOR

She insisted that aluminum was the best metal for cooking.

He declared that college years were the best in a man's life.

BETTER

She insisted that aluminum is the best metal for cooking.

He declared that college years are the best in a man's life.

The radio writer also is justified in using the present tense when his source is a statement, a letter, a news dispatch or printed story, a written document of any kind. Contrast these examples:

RADIO

The announcement by the Society says . . .

His letter declares that . . .

In a dispatch from Cairo, the correspondent discloses that . . .

The charts presented to the committee show that . . .

The Times story reveals . . .

NEWSPAPER

The announcement by the society said . . .

His letter declared that . . .

In a dispatch from Cairo, the correspondent disclosed that . . .

The charts presented to the committee showed that . . .

The Times story revealed . . .

A wide field for the proper use of the present tense is opened up to the radio news writer because he often writes of an event that is going on at the time his newscast is on the air. Such a short time elapses between his preparation and a broadcast that he may safely

say, "The parade under way on Main Street this afternoon" or "The plane is en route to." The newspaper writer can take no such chances. By the time his words reach the reader the parade will be over and the plane at its destination. Perforce, he must write in the past tense, "The parade on Main street yesterday" or "The plane tonight was en route to."

When rewriting newspaper copy the radio writer should weed out the awkward verbs in such an expression as "were to be called into session today." If his newscast is going on the air today he should make it "are to be called into session today," or better, "will be called into session today."

The perfect tenses go better on the air than the newspaper short-cut use of the simple past or simple future. In referring to events taking place prior to the day of the story, prefer the past perfect. For example, "The Senator previously had declined the invitation" is better than "The Senator previously declined the invitation." Here are more examples:

NEWSPAPER

The atomic energy commission scheduled a discussion for today.

He was decorated twice for bravery.

A moniment was erected on the site.

RADIO

The atomic energy commission has scheduled a discussion for today.

He has been decorated twice for bravery.

A monument has been erected on the site.

Too few radio news writers consciously stop now and then to consider the tense in which they are writing. It is not necessary to be a grammarian to choose the best tense. You can test your tense by the same method you test anything you write for the radio. Read it to yourself. Does it sound right? Is it "listenable"? If not, try again in another tense.

SHOP TALK

1. Several ways of transmitting news are discussed in this chapter. Can you think of other ways used in the historical past?

2. Debate the question: "Can news be written so as to be usable both in a newspaper and on the radio?"
3. What essential differences affecting style are to be found in (1) radio, (2) platform and (3) press?
4. Cite examples of warmup and transition expressions used in ordinary conversation.
5. What are the advantages gained by use of the present tense in radio writing?

CHAPTER XI

Punctuation and Numerals

Precision Pays Off. For the sake of uniformity and consistency it is necessary for a radio newsroom to establish rules governing typewriter adjustment, copy and script slugs, punctuation, numbers, abbreviations, titles, capitalization and so on. Some of these copy rules have been covered in earlier chapters and discussion of others is withheld until later on. The purpose of this chapter is to deal with two important sections of MIDT copy rules—those on punctuation and numerals.

Bother about such details as dashes, quotation marks, dollar signs and dates may seem hardly worth the while of a young writer whose head is full of ideas he wishes to express. Such details confuse his thoughts and slow up his speed. However, he soon finds that radio news writing is hedged about by many restrictions. Failure to observe them tangles up his own typewriter keys, adds to the labor of the editor who must make corrections, causes the announcer to fluff, and finally reflects back on his own ability to write clean copy.

Time taken to look up the copy rules covering punctuation and numerals and to refer back until you memorize and use them by habit is time well spent.

You Can't Hear Punctuation. A handbook used by The New York Daily News says that the basis of its style is "good taste, common sense and Webster's dictionary." That is a sound basic formula for any kind of composition—in particular, news writing.

A good many of the time-tested and more standardized newspaper copy rules apply equally well to radio news. But no set of newspaper copy rules is wholly applicable to radio for the simple reason that you can't hear all that you can see. You can't hear punctuation—for example, quotation marks. Therefore the scriptman must never forget that he writes solely for the eyes of an announcer—not for the eyes of silent readers. If a symbol aids the announcer's delivery, it is good; if it hinders delivery, it is worse than useless.

The purpose of punctuation is to indicate relationships among expressed thoughts. It supplies symbols for pauses and inflections that in spoken language help the listener to know when a thought has been completed, when a thought is suddenly broken, when a question is asked, when excitement is implied.

Reading either silently or aloud does not proceed in a straight line. The eyes grab up a word or two, run ahead to see what's next, come back to get the rest, look ahead again, return and finish the job. As the eyes run ahead, they see punctuation marks that enable the reader to pause mentally and inflect silently.

To increase reading ease the Spanish system of punctuation places the question mark and exclamation point upside down at the beginning of a sentence as well as right side up at the end, thus: ¿Como esta Vd.? ¡Muy bien, gracias! The presentence symbols warn the reader in advance of what is to come and lessen the strain of "reading ahead."

However, the eyes of a trained announcer complete the "reading ahead" operations much faster than those of an ordinary reader. He mentally registers the question marks, exclamation points, dashes, commas and periods well in advance of his voice and is able to pause or to change his pitch and tone with ease if the punctuation is proper.

A Simple Punctuation Plan. The diversity among the copy rules of publishing houses, magazines and newspaper editorial offices already has been pointed out. This is nowhere more apparent than in the rules governing punctuation.

In view of the diversity there is no good reason radio news crafts-

USED AND UNUSED
TYPEWRITER SYMBOLS

APPROVED

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p
q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x
y	z	A	B	C	D	E	F
G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V
W	X	Y	Z	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	0	-	,	.
"	'	?	\$				

BARRED

$\frac{1}{2}$:	¢	/	#	%	_	&
(	)	*	$\frac{1}{4}$;	@		

Rules of MIDT.

men should not try to devise punctuation plans best suited to their own needs. The aim of such a plan should be to give the maximum aid to an announcer with the maximum simplicity. Although each mark essential to effective delivery needs to be included, the fewer used the better for all concerned—writer, editor and announcer. It is unwise to include either rarely used marks or different marks serving almost parallel purposes.

Generally speaking, radio news writing tends to follow the open system of punctuation used for ordinary descriptive and narrative writing as against the close system used for composition in which precision is the first requisite. The open system calls for a minimum of pointing without causing ambiguity.

Still another factor favoring simplicity in punctuation is the limited number of characters available on typewriter and teletype keyboards. Such rarely used marks as brackets, daggers and parallels must be eliminated for this reason alone. The marks found on both normal keyboards follow:

. Period	: Colon
, Comma	; Semicolon
- Hyphen	() Parentheses
! Exclamation point	* Asterisk
? Interrogation point	. . . Ellipses or leaders
“ ” Quotation marks double	/ Virgule
‘ ’ Quotation marks single	

In the MIDT newsroom only the punctuation points in the left-hand list are in use. These alone are considered adequate for full if not fancy composition. While perfectly proper, the points in the right-hand list duplicate functions which can be performed with the simpler list. It should be noted that the virgule is not employed in the grammatical sense to indicate that either of two words which it separates may be used. The short slanting stroke is used, however, to indicate the insertion of omitted words typed above it.

Marks To Show Pauses. The two simplest punctuation points are the comma and the period. To the announcer a comma, show-

USED AND UNUSED
TELETYPE SYMBOLS

APPROVED

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
Y	Z	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	0	-	?	\$!
'	'	.	,	"			

BARRED

: & £ () ; /

Rules of MIDT.

ing a separation of words, phrases or clauses in respect to the grammatical structure of a sentence, indicates a slight pause. The period, when it marks the end of a complete sentence or any expression standing for a sentence, calls for a slightly longer pause than the comma and a more pronounced voice inflection.

In radio news the ratio of periods is higher and the ratio of commas lower than in other writing. Favoring simple and uncomplicated sentences, the radio writer naturally should not use a comma if he can use a period instead and start a new sentence. A dash should be used in place of the comma to set aside clauses when strong emphasis on the clause is desired.

The semicolon, which is really just a strong comma or a weak period, is so seldom of value in radio news writing that it is banned by the MIDT rules.

In addition to the momentary halt indicated by a comma and the medium-length pause by a period, the radio writer frequently needs to denote a major or more definite pause with still another symbol. For this purpose the dash is ideal because it stands out so distinctly before the eyes of the announcer. For the same reason—because it is visually distinctive—the dash is used as a substitute for the colon, for parentheses, for the asterisk and for leaders. It is, indeed, a mark of many uses.

The dash in MIDT copy is composed of a double-hyphen, always with a single space before it and a single space after it. Tests show that this form catches the eye quickly. While addition of a third hyphen would make the mark still more distinctive, it requires added effort and space. The advantage gained in making the dash stand out more clearly does not warrant the expenditure of time and resultant effect on script arithmetic. The two-hyphen dash is satisfactory if care is taken to leave the spaces separating it from the matter before and after it.

In ordinary prose the dash is used within a sentence to signify an abrupt break in thought—to show that the writer is about to present something that is logically but not grammatically connected to the main thought—and also to set off parenthetical matter or to indicate hesitancy. Examples:

~~Take the book with you and—wait! That's the wrong one.~~

If you should see him—you might meet him on the train—
give him my message.

Well—I don't know—that is—all right. I'll do it.

As in the examples, the MIDT writer employs the dash for broken sentences and instead of parentheses. Like any other writer, he avoids the slipshod habit of using a dash indiscriminately in place of a period or a weak comma.

However, the scriptman departs from the company of other stylists in using the dash to show a major pause. No such long pause is required in silent reading. Some newscasters prefer leaders, or a series of periods, to indicate the longest pauses. In MIDT copy where fairly short paragraphs are preferred, announcers understand that the longest pause is shown by the start of a new paragraph. This makes leaders unnecessary and they are barred.

The following excerpt illustrates the customary use of the two-hyphen dash in MIDT scripts:

This bill is sponsored by Senator Miles -- the Republican from Boone County -- and has won the support of Governor Boland. The Governor -- a veteran himself -- urges early passage of the measure in a letter received by Miles today. Says Boland -- and we quote -- "Let's have some kind of action -- right now!"

As used in the last sentence, the dash replaces a colon. The purpose of the colon in composition to be spoken is to allow the speaker to pause and take a short breath. The dash indicates the pause just as well and the colon is duplication.

Another use of the dash is to introduce the date-lined item:

Washington -- An announcement by the Post Office Department today says that the Midland post office will be rebuilt at a cost of \$100,000.

How To Quote Your Source. Perhaps no copy rules vary more widely in radio newsrooms than those covering quotations, the only

punctuation marks ever spoken aloud by the announcer. Almost constantly the script writer needs to identify his source, to cite his authority, to repeat statements with more or less exactness, to cite passages from documents. To be objective, especially when conveying controversial assertions, it is often mandatory for a script writer to set forth his authority with unmistakable clearness.

So important is it that a writer have proper instruments for these operations that MIDDY provides a full tool kit and encourages use of the right tool to secure the desired degree of credit.

Bacon says that some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested. So it is with news statements. Some are to be paraphrased, others to be quoted loosely, and some few to be quoted with such exactitude that the listener learns precisely where the quoted words begin and end. It is up to the writer and editor to determine which degree of exactness is called for and to use the tool to provide it.

No copy rule is required for paraphrasing ordinary, run-of-the-mill news statements. The sense of a passage may be rendered freely in the same or different language. Examples:

The new beauty queen says that she is more interested in cooking than in romance.

He predicts a landslide in the November elections.

In the opinion of Secretary Roberts this plan is bound to fail.

If the passage is somewhat unusual but only moderately controversial, it may be placed in quotation marks to be read but not spoken by the announcer. Examples:

Doctor Kincaid warned that church members must "wake up and speak up" if they expect to have their influence felt.

He says that the hailstones were "as big as billiard balls -- some of them the size of baseballs."

The report declares that "Midland's schoolteachers are paid less than its street cleaners."

Added emphasis may properly be given to quotation marks by using dashes to indicate a pause, thus:

As they marched, the pickets chanted -- "No contract -- no work!"

A shout went up from the crowd -- "We want Miller" -- but the speedy halfback stayed out of the game.

The youth told Judge Lutz -- "Sure, I was going to hit him. So what?"

In none of the foregoing citations are the quotation marks put into words. Some passages, however, are so dramatic, so important or so laden with controversial dynamite that no question should be left in the listener's mind as to who says what. In this event quotation marks must be spoken. Because their use is foreign to normal conversation many newsrooms bar the words "quote" and "unquote" or "end quote." Some, but fewer, taboo even "we quote" and "end of quotation." This author agrees that "quote" and "unquote" are stiff and awkward but does believe that quotation marks must be made vocal on occasion, despite their jarring effect on the listener's ear. Therefore MIDT copy rules permit "quote," "we quote," or "and we quote" at the start of a passage; and to end a passage, "end of quotation." Examples:

Then came the announcement which broke up the meeting. Pollock declared -- and we quote -- "The vote was crooked and I will not be a party to it" -- end of quotation.

The prosecutor asserted that -- quote -- "This defendant -- a man utterly without honor -- is a disgrace to the community" -- end of quotation.

At midnight Carlson conceded. In a telegram to Sanders he declared -- we quote -- "Congratulations on your victory. I wish you a successful administration" -- end of quotation.

It is not always necessary to tack on "end of quotation," but if exactness is desired it is better to do so, especially if a full pause is

not indicated at the end of the quotation by a new sentence and paragraph.

Admittedly the voicing of quotation marks can be overdone. Wooden-like repetition of "we quote" and "end of quotation" for garden-variety statements merely annoys the listener. There are other effective ways to specify your source and avoid monotony, for example with phrases like these:

His exact words were . . .
 These are his words . . .
 The text says in part . . .
 With this dramatic phrase . . .
 He denounced what he called . . .
 As he put it . . .
 To quote him . . .
 You have just heard the words of . . .
 That completes the text of . . .

Such qualifying phrases help to tell the listener who or what is being quoted, thus making sure that an opinionated statement is not credited to the newscast itself.

If the quoted matter extends beyond a paragraph or two, it is necessary to interject phrases like "The Governor went on to say," "Boland's statement continues" and "Still quoting from the Governor's speech." Thus the listener just tuning in catches on quickly.

Single quotation marks may be used in radio copy to indicate a quotation within a quotation, thus:

The witness said -- and we quote -- "I distinctly heard him say -- 'Don't be late' -- and then I heard the door close" -- end of quotation.

It is better, of course, to avoid complicated quotes within quotes if possible.

Trouble With Numerals. The proper use of numerals and figures in copy poses a troublesome problem for radio writers,

editors and, especially, composers of copy rules. The problem arises from two facts: (1) Numbers are easier to comprehend when seen than when heard. (2) Figures require more speaking time than words that use equivalent space on paper.

Numbers are complex and human memories short. It is difficult for a primitive man to count beyond the number of fingers and toes that he can see or show at one time. In ordinary conversation we seldom cite any but the simplest numbers. Beyond one hundred we speak in approximate numbers such as "thousands of them" and "about a million." If we wish to keep an address or a date, we "write it down." Some of us cannot remember a telephone number during the time it takes to look from the directory page to the dial. To retain numbers we constantly need a visual crutch.

Visual crutches are supplied on the printed page. An interested reader can stop, reread and ponder figures. A long string of figures in itself gives a size impression to the eye, and figures frequently are accompanied by illustrations.

No such visual aids assist the announcer. Even a platform speaker may indicate a number by holding up one or more fingers, or illustrate height, width or length with his hands. The radio listener with no eye assistance hears complex numbers and sets of numbers with irritation. There isn't time to absorb them. They zip by until he is completely confused.

Therefore, these are guides to good radio news writing: Use numbers sparingly. Never use an intricate number if you can avoid it. Use a round number in preference to an exact one.

Specific and factual writing, of course, calls for numbers which may not be avoided. And that brings us to the second part of our problem—how to reconcile figures, which are condensed words; with script arithmetic.

In special kinds of scripts or portions of scripts containing long lists of figures—market quotations, stock reports, sports results and the like—special rules and space-time adjustments are required. However, in general news scripts the rules hereinafter set forth are adequate to prevent numbers from materially affecting script arithmetic.

Rules on Numbers and Figures. All rules on numbers and figures are a compromise to best serve the writer, the announcer and the listener without too much maladjustment of the space-time balance. These of MIDD are no exception.

Two-Word Rule. The general rule is to spell out all numbers containing one or two words when pronounced naturally. Count each part of a hyphenated word as one full word. Use figures for all numbers containing three words or more. Examples:

RIGHT	WRONG
five years old	5 years old
Seventh Avenue	7th Avenue
odds of three-to-two	odds of 3-to-2
Sixth Army Corps	6th Army Corps
a seventy-six-year-old man	a 76-year-old man
one hundred years ago	100 years ago
six thousand men	6,000 men
eighty million light-years	80 million light-years
	80,000,000 light-years
125 horses	one hundred and twenty-five horses
	one hundred twenty-five horses
135th Street	One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street
726 sailors	seven hundred and twenty-six sailors
6,872 tickets	six thousand, eight hundred and seventy-two tickets
population of 7,322,901	population of seven million, three hundred and twenty-two thousand, nine hundred and one

Fractions. Spell out all fractions. Examples:

RIGHT	WRONG
one half of the amount	1/2 of the amount
two-thirds finished	2/3rds finished
twenty-nine one-hundredths	29/100ths
five and one-half years old	5 1/2 years old
	five and 1/2 years old

Percentages. Spell out all percentages, using the word "point" for period. The symbol % is barred. Examples:

RIGHT	WRONG
two point seven per cent	2.7 per cent
	2 point 7 per cent
twenty-seven point two nine per cent	27.29 per cent

Dollars and Cents. The symbol ¢ is barred. Use the symbol \$ in front of and only in front of figures as specified under the two-word rule. Examples:

RIGHT	WRONG
ten cents	10¢
	10 cents
	\$0.10
seventy-five dollars	\$75
\$110	one hundred and ten dollars
\$4,910	four thousand, nine hundred and ten dollars
one thousand dollars	\$1,000
\$1,700,000	one million, seven hundred thousand dollars
two billion dollars	\$2,000,000,000

Dates. Use figures for years. For a date of the month use the abbreviation of the ordinal number. Examples:

RIGHT	WRONG
1900	nineteen hundred
1947	nineteen hundred and forty-seven
October 4 th	October 4
	October fourth

An exception is to spell out "first." Use 2nd instead of 2d and 3rd instead of 3d.

Time. The following are correct:

12:01 A-M
2:10 P-M

seven o'clock
 half-past five
 the meeting starts at 6:35 tonight
 at 8:30 this morning

The only place where a colon is permitted in MIDT copy is in the time.

Start of Sentence. Spell out all numerals which start a sentence.

The start-of-sentence rule is required to prevent mixups between figures in a sentence and figures in a period copy slug. Typed close together, such figures are likely to be read as a unit.

You Can Simplify Statistics. One of the skills of the radio writer is to reduce intricate and complicated matter to simple word pictures. He often can apply this simplification process to numerals. Ask yourself: Is it necessary for me to be exact to the last digit? Is there a way to say it without this mouth-filling figure? Is a second and third figure necessary?

If you are reporting a baseball score, the age of a person or the date on a calendar no simplification is required or countenanced. Such small and familiar numbers are easily understood. But certainly you give the listener a more definite impression with "a little less than half" than with "forty-eight point twenty-three per cent." Here are more examples:

POOR	BETTER
\$518,902	<i>Slightly more than \$500,000</i>
Receives a one hundred per cent boost in salary	<i>Salary is doubled</i>
With votes from 1,361 out of 2,683 precincts counted	<i>With one-half of the votes counted</i>
Reduced from \$1.57 to seventy-five cents a pound	<i>Cut in half</i>

If you do have a number which you wish to impress specifically on the mind of your listeners one method is repetition, thus: Here's

an important announcement from Red Cross Headquarters. If you need an ambulance call Tremont five-four-three. We repeat that telephone number. Tremont five-four-three.

SIOP TALK

1. Do you believe the Spanish system of punctuation should be adopted in English prose?
2. Write down and discuss several sentences in which a dash is proper in radio copy but improper in prose for silent reading.
3. Do you think that the words employed to make quotation marks vocal are used in radio news too much, too little, or just about often enough?
4. List as many different phrases as possible to specify the sources of news statements.
5. What is the difference between cardinal and ordinal numbers?

CHAPTER XII

How To Help the Announcer

Newscasts As a Partnership. Sounds indicated on paper make no noise without a voice to speak them, and the work of the radio news writer-editor is incomplete until an announcer begins to read aloud into a microphone. A good announcer can make a poor script sound better and a good writer-editor enables an announcer to distinguish himself before the air audience. It is the perennial partnership between playwright and actor in a new form.

Playwrights sometimes regard actors as mere vocal marionettes, and many performers think of the dramatic author as a hack whose uninspired prose is given wings by the actor's fine delivery. But unless a man is both player and playwright—a Molière or a Noel Coward—he must be content to speak another's lines or to write for the man with a more resonant voice.

So it is in radio news except in circumstances when the newscaster writes, edits and delivers his own script. At MIDT the writer-editor and announcer are different persons but they cooperate closely.

The smoother the partnership between them, the less friction and jealousy, the more finished is the end product as it reaches the listener. Writer-editor and announcer are playing on the same team—one the pitcher, the other the catcher. Few games are won if the man on the mound and the man behind the plate are at odds.

Many an argument between announcer and script writer could

be avoided if each knew more about the other's job. A writer increases his professional value to the station by learning something of speech, diction and voice projection. Conversely, a microphone man who can judge news values and knows the problems of the writer-editor is more likely to succeed as a news announcer.

At MIDT the announcer and the writer of a script are seldom in direct contact except for a short time before a newscast goes on the air. The press service radio writer has no contact whatever with the man who delivers his product. Yet their operations must mesh together.

As treated in this book, radio journalism consists primarily of writing and editing rather than speaking. However, just as a newspaper reporter or copyreader needs to know something of typography, so the scriptman uses his typewriter and pencil more intelligently if he understands the work of the announcer—the printing press of the air. Specifically, the writer-editor needs to know how he can aid in the delivery of their mutual product.

Spacing and Hyphenating. Occasionally a script writer wishes to identify a word so clearly that there is no possible way for it to be mistaken for another word or to inform the announcer that a word is to be spelled out letter by letter for the benefit of the listener. In composition for the silent reader devices for these purposes are unnecessary. The reader can reread the word and see the spelling for himself.

To call the attention of the announcer to an unusual, dangerous or key word not to be confused with a similar word, an MIDT rule instructs the writer and teletype operator to leave single spaces between the letters, thus causing the stressed word to stand out in bold relief.

It is compulsory to space out only one word—"not." In typing and transmission, as well as reading aloud, "not" is often dropped out or mistaken for "now" in such phrases as "it is not a fact" and "he will not speak." In reporting a court pleading or a verdict MIDT writers are advised to avoid entirely the dangerous phrase "not guilty" and substitute "innocent."

**A RADIO NEWS
SPELL-OUT ALPHABET**

A for ADAM

N for NATHAN

B for BEN

O for OSCAR

C for CHARLES

P for PETER

D for DANIEL

Q for QUEEN

E for EDWARD

R for ROBERT

F for FRANK

S for SAM

G for GEORGE

T for THOMAS

H for HENRY

U for UNION

I for ISAAC

V for VICTOR

J for JOHN

W for WILLIAM

K for KATE

X for X-RAY

L for LUCY

Y for YOUNG

M for MARY

Z for ZEBRA

List of Words for Spelling on the Air.

To indicate to the announcer that he is to pronounce the individual letters of "alphabetical" words, MIDT uses one or more hyphens, thus:

B-C	M-D	C-I-O	D-A-R	C-O-D	Y-M-C-A
I-Q	F-M	G-O-P	F-C-C	U-S-S	S-P-C-A
A-P	U-S	M-G-M	G-A-R	R-F-D	W-C-T-U
A-M	A-D	I-O-U	I-N-S	T-V-A	A-W-O-L
P-M	D-C	A-M-A	T-N-T	S-O-S	B-P-O-E

In order to have an unusual word, such as a proper noun, spelled aloud on the air the writer states the intention in the script proper by explaining ". . . spelled S-M-Y-T-I-E" or "That is spelled - U-S-K-U-D-A-R." The single hyphen used for alphabetical purposes is not to be confused with the two-hyphen dash.

On the rare occasions when accurate spelling is even more vital to the listener, writers may use a radio spell-out alphabet illustrating each letter, thus: "A" as in Adam, "B" as in Ben and so on.

MIDT rules on spacing for emphasis and hyphenating for spelling out, while consistent with each other, are by no means universally used in radio news copy. In some newsrooms spaces are used to indicate spell-outs, and hyphens only as in formal prose. The writer must acquaint himself with the practices in his own office.

Abbreviations Are Abolished. Except only the alphabetical words and certain numerals, all words in MIDT copy must be written out in full. Abbreviations are not allowed. Examples follow:

WRONG	RIGHT	WRONG	RIGHT
Dr.	Doctor	Cen.	Centralia
Prof.	Professor	Dept.	Department
Lieut.	Lieutenant	Jr.	Junior
Col.	Colonel	Mt.	Mount
St.	Street	Rev.	Reverend
Blvd.	Boulevard	Ft.	Fort
Ave.	Avenue	Jan.	January
Fri.	Friday	Co.	Company

WRONG	RIGHT	WRONG	RIGHT
Supt.	Superintendent	Corp.	Corporation
Calif.	California	Gov.	Governor
Xmas	Christmas	Sen.	Senator
i.e.	that is	Rep.	Representative

Abbreviations which may be permitted in print can become abracadabra to announcers in sentences like this one: "He is employed by the Consol. Mfg. Co. in Portland, Me., but formerly worked for the C. & E. I. R. R. in Ill." Abbreviations, like figures, affect script arithmetic. This is a secondary reason for keeping them out of radio news copy.

Admittedly a rule barring abbreviations in any form causes awkwardness with a few words such as "Mrs.," which must be written "Missus," not "Mistress." "Mr." is not used by MIDT in routine copy. When required, it is written "Mister." However, the annoyance of writing out these familiar short-cut words is less serious than the use and abuse of abbreviations.

First Names and Titles. For the sake of the listener as well as the announcer, script writers should make every effort to shorten and simplify names and titles.

It is unnecessary to use the first names of well-known public figures such as President Wrightman, Governor Boland and Mayor Nelson. Omit middle names and initials unless they are clearly necessary to identification. It is worth a few minutes' mental effort to find a way to avoid using a long and unfamiliar name. It is sometimes wiser to say simply "the foreign minister of Venezuela" or "a village near Shanghai" rather than puzzle announcer and listener with a mouth-filling proper noun.

Shorten titles to a minimum length consistent with clarity and accuracy. Examples:

POOR

*Lemuel Barton, director of the
Division of Markets of the State
Department of Agriculture . . .*

BETTER

Lemuel Barton, state farm official . . .

POOR

Anne Clark, executive secretary of the Fine Arts Committee of the Midland Civic Society . . .

Chief Frederick Lydel of the Utopia Life Insurance Company's Bureau of Statistics . . .

BETTER

Anne Clark, speaking for the Midland Civic Society . . .

Frederick Lydel, actuary for the Utopia Life Insurance Company . . .

If a title is short or can be shortened, it usually is good practice to place it before the name, thus: Judge Mather, State Treasurer Handley, Fire Chief Chambers. If a three- or four-word title cannot be avoided, then "Doctor McClure, City Superintendent of Schools" is better than "City Superintendent of Schools McClure."

Two other MIDT practices designed to aid the announcer may be mentioned here. One is the use of quotation marks around the names and titles of inanimate objects, the nicknames of persons and the names of animals. Another is general capitalization of all proper nouns, parts of titles, names of companies, organizations and thoroughfares.

Quotation marks are placed before and after the titles of ships, books, plays, songs, paintings, magazines, newspapers and the like. They also are used for such nicknames as "Teddy," "Butch" and "Shorty" and for such animal names as "Dobbin," "Spot" and "Tabby." These quotation marks serve a double purpose. They tend to discourage inaccurate use of names by the writer except when he deliberately cites a nickname or invents a descriptive name. Also they warn the announcer to pronounce them with care.

Since the size and shape of letters are apparent only to the eye—not to the ear—capitalization is of less moment in radio news script than in other kinds of copy. In radio dramatic copy it is a fairly general practice to type in capital letters everything that is not to be said on the air such as stage directions and sound and music cues; words to be spoken by actors are in small and capital letters. In the capitalization of first letters in words a newspaper may follow "up style" or "down style," meaning that it favors a generous use of "upper case" or capital letters or leans to "lower case" or small letters.

At MIDT the bulk of copy is transmitted through teletypes without small letters. Hence, capitals or a lack of them is meaningless to the announcer. However, some MIDT scripts are read from typewritten copy. Consistency in capitalization also speeds up copyreading and teletyping. MIDT therefore chooses and follows the "up style," calling for capitalization of doubtful words.

Letters That Whistle and Rasp. The job of the writer-editor is to prepare a news script which can be grasped easily by busy Americans. He asks himself as he writes, "Is it 'listenable'?" It is "listenable" only if it is easily read aloud, for radio writing is speaking writing. Too many writers intent on subject matter in a script brush aside bothersome concern over the problems of the delivery man. As a result many a "literary" script sounds slipshod, whereas one seemingly more ordinary goes over the air flawlessly because the writer remembered how to help the announcer.

We already have learned something about aural values in sentences, phrases and words. Letters and combinations of letters also influence reading aloud, some so much so that they create sounds known in the studio as "good radio" and "bad radio." Let us examine a few of the latter.

A trained announcer tries to "swallow" the letter "s" in order to keep it from whistling through the microphone. "Sh," "z," "ch" and "j" tend to produce a similar effect. In phonetics this hissing sound is known as sibilance. It is exaggerated in tongue twisters like "She sells sea shells by the seashore," "She is seriously sewing shirts" and Sister Susie sees the sassy sailors sliding down the slippery ship's side." Sibilance shows up in radio news writing in such apparently innocent combinations as "especially susceptible," "analyst's statistics" and words like these:

assiduously
dissonance
sumptuously
resilience
spaciousness

reminiscences
bourgeoisie
chastisement
specification
idiosyncrasy

"BAD RADIO" SOUNDS IN
OLD-TIME TONGUE TWISTERS

(The Sibilant S)

I saw Esau saw six slim, sleek and
slender saplings.

(The Rasping R)

Around the rough and rugged rocks
the ragged rascal ran.

(The Popping P)

If **Peter Piper** picked a **peck** of **pickled**
peppers, how many **pickled peppers**
did **Peter Piper** pick?

(The Bursting B)

A **big black beetle** **bit** a **big brown**
bear and made the **bear** **bleed** **blood**.

Alliterations To Avoid.

Similarly, too many "r" sounds may produce a rasping "br-r-r." The "r" is difficult to articulate because the lips are not used in forming it. Babies use their lips, causing them to say "a wed wattle" for "a red rattle." Cacophony or discord is caused by repeated "r's." Again, the warning to the writer is to avoid a series of these letters in combination.

"B's" and "p's" in such words as "bombast" and "perpendicular" blast into the microphone with explosive force. Phrases containing several "p" words like "parallel posts and pillars" tend to pop like popcorn, and a series of "b" words such as "bake a big batch of biscuits" seem to burst like rubber balloons. The bursting sound sometimes turns "probably" into "probalee," "probly" or "prally."

"F" and "th" combinations such as "fifth" and "twelfth" sometimes make numerals hard to understand. Also watch the long "a" sound in "eight" or "eighth." It is better to write "one million" than "a million" lest the latter be heard as "eight million."

Simplicity Insures Clarity. It is axiomatic that what is easy to understand is also easy to say. Therefore the news writer who is thinking and writing with conversational clarity is not likely to trip up a trained announcer.

A word with too many syllables to pronounce easily like "inimitable" or too technical like "sulfathiazole" is also too fancy to be easily understood. Although the newspapers have taught the public to read fairly difficult scientific words, the radio listener regards as double-talk a sentence like "a recessive allele influences the phenotype only when the genotype is homozygous." Such words are not included in the reading and recognition vocabulary of the average person, nor are these:

<i>syllabication</i>	<i>lingually</i>
<i>proboscis</i>	<i>unctuous</i>
<i>effulgence</i>	<i>machination</i>
<i>supernumerary</i>	<i>pronunciamento</i>
<i>physiognomy</i>	<i>quiescent</i>
<i>aesthetic</i>	<i>mellifluous</i>
<i>ascetic</i>	<i>ubiquitous</i>
<i>apothegm</i>	<i>verisimilitude</i>

In some radio newsrooms it is customary for the writer to indicate the pronunciation of difficult or unusual words by semiphonetic spelling or by placing the phonetic form in parentheses after the word. These practices are not used by MIDT on the ground that the labor involved does not pay proportionate dividends. Phonetic spelling delays the writer and is seldom welcomed by an announcer who usually prefers to look up his own pronunciations.

Fluffs and Bloops. If a writer deliberately wishes to use alliteration, rhyme, double-talk, basic English or some other word combination as a gag or purely for the sake of the vocal sound effects, he is wise to tip off the announcer in advance so that he will not stumble into it unexpectedly.

Despite all precautions, fluffs, also referred to in radio jargon as bloops, phumps and flubs, will happen in the best of studios. A historic fluff occurred in the introduction of former President Herbert Hoover as "Hoobert Heever." Such a transposition of letters, sounds and syllables is termed metathesis but is more often called a "spoonerism" after a clergyman who reputedly told his congregation, "Let us now sing the hymn 'Kinquring Congs Their Titles Take!'" On another occasion legend has it that the good warden asked, "Is this pie occupewed?" Comic books are full of similar fluffs such as that of the flustered bridegroom who asked the minister, "Is it kistomary to cuss the bride?"

Just why an announcer sometimes will turn "butterfly" into "flutterby," "battered muffins" into "muttered buffins," "Now eat your cereal, children" into "Now eat your children, cereal" or "the sun is bright" into "the brun is sight" is a mystery. An announcer may take a dozen pronunciation hurdles in stride and then, several lines later, make a fluff. Perhaps it is the letdown after the mental tightening up. Fluffs frequently come in series. If an announcer is thrown, he often stumbles several times before arising.

Thus a writer can make the announcer's job more difficult without either of them being aware of the cause. A jawbreaker sentence may not prove an obstacle when read, but may cause the announcer

to fluff further on in the script as his eyes travel ahead of his speaking voice.

Try It for Yourself. It has been pointed out that the best radio writers speak a script silently or mumble it to themselves as they type it. Move your lips with your fingers and you will avoid "bad radio" words as well as bad literary style.

Listen to your script on the air. In busy newsrooms an experienced hand may fall into the habit of finishing off one show and starting another without taking the time to listen. He is missing a chance to improve. If the announcer hesitates or fluffs, ask yourself, "Was that his fault or mine?" Check your script as you listen and often you can detect your own weaknesses.

For the writer there is no better way to test the readability of his script than to face the microphone and find out how it feels to deliver it. Radio news editors have improved their writers noticeably by putting them on the air with their own written words. The student can improve in the same way by reading his script aloud to the class with or without a microphone.

It is by no means unusual—indeed it is common—for an announcer to discover that he can write and for a writer to discover that he can deliver news before the microphone. On every hand are found men and women who do both and do them well.

SHOP TALK

1. Who contributes more to the newscast—the writer or the announcer? Why?
2. Find in newspapers lengthy titles inappropriate for radio copy, and discuss them.
3. Discuss the comparative merits of the "up style" and "down style" in capitalization.
4. Can you recite any tongue twisters which would be hard to read over the air? Point out the difficult sounds.
5. List several "s," "r," "b" and "p" words found in newspaper copy which would be "bad radio."

CHAPTER XIII

The Man at the Microphone

The Job of the Announcer. Although radio is in its infancy when compared to medicine, law, the stage, the press and many other older branches of human activity, the time has long since passed when it meant something definite to say, "I'm going into radio" or "I'm in the radio business." Radio is a vast and complex industry employing thousands of business executives, engineers, advertising salesmen, musicians and actors. Specialization swiftly followed commercialization and today the "radio" man or woman may well be an expert who is devoting a lifetime to specific and limited duties.

Such a specialist is the radio *announcer* as distinguished from the radio news *writer-editor* or the combination news writer-editor-announcer or *newscaster*. An all-round announcer is a highly trained man. His education includes study in speech, dramatics and music. His talents overlap those of the public speaker, actor and conductor.

In a small station the announcer, like the writer-editor, may find himself doing a myriad of chores. He may man controls during rehearsals, handle publicity, solicit accounts, keep the log, watch the transmitter, operate sound effects, select musical bridges, act as platter jockey on the transcription turntables, handle mail or sweep out the studios. If he advances to a network or metropolitan station the announcer finds the standards high and competition keen. Many major stations refuse even to test a man who cannot show two years of work with another station. To qualify for an audition

he requires a knowledge of music and an ability to pronounce foreign words fluently. Further, he must have a good baritone voice and the knack of ad libbing or impromptu talking.

The average announcer is an actor—not an editor—at heart. Often he has had stage experience or played in radio dramas. His voice is his fortune. He enjoys a word with a wallop, a line with a lift, a script that sings. This thespian instinct gives life to a newscast, but play acting does not insure a well-spoken script. Let us watch the experienced announcer as he prepares and presents the handiwork of the writer-editor.

Studying the Script. After a script is written and edited, the writer still may aid the announcer by calling his attention to any peculiarities. Warn him if there is a catch phrase. If you happen to know offhand the pronunciation of a difficult name, you can save him the trouble of looking it up in a reference book.

Once the final corrections and suggestions are made by the author, responsibility for the show passes to the announcer. If he is wise he allows himself sufficient time to study it—at least to scan it—before he goes on the air.

It is an unfortunate fact that some announcers wait until the last minute, rush into the newsroom, tear off or grab up a news script, catapult themselves into the studio and begin reading with hardly a preliminary glance. It is this practice that leads to such embarrassing and hair-raising experiences as reading the last part of a story first or, worse, losing a page of copy altogether. Oddly enough, the same announcer may study commercial continuities carefully, and patiently go through one to three rehearsals of radio plays.

The conscientious announcer checks his news script thoughtfully, trying to understand each item. He may read the passages aloud, marking pauses with straight or diagonal lines and underlining or otherwise marking words to be accented, phrases to be stressed, pauses to be observed. Such scoring leads to self-assurance, sure interpretation and satisfied listeners.

Announcers have various postures in the studio. Some prefer

EXAMPLES OF SCRIPT MARKS BY ANNOUNCERS

THE MAN AT THE MICROPHONE IS GIVEN EVERY POSSIBLE AID TO DELIVERY WHICH CAN BE TRANSMITTED BY THE TYPEWRITER OR TELETYPE. SOME ANNOUNCERS PREFER TO READ FROM CLEAN, UNMARKED SCRIPT. OTHERS DEVELOP INDIVIDUAL PEN OR PENCIL MARKS TO ASSIST THE EYE AS IT READS.

A SINGLE VERTICAL BAR | MAY BE USED | TO INDICATE A PAUSE || WHILE A LONGER PAUSE, | OR BREATHING SPACE, | CAN BE SHOWN BY A DOUBLE BAR, || AS AT THE END OF A MUSICAL COMPOSITION. || THE BARS CAN BE CROSSED | AT TOP AND BOTTOM. ||

A VARIATION OF THE VERTICAL BAR / IS THE SLANTED LINE, / RESEMBLING A VIRGULE. / THIS MARK, / LIKE THE VERTICAL BAR, / MAY BE DOUBLED TO SHOW A LONGER PAUSE. // STILL ANOTHER VARIATION IS A LIGHT VIRGULE / FOR A SHORT PAUSE, // AND A HEAVY ONE FOR THE BREATHING POINT. //

A WORD OR PHRASE REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION MAY BE STRESSED BY UNDERSCORING. AN UNDERLINE ALSO MAY BE USED TO INDICATE A SYLLABLE TO BE ACCENTED. MORE ELABORATE FORMS OF UNDERSCORING ARE RECTANGULAR OR ELLIPTICAL MARKS TO SHOW SPECIAL TREATMENT OF A WORD.

Pen or Pencil Aids to the Eye.

to stand, but a majority sit relaxed before the microphone, leaning forward from the hips with elbows on the table, perhaps holding a pencil in one hand.

The script itself is scissored into items, typewriter-sized sheets containing several items, or odd-length sheets cut to include groups of items. These the announcer turns over like cards from a deck or the leaves of a book. Or while his eyes inspect the upcoming page or glance at the clock, he may drop the completed pages on the floor one by one so there is no chance of rereading. He is careful not to rustle the paper as he handles it.

Sight Reading and Speed. The instrumentalist in an orchestra follows the conductor's baton and simultaneously reads his music. This double vision is possible because the eyes can see things outside the circle of focus. The radio news announcer reads entire sentences and sometimes full paragraphs at one time.

Sight reading enables him to keep his timing and pacing effective, to pause when necessary, to catch errors and adjust himself to difficult phrases and unfamiliar names. Here and there he may even insert a minor word, or use a contraction such as "we'll" and "we're," thereby smoothing out the script of an inexperienced writer.

Good speaking depends upon ease and controlled speed in reading. Both can be acquired. Reading clinics have increased the speed of students from rates as low as 150 words to as high as 350 words a minute, changing word-by-word readers into phrase-by-phrase readers and finally into paragraph-by-paragraph readers.

A veteran announcer actually may be able to read three hundred or 350 words a minute, but talk at this express-train velocity would be meaningless to a majority of listeners. As explained in "Timepieces and Typewriters," MIDT announcers adjust to an average speed of 175 words a minute.

Proper pausing as well as timing is part of the technique of reading with "readiness," that is, reading without betrayal of the fact that you are using a manuscript. Pauses may not be omitted or delivery becomes as maddening as a metronome, nor may they be

too regular. Even warmups and transitions do not give the listener a chance to shift his thoughts at the right time if the announcer babbles past punctuation marks—the stop signals of the script.

Study and sight reading are the sources of these essentials to effective news delivery—right timing and proper pausing.

The Friendly Voice Does It. At the risk of redundancy this author has pointed out—and will emphasize again and again—that the writer-editor projects himself into private homes as a guest and as such must express himself like one.

However, it is the announcer whose voice actually enters the living room and it must be friendly. It is he who extends a verbal hand across the air waves. If you hold out your hand and smile, it is possible to insult a man without offense. However, the announcer cannot smile or gesture for the benefit of his invisible audience. He relies upon his voice alone to make and keep himself welcome.

The voice is a marvelous instrument and when used by an expert it can project delicate shades of meaning that only the most accomplished writers can put on paper. A trained announcer speaks as though he were talking to one person in a friendly, conversational tone. He is sincere, calm, persuasive and honest, for the radio is a good lie detector.

The range of the voice is indicated by a list of common faults compiled by a voice teacher. It should not be colorless, breathless, uncertain, mumbling, cloying, apologetic, strained, lazy, grating, high-pitched, hesitant, whining, rasping, weak, patronizing, rumbling, nasal, dejected, babyish, falsetto, cracked, demanding, angry, arrogant.

Naturalness, perhaps, best expresses the rarest and most sought-after quality in radio diction. Affectation of any kind is far more noticeable on the air than in conversation. Microphones are more acute than the human ear. They readily pick up signs of nervousness. One radio authority says that the personality, character and life experiences of an individual, as well as his state of health, may be ascertained by listening to him over the air.

Home listeners are quick to detect affectation. After hearing the

first few words of a newscast they decide with amazing unanimity that they like or do not like the announcer. They are more disposed to like him if his delivery is simple, direct and well modulated.

Accent and Pronunciation. The world is a place of many accents, but none are used by radio news announcers in this country except those heard in popular American speech. Broadly speaking, there are three sectional speech styles in the United States—those of the East, of the South and of the West. Announcers for an individual station tend to use the dialect of the region in which it is located. So-called general American—the dialect of the Middle West, with a slightly broader “a” and the “r” somewhat lightened—is favored for nation-wide network broadcasting.

Proper pronunciation is vital. Slovenly articulation is inexcusable even in the smallest station; and an announcer, like a writer-editor, must make constant use of the dictionary, including the gazetteer and biographical sections. Networks have their own excellent handbooks of pronunciation. Station MIIT uses Webster’s dictionary, which gives the English forms of foreign words. MIIT rules call for use of the Anglicized version even though the announcer knows the native pronunciation. If Webster’s gives only one pronunciation for a word, that one is used, whether foreign or English.

Should an all but unpronounceable word appear in a script, the announcer should check it back with the writer and ask for a substitute, perhaps suggest one himself. Or if use of the word is mandatory, he must pronounce it as best he can and then if he wishes spell it out for the benefit of the audience.

Tricks With the Voice. How often have you heard the remark, “He said it like he meant it” or “Maybe she *did* say that, but it didn’t sound that way”? In conversation the impression often is made not by what you say but how you say it. So it is in radio speaking.

Voice versatility ranges so far that whole glossaries are compiled to describe the various shades of speech. One of the terms im-

HOW MEANING IS ALTERED BY SHIFT IN EMPHASIS

1. This expert denounced the new speed law as the cause of accidents. (This particular expert and not another.)

2. This expert denounced the new speed law as the cause of accidents. (He just says he's an expert.)

3. This expert denounced the new speed law as the cause of accidents. (He didn't merely mention it, he condemned it.)

4. This expert denounced the new speed law as the cause of accidents. (Not the old one, the new one.)

5. This expert denounced the new speed law as the cause of accidents. (Not the railroad crossing law, the speed law.)

6. This expert denounced the new speed law as the cause of accidents. (It's not just a proposal; it's a law you must obey.)

7. This expert denounced the new speed law as the cause of accidents. (Although it's supposed to stop them.)

8. This expert denounced the new speed law as the cause of accidents. (It's not merely a nuisance, but it has serious results.)

The Voice Controls the Sentence.

portant in news announcing is inflection, or the slide of the voice up or down the scale. A rising inflection expresses a question, doubt, hesitation or suspense. Falling inflection communicates confidence, firmness and decision. A double inflection is a movement both up and down, often within a single word, to express an idea plus a feeling about the idea.

Try the conversational words "Yes," "No," "All right," "Hello" and "Good-by," first with an upward slide and then with a downward slide. The question mark and exclamation point indicate obvious up and down inflections, but only the voice can convey such subtle meanings as these:

"Oh." meaning "I see."

"Oh?" meaning "So-o? I doubt it."

"Oh?" meaning "I've heard that before."

"Oh!" meaning "I'm frightened."

"Oh! Oh!" meaning "That's news to me."

With inflections the radio announcer can explain, expound, warn, belittle or exaggerate. While he cannot like the players in *Hamlet* "suit the action to the word," he can suit the inflection to the word and make it mean almost what he wishes.

Advertising pays; and just as the script editor has much to learn from radio commercials, so may the announcer profit from the inflections in messages that sell. Notice how the voice descends to a doubtful pitch as the air salesman admits, "Of course, there's nothing like homemade cake and pie." That is said *pianissimo*. Then his voice rises to a crescendo to clinch the sale as he continues, "But for genuine goodness and finest quality Tastic Pastries are tops!"

The news announcer, too, has a commodity to sell over the air. That commodity is news and he uses inflection to show its genuineness and quality. Like the commercial announcer he must imply with his voice a consuming interest in his subject. He may never sound dull or bored.

Force and Emphasis. Force in speech may be defined as energy applied by the voice to words and phrases. It is akin to inflection

and synonymous with stress and emphasis. Here the type shows how stressing a single word alters the meaning of a conversational sentence:

Are you walking *home*?—*Make up your mind.*
 Are you walking *home*?—*I mean you, not the others.*
 Are you walking *home*?—*Or riding?*
 Are you walking *home*?—*And to no other place?*

Different words may be emphasized in the same sentence without changing the effect. Consider the shades of irony to be obtained by stressing first one and then another of the words of Mark Antony's "Brutus is an honorable man" in Act III of *Julius Caesar*.

Note in the last line of the following item how the announcer controls meaning by word emphasis:

Manville was asked for a comment on the assertion by Senator Lee that the committee will act favorably. Manville replied -- and we quote -- "That's what he said."

What did Manville imply? Emphasis on *that's* indicates that Lee spoke of *that* rather than something else that had just been suggested. Emphasis on *what* stresses the *what*, rather than the *how* of the statement. Emphasis on *he* clearly implies disbelief. And finally, emphasis on *said* hints that Lee did not believe the statement himself.

The Music of Speech. Speech and song are allied in that there is a definite relationship between rhythmic patterns in sound and in human emotions. Enjoyment of rhythm is the source of appreciation of music, dancing and poetry. A few familiar passages illustrate rhythm in speech:

So it's home again, and home again, America for me!
 Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll!
 Alone, alone, all, all alone.
 Quoth the raven, "Nevermore!"
 It was "Din! Din! Din!"
 "The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

The orator and debater, the instructor and preacher, the lawyer and actor—all consciously or unconsciously seek the emotional responses to rhythmic impulses conveyed through the ear. To a limited extent the news announcer, too, shares in this search for emotional response but without resorting to affectation of any kind.

Now and then a writer will quote or create a poetic phrase or the announcer will slip into rhythm. However, both are craftsmen before they are artists and they do not write and speak for exhibition. The techniques of writing and speaking are not an end in themselves but a means to an end—an unobtrusive means. The end sought in the writing and announcing of news is clear communication.

Clarity on the air comes from naturalness marked by the absence of any profound emotional overtones. The best voice is that used in the daily communication of factual matters, in asking casual questions or giving casual commands, explanations and descriptions, always with more consideration for meaning than for vocal gymnastics.

SHOP TALK

1. Which kind of experience is most valuable to a general radio announcer—that of an actor, a musician or a newspaper reporter?
2. Must a news announcer completely understand the subject matter of his copy in order to read it properly?
3. What advantages does the announcer have in comparison to the platform speaker? What disadvantages?
4. Should announcers speak in sectional dialects? Or should all adopt the so-called general American accent?
5. Do you think it better to use the English or the native pronunciations of foreign words?

CHAPTER XIV

Analyzing the Audience

The Unseen Audience. The radio audience like the wind is invisible. You can't see it, pick it up in your hands or assemble it. Yet it is real and by induction it can be weighed, measured and analyzed just as the direction and velocity of the wind are determined.

Too little attention, perhaps, is given to audience study by radio news handlers. They are inclined to regard it as a problem for survey and rating experts, time salesmen and sponsors. Almost any office boy in a radio commercial department knows that you don't advertise cigars for men at 9 A.M., perfume for women at 6 P.M. or corn flakes for youngsters at midnight. But there are scriptmen with only a hazy notion about when to favor news of cooking, baseball or a new arrival at the zoo. Such writer-editors are blind marksmen firing shotguns wildly with hope but without assurance of hitting a target.

News is a commodity. The newscast is a product processed, packaged and purveyed for profit. Somebody pays to put newscasts on the air and the sponsor gets a scant return if they fail in audience appeal.

To argue that news programs in this regard are something separate and apart from music, comedy or variety—that people listen to news as an obligation and to other programs for fun—is foolhardy. The American listener selects his news for the same reasons that guide his choice of other fare on the radio menu.

With his thumb on the dial he can and does exercise that choice by a twist of the wrist. He will not be bored. He will be rid of a newscast that does not interest him. To be popular, news programs must satisfy a majority of the listeners day after day.

What is known about the listeners that is of value to writers and editors? And how can that knowledge be applied in a practical way? This chapter and the next will deal with these two questions.

Time and Place of Listening. The radio audience is the largest available to any medium of communication. Probably there is no normal adult in America to whom radio is unknown. Virtually the entire grown-up population listens with some degree of regularity, and a greater proportion of this audience listens to news than to any other kind of program.

Broadly speaking, if the news is of sufficient moment and urgency—for example the bombing of Pearl Harbor—the audience comprises almost all persons beyond eight or ten years of age with unimpaired hearing.

We can divide and subdivide the radio audience in many ways—by sex, age, income, education, occupation and place of residence—in a statistical effort to locate an “average” listener. Inevitably we should end where we start—with a Mr., Mrs. or Miss John or Jane Public—a composite and meaningless nobody.

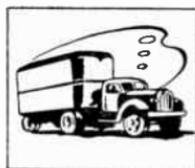
Radio is at one and the same time a mass and an intensely personal medium. While the audience as a whole is a collection of people, it also consists of particular persons oblivious to group association and unaware of the reactions of one another. The concern of the listener is limited largely to himself and to the man at the microphone. The delivery of radio news is a person-to-person affair. However many hundreds, thousands or millions may be listening to a speaker, he talks to each one intimately as an individual and not as to an assembly. Ideas move directly from the speaker to a single person.

The program maker cannot interest each of these individuals all the time, for they cannot be made into a single psychological unit, but he can come closer to reaching some all the time and all some

THE PRINCIPAL PLACES WHERE PEOPLE LISTEN



HOMES



TRUCKS



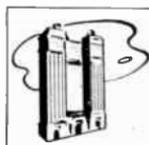
**PASSENGER
AUTOMOBILES**



TAXICABS



RESTAURANTS



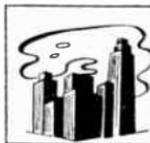
HOTELS



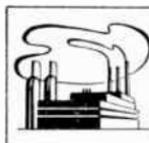
CLUBS



OUTDOORS



OFFICES



FACTORIES



TRAINS



SHIPS

Locations of Receiving Sets.

of the time if he can divide the composite nobody into groups of somebodies.

The key to the breakdown is the *place* of listening. From place we can deduce the make-up of the listening audience at a given *time*. Thus, from where we can determine who listens when and thus identify our "average" listener by the hour, day and date.

Where do people listen? What are the places in which receiving sets are located? They can be found, of course, wherever people are at leisure, at work, at play or in transit. There are radio receiving sets in offices, factories, hotels, restaurants, bars and clubs; at beaches, parks and picnic places; on trains, planes, ships and pleasure boats. Substantial numbers are located in motor vehicles—taxicabs, trucks and especially passenger automobiles. But all of these are only a comparative few. The overwhelming majority of radios are located in dwellings. Nine out of ten American homes are equipped with at least one loudspeaker. Perhaps one-third of them have more than one set.

We are now at the very heart of the problem. We may conclude safely that the American home, in particular the living room, is radio's main auditorium—the favorite place of listening—and that members of the family, except babies, are typical listeners. The average family, excluding infants, consists of three persons, but the personnel in a household may range from one to a score.

The habitual activities of family members are governed by more or less measured and regular units of time. They go to or return from school and work, perform household duties, go to bed and get up, and have breakfast, lunch and dinner at about the same time everywhere. Over week ends and on holidays they follow well-established customs. There are exceptions. Just as all radios are not in homes, all people do not eat, labor and sleep simultaneously. But the nonconformists are in the minority. For practical purposes we can rely upon the common domestic cycle.

Occupations While Listening. We pause here to comment on one audience aspect peculiar to radio and related to the place and time of listening. This is the ability to do something else concurrently.

You cannot read a newspaper, magazine or book effectively and divide your attention. Nor can you watch a movie, stage play, baseball game or circus and occupy yourself otherwise. You have a little more liberty while listening to a speaker in a church or an auditorium or to music in a concert hall, but the person who whispers, rustles a program, opens or closes a handbag with a snap attracts frowns and "Sh-h's."

Seventy-five per cent of the listeners to the radio do something else at the same time. Among the manifold home activities while listening are shaving, dressing, dusting, ironing, sewing, knitting, cooking and eating, not to speak of more distracting doings such as trying to read, study, talk, play cards, amuse the baby or play with the dog.

Statistics showing that radios are on in most homes from two to five hours a day also make it obvious that some of the time the loudspeaker is unheeded and unheard. Even when listeners seriously settle down to concentrate on a program they are subject to interruptions such as are caused by the ringing of the telephone and doorbell. It requires more concentration, of course, for news than for music, but these facts may well be pondered by news writers and editors as well as program directors.

The newscast is in constant competition with diversions. On the encouraging side is the fact that what a person is doing interests him. Newsmen sometimes can and do capitalize on this point in human nature. For example, news about food is zestful at mealtime—about toast and coffee, say, at 7 A.M. Only an unimaginative script editor would ignore a Santa Claus story on Christmas Eve.

The alert news selector not only thinks of the calendar, looks at the clock and projects himself mentally into the living room as he arranges a show, but he also reflects upon what his listeners are likely to be doing during the program.

Time Rule Exceptions. Before we consult the clock and calendar to identify groups of listeners by time, let us first note and freely recognize several special radio situations.

Network news programs broadcast simultaneously in several time

zones may not be tied quite so closely to the clock as those of individual stations. This also is true of news sent by press service radio bureaus to stations in more than one time zone. Daylight-saving laws also make for lack of uniformity. However, the four main divisions of the twenty-four-hour day—morning, afternoon, night and early morning—roughly correspond across the nation.

Within each community the customary domestic cycle in a small percentage of homes is set forward, set backward or completely reversed. Leisure and sleeping hours may be turned topsy-turvy by labor on night or lobster shifts. Even during the lobster shift “dead” hours from midnight to 7 A.M. there are enough listeners awake to warrant profitable round-the-clock operation by many radio stations.

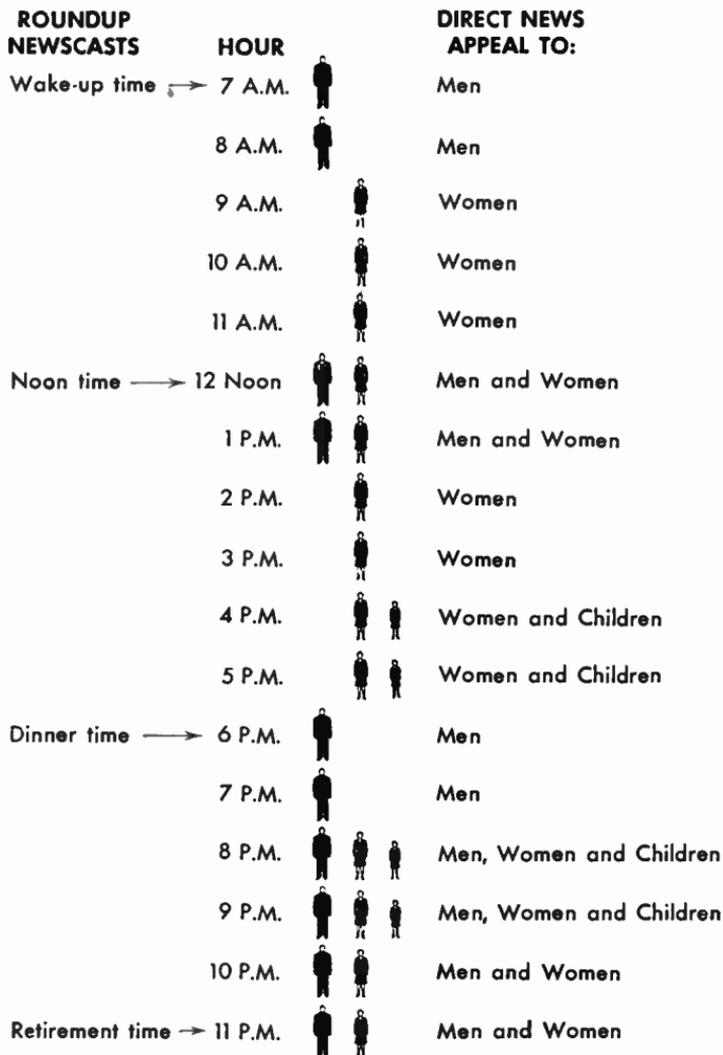
The early morning audience consists mostly of late stay-uppers and early risers. From midnight until 4 A.M. the typical listeners are party-goers and theater patrons and personnel. From 4 to 7 A.M. the audience picks up in steadily increasing waves—early risers, including milk and newspaper deliverymen and their wives, farmers and finally commuters. Some radios are on in open-all-night places such as factories, restaurants, police stations and hospitals, but the heaviest listening, as at other times, is in the home.

We must recognize, too, that the domestic cycle differs somewhat in rural and urban communities, especially the sleeping period. Rural folk retire and rise earlier than city dwellers.

Divisions of Radio Time. Excluding the “dead” hours, the broadcasting day generally is divided into daytime before 6 P.M. and nighttime after 6 P.M. Audiences are lightest in daytime, heaviest at nighttime.

For a further breakdown we turn to weekday activities in a typical home. During the wake-up period the entire family is at home together, but not at leisure except perhaps at breakfast. By 8 to 8:30 A.M. the husband and other employed adults, if any, are off to work and the children are starting to school. Thereafter until noon the home radio belongs to the wife and mother. A good many husbands and youngsters are home for lunch. During the afternoon,

A GENERAL RADIO AUDIENCE ANALYSIS



Listener Classification by the Clock.

until 4 or 5 P.M., the woman again has the radio. Then the children home from school are at it from 4 to 6 P.M. Near 6 P.M. the husband is home and likely to be listening with several others around dinnertime. From 7 until 10 P.M. the entire family is awake, at leisure and listening, often in a group. This is the heaviest audience concentration of the day. After 10 P.M. the children are in bed and the older folk have the radio until they, too, retire between 10:30 and midnight.

It now is obvious that the number, sex, age and, to a certain extent, the occupational and social interests of the listeners can be determined and classified by looking at the clock.

We may generalize by saying that all family members are at home receivers at wake-up-breakfast time, women until noon, all members at lunchtime, women during the afternoon, children in the late afternoon, men at dinnertime, all members during the evening, men and women in the late evening.

This time analysis throws out a flood of light to guide the planners of all kinds of radio programs. What about news programs in particular? When do particular family members want to hear what kind of newscasts? Special factors now need attention.

News is news to the individual listener until he or she has heard it. During the sleeping period news accumulates. Happenings at 1 A.M. are fresh to those who retired at 11 P.M. People away from home at work or school hear little if any news at those places. So news accumulates for them during the late morning and in the afternoon. During the evening if at home, family members are relaxed, listening to nonnews programs for entertainment, visiting and doing other things, missing much of the news. Many are out to movies, parties and so on.

So the peak news interest periods are: (1) wake-up time; (2) noontime; (3) dinnertime; and (4) retirement time. All across the country radio stations concentrate news at these places on the clock, especially at (1) and (3). *MIDT*, a typical station, schedules its fifteen-minute newscasts at 8 A.M., 12 noon, 6 P.M. and 11 P.M., with five-minute shows at other hours during the broadcast day.

The fifteen-minute presentations naturally are called *roundup* shows because they round up the news occurring while the bulk of the audience is not listening to radio news programs.

The MIDT Audience Guide. Under a glass top on the desks of MIDT writer-editors lie copies of a guide giving them thumbnail information about the make-up of the audience at each hour for which a show is prepared. Such guides have been compiled in various forms for handy reference in newsrooms. The MIDT guide follows:

7 A.M. This is the wake-up show. Most Midlanders rub their eyes and hop or squirm out of bed at 7 A.M. Many turn off the alarm and turn on the radio as they yawn. This is their first newscast of the day. Everything that has happened since 10:30 the night before is brand-new to them. What they want is a quick catch-up of the while-I-slept developments.

Be cheerful, bright and lively. Visualize the scene. Special topics suggest themselves: alarm clock, toothpaste, clean shirts, razor blades, oatmeal and corn flakes, toast and coffee, commuters' trains. Favor the man but remember the working girl too. Now it's the breadwinners who count. Mother is too busy frying eggs and dressing herself and the youngsters for attentive listening. Any news about jobs, the boss, or getting to work is important. Is it a holiday or half holiday? When will the workers be home tonight? Expand the weather report. Tell them what to wear and carry.

8 A.M.—15 Minutes. This is the peak listening hour of the morning. Thousands of white-collar workers are ready to leave for work. It is your last chance to reach the late commuters. This is the only newscast that many of these people will hear until evening.

Round up and review all the major news developments since 10:30 last night. Give your listeners the full news but not too many long or involved stories. People are nervous, anxious to be off to work. They'll snap you off if you dawdle. Keep stories to the point and moving fast. Give time signals frequently.

Everybody now is intensely interested in the weather and what

to wear or take to work—light or heavy suits, vest or no vest, rubbers, overshoes, muffler, gloves, topcoat, overcoat or fur coat, beret or straw hat. Tell them.

9 A.M. The home rush is over. Father and the kids and the older sons and daughters have gone to work or school. The audience is eighty-five per cent women doing housework. Mother rests between rounds of bedmaking, dishwashing, dusting, mopping or baby feeding. The radio is hers alone.

Women at this hour are interested in vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, can openers, potato peelers, linen closets, the cost of maid service. They are preparing to go marketing. Use anything you have on grocery stores, vegetable markets, food prices, nutrition and meal planning. For department-store shoppers give any news you have on unusual show windows, parades or downtown events they may witness.

10 A.M. Women still are monopolizing the home radios. Again eighty-five per cent of the listeners are women, mostly in the thirty to forty-five age group. They are adult homemakers. Many of them are just back from the neighborhood markets. Some still are preparing lists to stock pantry shelves.

In shaping up the show, look for angles that affect the family from the woman's point of view. Household budgets and the cost of living have a place here. Begin to bring in, as strong secondary news, data about beauty, dressmaking and fashions as well as escapist stories of love, marriage and domestic difficulties.

11 A.M. Adult women at home still make up the bulk of your listeners, but early lunchers are edging in. Avoid anything to offend sensitive mealtime listeners.

A brief spot news roundup of late morning developments is called for. But keep the wordage down on individual stories. Hollywood and Broadway chitchat is good. Romance, too.

The weather again becomes important as women make their after-lunch plans. They want to know how to dress themselves during afternoon shopping and visiting jaunts.

~~12 Noon—15 Minutes.~~—This should be the best balanced of the midday news programs. The lunchtime audience is big and there is a fairly even distribution of men, women and children.

Spot news developments are breaking fast at this hour, so you not only must round up all the news which a large part of your audience has missed since the before-work morning roundups, but you must keep right on your toes to patch in last-minute prenoon news. If you miss it now, your audience may hear it elsewhere before nightfall.

This is another mealtime show. The bulk of your copy should be general news as late as possible, rounded out with any features that might appeal to a mixed audience and, of course, wound up with a smile.

1 P.M. Once more the majority of listeners are women—about sixty per cent—but don't completely ignore the males lingering after lunch. As at noon, this hour calls for a brief roundup of morning news plus fast-breaking spot items, especially late developments of the lead items broadcast during the past two hours.

But more time now is available for secondary news topics of special interest to women. Draw again on Broadway, Hollywood, fashions, beauty and the like.

2 P.M. Here are the ladies again—with more leisure to listen. Most of the heavy housework is done. Mrs. Midland is sitting at home with her sewing, keeping an eye on the baby, or she's visiting a neighbor next door or perhaps talking with several women at a club meeting or bridge party.

Now is the time when these adult women, chiefly housewives, are ready and eager to hear about romance, husbands, marriage, how to be slim, beautiful, fashionable, alluring. They can take a lot of this and a minimum of pontificating about world affairs.

3 P.M. The bulk of the audience continues to be adult women at home. Your problem is to use more of the 2 P.M. variety of news without repeating too much from the previous show.

A few younger children are listening now, so if you have an ani-

mal story, say, or any news-pegged feature that will not drive away adult women and yet please the kids, now's the time for it.

4 P.M. Housewives at home still are the big group, but new categories demand catering. One, not too large, is adults gathering for cocktails and tea. Returning school children are beginning to be a substantial part of your audience. Mothers and youngsters will appreciate a good hero yarn or a story about a pet. News of school, child care and health is good if kept simple. Hold down all kinds of technical and involved news.

5 P.M. This is the peak listening hour for children. Try to include at least one or two items especially for them. However, two groups of women comprise your main adult audience. Housewives still are on hand, but the first wave of returning breadwinners is reaching home. The earliest arrivals are white-collar workers, many of them young women, who punched out at 4 or 4:30 P.M. Some have not heard a radio since they left for work early this morning. A brief summary of the high lights of the day's major news is mandatory.

6 P.M.—15 Minutes. The whole family is at home now, but this is the first chance that all the male breadwinners have had to catch up on the news of the entire day. They are the ones to satisfy. More women and children are listening now than at any other time of the day, but they are secondary.

Father is taking it easy while he waits for dinner or after finishing dinner. Tell him the biggest news of the day, including plenty of public affairs, politics and sports. Use every important afternoon sports score you have, plus the dope. And of course anything about the community or neighborhood makes fine family conversation.

This is the peak listening hour of the day. Make your script rich and well rounded.

7 P.M. Continue to direct your appeal to the masculine head of the household. Now, if ever, Dad is the dial dictator. Remember too that many workers, mostly male, came home late, so you need another brief roundup of the top news of the day.

~~Strongly favor straight and feature news with adult male appeal.~~
Use more sports, together with details about the atom-powered automobile, the jet plane, the political outlook in Washington, the latest trade treaty and how it will affect business. Bits about gardening and golf are apropos.

8 P.M. It's the family hour. Both by sex and by age your audience is now one of the best balanced of the day. You have fulfilled your obligation to the homecoming workers. Now give mother and the young people something, too.

Competition from the popular network nonnews shows is heavy. Try for universal interest—features that will appeal to the entire family listening at home and at leisure. Movies, bus lines, the family money and family car, adventure, thrill-and-chill stories, business and school affairs all have their places in this script.

9 P.M. You're playing now to a more mature family group at home. The younger children are in or going to bed. High-school and college students are up with both parents.

Compress the general spot news and emphasize interpretation. What does the news mean to the average citizen? Try to avoid rehashing the early evening roundup stories by using fresh approaches and conclusions. Dig into the lengthy stuff for new color to dress up the old frameworks.

This is another tough hour to compete with the entertainment shows for listener interest. It calls for the best script shaping, the cleverest and most imaginative writing.

10 P.M. Your adult audience still is with you, although beginning to yawn a little. It's no time for rehashes. Continue to get background and interpretation into the stories of the day's news events. Search for new twists. Clarify and humanize the stories already known in essential outline. Juggle features from show to show to lend variety. Capitalize every bit of fresh news of evening events which you have. Keep up to the minute on night speeches and sports.

11 P.M.—15 Minutes. This is the last good-night roundup. Adults are at home and preparing for bed. Many have just returned from the movies, dinners, visits to friends. Some of those who remained at home have been occupied with conversation, reading and other radio programs. They are switching in for a last helping of news before going to bed.

Skim swiftly the high spots of the day's major news. Give complete news on the events of the evening. Anything that happened since 6 P.M. deserves full treatment.

A good-night smile is mandatory. No matter how grim the news has been, send the listeners to bed with a chuckle and a feeling that perhaps all is right with the world despite evidence to the contrary. Now is the time to make them forget their woes. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Let's smile, relax and sleep.

Audience Over the Week End. Five days of the week—the weekdays—the domestic cycle and hence the radio audience cycle remains the same. On Saturday and Sunday it changes, but again the calendar, clock and a knowledge of ordinary home life enables the news writer-editor to identify his audiences.

Saturday morning resembles any other morning so far as the woman of the house is concerned. However, the children are at home and because of the five-day week more and more husbands are on hand. Most of the children are at play, the husbands gardening, golfing or otherwise occupied with home chores, amusements and hobbies. Listening falls to a low ebb Saturday afternoon. The smaller audiences are mixed and news needs to be of universal interest and well balanced. Saturday night may be treated like any other night, but keep in mind that more listeners are having a good time and are apt to be less serious-minded.

Saturday fortunately brings a freshet of news about the things that people gather to see and do—sports in particular—and this news is of interest to them as well as to the stay-at-homes.

Sunday morning the entire family rises late, about 8 A.M. in Midland, and relaxes for a while. The hustle and bustle of getting away to work and school are missing. Listening is heavy and news needs

to be of a mixed variety, emphasizing religion in the earlier part of the morning and recreation—places to go, things to see—as the afternoon is planned.

On Sunday some people go to church and Sunday school, baseball games or picnics. Some golf, fish, sail, ride, skate, ski. Some work in the garden, cut grass, chop wood or clean the car. Some have big Sunday dinners, visit and are visited. News of all these doings is interesting to the people who do them.

Traveling and crowds produce some major spot news—enough to keep newscasts lively during the gap between the arrival of the Sunday morning and the early editions of the Monday morning newspapers. There are few Sunday afternoon papers and the radio has the field rather to itself.

On holidays the family behaves much as it does on Sundays, but these festival times are special occasions calling for special news selection and treatment. They will be discussed in the next chapter.

SHOP TALK

1. Specify several commercial products advertised on the air. Try to associate them with the listening audience at the broadcast hours.
2. Discuss the radio listening habits of family members in your own household. Do they vary in any way from the usual?
3. What can you do effectively while listening to a radio news program?
4. In what time zone do you live? Does this interfere with convenient listening to network radio programs?
5. Why are the hours after 6 P.M. considered more valuable to sponsors than those before 6 P.M.?

CHAPTER XV

Fitting News to the Family

Primary News First. News is distinguished from other entries on the radio bill of fare by one peculiar quality. Under certain circumstances it can become of such widespread public interest that listeners demand and get it to the exclusion of all else.

This is made evident by the fact that programs of any other nature from time to time are interrupted and on occasion omitted to make way for the reporting of a major news event. It is unthinkable that a new comedy gag would be allowed, like a news bulletin, to break into, say, a serial drama or that a new opera would be permitted to disrupt a station log without notice and for hours at a time, like news of a local catastrophe or a national emergency.

Sooner or later in any radio newsroom, you can hear expressions like "let it ride," "shoot the works," "play it off the boards" and "go to town." Such shop slang means: This news is big. Virtually everyone wants to hear it. Right now nothing else matters. Give the story fast and in full.

In apposition to the fact that almost everybody wants to hear some news of concern to all is the equally realistic truth that only certain groups of listeners want to hear certain other news of particular concern to them. News then may be divided into two classifications: (1) news of interest to the bulk of the audience, and (2) news of special interest to a part of the audience. We may describe the first type as major or *primary* news and the second type as minor or *secondary* news.

In preceding chapters we have shown that audiences can be divided on the basis of family activity and listening groups identified by clock and calendar. In this chapter we shall discuss news which appeals to each member of the family unit. All such special group news is secondary. It is necessary to keep this essential point in mind lest we lose perspective as we proceed.

Finding and fashioning news to fit groups of people is an art which every writer-editor needs to learn early and to apply often in his career. But he may not forget that primary news comes first in the straight newscast. Ability to distinguish between primary news, for broadcast regardless of date, day and hour, and secondary news to be favored at selected times, is basic to the sound selection and presentation of general radio news.

General and Topical Newscasts. If we attempted to single out one news topic with appeal to everybody all the time, we probably would settle on the weather. So vital is the weather forecast to persons of every sex, age and occupation that it is published on page one of nearly every daily newspaper and broadcast frequently by every radio station. It is a fixed part of each MIDT newscast.

Nevertheless, even the weather does not have universal appeal. Interest slackens when meteorological conditions are normal. Even extraordinary weather may be of no concern to a person confined to a hospital bed or to one who heard or read the latest forecast just a short while ago.

Let us now suggest a presidential election as a topic of universal news interest. Is not almost every adult in the nation interested in who will be the next president? Yes, almost everyone. Little other news is broadcast as the votes are tallied. But the intense mass interest is of short duration. After the winner is known the news appeal flickers and dies out.

It is unsafe, then, to say that any news is of interest to *all* the audience *all* the time. What is primary news, therefore, depends on a variable topic-time relationship to be determined only by a specific set of circumstances.

Just as primary news may recede to the secondary status, so spe-

cial interest topics which customarily are secondary news may climb into the primary classification. For example, sports news is of special interest to men and is usually secondary news. But it becomes primary when a heavyweight boxing title or a World Series championship is at stake. Food, romance and child care usually are secondary news topics with feminine appeal; but a meat famine, the love affair of a king, or the kidnaping of a baby from prominent parents surges forward as primary news.

Ordinarily in the straight regular newscast there is at least one and more often a cluster of primary news stories. This primary news needs to be selected, placed in the script, written and edited as the nucleus of the newscast. Once it is dealt with, the script makers may well turn their attention to the secondary news with special group appeal.

There are many kinds of frankly topical news and seminews programs tailored to special audience groups. Typical of these topical newscasts are programs devoted to aviation, beauty, books, business, farming, fashions, food, gardening, health, motoring, films, photography, religion, science and sports. Suggestive titles include:

News of the Airways
Beauty News and Hints
Book News and Views
The Business Review
The Farm Front
In Fashion Today
Food for the Family
The Man With the Hoe

Health Is Wealth
The Home Helpmate
Along the Highway
Film Folk
The Camera Hour
Religion in the News
News of Science
Speaking About Sports

This list of topical programs, bearing relationship to the news but shading away from it into other program forms, could be extended indefinitely. It is a rich field for specialists with news backgrounds.

Topical newscasts merit the current attention of writer-editors because they indicate how to reach the special groups of listeners with what they like to hear. Sponsors of topical newscasts, like other radio advertisers, have reliable sales barometers to measure

their success in appealing to groups of customers with particular interests.

Dividing Up the Family. Our discussion of topical newscasts hints at the complexities confronting a radio newsman seeking to orient special audiences and to winnow out the secondary news subjects which engage their attention.

Age groups, for example, range from children five to twelve upward through teen-agers variously described as juveniles and adolescents to young, middle-aged and older adults. Occupational interests are still more diversified. Even such large groups as housewives, businessmen, office employes, factory workers and farmers may be broken down into innumerable subgroups. Similar problems are raised by division according to education, income, race, national origin and so on.

Statistical studies of these radio audience breakdowns constantly are being made and are available to anyone in the industry. But the practical-minded writer-editor needs some broader and simpler guide to the selection of secondary news by clock and calendar. So once again we turn to the family. In it we find father and mother, son and daughter, sometimes in-laws, grandparents and domestic servants. Each one of these household members falls into one of three general groups—men, women or children.

Women are the most distinct and easily identified news-listening group because they spend more time in the home than men or children. They dominate the audience for the long daytime period. Men assume strong importance during the comparatively short time they are at home, especially in the early evening when they control the radio dial. As a news-listening audience children are a comparatively minor group concentrated in the late afternoon. This weekday relationship is altered somewhat over week ends and on holidays.

For convenience we shall discuss first the main news interests of the three groups, then those of men, of women and of children separately, and finally the interests of the family as a whole on special occasions.

TYPICAL TOPICS OF SECONDARY NEWS

FOR WOMEN



BEAUTY



ROMANCE



FOOD



HOLLYWOOD



HEALTH



SOCIETY

FOR MEN



POLITICS



SPORTS



PUBLIC AFFAIRS



SCIENCE



INDUSTRY



ADVENTURE

FOR CHILDREN



ANIMALS



SCHOOL



OUTDOOR LIFE



GAMES



TRAVEL



HOBBIES

Appeals to Special Audiences.

The Worlds We Live In. In the chapter "What's News—and Why?" we found the ten elements of news—immediacy, proximity, consequence, prominence, drama, oddity, conflict, sex, emotions and progress—by an examination of news itself in relation to listeners. To determine the special interests in secondary news we shall reverse the procedure and examine the likes and dislikes of listeners in relation to news.

Each human being—man, woman or child—lives in two worlds. One is a world of reality—of practical things concerning himself and his own activities. The other is a world of fantasy—of doings by others outside the realm of his own day-by-day experience, in which he participates vicariously by projecting himself into them through imagination.

It has been said that a man likes to talk first about himself and next about his job. This truism also applies to women and children. A woman's own personality and her work—chiefly as a homemaker—are of absorbing interest to her. A child likewise instinctively reacts to anything touching himself or his own real experiences at home, at school or at play. Himself—or herself—and his "job," meaning his own activities including leisure-time pursuits and his direct contacts with others, are matters of the most vital interest in the world of reality.

But the second world of fantasy is no less interesting. An adult male from time to time envisions himself as the protagonist in conflict, and assumes the role of the hero he hears or reads about. A woman projects herself into the drama of romance and dreams. Most often of all a child mentally enters the land of make-believe.

News itself—especially the secondary news for special groups of men, women or children—may be found in one of the two worlds of human interest. Patently all news is factual and therefore real in origin. But from the point of view of the listener much of it is in the second world—the world of modern Galahads, Cinderellas and Pinocchios, the proxies whose adventures and experiences we all share in our own fancies.

Personal News for Women. Perhaps the deepest desire of a woman is to be wanted, sought after and cherished. Therefore, how

to make herself more attractive is a question of never-ending interest to her. It is uppermost in her world of reality.

She searches eternally for the secrets of youthful beauty and never loses hope and faith that the search somehow will be successful. Her sex spends millions of dollars annually on colorful clothing and cosmetics. She consumes innumerable hours in beauty parlors and before her own mirror, and in reading and listening to advice on adornment.

Closely allied to this responsive attention to beauty is a woman's interest in health and etiquette. How to reduce or gain weight, how to attain vim and vitality, how to behave in company are favorite feminine questions—as beauty, medical and charm experts can testify. As a result, perhaps, modern American women are as personable as money and time can make them.

Translating this concern of a woman with her own personality into terms of news we may conclude that she likes to hear news linked to beauty, fashions and styles, health and good manners. When choosing stories for feminine appeal the radio news editor should keep in mind such specific matters as lipsticks, perfumes, face powder, hairdos and hairpins, millinery, fur coats, hosiery, footwear and jewelry, exercising and dieting, and the correct thing at parties, weddings, while dining, dancing or playing bridge, and in correspondence.

How to be personable, of course, is a question which goes beyond mere material matters. It involves the more subtle subject of charm in contact with others and shades into the world of fantasy.

News for Wife and Mother. Within the world of reality a woman, next to herself, is concerned with her routine day-by-day responsibilities and duties. In this field, the makers of straight newscasts must limit themselves largely to news for homemakers.

There are plenty of women with occupational interests outside the home. Millions are stenographers, secretaries, factory workers, teachers and nurses, but in comparison to housewives these are highly specialized and minority roles. By and large, the feminine radio listener must be considered a wife and mother in the home.

Food and meals unquestionably take top position in the field of

homemaking radio news for women. Men and children, too, are interested in food, which frequently becomes of primary news value; but the purchase of food, the preparation and serving of meals, are largely a feminine function.

Surveys show that women get more information about buying food from the radio than from any other medium. Such subjects as patterns and needlework require more visual illustration. Timely news of foods in season, of the grocery, meat shop, vegetable market and bakery deserves good billing especially in the morning market-basket hours. News of nutrition, menus, cooking and kitchen work generally finds favor in the before-noon period on weekdays.

Home furnishings and decoration, household time-saving and labor-saving methods, devices and gadgets, child feeding and care, how to get small fry to do home chores or go to sleep—these are among other occupational concerns of homemakers and as such have supplemental radio news value.

Not to be overlooked by newsmen is a fact well known to advertisers. Women do eighty-five per cent of the buying. Except for their vices, men spend little money. Women are the distributors of wealth, the shoppers for the nation. Clearly they welcome news of merchandise, stores and shops of every kind, and the commodities they sell—especially the prices. There is a great deal of non-advertising news that ties directly to women's purses. It's good any hour of the day.

In the afternoon the homemaker has more leisure time to consider less pressing activities such as sewing, knitting and mending, flower gardening, planning family celebrations and entertaining. Her thoughts also turn to visiting with friends and neighbors, bridge, books, and participation in clubs and organizations.

Here is a pointer for newsmen to remember. One of the false conclusions to which the novice is prone to jump is that women are chiefly concerned with the doings of other members of their sex in cultural and community work, civic crusades, politics, business, aviation and sports. He soon discovers that news made by women and news for women are wholly different. The average woman cares but

little about other women in masculine fields of activity. Her interests lie nearer to herself, in her own two worlds of reality and imagination.

The Realm of Romance. The life of the average housewife, although it may be normal and happy, tends to become monotonous. For hours she may be alone in the home. The radio helps to keep her company, to relieve the monotony by providing a pathway of escape from humdrum into the world of fantasy, peopled by characters with whom she can identify herself through sympathetic imagination.

The importance of this appeal is spotlighted by the success of daytime serial dramas or soap operas and talk-music programs featuring the romance theme. The radio newsman has much to learn by pondering the pull of these presentations.

Mrs. Average Housewife is very unlikely ever to be a queen or duchess with Prince Charmings at her feet, an irresistible Lorelei of the screen commuting to and from Reno. Neither is she likely to become a Miss America, a Newport debutante or one of the ten best-dressed women of the world. But she is eager, indeed she craves to hear about such exciting and glamorous folk. Without the slightest difficulty, as long as they are plausible rather than mawkish or overemotional, she puts herself in their shoes and lives their lives in imagination.

The writer-editor can take advantage of this interest in a second world by delivering to his predominantly feminine audience news of Hollywood and society, and above all, news of romance, stories of love, marriage and divorce involving real news characters. Whether she is maid, wife or widow, happily or unhappily married, a woman is never weary of romance.

Another pointer for newsmen is that a woman, much more than a man, tends to humanize the news. She is impatient with abstract and academic ideas. She inclines always to symbolize them in terms of living persons, whether real and close to home or remote and romantic, with whom she can identify herself or persons she knows. In addition to love, marriage and divorce, she is interested in birth,

adoption, illness and death. To women, ~~human beings are far more~~ interesting than logic and inanimate things and processes.

News for Menfolk. News interests of men and women, as distinguished from each other, are an outgrowth of their special and specific places in the family and tribal or community groups.

Because he is the stronger, man is the aggressor and hence the leader. He is the primitive hunter and the warrior, the chief of the tribe. In modern life he is the provider, the one who ranges abroad from the home to strive among strangers for a livelihood. In outside activities he is the statesman, politician, executive, builder, craftsman, manager, preacher, lawyer, doctor and, generally speaking, the doer.

In his world of reality a man, like a woman, is interested in himself and his job. But he is less introspective than a woman. His thoughts and interests tend more to turn outward toward his relationship with others while away from home. His home concerns are largely those of the entire family group and his own home hobbies and leisure-time pursuits. You can interest him in family trips and excursions, in income taxes and budgets, in automobiles, his workshop and garden, his golfing and fishing, and to some extent in his movie-going and bridge-playing. But these merge into the broader all-family interests.

To find the news of special man-interest we go beyond the home zone into public affairs and current events. In the early evening you can sit a man down to a dinner of roast beef, potatoes and apple pie or to a radio menu of international diplomacy, foreign politics, Washington reports, news of domestic and local public affairs, and he will relish it. He will readily listen, whereas a woman will yawn, to news of management and labor problems, railroads, airway, mine and ship operations, commodity and stock markets, banks and business, real estate transactions and the like. A man can take a lot of this orthodox news and thoroughly enjoy it.

In his world of fantasy a man inevitably identifies himself with a fighter, courageous in defense, valorous in attack, rolling dice with destiny and overcoming odds with wit and daring. There is always

in his proxy world suspense, action, adventure and, above everything else, battle for mastery.

Most distinctive of man-news is sports which is heavily laden with the conflict element. A man may be a thousand miles away from Yankee Stadium or may never have seen a professional baseball game in his life, but he still follows the national pastime as well as other sports avidly and eagerly. Unconsciously he imagines himself the star hurler, the home-run hitter, the canny quarterback, the broken-field runner, the knockout victor, the winning jockey.

News of warfare, exploration and science also combines the interest of men in their own proclivities with that in the successes of persons they imagine themselves to be. While love interest is definitely to be subordinated in secondary news for a male audience, even the most hard-boiled man can stand a little restrained romance provided it is not too stickily sentimental.

News for Children. The male-female news distinction diminishes as we go down the age scale from twenty to ten. Below ten interest in general news virtually disappears.

Radio is the third principal activity of children, only school and outdoor play outranking it. It has become a tremendously versatile tool in the education as well as the entertainment of children. Topical newscasts for children emphasizing hobbies, invention, vocational guidance, travel, camping, adventure stories from real life and thrilling episodes from world history are becoming more and more frequent.

However, the straight newscast is aimed principally at adults and cannot devote much time to juvenile interests without offending the grownups. Nevertheless, writer-editors often can slant some secondary news to children during the 4 to 6 P.M. weekday period.

Stories about animals are liked by children of both sexes and all ages. Save your zoo or pet story if possible for the late afternoon. Children also like news of outdoor life, school, things that they and other children make and do. Boys, like men, are interested in sports of every variety.

Two warnings are in order with regard to news directed to children. You must not "write down" to children. Their heroes and heroines usually are superior adults to be admired and idolized. They want no moralizing, preaching or namby-pamby talk. Second, in news for children, do not exalt criminals or wrongdoers of any kind, encourage disrespect for elders, condone cruelty, greed and selfishness, or laud recklessness as the healthy spirit of adventure.

The Calendar As News. The calendar is not only a register of days, weeks and months but also a record of numerous events which occur at regular intervals and are in themselves newsworthy. These calendar stories may be classified as seasonal, anniversary and holiday.

The activities of mankind to a large extent are affected and modified by the coming and going of the seasons—spring, summer, autumn and winter. Each season brings its own type of news.

The anniversaries of notable events in the past make these occurrences news for the present if the connection between them is shown. Birthdays of famous men and women, anniversaries of battles and other events in military, political, economic or social history provide news pegs for historical parallels.

Holidays, the offspring of history, come at regular times on the calendar and they strongly influence the family cycle, especially those which suspend normal occupations and those of religious significance.

Home is where the heart is on holidays, and in adjusting his secondary news to his special audience the writer-editor must think in terms of the family at home on these occasions. His task is to enter the spirit as well as the activities of the date and hour. For example, on Easter morning, Christmas Eve or Thanksgiving Day, all members of the family group are likely to be at home with the radio as sort of extra guest as they talk of, think about and follow the traditional customs of the day.

The strongest possible secondary news on such occasions—news which often becomes primary—is that concerning the occasion itself; for, at this particular place on the calendar and clock, it is of

DAYS WHICH SHOW THE CALENDAR AS NEWS

<p>JANUARY</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p>① 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>8 9 10 11 12 ⑬ 14</p> <p>15 16 17 18 19 20 21</p> <p>22 23 24 25 26 27 28</p> <p>29 30 31</p>	<p>FEBRUARY</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p> 1 ② 3 4</p> <p>5 6 7 8 9 10 11</p> <p>⑫ 13 ⑭ 15 16 17 18</p> <p>19 20 21 ⑳ 23 24 25</p> <p>26 27 28</p>	<p>MARCH</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p> 1 2 3 4</p> <p>5 6 7 8 9 10 11</p> <p>12 13 14 15 16 ⑰ 18</p> <p>19 20 ⑱ 22 23 24 25</p> <p>26 27 28 29 30 31</p>
<p>APRIL</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p> ①</p> <p>2 3 4 5 6 7 8</p> <p>9 10 11 12 13 14 15</p> <p>16 17 18 19 20 21 22</p> <p>23 24 25 26 27 28 29</p> <p>30</p>	<p>MAY</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p>① 2 3 4 5 6</p> <p>7 8 9 10 11 12 13</p> <p>⑭ 15 16 17 18 19 20</p> <p>21 22 23 24 25 26 27</p> <p>28 29 ⑳ 31</p>	<p>JUNE</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p> 1 2 3</p> <p>4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> <p>11 12 13 ⑭ 15 16 17</p> <p>18 19 20 ⑰ 22 23 24</p> <p>25 26 27 28 29 30</p>
<p>JULY</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p> 1</p> <p>2 3 ④ 5 6 7 8</p> <p>9 10 11 12 13 14 15</p> <p>16 17 18 19 20 21 22</p> <p>23 24 25 26 27 28 29</p> <p>30 31</p>	<p>AUGUST</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p> 1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>6 7 8 9 10 11 12</p> <p>13 14 15 16 17 18 19</p> <p>20 21 22 23 24 25 26</p> <p>27 28 29 30 31</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p> 1 2</p> <p>3 ④ 5 6 7 8 9</p> <p>10 11 12 13 14 15 16</p> <p>17 18 19 20 21 22 ⑳</p> <p>24 25 26 27 28 29 30</p>
<p>OCTOBER</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>8 9 10 11 ⑫ ⑬ 14</p> <p>15 16 17 18 19 20 21</p> <p>22 23 24 25 26 27 28</p> <p>29 30 ⑳</p>	<p>NOVEMBER</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p> 1 2 3 4</p> <p>5 6 ⑦ 8 9 10 ⑪</p> <p>12 13 14 15 16 17 18</p> <p>19 20 21 22 23 24 25</p> <p>26 27 28 29 ⑳</p>	<p>DECEMBER</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p> 1 2</p> <p>3 4 5 6 ⑦ 8 9</p> <p>10 11 12 13 14 15 16</p> <p>17 18 19 20 21 ⑳ 23</p> <p>24 ⑳ 26 27 28 29 30</p> <p>31</p>

Dates of Public Interest.

~~deep personal as well as group interest to all listeners—men, women and children alike.~~

SHOP TALK

1. Discuss today's current events in terms of primary and secondary news at classroom hour. Classify several specific stories.
2. List and discuss topical newscasts and the audiences to which they appeal.
3. What do you think radio newsmen can learn from the daytime serials or soap operas? Are newsmen justified in deliberately directing news of romance to women listeners?
4. Do you think that sports news on the air is overplayed, underplayed or about right?
5. Should the news interests of children be recognized in general newscasts? What kinds of news interest the children you know? Cite examples.

CHAPTER XVI

Shaping the Show

The Script Editor at Work. We pay another visit to the MIDT newsroom preliminary to a discussion of story selection and item arrangement in the preparation of newscasts. One writer-editor is "on the desk," serving as script editor or deskman in charge of production at this hour. Also on duty are writer-editors serving as script writers, and a copy boy.

The script editor sits at a wide table. In front of him are copy trays and several square feet of working space. Near at hand three transparent rulers, each about thirty inches long, lie atop rows of folded, copy-slugged raw material. Beyond these are other shorter transparent rulers used for arranging scripts.

The copy boy brings to the table copy from the AP teletypes and from the *Times* city and copy desks. Also before the script editor are several *Times* clippings mounted on copy paper. The script editor has duplicates of most of the raw material, thereby enabling two writers to use it simultaneously as the two-hour preparation periods for five-minute scripts and the three-hour periods for fifteen-minute scripts overlap.

As he sorts the intake material the deskman discards about half of it by spiking or dropping it into a wastebasket. He pastes together several takes of some stories. Others he shortens with his scissors. From time to time the copy boy helps with the scissoring and pasting chores.

With a red pencil the script editor places copy slugs on the sto-

ries which he retains. Then he clips together the two duplicates of each and places them under one of the longer transparent rulers—foreign news under the first; domestic, regional and local news under the second; news in special topical groups under the third. The deskman chooses slugged stories from these rows of raw material and moves them into position under the shorter rulers as the time for arranging a script for a writer approaches.

Nothing of major importance is breaking now. Nevertheless, the script editor keeps a close watch on copy coming from the AP teletypes in order to patch a newscast soon to go on the air or to dictate a flash or bulletin if necessary. The copy boy will warn him if urgent news is coming on the teletypes.

Duties of the Script Editor. It should be pointed out again that procedures in the MIDT newsroom are not necessarily duplicated anywhere. Probably no two radio newsrooms are alike in the division of duties and mechanical arrangements. However, the main functions of the staff—selecting raw material and arranging, writing, copyreading and transmitting scripts—are the same everywhere. We refer to the specific operations in our mythical newsroom only to illustrate these functions concretely.

The chief duties of the MIDT script editor are: (1) to receive, sort and judge raw news; (2) to plan each script and give the material to the writer, specifying the approximate length of each story; (3) to copyread and send the scripts to the announcer; and (4) to write or dictate when speed is needed. He must perform these duties on a strict timetable in accordance with deadlines.

The script editor is the key man of the newsroom. Largely upon his alertness, coolheadedness, energy and resourcefulness depends the worth of the newscast as it finally goes on the air. The most brilliant writers and announcers cannot produce a first-class show out of outworn, incomplete and poorly arranged material.

The chair of the script editor, therefore, should be filled only by an experienced man or woman, thoroughly drilled in every phase of the craft. He needs to understand what's news and why, the make-up of his audience at a given hour, the know-how of script arrange-

ment, the practical problems of writing and copyreading, the dangers of libel and bad taste, and the way to give orders so as to win staff co-operation. In a word, the script editor should be an all-round radio newsman.

In this chapter we are concerned with the work done by the script editor before the writer takes over. This spadework is not mere puttering around. On the contrary, it demands more brainwork than any other task in the newsroom procedure. To arrange or line up a show the script editor mentally checks it step by step all the way from the source to the loudspeaker.

You would not think of building a house without a blueprint. You don't hire a few men, hand them bricks, boards, hammers and nails and tell them to put something together. First you employ an architect. The script editor is the architect of the newscast; and if his plan is bungled, he's likely to end up with the cookstove in the attic, the bathtub on the front porch and no living room at all. Indeed, the structure may turn out to be a corn crib.

Sorting, Slugging and Saving. The appetite of a radio station for news is enormous. MIDT puts on the air more than 21,000 words daily. Despite this quicksand gobbling up of news, the wordage broadcast represents but a fraction of the voluminous raw material which pours onto the desk of the script editor.

About half of this incoming copy is discarded at once. The remaining fifty per cent is reduced to perhaps twenty-five per cent as it goes to the writer, who condenses it into less than five per cent. It must be kept in mind, of course, that perhaps half of the material in an average newscast is repeat news carried over from previous scripts.

The first task of the script editor is selection or, rather, selection and elimination, for it is a weeding-out process that he follows.

All news values are relative. The space or play to be given to an item depends not alone on its own interest but also on the availability and interest of competing items. The length of a newscast does not stretch or shrink any more than does metal type. It is the news which must stretch or shrink to fit the inflexible format of a

newscast. Therefore, while sorting, the script editor forms a general idea of his primary news—the *must* or top stories. As he assembles these he discards others accordingly. If he already has one or several major stories, he destroys other ordinarily good stories mercilessly. If on the other hand the supply is scant, he hoards his secondary news carefully. He cannot control either the character or the supply of the news. He must work with what he receives.

After smelting the ore which he has mined from his intake tray, the next task of the script editor is refining. Stories written for and printed in newspapers come in any length from a paragraph to many thousands of words. Over a teletype they arrive in takes ranging in length from one to eight or more inches. If he wants only the first take of a story, the script editor throws away all takes thereafter. But if he wants more, the takes need to be pasted together. With scissors he cuts and trims all kinds of copy for convenient handling. At MIDT all copy is cut or folded to the size of typewriter half-sheets.

As each story reaches the half-sheet size stage it is ready for a copy slug. As mentioned in Chapter VI, a copy slug is one word or two words red-penciled at the top of each piece of raw material. It is not to be confused with the script slug used to guide the announcer. A copy slug is an identification label on a sheet or half-sheet of raw material.

MIDT Copy Slug Rules. Without a uniform method of slugging copy the desks in the MIDT newsroom would be messy indeed. Script editors and writers would be compelled to read several lines of a story to find out its subject each time they picked it up. Stories would be thrown away, lost in debris or kept when they should be replaced.

The MIDT copy slug rules are simple. One word must be chosen as the *name* slug. Another word may or may not be used as a *group* slug. The name slug is printed in red capital letters at the center-top of the sheet. If there is a group slug it is handwritten or printed in upper and lower case after the name slug and a hyphen.

Usually the name slug is easily hit upon. It may be the name of

a prominent person or the key word in the story, such as “tax,” “quake,” “parade,” “dog,” “kidnap,” “plane.” Here are other typical name slugs:

ZOO	GEMS	GAMBLE
IRAN	ROB	SCHOOL
BABY	KIDS	ATOM
BUS	AUTO	DENVER
MOSCOW	VET	MINE
FLOOD	CLUB	LABOR

Short-cut and abbreviated words invented by script editors frequently are used as copy slugs—for example, POL for politics, OUT for weather, GRID for football, STOX for stock market. Usage also develops specializations like WRECK for a train wreck, CRASH for a plane accident, BLAST for an explosion, and so on.

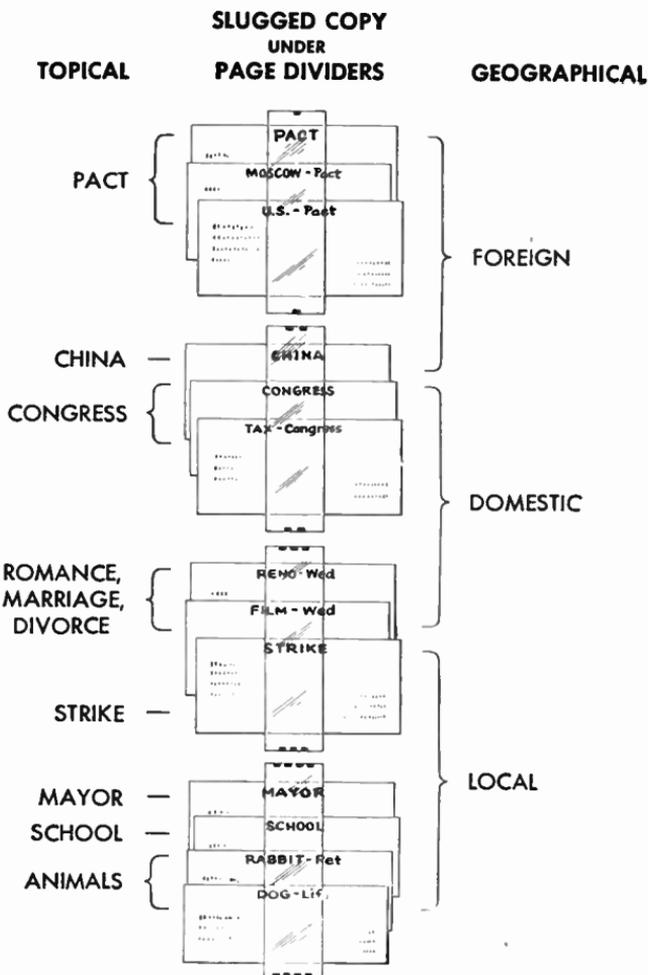
If the story is a single unit not associated with any other piece of copy, it gets only the one-word name slug. If, however, it associates itself with one or more other pieces of copy and is likely to be used in a script in connection with other copy, a group slug is added. The simplest association is that of a sidelight of a story already name-slugged. Suppose the original story is STORM and concerns a tornado. Then comes a separate story listing the dead and injured. The latter is slugged TOLL - Storm. Now a feature about a cow carried a mile and unhurt. It is slugged COW - Storm. Still another: RELIEF - Storm. The story has become multiangled.

In the same way sectional stories may be broken up into segments as follows:

CONGRESS	XMAS
TREATY - Congress	WORSHIP - Xmas
HARBORS - Congress	SANTA - Xmas
ADJOURN - Congress	TOYS - Xmas

The original story CONGRESS or XMAS may be discarded at will without replacement since each individual piece of copy has its own name slug. It is important to understand that some times

A-TYPICAL FIVE-MINUTE SCRIPT ARRANGEMENT



(Fixed portions of script not included)

Lineup by Script Editor.

but not often two name slugs on the desk are the same. A group or association slug may be repeated as often as necessary.

Certain group slugs used for groups of stories are seldom used as name slugs. Stories falling into these groups starting with the first one are given both a name slug and the customary group slug, such as LONDON - Europe, PARIS - Europe, ITALY - Europe; CAT-TLE - Farm, CORN - Farm, GRANGE - Farm; HAIRDO - Style, FURS - Style, HOSE - Style. Suppose the general topic is sports. Here are handy slugs: GRID - Sports, BOUT - Sports, TURF - Sports, GOLF - Sports, CAGE - Sports, TRACK - Sports.

Some of the most useful group slugs, as well as name slugs, are the short cuts such as WED for romance, marriage and divorce, AMUSE for the entertainment world, PET for any animal story, OBIT for deaths and funerals, SOB for a tragedy and LIFT for a smile.

Slugs useful in titling sectional stories include:

<i>LATE</i>	<i>TEXT</i>	<i>LIST</i>
<i>EARLY</i>	<i>COMMENT</i>	<i>FACTS</i>
<i>HISTORY</i>	<i>REACT</i>	<i>HILITES</i>
<i>PROGRAM</i>	<i>SUMMARY</i>	<i>SCORES</i>

It will be seen that such a copy-slug system enables the script editor and writer to distinguish stories at a glance even though they are mixed up. With the help of the slugs a script editor can shuffle all his copy into a heap and straighten it out like a deck of playing cards within a few minutes. The copy slugs resemble the symbols at the corners of the cards.

More important, group slugs become of great value as the script editor goes about shaping the raw material into groups of associated stories or continuities. This, rather than additional identification, is the chief function of the group slug.

Number and Length of Items. An item is a news story, or a distinctly separate, independent and detachable section of a news story when processed for radio. Each item carries a number. In a five-minute newscast an item is a single paragraph. In a fifteen-

minute newscast it may be more than one paragraph. The average is three items in one minute of script in the five-minute newscast.

How many items should be placed in a newscast? To answer that question let us look at it first from the point of view of the listener. If you analyzed a social conversation among your friends with a stop watch in your hand you might be surprised to learn that they stay on one topic from five seconds to four minutes. A good conversationalist shifts the topic every minute or two. Less than a quarter of a minute spent on a topic allows time for little more than one or two clipped remarks, but after two minutes a topic begins to wear thin. After four minutes it is worn to the point of bored yawns. Such general observations are not too safe, but they give us a clue to the reaction of a listener. Let us say that the shortest item requires fifteen seconds or about forty-five words, and the longest four minutes or seven hundred words.

We have seen that, fixed script sections being eliminated, the over-all item statistics of MIDT newscasts are as follows:

	<i>(Five Minutes)</i>	<i>(Fifteen Minutes)</i>
Words	700	2,100
Typewritten pages	4	12
Minutes	4	12

The five-minute newscast covering general news on all subjects represents less than one newspaper column. It is necessarily a digest; and if it is to be balanced and complete, most of the items must be as brief as clarity will allow. Rarely an entire five-minute show may be devoted to one momentous story, say a declaration of war, the death of a president, a local catastrophe. Every week there are a half-dozen stories worth two minutes each, and every day several worth a full minute. In any script it often requires from thirty seconds to a minute to get a lead item rolling well. Thereafter routine items on a five-minute script usually need to be held to fifteen to thirty seconds. If the first item takes forty seconds and the others twenty seconds each, the script consists of eleven items. Experience

shows that ten to twelve items are about right for the average five-minute newscast.

Although the fifteen-minute newscast is more comprehensive and detailed, the items while longer still fall inside the conversational limits of fifteen or twenty seconds to four minutes. Following the same reasoning as applied to the shorter show, and again in the light of experience, we find that twenty to twenty-five items are about right for the average fifteen-minute newscast.

The Grouping of Items. All radio news editors agree that a newscast requires coherence or continuity which may be defined as (1) proper order and (2) proper connection.

Like a speech, theme, essay, play or a composition of any kind, the news show needs a plan or pattern. In warfare a band of men, though strong and brave individually, is collectively weak if not well organized. The analogy can be applied to a newscast. Items delivered haphazardly without orderly sequence create a confusing hodgepodge. Organization means unity and in unity lies strength. The items need to be viewed as a whole, then deliberately grouped. This is the job of the script editor. Upon his arrangement, too, largely depends the success of the writer in forming the connections or transitions.

What shall the newscast order be? One needs only to glance at the departmentalization of a newspaper—at the sports, society, financial and other sections—to see that news stories group themselves naturally by topics and subtopics. The sequence in a newscast, therefore, may be called topical.

This gives us a basic premise for item and script arrangement. First the stories need to be assembled in groups, each group representing a topic. Then these groups of items, topics or continuities can be shifted about like dominos until placed in the right order.

What are news topics? Some of them, to be found in newspapers and magazine departments, have been mentioned—sports, society and financial news. We also have touched on them in “Analyzing the Audience.” Here are more of the broader topics:

<i>Animals</i>	<i>Night life</i>
<i>Automobiles, motor traffic</i>	<i>Politics, elections</i>
<i>Aviation</i>	<i>Public affairs</i>
<i>Crime, police, courts</i>	<i>Religion</i>
<i>Deaths, funerals</i>	<i>Romance, marriage, divorce</i>
<i>Diplomacy, international af- fairs</i>	<i>Schools</i>
<i>Farming, crop and market reports</i>	<i>Science, inventions</i>
<i>Fires, explosions, wrecks</i>	<i>Screen, stage, radio</i>
<i>Health</i>	<i>Ships, marine events</i>
<i>Labor-management relations</i>	<i>Storms, floods, earthquakes</i>
<i>Legislation</i>	<i>Styles, fashions</i>
<i>Marketing, shopping</i>	<i>Weather, outdoor clothing, road conditions</i>

The foregoing are but a few of the topical groups into which many news stories gravitate. They give a guide to the script editor as he puts on his group copy slugs and thus takes the first step in drawing them together.

However, arranging a script is not as simple as departmentalizing a newspaper. A newscast, especially a short one, resembles a front page more than an entire newspaper and page one stories do not all drop neatly into slots by subject. They come from far and near, they are both serious and light in content, and they vary in news value from the banner-line story and fudged-in bulletin to the oddity paragraph in a box.

The Sequence of Topics. To a limited extent newspapers and news magazines arrange news stories according to their points of origin. The main geographical divisions are (1) foreign, (2) domestic and (3) local. Foreign or overseas news subdivides itself by continents and nations. The term domestic is applied to news of the nation, including Washington, D. C., outside of the home state. Home-state and regional news may be either separated from or merged with domestic or local news. Local news refers to a city and its environs.

In newscasts the geographical arrangement of topics is excellent and used almost universally. It is successful because the listener

tends to visualize maps and scenes made familiar to him through movies, books, personal visits and imagination. Also he can be transported smoothly, as though on a magic carpet, from one geographical area to another, whereas if his mind is focused on Paris it jolts him to be jerked back to Midland, then taken suddenly to Rome and back again to Washington.

Script editors therefore generally assemble individual items and topical groups of items geographically. Typical sequences are local-domestic-foreign, foreign-domestic-local and domestic-foreign-local.

Other kinds of arrangements suggest themselves to the script editor as he examines the raw material before him. Many times he is compelled by logic to break a topical group or geographical unit into two or more parts, using one portion first and returning later in the script to pick up the remainder.

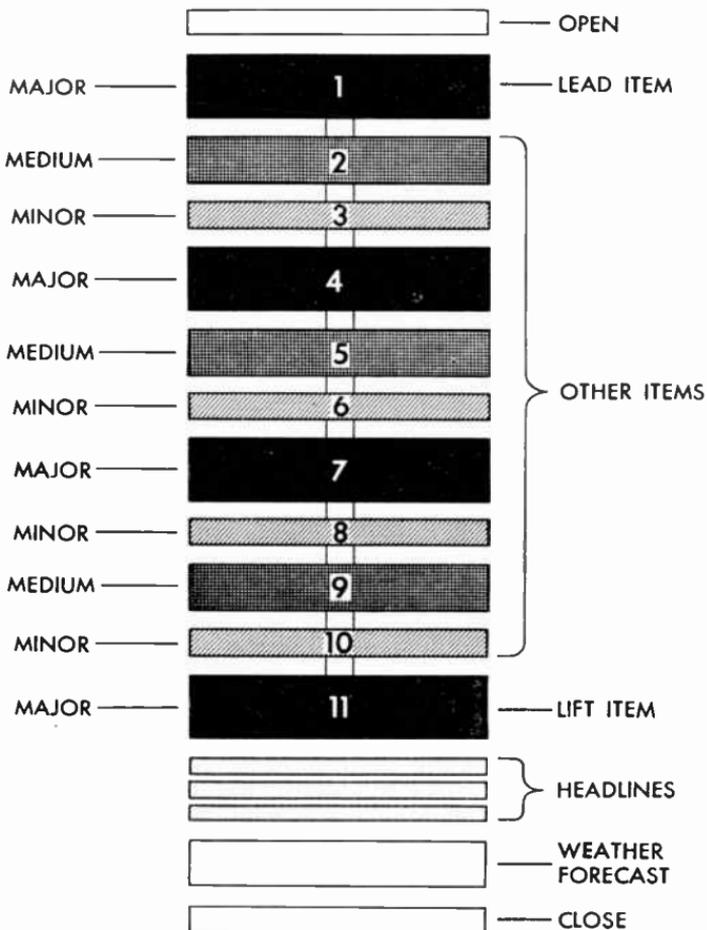
No rigid format into which any two newscasts will fit perfectly ever will be devised for the reason that each one is a new combination of facts. At best the customary plan of association of items into topics and arrangement of topics by geography is but a loose guide to script editors. Common sense must indicate the inherent relationships between specific stories. Several factors—logical, rhetorical and psychological as well as topical and geographical—may influence the arrangement. The aim is to provide a logical thought pattern for the benefit of the listener and often this must be done more by instinct than by rote.

Put Your Best Foot Forward. Having assembled his items roughly into topical groups and the topical groups into geographical units, the question now confronting the script editor is in what order to place the latter. Local-domestic-foreign? Or foreign-domestic-local? And what to do with the odd or stray stories unassociated, topically or geographically, with others?

We now need to consider two factors: (1) the relative importance of the beginning, middle and end of a newscast as positions for effective news conveyance, and (2) the relative newsworthiness of the items and clusters of items available for use in a specific script.

ARRANGEMENT OF A BALANCED SCRIPT

**NEWS
INTEREST**



Five-Minute Show Analysis.

Once more we can get partial—but not full—guidance from the newspaper which displays its show-window news story in heavy headline type on page one. A newscast, because it deals in news, also must put its best foot forward—begin significantly—if it hopes to hold its listeners. They turn on their sets to learn the more important news and there is no escaping the fact that they will switch off if they don't begin to get this major news without undue delay. To start a newscast with a trivial occurrence in Borneo or Iraq when the city of Midland is aflame would be folly.

Therefore the script editor leads with his highest trump—the most newsworthy individual story or the continuity containing the most newsworthy story. The top-line item usually should be either at or near the beginning of the show. To use another comparison, the opener is the locomotive of the newscast train.

No bridge player would wantonly waste his ace of trumps nor would a trainman fail to inspect and fire up his engine. Neither does a script editor carelessly choose his lead. Indeed, he picks it prudently, weighs it against other candidates for first place, ponders it deliberately and selects it with a view to arresting and holding the attention of the listener.

All-round newsworthiness—not necessarily consequence alone—dictates his judgment. Vague and indecisive articles on world affairs frequently are escorted to the rear to make way for a lost baby or monkeys loose in a pet shop. From time to time each topical group produces the lead item and thereby establishes the geographical order.

The script editor not only concentrates on choosing his best attention-getter as item number one, but often dictates the opening sentences to the writer or suggests a smart and snappy twist that will bait interest and lure the listener into the body of the show.

It may be properly argued that many listeners miss the first part of a newscast because they are unaware of the time, their clocks are slow or their radio sets are cold. This is true, but these late arrivals are informed by a recapitulation at the end of the show without offending the majority who tune in on time.

~~After the Lead—What?~~ We can now no longer look to the newspaper story or the newspaper as a whole for guidance. A newspaper story is an inverted pyramid with facts given in order of diminishing importance and tapering to an end. While departmentalized to some extent, the general news pages often are arranged in the same way, with top news on page one, second-rate news on page two, third-rate news on page three and so on.

There is no reason whatever for building the body of a newscast in this order of diminishing news values. What is said nearest the beginning finds listeners alert, their attention most easily engaged. What is said near the end lies freshest in the memory. There is ample evidence that between the lead and the wind-up, the most favored points in the show, news should be arranged not as mountains, next foothills and then mounds, but as a succession of peaks of comparable height.

The important consideration after the lead is to bridge the peaks—to make connections and to secure continuity so that the listener is guided from one item directly into the next and shifted painlessly from one geographical and topical section to another, each one having its own news interest.

Certainly there are no rules whereby sports should precede science; aviation, politics; or crime, romance. The top story may be in any one of these topical groups. Nor is there any reason a script may not move from local to domestic or foreign, from foreign to domestic or local, or from domestic to either foreign or local.

Once the individual lead item has been chosen, bringing a given topic to the forepart of a geographical unit and a geographical unit to the forepart of the script, no effort needs to be made to crowd forward other primary news stories. They can well be allowed to fall where they come naturally within a general pattern as conceived by the script editor.

There is merit, too, in sandwiching lighter stories—human interest yarns, oddities and humorous anecdotes—between the heavier news. These bits of brightness, especially valuable in fifteen-minute newscasts, let the listener relax from time to time from the tensity of graver news. The radio audience, like the baseball or the-

ater crowd, like a seventh-inning stretch or an intermission to chat and smoke.

Sandwiched-in light items, however, should not be allowed to interrupt continuity. Indeed, if well selected and placed, they may and usually do serve as transitions themselves, being associated with the items fore and aft.

The Lift and Recapitulation. “Leave ’em with a laugh” is an axiom of the show business long and successfully adapted to the radio newscast. It is sound psychology, especially the “good-night smile” on late evening shows. Newscasts frequently are fraught with reports of conflict, tragedy and misfortune. If they wind up with a chuckle, the audience reactions are: “Well, all is not lost.” “There’s a brighter side to life after all.” “Tomorrow’s a new day.” “We need to keep our sense of humor.”

The *lift* at the end is a standard fixture in the format of all MIDT newscasts. The script editor hoards brighteners, wisecracks and little nutshell dramas with surprise endings. He gives them the secondary copy slug “Lift,” keeps them together and dips into this treasure trove for a tag-line story each time he lines up a show.

Not always does the lift survive, for it is subject to replacement by last-minute spot news. When such news breaks just before or during the delivery of a newscast, it may be too late to get it into the forepart of the show. In that event it may go on as an addition or ad, automatically throwing out the lift. However, an ad must be of such keen interest to the listener that his mental need for a lift is satisfied by the stimulation of being among the first to learn something new and exciting. Lifts and ads will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

We now reach the final portion of the newscast proper—the recapitulation or repeat of the opening item or items for the benefit of listeners who tuned in late, failed to follow fully, or have already forgotten what they heard at the start.

We have pointed out reasons some listeners join the audience late. At a movie or ball game or church service the Johnny-come-lately may miss nothing that matters, but if delayed in receiving a

newscast he fails to hear the lead items. Unless they are repeated in substance he never hears them. Hence, the recapitulation, or *headlines* as they are called on the MIDT shows. There is yet another reason for the résumé. In a speech, as contrasted with a printed article which can be reread, it is a good practice for the end to revert to the beginning. It is like the return of a musical composition to the theme with which it starts. This satisfies the listener.

"Headlines" is a misnomer so far as placement is concerned, for these come not at the head but at the tail of the newscast. However, in form they resemble newspaper headlines and the term is perhaps simpler and more understandable than "summary," "digest" or "repeat" as some stations label recapitulations.

The length of the résumé varies with the length of the newscast. MIDT uses three headlines written from the first two minutes of the five-minute newscast. The three headlines total thirty words. The MIDT fifteen-minute newscast carries nine heads covering the first six minutes of the show and totaling ninety words.

Headlines are counted in MIDT arithmetic as one of the fixed portions of a script and the script editor provides the writer with no raw material for them. Since it is the writer's job to consult his own copy and turn out the headlines, they will be discussed further in chapters dealing with the writer's work.

The headlines do not complete the MIDT newscast. Thereafter come the weather report and the close. These also are fixed and not the concern of the script editor during his lining-up procedure.

Use of the Page Dividers. Let us now return for another look over the shoulder of an MIDT script editor as he completes the chore of assigning raw material to his writers.

Under his three thirty-inch transparent rulers he has perhaps fifty or sixty stories copy-slugged and in duplicate. On the far right side of his table are four transparent rulers, each six inches long. These are page dividers and under them he places the stories to be included in each minute of the upcoming five-minute show. Nearby are four other dividers, each twelve inches long. Under them he ar-

ranges stories to be used in each three-minute segment of the next fifteen-minute show.

When he has completed laying out the raw material, the deskman is ready to summon the writer. While they look over the raw material together, the script editor outlines the script, indicating the copy as he proceeds. The writer removes the material and returns to his own desk, taking the page dividers with him. These keep the unprocessed copy in order and enable the script editor to work with unwritten parts of the script, replacing, repairing or deleting at will.

Page dividers as physical aids to the script editor are perhaps peculiar to MIDDY. Wire baskets or trays, spikes, hooks, paperweights, envelopes, file folders and leafed-and-tabbed desk dividers are employed for laying out and lining up raw material in various radio newsrooms. The transparent page dividers have the advantage of making all the copy slugs visible at one time.

Every script editor requires devices of some kind to help him sort and arrange. He does not have the time to draft a blueprint with a pencil, but like the house builder he cannot expect to erect a satisfactory house without one.

SHOP TALK

1. What are the advantages of dividing the work of the script editor and the script writer? Why not let the same man arrange, write and copyread the script?
2. Compare MIDDY copy and script slugs with newspaper slugs and guidelines.
3. What is continuity? Why is it important in a newscast?
4. Contrast the outline or arrangement of a newscast with that of a speech, an essay and a play.
5. Why does a newscast need a résumé or recapitulation at the end whereas a newspaper story does not?

CHAPTER XVII

Warming Up the Listener

A Review and Preview. We now have reached a midway point in this book where it may be well to glance back over the ground we have covered and ahead along the pathway that lies before us. In the first half of the book we studied the elementary and general phases of script production. In the second half we move into the more advanced and specialized techniques of radio news writing and editing.

At the beginning we explored the craft of the writer-editor, viewed sources of raw material, examined the workshop or newsroom and tested the tools, especially typewriters and timepieces. We then dipped into the elements of news and subsequently applied these fundamentals to the radio audience. We have written words, sentences and passages in radio style. We saw the relationship between the scriptman and the man at the microphone, and watched the script editor shaping up the format of the newscast.

In this and the next two chapters we shall return to the work of the writer and practice intensively with warmups, item structure and coupling pins. Thereafter we shall study special aspects of radio news treatment, and then move ahead to the problems of more finished and speedier writing and editing. We shall process scripts by dictation and finally look into the mirror of the future.

The Writer and His Material. Let us turn our attention to the copy assigned to the writer by the script editor. It consists of press

service stories and duplicates of stories written for the *Midland Times* as well as clippings from the *Times*. In addition, there may be a few clippings from the library and publicity releases.

It is significant that all this raw material either has appeared in a newspaper or has been prepared for newspaper publication in newspaper style. In arrangement only has it been processed for radio. It follows, then, that the task of the writer consists of turning each newspaper-style story into a radio item, linking the items together and returning the full script for copyreading and transmission.

With the raw material before him, what is the first move of the radio writer? It is to *think* before he types. The temptation of the beginner is to say something before he has something to say—to start writing before he mentally selects the pertinent facts to be used in an item and plans his approach to them.

It is necessary to know the approximate length of the item to be prepared. This is indicated by the MIDT script editor, although in some newsrooms the writer, as his own editor, makes the decision. The wordage is a guide to the writer as he studies his raw material. Usually he needs to condense. If he is going to write an item of only seventy words, it is useless to read one thousand before starting to write.

Ordinarily the nub of the news is to be found at once in the first paragraph or two of a newspaper-style story. If, however, an individual piece of raw copy is scant and needs stretching, it should be carefully read to the end. It is well, in any event, to continue scanning and rescanning until the news nub, the main supporting data and the best quotations and citations are located. Perhaps the script editor has marked them with a red pencil. If not, the writer may do so, provided he does not mar the copy too much for the next writer.

Having isolated the essentials for an item, the trained writer sorts them mentally. Unless he aims at an unusual arrangement, say with a surprise ending, he does not necessarily conceive and preplan the entire item with a beginning, a middle and an end. Seldom does he go so far as to jot down an outline on paper. Time does not permit

it. ~~But he does focus his attention on the story as a whole and keep that focus while the item is created.~~

When handling a routine story the experienced writer is likely to hit upon a familiar framework, or mold, which he has used many times before for a similar set of facts. All experienced news writers keep an array of these molds on a brain shelf and reach for one at will. We shall see, handle and try out several of the more useful of them as we proceed.

The Five W's Won't Do. Glance at several stories on any front page and you will find that two out of three follow the formula of the five W's which calls for answers in the opening paragraph to these questions: *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* Sometimes "How?" is substituted for "Why?" Examples:

R. E. Johnson, president of the Chamber of Commerce (*Who*), announced today (*When*) that he will ask the City Council for a \$5,000 appropriation (*What*) to place benches at bus stops (*Why*) on Main street and 7th avenue (*Where*).

Five persons (*Who*) were injured last night (*When*) when an automobile plunged across a crowded sidewalk (*What*) in the business district of Clay City (*Where*). A tire blowout caused the driver to lose control (*Why*).

George Wilson, 16 years old, son of John Wilson (*Who*), died (*What*) at the Wilson home eight miles southeast of Midland (*Where*) early today (*When*) from injuries caused by a fall from a horse three days ago (*Why*).

Peter (Pistol Pete) Ryan, sophomore half-back (*Who*), galloped 48 yards through a broken field (*How*) to give Midland college a 6 to 0 victory over Fairmount (*What*) at Grant stadium (*Where*) this afternoon (*When*).

There are several reasons for development of the five-W or summary newspaper lead. It insures completeness in a wire story. Even if a circuit breaks or transmission of a story is interrupted on a press service teletype to make way for a more urgent story, the

receipt of only one full paragraph enables an editor to headline and print it.

The explanation for the summary lead goes deeper. It is the logical first unit of the inverted pyramid structure which has two advantages. Newspaper stories often need to be cut or trimmed to save space. An inverted pyramid story may be cut from the end without destroying its essentials. Also it permits the hurried reader to grasp these essentials quickly. He reaches the pith of the news at once without burrowing deep into the story or turning to its jump on another page.

In the summary lead the writer aims to compress the most interesting features of a news situation within the first sentence or two—the first words if possible—of a newspaper story. To the eyes of a reader moving at their own pace, swiftly or slowly, such leads deliver the news in an effective way. But they will not do for radio news story openers any more than the inverted pyramid will do for radio news item structure.

The listener needs a moment to get adjusted, to orient himself, to swing his attention into line before each detonation of news strikes his ear. The radio writer therefore provides for a slight delay in reaching the news nub or main action part of the story.

We have referred to this introductory procedure as “warming up the listener.” When used at the beginning of a lead item or as the first part of a blocked-off series of items, it is called the *warmup*. Warmups and transitions have also been described as *throwaways* because they can be deleted without destroying the gist of the story when read silently.

In attempting to explain the reason for warmups radio editors sometimes argue that the newspaper lead is too long, complicated and cumbersome for radio. Such leads as this one are cited:

Centralia State Representatives William Gerhart, Daniel R. Kennedy and Carleton Morehouse spoke last night at the Central auditorium, Main street and 7th avenue, before a cheering crowd of 2,500 persons in behalf of the proposed Timber river

waterway project which they advocated as a means of controlling floods as well as providing economical electricity to 5,000 farm families in the Timber Valley sections of the state.

Top-heavy and slow-footed leads such as this one appear only too often in the newspapers. They are a muddled attempt to answer all the W's with exhaustive detail in a single paragraph. However, such a lead is bad newspaper as well as bad radio writing. Alert editing should focus the main issue more sharply, like this:

Three state legislators, speaking from the same platform here last night, urged the immediate development of the Timber river waterway project.

There is a definite move among newspaper editors to lighten heavy leads and to insist on radio-style shorter sentences as part of a simplification campaign to make reading easier. However, there is no such discernible trend toward abandonment of the five W's or the inverted pyramid structure. It is clear, then, that the real difference between the newspaper opener and the radio opener is not literary style but fact arrangement.

In the words of a veteran city editor the press writer should "spill the works in the first line." A radio editor might well say, "Set 'em up first—then knock 'em over" or "Wind up before you pitch."

Writing the Warmup. The warmup is not merely a slow-up—a series of empty words creating a thought vacuum. Rather, it is a tune-up or a build-up. The aim of the introductory phrase or sentence is to start a train of thought in motion, to stimulate interest, to arrest and arouse the favorable attention of the listener.

Perhaps the simplest form of the warmup is a plain announcement that you are about to say something—a warning to be prepared to hear a story—thus:

First, we bring you the latest reports on . . .

There is important news tonight from . . .

Well, folks, don't let this worry you too much, but . . .

Casualness and spontaneity are disarming and inviting in the warmup and help establish the announcer-audience contact on a friendly basis.

Probably the surest way to stimulate a receptive attitude toward something new is to refer to something old and familiar. The old-to-new principle is well established as an attention-getter. Macaulay said, "If you give me a peg, I can hang any idea upon it." The pegs in the human mind are recollections of things seen, read, done or felt. Hanging ideas on these pegs has been called "reference to experience."

Certain characters in literature are familiar to all of us, for example Don Juan, Lochinvar, Beau Brummel, Pollyanna, Portia and Raffles. Historical personages such as Annie Oakley, and things like Plymouth Rock, strike a responsive chord immediately.

You are conforming to the psychological law of association if you allude to an old, familiar mental image of a well-known person, thing, place or situation in a warmup, thus:

Adolf Hitler has been dead since 1945 but in Berlin today . . .

The tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington Cemetery is to be the center of the nation's Memorial Day services . . .

Here's a new way to get rid of your *old Christmas cards*. Send them to . . .

The *shave-and-haircut shortage* will end tomorrow. A settlement of the barbers' strike . . .

Santa Claus is staging a race with death tonight . . .

There's *frost upon the pumpkin* this morning -- if you can find any pumpkins in Midland. The first cold snap of the season . . .

The best sleuths of *Scotland Yard* and the *French Sureté* are concentrating their famed deductive powers on a manhunt . . .

The student may ask: Are these openers not similar to the *Who?* and *What?* leads in the press? They differ in two ways. First, the radio news item may begin only with a name instantly recognized and associated with something in the listener's memory, whereas the newspaper story may begin with the name of an unknown,

WARMUPS MOVING FROM OLD TO NEW

PERSON

Governor Boland has tossed his hat into the political ring. In an interview at Centralia this afternoon, he announced that he will run again . . .

The memory of Franklin D. Roosevelt will be honored today in ceremonies to be held . . .

PLACE

If you have ever been to Coney Island, you have an idea of what Main Street will look like next week at the opening of the Midland Fall Festival.

Death Valley temperatures ranging as high as 110 are being recorded in some parts of the nation today. The current heat wave . . .

THING

The Star of Bethlehem in replica will glow on Christmas Eve atop the steeple of the First Methodist Church in Midland.

The 85,000-ton luxury liner "Queen Elizabeth" brought a dozen notables into New York Harbor today.

SITUATION

Midland's eighteen-day-old truck strike will end at midnight tomorrow. An agreement has been reached . . .

Troops are patrolling the streets of riot-torn Calcutta today after a second day of street fighting . . .

An Audience Attraction Device.

thus: "Nathaniel B. Whitson, 45 years old, an inmate of the Midland county penal farm, escaped . . ." Second, the warmup seldom answers more than two or three of the W's, whereas the newspaper lead usually answers four or five of them.

Source, Scene and Time As Warmups. An explanation of how the item originated and how or when it was received is another simple and effective way to introduce news to be spoken. In conversation it is natural to begin with "He told me," "So-and-so says," or "I heard on the radio." Examples of the source in warmups follow:

Dispatches from Moscow report that . . .

Late word on the coal strike comes from Washington this evening.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue has issued a new warning to income tax payers.

Reports from the American automobile capital . . .

The cables from the Far East are humming today with the news that . . .

A spokesman for the textile manufacturers says . . .

Well, there's a sign in the window of a Main Street drugstore which says -- and we quote . . .

London papers are devoting their front pages to the speech by . . .

The unspoken reaction of the listener to warmups giving source or authority is: "All right, I'm with you. Go ahead." His reaction is similar if the warmup describes the locale or scene of action, thus:

The troubled land of Palestine takes the news spotlight . . .

Island Park will be the scene of the city's celebration . . .

Nearly a mile below the surface of the earth, a rescue squad of miners is toiling . . .

The nine black-robed Justices of the Supreme Court have handed down a decision . . .

On the shore of Lake Lamar at sunrise this morning, Easter services . . .

In the newscast with *date lines*, of course, the locale should not be used in the warmup since this would be duplication. The date line itself partly fulfills the function of the warmup.

Reference to the time of a news development not only serves as a handy warmup but often emphasizes the immediacy value of the item, as in these examples:

And just a few minutes ago police reported that . . .

Within the hour these developments have occurred at the airport . . .

Shortly before noon today the Commissioner served notice that . . .

Exactly at the stroke of midnight the deadline will pass . . .

If you look at your clock you'll see that *this is the hour* when . . .

The Contrast Opener. As a method of overcoming the indifference of the listener, a contrast is closely akin to the old-to-new formula. If you mention or recall a subject in which he already has an interest, the hearer is made well disposed toward the unknown ahead. The contrast lead often is used in newspaper stories and the principle is adaptable to radio, thus:

A week ago "Prince" was just a mongrel pooch chasing cats up and down alleys out in Hillview. Today he is a prospective movie star headed for Hollywood.

One hundred years ago a group of three men met to start a "ladies' academy" in Midland. Today Midland College is marking the anniversary . . .

Maybe you remember the five-cent cigar and the nickel hamburger. They're gone forever, but now we have the five-cent food capsule . . .

Five years ago a policeman won a citation for saving the lives of two children. Today that same patrolman goes to prison for killing two other children.

SIX COMMON
TYPES OF WARMUPS

SOURCE — The Midland Times, in an exclusive story this morning, reports that . . .

LOCALE — Just a five-minute walk from the Central Police Station, a burglar . . .

TIME — At six o'clock tonight -- a little less than one hour from now -- Mayor Nelson will press a switch . . .

CONTRAST — Nearly every night for two years, Professor William Z. Mathers has lectured on the topic -- "How To Hold Your Mate." Today the professor is in Reno . . .

QUESTION — Would you like to sell your baby? If so -- for how much?

EPIGRAM — A little learning is a dangerous thing. Five-year-old Bobby Morris found that out this morning after he discovered how to work a fire-alarm box.

Variations of the Introduction.

Don't stretch out the first part of a contrast opener. All you need is to make sure that the audience has sufficient preliminary knowledge to understand what you are talking about. Move rapidly from then-to-now or from here-to-there, establish the dramatic contrast and get on with the item.

Ask a Question—Then Answer It. An interrogation seldom is used to start a newspaper story unless the problem itself is the crux of the story. It smacks too much of the witness stand. However, as a radio warmup a question is excellent if the answer is quickly forthcoming. Indeed, it is a favorite device in all kinds of public speaking. Here are samples of challenging question warmups:

Do you remember the hobble-skirt? Well, ladies, a new variation . . .

Does a husband have a right to spank his wife because she bids a slam without one face card in her hand? Here's the answer given by Judge . . .

Have you renewed your driver's license yet? No? Then you'd better hurry . . .

The interrogative warmup may take the form of a teaser not necessarily followed by a question mark:

Perhaps you're wondering what happened to those air-raid sirens used during the war. One of them . . .

Somewhere in Midland today there's a woman who probably would like to know what became of her three-thousand-dollar diamond necklace. She'll find it at . . .

Scientists say that superstitions about black cats and such are all hokum. Yet, if you ask Missus Lucy Laird . . .

The question or implied question warmup must always be friendly and sincere. A conundrum hinting that the listener is ignorant is likely to arouse his hostility instead of his curiosity and put him on the defensive. Further, once you ask a question you are bound to answer it adequately. Don't stray off or change the sub-

ject and leave it hanging in mid-air if you expect to keep your audience.

A Twist in the Approach. The introductory phrase should never be flat or dull. Cast it out like bait to snare attention. Or like the Chinese, who when building houses are careful to have an impressive gateway, make it an invitation to enter.

An epigram or familiar quotation aptly citing a general truth is a powerful attention-getter because it mints an old idea into a new form. It is novel, and since it must perforce be terse it is easy to remember. Study these epigrams as warmups:

East may be East and West may be West, but the twain are going to meet in the White House soon. The First Lady of China has arrived . . .

Curiosity killed the cat, as the saying goes, and it was curiosity that almost killed a kitten stuck in a drainpipe today.

Love laughs at locksmiths but a pair of teen-age lovers are not laughing at the locks in the Midland County jail . . .

Sometimes a slogan, a bit of verse or a popular song title will suggest a catch-line opener with a glint of human interest. Or you can make a gee-whiz approach shot like this:

Some folks get married at Niagara Falls. Others have had the knot tied in night clubs, on airplanes or even atop a flagpole. But it remained for a couple in Idaho to get married on a merry-go-round . . .

Warm, But Don't Burn. Once he has the warmup idea fixed in his mind and a few recipes worked out, the new radio news writer may find himself not only warming up his listeners but cooking them to cinders. Entranced by his own flight of fancy, he continues to consume so much space that he has none left for the news itself.

After all, the warmup is "throwaway" material and should be recognized for what it really is—a device needed in speaking but weak as a conveyor of information. The listener appreciates a brief overture to adjust himself and an interlude between topics,

but if the overture or interlude stretches out, he will turn off his ears, if not his radio set.

Therefore, write the warmup within limits. After a phrase or two—at most two or three sentences—be sure it is geared into the pertinent news facts. If it still threatens to become too long, discard it and try again. Don't burn up your listeners.

SHOP TALK

1. Read aloud several newspaper stories and discuss the point in each where you have read enough to write a seventy-word radio item.
2. Why is a warmup unnecessary in a story prepared for print?
3. Examine several newspaper story leads. Which of them could be used as they are to start radio items? Which need rewriting? Why?
4. Suggest several familiar names of persons, places and things usable in warmups. Is each of them familiar to a majority in the radio audience?
5. Ask a volunteer to make a short extemporaneous speech. Note down his warmup and transitions. Discuss them when he has finished.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Structure of the Story

Follow the Format. The script editor and script writer in the MIDT newsroom are different persons, each with his own part to play in newscast production. The script editor plans and copy-reads the script. The writer only writes.

Such a division of labor is not found in all radio newsrooms. Perhaps in a majority of them, certainly in most of the smaller stations where the bulk of the newscasts consists of preprocessed wire copy. "editing" means assembling, trimming, rearranging and revising that kind of copy, plus more or less writing by the "editor." This combination of duties works out well in newsrooms where the personnel is limited. Only the larger and more powerful metropolitan organizations like the *Midland Times* and MIDT maintain staffs which warrant such specialization.

Even at MIDT the division is impersonal. Each writer-editor serves as either script editor or writer as the work schedule indicates. Each mans the desk assigned to him day by day. Familiar with the duties of each other, the editor and writer operate as a team.

The writer follows the script format as fashioned by the script editor. With the entire news panorama spread before him and with time to view it from all angles, the editor clearly is better able to plan a show than the writer whose attention is fixed on one item or group of items at a time. The writer therefore cuts his cloth to the

script editor's pattern and makes no major alteration without the latter's consent.

In the preceding chapter we discussed in detail the ways the writer may begin the lead item with a warmup. Let us now check on his rate of production and then sit alongside as he turns out full items and ties them together.

Writing Against the Clock. The moving hands of the clock regulate all activity in the radio newsroom, including the speed of the writers. Each one must keep up with the march of time lest he fall out of the news parade. Stragglers soon lose their places in line.

The radio news writer probably puts words together more rapidly than the author of any other kind of composition. He works much faster than the writer of a book, magazine article, theme or letter. On the average he produces two or three times as much copy as a newspaper reporter or rewrite man.

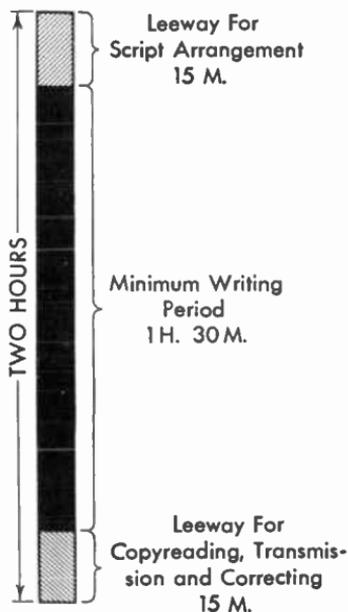
Novices seldom keep up with the clock on the first few tries but they pick up speed with experience. There is nothing alarming about the demand for completed copy. It is true that the best literary writers spend hours futilely biting their pencils and scratching their heads. Authors of the finest writing may produce no more than two or three typewritten pages a day. However, as compared to an extemporaneous speaker or even to a dictating scriptman, the radio news writer jogs along in slow motion.

The radio writer has three advantages over other manuscript producers. He rewrites from raw material, much of which can be copied verbatim. He writes in a natural and easy style as he talks. And he can count on corrections by a copyreader.

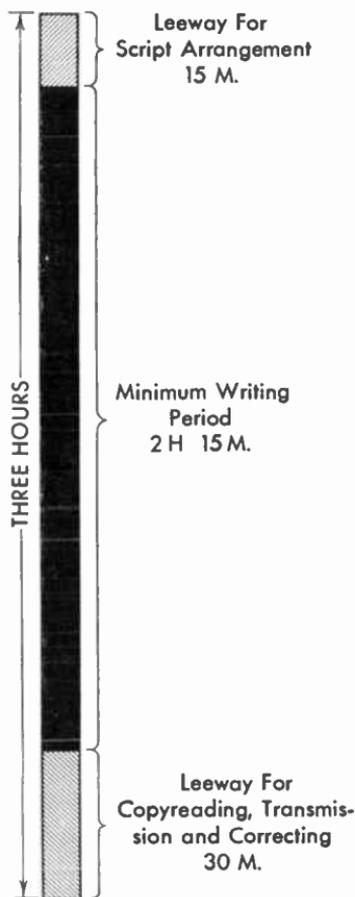
At MIDT a period of two hours is allotted for the preparation of a five-minute script and three hours for a fifteen-minute script. Fifteen minutes' leeway is allowed at the start for the script editor to make his line-up. Fifteen minutes at the end of the two-hour period and thirty minutes at the end of the three-hour period are devoted to copyreading and transmission of the last takes, to study by the announcer and to final checking and telephone correcting by the writer. Thus the five-minute script writer has one and a half

MIDT NEWSCAST PREPARATION PERIODS

FIVE-MINUTE SHOW



FIFTEEN-MINUTE SHOW



Script Production Timetables.

hours net to turn out 730 words including the headlines, an average of eight words a minute. The fifteen-minute script writer has two and a quarter hours to deliver 2,190 words, an average of fifteen words a minute. Writing the longer show is considerably faster because of less condensation, longer passages picked up from the raw material and fewer thought pauses between items.

Experienced writers at MIDT normally turn out a five-minute script in about an hour and a fifteen-minute script in about two hours. Under strong pressure the ablest can cut these work periods in half.

Getting the Script Under Way. Returning to his typewriter with raw material in hand, the writer pays careful attention to the lead item. Like a salesman he puts a shine on the first wares that he has to offer.

Before starting item one, the writer mentally prepares and satisfies himself with his warmup. Sometimes the script editor has suggested a smart opening twist or it may pop into the mind of the writer at once. But it is not unusual for him to frown over the first story for several minutes and then make several false starts on his typewriter before he hits on an idea that clicks—a lead that marches.

Any lead item worth writing is worth writing well; hence it is not at all unusual for a writer to consume five to ten minutes working it out before swinging into the balance of the script.

If the script editor has chosen well, the vanguard story carries strong news momentum and the format allots ample space for it to start the script rolling. The writer, too, aims to give the script a good shove at the start but he must not shove too far. If he continues to expand and expound on the warmup and body of the lead item without restraint, he will run out of space, with the pertinent points still unsaid and a disproportionate amount of time wasted. Once the lead is finished, the writer needs to compare copy with clock as he goes along, gearing his speed so that he completes each division of the script within a preset segment of time.

Fact and Quote Structures. After the warmup or coupling pin, what next? The writer now is confronted with the problem of building the body of his item. We have mentioned the existence of molds into which the experienced writer can fit almost any given set of facts. These molds or diagrams, like accordions, can be contracted or expanded according to the amount of material available and the desired item length.

There are three basic diagrams for the three main types of item body structure: (1) fact, (2) quote and (3) action. Nine out of ten news stories fit into one or a combination of these fundamental patterns.

The fact story is plain exposition. The component parts—fact one, fact two, fact three and so on—may be likened to bricks laid one below the other. We paragraph only for illustrative purposes in the following example:

(Warmup)

Old Man Winter is paying Midland an unwelcome visit this morning.

(Fact 1—Snowfall)

Five inches of snow blankets the city and it's still coming. The snowfall is the heaviest recorded at the United States Weather Bureau for two years. It may break the November record of seven inches set in 1946.

(Fact 2—Temperature)

Also, the temperature has taken a nose dive. The thermometer tumbled to the zero mark just before dawn and now is hovering at three above.

(Fact 3—Forecast)

And you'd better keep those overshoes and mufflers handy. Weatherman Robert Bennett foresees more of the same tonight and tomorrow. His forecast calls for zero again by nightfall. But he says warmer weather is due over the week end.

(Fact 4—Street Clearance)

Meanwhile, the city street department is on the job. Superintendent Antrim announces that ten snowplows, thirty other

~~pieces of equipment and one hundred men with shovels were at work at 8 A.M. Another hundred temporary men are being hired this afternoon.~~

There is nothing complicated about the fact story arrangement. You simply set forth the fact units—snowfall, temperature, forecast, street clearance—condensing, lengthening, adding or reducing the number according to the space limit.

Speeches, statements and letters—and to some extent interviews—fit into a quote story structure. A sample follows:

(Warmup)

The City Council chamber was the scene of another sharp attack today on the proposed zoning ordinance.

(Summary)

Alderman Wallace of the Fourth Ward declared that Greenview Garden will be ruined if the bill passes. Under its terms the Garden district would be zoned for business. The bill is sponsored by Mayor Nelson.

(Quote)

Wallace told the aldermen -- and we quote -- "It's homes or hot-dog stands. Lawns or gas pumps. You can't have both in Greenview" -- end of quotation.

(Summary)

The Fourth Ward Democrat accused the Mayor of "selling out" the buyers of homes in the new subdivision. Greenview was annexed to the city three years ago.

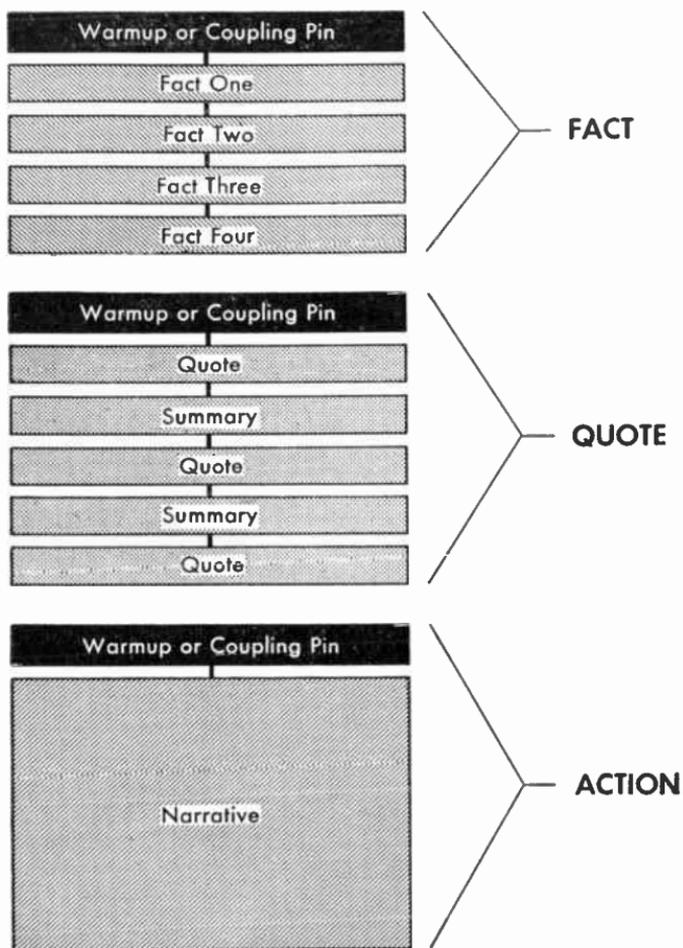
(Quote)

Wallace went on -- again we quote -- "If you put through this sellout it will be Greenview no longer. You'd just as well rename it Darkview" -- end of quotation.

This is another simple mold handy for the beginner with several hundred words of direct quotation before him and wondering what to do with them. Underline the most pungent and pertinent statements, then alternate them with facts and paraphrases.

The fact and quote diagrams are merely suggestive—not rigid—

DIAGRAMS OF ITEM STRUCTURES



How Items Are Built.

forms. Often an item will contain both kinds of material, as well as a third variety which we shall call ~~action or narrative copy.~~

Action Copy Structure. The standard news action story often can be diagramed as a warmup or transition followed by a narrative telling the story chronologically. An example follows. Again the paragraphing is only to illustrate.

(*Transition*)

Here in Midland an old-fashioned runaway gave police an exciting chase this afternoon.

(*Narrative*)

A horse named "Blackie," hitched to a wagon owned by the Pure Milk Company, staged the runaway on South Elm Street. The trouble began when "Blackie" -- who really is dappled gray -- took fright at a bonfire of leaves in front of the Parkside Market at Tenth Avenue. The driver was making a delivery inside. At the smell of smoke "Blackie" snorted, shied and then galloped, dragging the wagon through three blocks of heavy traffic. Milk bottles crashed on the pavement like a string of exploding firecrackers as the wagon careened forward. It ripped the fenders from two automobiles, knocked over traffic signs and scattered pedestrians in all directions. At Sixth Avenue a policeman snatched at "Blackie's" reins but missed. At the next corner Patrolman Edward Winkler brought him to a halt. Traffic was detoured for an hour while a sweeper cleared away the broken bottles.

Here is another action story which follows the narrative pattern after the introduction:

(*Transition*)

And now a story from our believe-it-or-not department. It's what you might call a whale of a tale about the tail of a whale. Jim Scallon vouches for it and Jim ought to know because he saw it with his own eyes. But to get on with the tale.

(*Narrative*)

Jim was out for a jaunt on Lake Luce last evening in his nineteen-foot power launch "Louisc." Putt-putting along a mile offshore, Scallon dropped a trolling line behind. He got a yank -- a

tremendous yank. He looped the line around the rail. It snapped taut, but held. A moment later the launch swung to port and was taken in tow by something on the end of the line. And then says Jim – we quote him – “I saw a huge tail or flipper come up out of the water. It was black and as big as my boat. I think it was some kind of a whale.” Well, the line broke and Scallon got safely home. He has reported the adventure to Commodore Lew Blanchard of the Midland Yacht Club. Blanchard believes that Scallon hooked a submerged derelict or a log.

A favorite narrative form, especially for stories in the lighter vein, is the suspended interest drama with a surprise climax in the last telltale words. This device will be discussed in a later chapter.

The Shotgun Summary. One of the handiest weapons of the harried script editor as well as writer is a shotgun summary or digest whereby a half dozen or more minor stories of about equal news value in the same topical group are treated as a single item. Examples:

Now the latest sports news. First, a look at the football scoreboards. At Midland Stadium the Purple Panthers clawed down Fairmount's vaunted Teachers thirty-seven to six. The Teachers ran over their lone touchdown in the final five minutes. Here are more Centralia conference scores: Larchmont seven, Holbrook six. Wilson thirteen, Glendale nothing. Hope Academy and Juniper tied seven to seven. At Glendale this afternoon the Juniper Jaybirds ran away with the ten-mile marathon, with Lawrence Leland out in front at the finish. Midland's entry, Jerry Whitson, placed third. On tonight's basketball program Center High will meet Hillview in the Center gymnasium at eight o'clock. Center is undefeated so far this season. Freshmen fives from the two schools will clash before the main event.

From Capital City where the state legislature is in session comes word that Centralia income tax payers are due for a break. The twenty per cent tax-reduction bill is now on the desk of Governor Boland. Also approved by both houses is a budget bill appropriating fifty thousand dollars to the Midland County Fair Association. Tomorrow the Governor will preside over a public hearing on the

entire budget. Delegations from the Midland Chamber of Commerce and the Citizens Protective League plan to attend.

The shotgun summary which is an adaptation of the fact structure works well if each of the news fragments is newsworthy and if they cling together. If they fail to do so the weapon becomes a machine gun firing in all directions, to the bewilderment of the listener.

Date Lines and Headlines. Only a thin border distinguishes the shotgun item or group of items from two specialized types of item construction. These are date line and headline items. They are alike in that both resemble a succession of bulletins and by the nature of their construction lessen the urgency of warmups and transitions. Neither is used by MIDI. The date-line technique grows directly out of a standard newspaper custom of printing a line before each out-of-town story giving the place and date of its origin, such as: Denver, Col., June 19. In radio form the date is omitted and local as well as out-of-town items carry the opening identification, thus:

Moscow --
 Washington --
 Capital City --
 Midland --

Sometimes the date line is varied to include a partial transition like:

Now to Calcutta --
 New York again --
 Back in Midland --
 Once more Midland --

The advantage of the date-lined item is at once apparent. Date lines plant the listener figuratively at the scene of action and transport him to the next one. In a measure, a date line lends authority to the item. For example, it may be assumed that a dispatch from Moscow probably represents accurately the Soviet point of view toward a diplomatic development. Finally, the date line permits a

more definite pause by the announcer than an unspoken item number.

Disadvantages of the date-line structure also are apparent. Many listeners dislike the flash-flash and bang-bang effect on their ears, especially if the announcer barks the date line like a series of exciting flashes or bulletins. Few items in a routine news script are of bulletin caliber, and repetition of date lines undoubtedly gives the impression that they are. Also date lines may become awkward in a sectional story when several developments occur in scattered places of no consequence to the news itself.

Headline formats are confined largely to one- to three-minute newscasts which present highly condensed news high lights. These too usually carry date lines. They differ from newspaper headlines only in that each is composed of one or more complete sentences.

The headline construction of a complete newscast is not to be confused with the headline recapitulation at the end of MIDT shows for the benefit of late tuners-in. Preparing this résumé, the final task of the writer of each script, is our next consideration.

Encore and Exit. Aristotle says that all things have a beginning, a middle and an end. The end of the portion of an MIDT newscast typed by the writer is a concluding synopsis. It opens with a fixed introduction: "Here are the headlines of the hour."

Is a résumé at the end of a script really necessary or is it redundant? In written or printed discourse it is justified only as a time-saver enabling the reader to see the high lights of a presentation at a glance or to review them without rereading. But he may reread if he wishes, and therein lies the answer to our question. A résumé is necessary at the conclusion of a speech or a newscast because for the hearer there can be no going back. He must ever go forward with the speaker or announcer. Like the preacher who "tells 'em what I'm goin' to tell 'em, then tells 'em, and then tells 'em what I tol' 'em," the script writer concludes by telling them what he has told them.

We already have mentioned the reasons listeners frequently fail to hear the first and most newsworthy portion of a newscast.

~~These listeners need to be informed about what they missed.~~

There is a strong secondary reason for the headlines as designed by MIDT. Their very form—succinct and snappy—insures a satisfactory, even if synthetic, finale. A newscast should not run down after the manner of an expiring alarm clock which has ceased to ring. It needs stimulation near the end.

The object of the headlines, of course, is not to repeat what already is fresh in the mind of the listener. The résumé therefore epitomizes only the first few items in the show—those delivered in the opening two minutes of the five-minute newscast and the first six minutes of the fifteen-minute newscast. Since these segments contain the most newsworthy items, the headlines alone provide the late tuner-in with the major news of the hour.

After finishing his last item, the writer types the script slug -- IIEDS -- at the upper left corner of his last page and proceeds as follows:

1. Midland blanketed by five-inch snowfall -- the heaviest in two years.
2. More tonight, but warmer weather is promised over the week end.
3. Hillview bus skids and overturns -- passengers escape injury.

These are the three heads, totaling thirty words, required on the five-minute newscast. You will note that the writer devotes two heads to his first topical group—the storm—but dips into the second minute of his script for the last one.

The fifteen-minute script carries nine headlines totaling ninety words. An example:

1. President Wrightman proclaims “peace and progress” as aim of new administration.
2. Chief Executive in address to Congress says our foreign policy is firmness and friendship.
3. Reaction favorable abroad -- Moscow and London applaud speech as “constructive.”
4. Senate confirms nomination of Lane to the Supreme Court.
5. Moslem and Hindu factions clash in Bombay and Calcutta.

6. Round-the-earth fliers near Ireland after flight over North Pole.
7. New York welcomes fleet after Atlantic maneuvers.
8. Record corn crop foreseen by Centralia Department of Agriculture.
9. Midland Community Chest campaign at halfway mark with \$200,000 goal in sight.

The script headline, like a newspaper headline, contains a verb and is written in the present or future tense. It is a simple summary, and always includes the essential fact or main action in the story it recapitulates.

It will be noted that while the standing introduction provides a brief transition from the last item to the headlines, the headlines themselves require no transition. However, they do have continuity since they are based on the topical group continuity in the script itself.

With the completion of the last headline the writer has finished his show. A weather forecast after the headlines is prepared by a copy boy, and the fixed close is already in the hands of the announcer.

SHOP TALK

1. Why does a radio news writer produce three or four times as much copy in a day as an average newspaper writer?
2. Do you think an hour and a half for writing a five-minute script is too long, too brief or about the right amount of time? Answer the same questions about two and a quarter hours for a fifteen-minute script.
3. Why should a lead item be given comparatively more time than other items in the script?
4. If you were devising a program structure for a radio station would you use date-lined items? Give your reasons.
5. Why does a radio newscast need a recapitulation at the end? Would this be a good idea for newspaper stories?

CHAPTER XIX

Coupling Pins and Continuity

Transitions in the Newscast. The radio news script may be likened to beads on a string or to barges towed by a tug. The pieces of string or the towlines correspond to transitions from one subject of discourse or thought to another. More graphically, perhaps, the complete newscast is portrayed as a train consisting of engine, various kinds of cars, and caboose. From this analogy comes the term coupling pin, a newsroom expression meaning a transitional word, phrase or sentence. Sometimes it is called a tie-in.

The human mind grasps only one idea or word picture at a time. While the mind may flash swiftly from one to the next, the transition always is present or implied in the process of thinking.

Connections are common to all forms of composition, which Ruskin says "means, literally and simply, putting several things together, so as to make one thing out of them." A transition is used to summarize the thought preceding, to forecast the thought to follow, to show the relationship of one thought to the next.

In writing for a silent reader the coupling pin is not emphasized. With the beads, barges or cars set forth as physical matter in the form of word symbols, the links may be lightened to the point of invisibility. The ear, however, cannot get the same sense impression. Writing that is to be spoken must implant the transitions so that they cannot be missed.

You need only to say a few casual words or listen briefly to a conversation to identify coupling pins like these:

Oh, yes, that reminds me . . .
Speaking of such-and-such . . .
And so I said . . .
While I'm at it . . .
If you don't think that's so . . .
As a matter of fact . . .
On the subject of . . .
And what's more . . .
All right, but . . .
There's something else, too . . .
Along that same line . . .
Last but not least . . .

These easy and often colloquial phrases sprinkling conversation become stiffer and more formal in speechmaking:

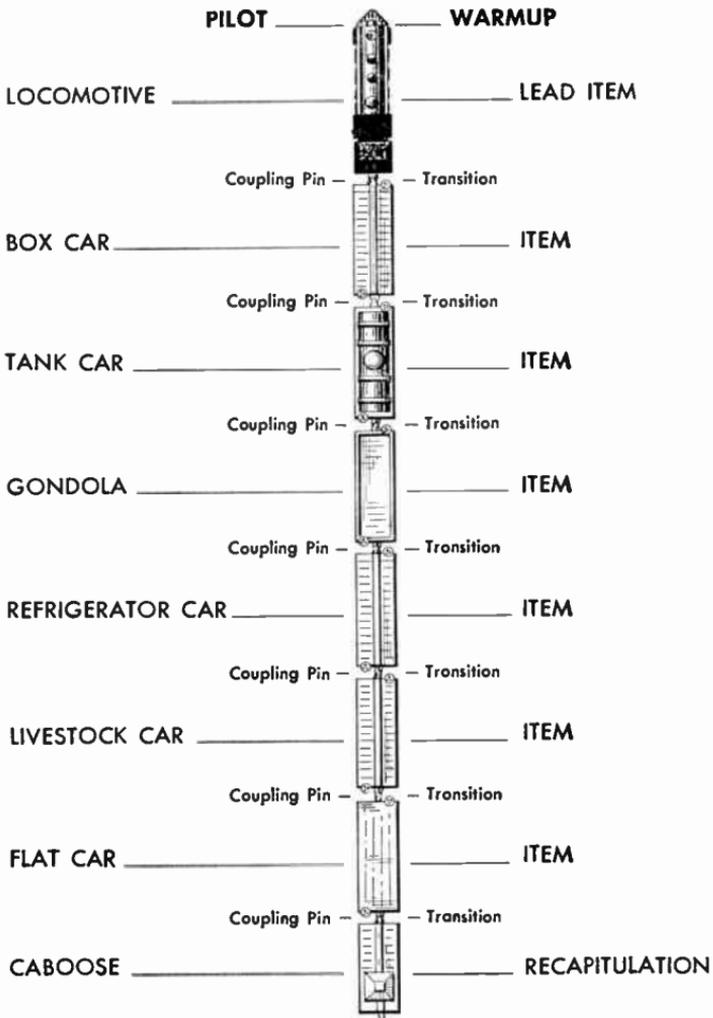
That brings me to the question of . . .
My next point is that . . .
A further objection to . . .
That, then, is my reason . . .
Now, from another view . . .
To illustrate the point . . .
Let's turn now to . . .
So much for that . . .
Having this in mind . . .

Continuity in Radio. The need for a smooth flow of talk, music and other sounds through the loudspeaker has made *continuity* a special word in the radio industry. It means text to be read by an announcer, such as introductions of musical numbers, introductions of speakers, commercial announcements and so on. A newscast contains continuity and is a continuity in itself.

In radio there are a half-dozen methods for shifting scenes—silence, fade, narration, musical interlude, a musical tone that is amplified and allowed to die away as the next scene begins, various kinds of sound effects.

In a drama and to some extent in a news dramatization, a sound effect may carry the action from scene to scene. For example, the roar of an airplane motor, the whistle of a boat, the chug of a locomotive or the clicking of wheels on rails may transport the

ANALOGY OF TRAIN AND NEWSCAST



How Items Are Coupled.

listener from place to place. Or a bar of music, say from "Hearts and Flowers," "Stars and Stripes Forever" or "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," instantly creates a mood or setting. The writer of a straight newscast can rely on no such transitional aids. Words, and words alone, are his scenery and he must shift it himself.

We previously pointed out the fundamentals required to secure continuity: (1) proper order with (2) proper connections. Proper order is the concern of the script editor, who sees to it that his topics do not jump helter-skelter from pickles to golf or from bombs to babies, his geographical groups from Midland to Bangkok and back again to Midland. Proper connections within and between items and groups of items are the concern of the writer. If he must—positively must—move from bombs to babies, he still devises a coupling pin to make it clear to the listener that there is a drastic but deliberate change in thought.

Transitions need to increase in strength in ratio to the length of the item. The longer the listener's mind is focused on one topic or area, the more necessary it is to inform him when a shift occurs. Therefore, coupling pins in ten- and fifteen-minute newscasts are more elaborate, though less frequent, than in the shorter five-minute script.

Typical Thought Transitions. Let us dip into the dictionary and seine up a few transition specimens from the vast sea of expressions available to the writer as he leads the listener from one idea to the next. A transition implies action. Each one indicates a movement. In other words, it does or accomplishes something. Here are our specimens and what they do:

(To show order)

<i>first</i>	<i>in addition</i>
<i>second</i>	<i>thereafter</i>
<i>since then</i>	<i>finally</i>
<i>furthermore</i>	<i>next</i>
<i>then</i>	<i>at length</i>
<i>formerly</i>	<i>to conclude</i>
<i>thereupon</i>	<i>to continue</i>

(To emphasize)

moreover	especially
indeed	above all
most of all	in particular

(To illustrate)

for example	to illustrate
like	a case in point
as	to show
for instance	in this case

(To summarize)

to sum up	in general
on the whole	thus

(To change point of view)

on the other hand	in another way
in general	turning to
seriously	speaking of

(To repeat)

in fact	in other words
indeed	also
as well	too
again	once more

(To except)

irrespective of	with this exception
-----------------	---------------------

(To relate)

namely	as long as
along with	whereas
not only	the more

(To contrast)

nevertheless	yet
in spite of	but
otherwise	on the other hand
unless	even so
in contrast to	on the contrary

(To digress)

incidentally	by the way
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	(To resume)	
well		now that
now		to continue
	(To refer)	
regarding		in reference to
as to		with relation to
speaking of		in connection with
	(To show purpose)	
to this end		for this purpose
for this reason		having this in view
	(To compare)	
similarly		likewise
in the same manner		in the same way
like		also
	(To show cause and effect)	
because		this being the case
thus		consequently
accordingly		as a result of
hence		therefore
for		thereby
	(To clarify)	
in fact		as a matter of fact
to be sure		in other words
	(To assume)	
of course		obviously
no doubt		undoubtedly
naturally		clearly
	(To show uncertainty)	
perhaps		maybe
probably		possibly

Transitions As News Elements. The headings in the foregoing list indicate what the writer is seeking to accomplish. In news writing the transition also may help to accentuate a basic news element and thereby directly increase the newsworthiness of an

CONTINUITY IN GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

FOURSCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

NOW WE ARE ENGAGED IN a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that the nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

BUT, IN A LARGER SENSE, we cannot dedicate--we cannot consecrate--we cannot hallow--this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

IT IS FOR US, THE LIVING, RATHER, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

IT IS RATHER FOR US to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us--that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

. . . Abraham Lincoln

Speech Warmup and Coupling Pins.

item. Here are examples of coupling pins giving point to the news elements as discussed in "What's News—and Why?"

Immediacy—meanwhile, shortly thereafter, now, later on, at last, formerly, previously, all this time, simultaneously, just before, coincident with, earlier in the day, while, at the same time, in the near future, nowadays, a new development, on the heels of, soon after.

Proximity—nearby, here at home, locally, in this area, closer to home, not far away.

Consequence—of more significance, especially important, of more widespread interest, of deeper concern to.

Prominence—as you know, more widely known, as you'll recall.

Drama—mystery surrounds, in the spotlight, in the limelight, as a climax to, the last act.

Oddity—believe it or not, of all things, a new wrinkle, strange as it may seem.

Conflict—in defiance of, squared off against, in the other corner, at odds with, in blunt words, making a sharp attack, opening fire on.

Sex—on the distaff side of the news, in the realm of romance, of interest to women.

Emotions—tragic news comes from, here's a smile, in a lighter vein, on the more serious side of the news.

Progress—another scientific advance, blazing a new trail, in the vanguard of.

Shifting the Locale. Since large sections of a script, if not the entire show, are likely to be arranged by the editor in geographical groups, the writer finds himself constantly in need of words and phrases as signposts to tell the listener where he has been, where he is and where he is going.

General geographical transitions include such expressions as "eastward," "to the north," "nearby," "in the neighborhood," "close to," "returning," "back in," "on the other side," "elsewhere"

and so on. The following are among the more specific transitions between major geographical groups:

(Foreign)

Now the news from abroad . . .
 A spin of the globe takes us to . . .
 Half a world away . . .
 On the other side of the world . . .
 In the world down under . . .
 On the opposite side of the globe . . .
 Across the Atlantic . . .

(Domestic)

In the nation's capital . . .
 Elsewhere in the nation . . .
 On the national news front . . .
 Here in the United States . . .
 On this side of the Atlantic . . .
 Within our home borders . . .
 In this country . . .

(Local)

Here at home . . .
 Now the local news . . .
 In Midland . . .
 In our own city . . .
 Back in our own town . . .
 Now for a glance at the local scene . . .

Look for the Bridge Ahead. As he nears the end of an item an experienced newscast writer often pauses, picks up and inspects the next piece of raw material. He does this because he knows that he needs to span the two items with a transition and that a bridge has two ends—one stretching back and the other ahead.

A transition need not always be confined to the beginning of an item. It may start as the last word, phrase or sentence of the preceding item. Or the writer may purposely arrange the item so that the final part of it gives him a natural steppingstone to the next one. To use the bridge analogy again, he thus can build an approach to the next span.

Assume that one item concerns a shortage of granary space and the next a bigamy arrest. The writer might contrive to end the granary item with *too much wheat* so that he could begin the next, "Not too much wheat but too many wives . . ." An item about a gun fight might be ended with *bullets* so that the next about a forthcoming election would start, "Ballots rather than bullets . . ." Or if one item concerns a heat wave it could be ended with a phrase like *soaring temperatures* to be echoed in the next, about a debate, "And temperatures also soared at a meeting of . . ."

Such verbal turnstiles continually suggest themselves to the radio writer. His mind attracts them like a magnet and he usually finds that he has several to choose from. If he chooses well, his entire script blends together into a coherent whole.

Be Colorful, But Don't Judge. There is no reason for a coupling pin to be dull and stodgy merely because it is not an integral part of the story. Indeed, it often can be brightened with a bit of sound color, retouching as well as shifting the scenery, thus:

Through the warm, blue waters of the Mediterranean . . .
 On the moonlit sands of Miami Beach . . .
 Across the freezing steppes of the Soviet . . .
 Prowling through a pea-soup fog . . .
 Another saga of courage under fire . . .

One of the ever-present dangers in choosing a live coupling pin is a tendency to editorialize by hanging an opinionated label on an item. The beginner is inclined to introduce every item with a tag like "Here's good news" or "Here's bad news." It is rare indeed that good news for somebody is not bad news for somebody else. Good news for the buyer is bad news for the seller. Good news for the victor is bad news for the loser. And good news for cats is bad news for birds.

Remember that your audience is composed of persons with every shade of opinion. Each one feels entirely competent to decide for himself whether the news affects him favorably, adversely or not at all. Give him the facts and let him draw his own conclusions.

Also avoid judging the value of the news aloud with phrases like "And now more important news" or "Here's big news." It is unwise to characterize a story as "amazing," "astonishing," "extraordinary," "exciting" or even "interesting." Again, your listener may violently disagree. Leave it to his own judgment.

SHOP TALK

1. Choose two students to discuss a campus event for several minutes. Note down the transitions in their conversation.
2. Why are transitions more necessary to radio than to the newspaper, moving pictures, the stage and the platform?
3. Read aloud several lengthy passages from a Shakespearean play, commenting on warmups and coupling pins.
4. Make a list of radio sound effects and musical numbers used to set moods and achieve continuity.
5. Do you think transitions in the average radio newscast are overemphasized, underemphasized or about right?

CHAPTER XX

Keeping the News Fresh

What's New? Immediacy is the first element of news. It has other qualities, but no one or combination of them is strong enough to substitute wholly for newness which wears away as the unyielding hands of the clock swing around.

What is newness? The answer is not simple. It is untrue to say that newness characterizes only events that have just occurred. Happenings a week ago—even centuries ago—may be news when disclosed for the first time today. Nor is it accurate to say that newness merely is a quality of something heretofore unknown but now revealed. Unknown to whom? What Smith heard a while ago may be new to Jones who has yet to hear it. Let us say, then, that newness in a radio story is measured by the ratio of listeners to whom it seems to be new.

Unfortunately, it becomes necessary at times to substitute synthetic for real newness, thereby making aging and worn news seem new to the listener. Because news events are real, not imaginary, they do not occur to suit the convenience of news handlers who may not, like the authors of fiction, “dream up” things to broadcast. They must take the news as it comes, and it comes unevenly.

Seasonally there is a familiar “summer slump,” with people on vacation, schools closed, legislative bodies adjourned and public offices in the doldrums. Also there are up-and-down curves on the daily news chart. After an overnight drop to near-nothingness, general news picks up a bit at breakfast time, lifts again as morning

activities are reported at noon, soars to a peak in late afternoon and then levels out during the evening.

Further, newscast-makers are dependent upon their sources of supply. Press associations budget and file for PM and AM newspapers which require copy from 7 to 9 A.M. and from 4 to 6 P.M. respectively. Copy from the *Midland Times*, a morning paper, is most plentiful during the latter period.

However, even the normal ebb and flow of news is not to be counted on. Veterans say that "runs" of copy are like runs of cards, that it is usually calm just before the big breaks which arrive in rapid succession.

When the breaks do come, a script editor has no selection troubles. He figuratively tosses his cards into the wastebasket and plays with the new deck.

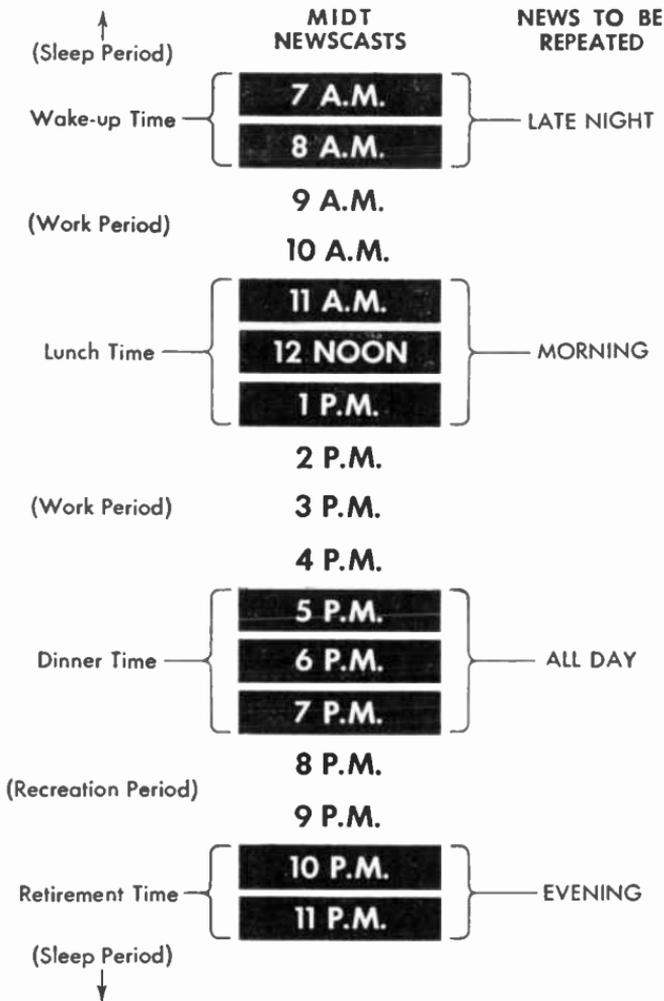
However, the periods of calm outlast the periods of storm, and more often than not there are too few really new stories to make up a program. The problem then is one of repetition and how to freshen the wilted stories so as to make them seem new and appetizing after they are broadcast several times.

Repeating in the Newscast. The radio consumes major news copy rapidly—much faster than a newspaper. The *Midland Times*, for example, prints three editions daily to cover the happenings of a twenty-four-hour period, but MIDT broadcasts a show every hour from 7 A.M. to 11 P.M. Much of the broadcast news needs to be revised from hour to hour for the benefit of those who have heard the same essential facts before.

But the script editor may not assume that every potential listener is at his loudspeaker to hear each newscast. New listeners are switching in constantly and the headline repetition is necessary for them even within a single five-minute newscast. The obligation of the scriptmen to these newcomers may be compared to that of a spot newscaster at a football or baseball game. He must give the score at frequent intervals.

When a regular newscast listener misses a show, he has missed that show forever. And as we have seen in studying audience dis-

HOURS WHEN REPETITION IS NECESSARY



Newscasts Which Require Freshening.

tribution, only a select few listen during normal sleeping and at-work periods. The mass audience mounts during the awake-and-at-home hours. Repetition then is mandatory. Also to be considered are the station's nonnews audiences. The second newscast breaking into a highly popular program obviously should not repeat too much of the first which was heard by the same listeners.

Thus as the radio situation varies, it indicates the make-up and treatment of the newscast, calling for revival as well as revision in conformity to the broadcast hour.

With his news impermanent and his audience made up of intangibles—those informed and those uninformed—the script editor seeks to balance realities and often ends with a compromise. He can satisfy some of the listeners all the time; all, some of the time; but not all, all the time.

The News Serial Story. Three invisible questions symbolize the mind of the news-consuming public: What is going to happen? What has happened or is happening? What happened afterward?

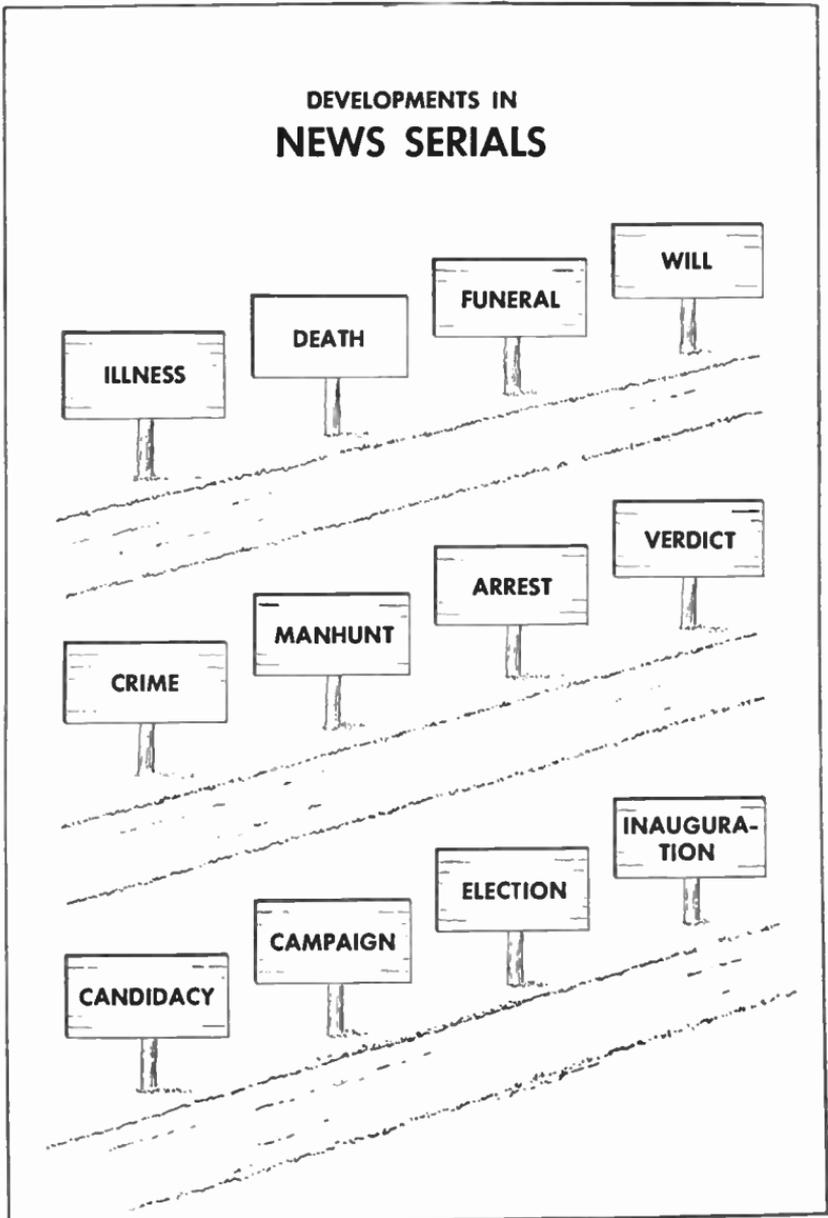
Stories which supply the answers fall in one of three classifications: (1) an *advance*, (2) *spot news* and (3) a *follow-up*. Advance stories foretell events expected to occur. Spot news stories deal with events which have just occurred or are occurring now. And follow-up stories, also called second-day stories in newspaper offices, are sequels to events that have occurred. The three descriptions are applied to parts or angles of stories as well as to complete reports.

These classifications, which show the time of occurrence in relation to the time of publication, come from newspaper office parlance. In using them it is important that the radio scriptman perceive the differences between the newspaper day and the broadcasting day.

Except in rare cases a newspaper never reprints yesterday's story in today's issue. It does, however, carry many stories unchanged through all editions of the same date but it revises others which develop during the publication period. Newscasts correspond not to issues, but to editions of a newspaper.

The parallel fails to hold at one important point. Few readers

DEVELOPMENTS IN NEWS SERIALS



Follow-Up News Mileposts.

subscribe to or buy more than one edition of a newspaper. Those who do read a new edition glance at the headlines and ignore stories read previously. The radio listener has no way to detour repetition. He cannot switch his ears without switching his dial, that is, discarding his air-borne newspaper. Hence every story must be completely rewritten, if not revised, in every newscast.

Some stations repeat entire newscasts verbatim several times during the wake-up-breakfast-go-to-work period on the theory that there is a rapid audience turnover. Such repetition, however, tends to drive away otherwise continuous listeners.

Repeat stories may be divided into two groups—those in which the actual facts remain in *status quo* and those in which there are new, additional facts. The former is a rewrite story; the latter, a true follow-up. Let us first consider the treatment of the true follow-up—the fresh chapter in a serial news drama.

Some situations unfold naturally. Romances culminate in engagements, engagements in weddings and weddings in honeymoons. Illness ends with recovery or death, death with a funeral and disclosure of the contents of a will. Nominations move into campaigns followed by elections and inaugurations. Major crimes result in manhunts, arrests, arraignments, indictments, trials, verdicts, sentences and punishments. These are familiar serial plots.

It is the task of the reporter rather than the radio rewrite man to discover new facts. Before these new facts reach the radio newsroom they are usually merged into a revised story. The true follow-up story comes in a standard pattern.

The New Angle and Tie-In. In a follow-up story as prepared for print, there are three essentials: the *new lead*, setting forth the fresh development; the *tie-in*, a brief synopsis of what has gone before; and *new detail*. An example:

(New Lead)

Tired, cold and hungry but otherwise unhurt, two Midland boys, Harold Ruskin, 12, and Peter Grant, 9, were safely removed last night from a homemade raft tossing on wind-whipped Lake Luce two miles off the Municipal pier.

(Tie-In)

Crewmen aboard a launch sent out by the Midland Yacht club reached and rescued the boys after sighting the raft by the glare of parachute flares. The youngsters, caught in a storm while fishing, had drifted for 12 hours without food or water.

(New Detail)

"We tipped over once and I thought we were goners," Harold related at the home of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. T. S. Ruskin, 2634 Springfield avenue . . .

If the background of a story is well understood, the tie-in may consist of only a single phrase, woven into the lead paragraph, as follows:

Mayor Nelson today gave his approval to an ordinance extending to June 15 the time for payment of water bills as *recommended by the Midland Civic society last Thursday.*

Sunny skies and a warm breeze, *following a week of rain and snow,* gave Midland a taste of spring today. The temperature climbed to within one degree of the record set for the date in 1927.

Writing the Radio Follow-Up. The three essentials of the follow-up—new angle, tie-in, details of the new angle—go into the radio news item as well as the newspaper story. However, the similarity pertains to content and not necessarily to arrangement.

Always in writing a straight news story the reporter or rewrite man pushes his newsiest point to the front. Always in writing a straight news radio item the scriptman begins with a warmup or transition which may or may not include the tie-in.

Let us examine the raft story from the point of view of a radio writer preparing item one from the newspaper version before him. First we merely place a warmup at the start:

A search for two Midland boys lost on a raft since early afternoon has ended. The two lads now are safe at home.

Now a simple radio rewrite of the original story:

Tired, cold and hungry but otherwise unhurt, Harold Ruskin, twelve years old, and Peter Grant, aged nine, were rescued at 10:25 P.M. Their homemade raft was found tossing on wind-whipped Lake Luce two miles off the Municipal Pier. A launch sent out by . . .

Let us now reconstruct the story again, this time using the original tie-in as a warmup:

A launch sent out by the Midland Yacht Club has reached and rescued two boys afloat on Lake Luce. Crewmen on the launch sighted the boys' raft by the glare of parachute flares. They had been caught in a storm while fishing, and drifted for twelve hours without food or water.

Now we go back to the original new lead and continue:

The lads rescued are Harold Ruskin, twelve years old, and Peter Grant, aged nine. They were tired, cold and hungry but otherwise unhurt, when the launch found their homemade craft tossing in the wind two miles off the Municipal Pier.

The same reversal of arrangement may be applied to the shorter tie-ins:

The Midland Civic Society recommendation for delay in the payment of water bills has been signed into law. Mayor Nelson today gave his approval to an ordinance extending the deadline to June 15th.

After a week of rain and snow Midland is enjoying a taste of Spring today. Sunny skies and a warm breeze have sent the thermometer soaring. It has reached a point within one degree of the record set for this date in 1927.

The terms used in this chapter are not to be confused with the radio serial drama *lead-in* and *lead-out*. The serial drama *lead-in* is an introduction by announcer or narrator, usually referring to the preceding installment and helping to set the opening scene of the new installment. The *lead-out* is a closing comment with an

invitation, direct or implied, to listen to the next installment. It also should be made clear that the tie-in as used here differs from the transition or coupling pin which also is sometimes called a tie-in because it ties one item to another.

Freshness Without Newness. In each of the stories so far cited an actual new development provided the fresh angle. However, the newscast writer must revise a large number of his items, perhaps half of them on the average, from the identical copy used for preceding scripts.

Unlike the newspaper reporter he cannot dig up a new angle by personal investigation. But he can freshen a story in several ways. Clips from an editorial library may give him a clue. Or he may find in the copy before him an angle that was overlooked or played in a minor key in the earlier versions—perhaps a motive or cause—which can be made into a theme. Or a happy new phrase or two may pop into his mind. With no new facts he can still dress up a story with an altered arrangement, a new approach and new phraseology in his rewrite.

A story worth repeating usually contains more than one angle. Observe how the radio writer can obtain a semblance of freshness by a shift of emphasis to a feature not stressed by his predecessor:

ORIGINAL STORY

Chicago, Nov. 9.—The National Grandmother's club today asked Congress to do something about an annual Grandmother's Day. Mrs. Bea Good of Medina, N. Y., president, told delegates to the club's annual convention that Congress should make the day the first Sunday in October.

"We have a Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Children's Day," Mrs. Good said, "but nothing for grandma."

She was heartily applauded by 200 delegates whose fashionable make-ups belied their ages. The grandmothers, rouged and manicured, wore furs, bright dresses and feathered hats. One had a purple dress, green gloves and a red hat perched on a permanent wave.

"Sometimes I think we're ahead of the times," declared Mrs.

Grace A. Gray of Mitchell, Ind., secretary of the club. Mrs. Gray, who raises horses, believes that life really begins at 60.

Each of the grandmothers wore a pin with a bar for each grandchild. The one worn by Mrs. Ella Godec of Chicago hung nearly to her waist. It had 17 bars.

FIRST RADIO VERSION

Grandma has gone modern. She has traded knitting for a permanent wave and her rocker for a job. If you think there's anything old-fashioned about grandma you should be at the annual convention of the National Grandmother's Club in Chicago. You would see two hundred smartly rouged and manicured ladies in costumes that would flatter campus coeds . . .

SECOND RADIO VERSION

Life begins at forty? Don't you believe it! Life begins at sixty -- and there is Grandmother Grace Gray of Mitchell, Indiana, to prove it. Missus Gray is secretary of the National Grandmother's Club in convention at Chicago. Says Missus Gray -- "Sometimes I think we're ahead of the times". . .

THIRD RADIO VERSION

If you see a lady wearing a ladder-like lapel pin with crisscross bars don't jump at conclusions. She hasn't joined the Army nor is she necessarily a crack shot. She is a grandmother and each bar stands for one grandchild. Missus Ella Godec is wearing one with seventeen bars at the annual convention of the National Grandmother's Club in Chicago. It hangs nearly to her waist . . .

The proximity value of a story sometimes can be increased by lifting out and stressing a local angle in the radio item. The key to localization lies in a rearrangement of the facts so that a feature of special concern to the station's community is played up.

Don't Forget the Clock. On the theory that radio listeners are accustomed to bulletins and expect last-minute news only, writers sometimes seek to inject a synthetic flash-flash and bang-bang into each aging story.

This author does not share in the notion that radio listeners want only thrills and chills in their newscasts. The stunt era is over.

Radio-wise audiences recognize stale news for just what it is, especially if it has been broadcast several times previously or has appeared in the newspapers.

Rather than cry "Wolf!" too often, it is sometimes better to say candidly, "This occurred at 3 P.M." or "Two hours ago." Occasionally, if suspense is strong and repetition mandatory, listeners appreciate a frank statement that there has been no fresh word on such-and-such an event since yesterday.

It is poor practice, of course, to date a story back to last night or yesterday unless the very lack of developments is news in itself. "Yesterday" is a word forced upon morning newspapers because their news occurred the day before the publication date. By the same token, afternoon papers usually pry a "today" into a story lead to emphasize that they print "today's news today."

The radio news writer is under no such compulsion. He uses "today" and "yesterday" only if they clarify the time element. They tend to throw him into the newspaper past tense and thus out of the conversational present tense.

You cannot fool the listener, however, by deliberately being vague. If an event happened shortly before midnight and you are writing an 8 A.M. newscast, you lose nothing by stating when it occurred. The listener reflects, "of course it's eight hours old but it's still news to me because I've been asleep."

If the clock gives a time advantage to the newscast—and it often does because of speedy radio transmission of news—radio writers exploit that advantage. Newness and nowness are high-lighted if the time of occurrence can be specified as recent. Warnups and transitions abound with phrases to emphasize timeliness, such as:

- A last-minute dispatch . . .
- Just ten minutes ago . . .
- Within the hour . . .
- Less than thirty minutes have passed since . . .

An MIDT copy rule calls for the translation of time into local or Midland time, thus enabling the listener to reckon the time in terms of his own clock and his own activities.

Foreshadowing the Future. The immediacy factor in news works both ways—into the future as well as into the past. Tonight's event is newsier than tomorrow's, tomorrow's is newsier than next week's and next week's is newsier than next year's. Generally speaking, radio is more concerned with immediate than future events, as compared to the newspaper with space for detailing plans and programs.

When written in the future tense about something that is scheduled or planned to occur, your item may be just as remote as if it concerned something which did occur in the distant past. As the occurrence becomes more imminent it gains in news value. Script editors working with copy prepared for newspapers need to keep this in mind. If an event has not yet happened, it is absurd to say, "Oh, that's old. We used a story on it yesterday."

Foretell, but don't prophesy. Nothing is quite certain in this world and no radio writer should presume to be a soothsayer or an oracle. For example, do not say that the ball game will be played; say that the ball game is scheduled to be played. Rain may cancel it. Do not write that the speaker will say. Write that the speaker is expected to say or that he says such-and-such in an address prepared for delivery. He may send regrets or even become ill while speaking and never reach the remarks that you quote. The safe rule is: Always add reservations to save the face of your newscast if things turn out wrong and it doesn't happen.

SIOP TALK

1. Can you think of any events in the historical past which develop spot news today?
2. Why is the news supply curve low at 3 A.M., higher at 7 A.M. and noon, at its peak at 7 P.M. and high at 11 P.M.?
3. How often should a spot newscaster at a football game give the score? Should an important news fact be repeated so often?
4. Is there too much or too little repetition of radio news? Discuss repetition from the points of view of the individual and the mass of listeners.
5. Define and discuss the following terms: new lead, tie-in, follow-up, second-day, lead-in, lead-out, spot news, advance.

CHAPTER XXI

Accuracy and Objectivity

The Will To Do Right. The preparation of news for conveyance to the public has been likened to many other kinds of human endeavor. It has been called an art, and with reason, for certainly the news writer's display of literary talent is comparable in some measure to the artistic skill of a painter, sculptor or musician. It has been called a business. Again the comparison is sound. News is a commodity for sale at a profit by newspapers or radio stations which are business enterprises.

Such analogies, like those of the blind men who found that an elephant resembled a tree trunk, a rope and the side of a barn, are true but incomplete. News handling includes artistic and commercial phases. But it may also be compared plausibly to a science and a game—a science because it should be factual and a game because it should observe the rules of fair play. It is these important obligations of the newsman that we discuss in this chapter.

In probably no other workshop, except the laboratory of the pure scientist, is the premium on—and the ratio of—accuracy so high as in the press or radio newsroom. As a member of the news fraternity, the script writer-editor makes a scientific approach to each problem and he solves it strictly in accord with what is, what has been or what will be.

The newsman deals only in facts—never in fairy tales or fiction. Like a scientist he seeks out the truth. But veracity alone is not sufficient. Like a sportsman, he must dispense it without unduly trespassing on the rights of others.

Accuracy and objectivity—these are pilot lights of the writer-editor. He may not regard them merely as two remote and academic words. Unless honesty and fair play are ingrained in his code of conduct—the pilot lights watched constantly—his voyage into radio journalism is bound in shallows and in miseries.

There is no maudlin sentiment in the warning that a person who is prone to push people around or to inflict needless injustice on others should stay out of journalism. Newsmen need to be men of good will.

The Premium on Accuracy. News in essence must be reliable. Its trustworthiness as an unadulterated product is comparable to that required of meat and bread. Bakers and butchers boast of the purity of their products. News must meet even higher standards. Foodstuffs such as meat can be sold by grades. There is but one acceptable grade of accuracy in news—perfection.

Accuracy, like purity, pays off. The highest tributes that can be paid to a radio news organization are, "I believe it because I heard it over MIDT" or "Of course it's so if MIDT says it's so." Such confidence means more than merely satisfied customers. A broadcaster, like a family doctor, is an intimate home visitor whose income grows from a reputation for reliability.

We have pointed out that accuracy alone is not a complete justification for broadcasting news. It is not only unsportsmanlike but illegal to make public certain kinds of information, no matter how accurately it is reported and written. Further, some statements may be accurate without being the entire truth or they may be both accurate and biased. Statements in these categories will be discussed in succeeding chapters. For the moment it is sufficient to say that accuracy is the backbone of proper news presentation. Without it news ceases to be news and sinks to the level of hearsay and gossip.

Sentries—Front and Rear. Responsibility for the accuracy of news seldom falls upon a single person. On guard between the newspaper reporter and actual publication stand the rewrite man,

THREE MOTTOES IN THE
SCRIPTMAN'S CREED

**BE
ACCURATE**

**BE
OBJECTIVE**

**BE
FAIR**



RADIO NEWS WRITER

How To Guard Your Copy.

the city or telegraph editor, news editor, copyreader and proofreader. Each checks on the accuracy of the man who passes the news along to him.

Working as he does midway along the news supply line from reporter to microphone, the radio scriptman is in the position of a householder with good watchdogs at the front door but poor ones at the back. As a rewrite man, he receives news previously gathered, written and inspected. Thus he is strongly protected at the front. But because his product passes quickly through fewer hands as it goes from typewriter to microphone, his rear defenses against inaccuracy are weaker. Let us examine more closely these sentries, front and rear.

Much of the radio news raw material comes from and through one of the major press services—Associated Press, United Press and International News Service. The AP defines “the presentation of truthful information” as a fundamental. A UP executive told *Editor & Publisher*, “Our responsibility . . . is to make our news dispatches absolutely factual, forthright and honest.” An INS official cites the need to “seek out . . . the truth, as accurately and impartially as is humanly possible.” The press services not only honor accuracy but have the know-how to insure a high standard of trustworthiness.

Other wellsprings of radio news raw material—newspaper staffs and newspapers themselves—likewise screen their stories for accuracy before they reach the desk of the scriptman. Thus the radio processor can customarily rely on the basic data reaching his desk. The danger of inaccuracy is greater after the news leaves his typewriter and moves through the comparatively few and hasty checks to the air.

In some radio newsrooms there is no check at all. A newscaster who writes, edits and delivers his own script is without any safeguard beyond his own care. At MIDT the script passes through the hands of three persons—the script editor who serves as copyreader, the teletype operator and the announcer. The script editor is a bulwark against errors but, unlike a city editor, he seldom is able to call back a reporter for clarification. Nor does he have as

much time for revision as the newspaper copyreader. The teletype operator and announcer are helpful but are handicapped by lack of the original copy for comparison purposes. The burden of avoiding inaccuracy therefore falls most heavily on the writer. He needs to be ever vigilant against the danger of distortion as he rewords and rephrases the facts in front of him.

Words To Be Watched. The first lesson learned by a cub reporter is to get names and addresses right. And an elementary rule for the script writer is to transcribe them accurately. Errors in a surname or initial can cause plenty of trouble. This one, for example:

The police have nabbed a suspect in the Midland Fur Company robbery. John Hankins is in the Midland County jail charged with burglary.

In this case the copy identified the man arrested as "John E. Hankins of 720 Elm street." The script writer, in the habit of sacrificing middle initials and addresses to save space, did so, and a complaint came from John H. Hankins of 1109 Tremont Street, an innocent victim of the carelessness.

If your copy says "He gave his address as 1354 Winthrop avenue" do not write it "He lives at 1354 Winthrop Avenue." Perhaps he has given a false address and the reporter qualified it purposely.

For the sake of sound color do not deviate from accuracy in the use of verbs. In processing the testimony of a witness, for example, do not make over "he said" into "he admitted," or "he asserted" into "he conceded." A statement that someone "hints at" carries an innuendo not so pronounced in "suggests" or "indicates." Be wary of "pointed out that." Reserve "pointed out" for statements of incontrovertible fact. Don't assume that it's accurate because somebody says it's so.

The radio writer needs to be on the alert for words pronounced almost alike although different in spelling or meaning. Be careful with such a name as "Cohen," which sounds like "Cohn" or

“Colan.” It’s best to identify beyond a doubt. Spell out a name if there is danger of confusion when it is read aloud.

If the copy says she “plunged” from the window, don’t change it to “fell” or “jumped.” Use “plunge,” make it “fell or jumped” or go directly to the fact that she was found on the sidewalk below the window. “Fell” labels the descent as an accident, “jumped” as a suicide. “Plunged” is noncommittal.

Keep an eye on the word “not” or your typing fingers may click out “now.” Remember, too, that “not” must be spaced out. No examples are needed to show the havoc which the use of “now” for “not” can wreak on accuracy.

Double meanings dig pits of error for unsuspecting writers to fall into. You can usually detect them by reading your script back to yourself as you write.

Accuracy v. Objectivity. Accuracy is a somewhat simple and easy-to-understand virtue common to all ethical purveyors of public intelligence and enlightenment—at least to all in America. A deliberate inaccuracy is first cousin to falsehood, which is a fancy word for lie.

But when the straight newscast writer seeks objectivity, defined as “the tendency to view events and ideas apart from self-consciousness” and synonymous with “impersonal,” he finds himself parting company with some others in the news fraternity—in particular the editorial writer and the commentator.

The right of fair comment and criticism is a privilege guaranteed under the Constitution as interpreted by the courts, and jealously guarded by alert citizens as fundamental to freedom of the press and of the air. The clear-thinking radio writer-editor—indeed any person with a part in the publishing or broadcasting business—properly aligns himself with these defenders of liberty and with Voltaire, who declared: “I hate to the death what you say but I will defend with my life your right to say it.” But as a worker, the straight newscast scriptman must draw the line sharply between neutral news and personal opinion. He is rigidly objective.

Newspapers may openly enunciate policies, codify these policies

into platforms, adopt slogans and express them by the concentration of space and attention on a matter deemed of public importance. Although a radio station does not have an editorial policy, a news commentator may ethically analyze and elucidate if he remains free from bias. As the word "commentator" implies, he may comment, using the personal "I." The straight newscast writer may neither comment personally nor use the personal "I."

These distinctions were made clear in Chapter II and they are restated here only as a prelude to discussion of the ways and means used to attain and maintain objectivity.

Objectivity should be active—not passive. The writer-editor needs to develop consciously an attitude of impartiality which will never permit him to offer an opinion, make accusations or indulge in speculation. The moment he becomes embroiled in what he is writing about he ceases to be a neutral observer and becomes instead a propagandist.

Have Authority and Cite It. Nobody is going to take issue when you say that cats are four-legged animals. Nor will anyone disagree to take offense if you assert that two and two make four or that the world is round and not flat. On the contrary, people would jeer if you wasted their time in naming an authority to prove such universally accepted truisms.

However, there are many news statements that are not universally accepted but, on the contrary, are extremely controversial. Since conflict is a strong element in the news, the writer-editor finds himself constantly handling these red-hot pokers. He may do so with immunity by following these rules: Never write or edit so as to place yourself, your newscast or your station in the position of standing in judgment, voicing an opinion or drawing a conclusion. If the subject is controversial be sure you have an authority—and cite that authority specifically.

Make it a standing rule to credit to reputable witnesses or sources every statement of fact not generally known to be true, especially if unconfirmed by an official source. Do not omit this credit for the sake of saving words.

Although the source or authority in press service or newspaper copy usually is competent it is well for the script writer to scrutinize it. Accurate observation is rare and it is far from easy to tell the truth. ~~An authority needs to be authoritative—an official, an expert, an eyewitness, a person in a position to know the facts.~~

How explicit you need to be in identifying your source depends on the degree of confirmation or controversy. If the poker is barely warm, a light reference will do. If it is red hot, cite name, chapter and book. If it is glowing white, pin down your source with rivets and hedge it with those steel double bars—quotation marks. Here are a few fool's-gold qualifications which provide no protection whatever:

*it was learned
reports have it
it is said
believed to be
statistics show*

*it is understood
speculation is rife that
what is termed
according to reports current in
authorities say*

Anything that is “understood” or “learned” is true and any qualification is a waste of words.

Each one of these and all similar nonspecific credits are taboo in MIDT newscasts. They serve only to clutter up copy without affording the slightest exemption from station responsibility for the accuracy of the statement. It is exactly as dangerous to write, “It is said that the man is a thief” as to write, “Station MIDT brands the man as a thief.”

Of little more value in avoiding the onus of personal judgment are phrases like “police say,” “according to the district attorney’s office,” “in diplomatic circles,” “political leaders feel” and so on.

The beginner asks: Suppose no source is given in my copy. Then what? The answer is this: If the writer has copy, then he has authority. At MIDT, for example, two of the primary news sources are the AP and the *Midland Times*. Each of these institutions is an authority in itself and may be cited. If the Associated Press announces a fact obtained from a “reliable source” or the *Midland Times* carries a statement from “unimpeachable authority,” you

may credit the AP or the *Times*, for even if they keep the source of a story confidential it may be taken for granted that their reporters vouch for its accuracy.

Don't Take Sides. The essence of objectivity is neutrality but it calls for more than merely a passive attitude. The writer may not just say to himself: "Ho, hum! I'll keep out of this fight. It's no concern of mine." Battle flames along the news front and the scriptman must enter it—not as a belligerent but as a noncombatant determined to choose his words and dispense his space with even-handed impartiality.

The newscast writer may profit by a word to the wise from an on-the-spot sports announcer. Asked if he was biased in favor of either team, he replied: "Sure, I'm biased. I'm biased for both teams. I never see the fumbler—not much of him, anyway. I'm off down the field with the runner."

Unfortunately, the honest news writer does not always find himself with two "teams" before him and thus able to strike a happy medium. More often his copy carries only one side of a controversy. Working reporters know how hard it is sometimes to get both sides of a story. They try but often fail because of lack of time, inability to reach spokesmen on one side or the other, or refusal by spokesmen on one side to make statements. In presenting only one side it is wise to make it clear that only one side of the controversy is available.

An interval of hours or perhaps days may elapse before a counterattack, say in a political debate, ensues. In that case news of the attack and clear identification of the aggressor goes on the air, and the counterattack, if and when it comes, is treated in an identical fashion. This, of course, requires an over-all objectivity by the radio news editor and his lieutenants.

Newspapers at one time made no effort to be impartial. As partisan organs they took one side of a controversy, sometimes shifting to the other as expediency demanded, and slanted news accordingly. An historical illustration, as shown in an accompanying chart, was the treatment of Napoleon's escape from Elba by

**HISTORICAL EXAMPLE OF
NEWS SLANTING**

**HEADLINES IN PARIS NEWSPAPERS
MARCH 9 TO 22, 1815**

March 9

The Anthropophagus Has Quitted His Den

March 10

The Corsican Ogre Has Landed at Cape Juan

March 11

The Tiger Has Arrived at Cap

March 12

The Monster Slept at Grenoble

March 13

The Tyrant Has Passed Through Lyons

March 14

The Usurper Is Directing His Steps Toward Dijon

March 18

**Buonaparte Is only 60 Leagues From the Capital;
He Has Been Fortunate Enough To Escape His
Pursuers**

March 20

Napoleon Will, Tomorrow, Be Under Our Ramparts

March 21

The Emperor Is at Fontainebleau

March 22

**His Imperial and Royal Majesty Arrived Yesterday
Evening Amid Joyful Acclamations of His Devot-
ed and Faithful Subjects**

Accuracy Minus Objectivity.

Paris newspapers. Such gross exaggeration no longer is in vogue, but some newspapers promote policy by selection and slanting that is not to be tolerated in straight newscast writing.

Suppose the *Midland Times* is supporting a slum clearance program. On page one it displays a statement by Mayor Nelson that "those who oppose the clearance of these outmoded, unsanitary and ugly dwellings lack foresight. To get rid of them means a healthier and cleaner city." The *Midland Gazette*, however, believes that the tenants should not be ousted from their homes without proper new ones being provided. So the *Gazette* gives prominence to a story quoting James Milligrew, head of the Midland Civic Society, who says: "Never has such a cruel and high-handed course been taken by a mayor. Nelson, by a stroke of his pen, would put hundreds of families into the street. It's outrageous."

The MIDT writer has both statements before him. He writes:

The South Side slum clearance project is at issue in a sharp dispute between the Mayor of Midland and the head of the Midland Civic Society. Defending the program, Mayor Nelson says -- and we quote -- "Those who oppose the clearance of these outmoded, unsanitary and ugly dwellings lack foresight." In reply to the Mayor, James Milligrew, president of the Civic Society, declares -- we quote Milligrew -- "Nelson, by a stroke of his pen, would put hundreds of families into the street. It's outrageous" -- end of quotation.

Assuming that the Milligrew statement had been received the next day it certainly would have been used by MIDT if the Nelson statement had been broadcast the day before. Thus MIDT would maintain objectivity.

SHOP TALK

1. What is meant by the "scientific approach" as applied to the handling of news?
2. Do you think it necessary for one or more persons other than the writer to inspect his copy for accuracy before it goes on the air?

3. Should radio stations, like newspapers, have editorial policies and platforms?
4. Would straight newscasts be better if writers were permitted to use the personal "I"?
5. Make a list of "fool's-gold" qualifications in addition to those in this chapter.

CHAPTER XXII

Look Out for the Law

An Ounce of Prevention. There's an old saying among newsroom veterans, "You've never learned until you're burned." Old-timers often quote this bit of cynicism after watching one cub after another wave aside warnings only to learn from a subpoena to court or the loss of his job that freedom of the press and speech does not let him write or say anything he pleases.

Too many radio news novices with more nerve than discretion learn in the hard school of experience. Others, too easily frightened, become so timid that their performance suffers like that of a gun-shy dog. The cure for both ailments—rashness and cowardice—comes from sure knowledge gained by study, observation, training and vigilance.

This chapter does not set forth all there is to learn about news and the law. There are excellent books and full courses of study on this important subject well worth the attention and time of students about to enter journalism. It is wise to go forth as well armed as possible. To keep his newscast out of legal difficulties, a writer-editor need not be a lawyer but he does need to understand the principles and main points of the law as they apply to his handiwork.

Accuracy and objectivity go a long way toward diverting the newsman from the pitfalls of libel and slander. His own sense of fair play provides an even safer shield, for despite devious and sometimes doubtful applications of the law, its purpose is to pro-

tect fundamental human rights. To say, for example, that a man is a thief when he merely has been arrested on a charge of theft is *obviously as inaccurate and unfair as it is slanderous.*

Liberty Is Not License. The first amendment to the Bill of Rights to the Constitution reads as follows: "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press . . ." This momentous guarantee means simply that every person may speak, write and publish his sentiments on all subjects, *being responsible for the abuse of that liberty.* Freedom does not mean license, as shown by this Supreme Court interpretation: "All men have a right to print and publish whatever they deem proper *unless by doing so they infringe upon the rights of another.* For any injury they may commit against the public or individual, they may be punished. . . . The freedom of speech and the press does not *permit the publication of libels, blasphemous, or other indecent articles or other publication injurious to morals or private reputations.*"

Broadly speaking, the abuses forbidden are libel or slander, blasphemy, immoral "publication," sedition and contempt of court. Libel or slander may result in payment of damages to the injured party or parties, or in a fine or imprisonment. Thus, libel may be either civil or criminal. The other four abuses, as they concern radio, may result only in criminal prosecution.

What is libel or slander in the news? In nontechnical language it may be defined as an untruthful printed or broadcast statement which exposes a person or group of persons to public hatred, contempt or ridicule. More simply stated, it is anything that unjustly defames the character of an individual or hurts him in his business, profession or vocation.

Is It Libel or Slander? When the Constitution was framed radio did not exist. Nor did the business of broadcasting come into being during the period when the states enacted and the courts interpreted most of the laws dealing with libel in the press.

Radio arrived long after the newspaper and it is no wonder that

its advent raised the question: Is radio defamation libel or slander? Slander is defamation by word of mouth; libel, written or printed defamation. The question as it concerns radio is not yet fully answered, although the trend of legislative enactments and judicial decisions is toward libel rather than slander because most radio programs are written out and read from script.

Typical of the state laws being enacted to cover radio is that of Illinois, which provides maximum penalties of a five-hundred-dollar fine and a year in jail on conviction of the charge of "knowingly or maliciously being a party to the broadcasting of libel." This statute defines libel as follows: "A malicious defamation broadcast by radio tending to blacken the memory of one who is dead, or to impeach the honesty, integrity, virtue or reputation, or to publish the natural defects of one who is alive, and thereby expose him to public hatred, contempt, ridicule or financial injury."

The slander or libel question is one that needs not be answered by the radio newsman, who should avoid either and both. However, it is well for him to know that the laws of libel are more severe than the laws of slander. Further, the radio is a method of publication whereby a reputation may be more extensively injured than by either slander uttered to an audience within hearing of a human voice or libel printed in newspapers. Therefore it behooves the radio newsman to be even more careful than the platform speaker and the reporter. Also he needs to remember that as a processor of written news he is a megaphone for any libel therein and may be held responsible for putting it on the air.

Said Associate Judge Stanley H. Fuld of the New York Court of Appeals:

"The primary reason assigned by the courts from time to time to justify the imposition of broader liability for libel than for slander has been the greater capacity for harm that a writing is assumed to have because of its wider range of dissemination consequent upon its permanence in form.

"When account is taken of the vast and far-flung audience reached by radio today—often far greater in number than the readers of the largest metropolitan newspaper—it is evident that

the broadcast of scandalous utterances is in general as potentially harmful to the defamed person's reputation as a publication by writing. That defamation by radio, in the absence of a script or transcription, lacks the measure of durability possessed by written libel, in no wise lessens its capacity for harm."

Be Cautious With Crime News. One of the surest ways to damage a reputation and invite a suit for libel is falsely to impute to a person the commission of a crime. This is one of the common causes of trouble because so much news falls into the crime category and the shades of legal innocence and guilt are so difficult to define.

The best safety-first rule is never personally to presume or hint in your script that anyone is guilty of any kind of offense, no matter how overwhelming the evidence. A statement of wrongdoing must come from a privileged source and you should so credit it. We shall discuss privilege in a moment.

Many a newscast has slipped in saying wrongly that a person was arrested. Perhaps a policeman said that a warrant was sworn out, but the arrest was never made. Remember, too, that there are many stages in the development of a crime story and such words as "suspected," "accused," "confessed" or "convicted" must be watched carefully. Potentially libelous words may not be broadcast without qualification. Each of these has been the basis of a libel suit:

<i>abductor</i>	<i>embezzler</i>	<i>loan shark</i>
<i>anarchist</i>	<i>felon</i>	<i>maniac</i>
<i>blackmailer</i>	<i>firebug</i>	<i>outlaw</i>
<i>conspirator</i>	<i>forgery</i>	<i>racketeer</i>
<i>counterfeiter</i>	<i>fraud</i>	<i>shoplifter</i>
<i>criminal</i>	<i>gambler</i>	<i>slacker</i>
<i>crook</i>	<i>grafters</i>	<i>swindler</i>
<i>degenerate</i>	<i>hypocrite</i>	<i>thief</i>
<i>drunkard</i>	<i>impostor</i>	<i>traitor</i>

Most libel suits are based upon statements known as libel per se. Libel per se means that the words used are regarded by common

BEWARE OF LIBEL IN CRIME NEWS



A man wanted for questioning about a death is **not** necessarily
A SUSPECTED SLAYER



A man arrested by the police on a homicide charge is **not** necessarily
A KILLER



A man who is arraigned as a killer is **not** necessarily
AN ACCUSED MURDERER



A man who confesses to a murder is **not** necessarily
A CRIMINAL



A man who is convicted of murder is **not** necessarily
A MURDERER

Dangers in a Homicide Case.

consent as damaging or injurious. Here are more such words: arson, bigamy, bribery, burglary, desertion, larceny, perjury, robbery, seduction, treason.

We have emphasized that the insertion of such phrases as "it is said," "it is alleged," "it is reported," "neighbors say" and "according to police" is worthless in a newscast. Certainly these sham defenses afford no protection from a libel suit. It is no defense that the libelous statement was repeated only after some other person first uttered it.

Reputations and Livelihoods. It may be libelous to attribute to a person any act of moral turpitude whether or not it is punishable as a crime. Words like these reflect upon conduct and character: dead beat, hypocrite, impostor, liar, mistress. Phrases in the danger zone include: guilty conscience, unsavory record, easy money, lucrative racket, notorious neighborhood, phony procedure, public nuisance, scandalmonger, woman of easy virtue.

Statements are libelous per se if they injure a person in his pursuit of a living or deprive him of the fruits of his occupation. Professional men and women rely upon public confidence and to destroy it is dangerous indeed. It is libelous to call a lawyer a shyster, a doctor a quack, a clergyman a hypocrite, a professor an ignoramus, a scientist a pseudo scientist, a public official an incompetent. Little less fragile are the reputations of artisans and skilled workers. You may not impeach their honesty or ability.

Finally, you need to exercise discretion in writing news that may jeopardize business standings or transactions. Banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions, and food distributors are especially vulnerable. "Bankrupt" and "destitute" have both been causes of successful suits for libel. Never insert the name of a business concern or product with a derogatory implication without a complete checkup of your source and justification for doing so.

Public Records Are Privileged. There are so many "don't's" and "can't's" in any discussion of libel that a beginner is apt to wonder how anyone or anything can be described as other than a paragon

PERSONS WHO ARE EASY TO DEFAME



Don't call him

DOCTOR.....A QUACK



LAWYER.....A SHYSTER



CLERGYMAN.....A HYPOCRITE



PUBLIC OFFICIAL.....AN INCOMPETENT



BUSINESS MANA BANKRUPT

Reputations Are Fragile.

of goodness and virtue. How, he asks, can newspapers and news-casts enjoy such latitude in detailing crime, graft and other kinds of human perversity? Clearly material of this sort soils reputations and damages business.

The explanation is—privilege. There is certain information based on public records which a paper may publish and a station may broadcast even though the statements made are damaging. These include virtually all official proceedings, judicial and legislative. Privilege covers the news of an arrest and the charge, or news of the filing of a suit, but the suspicions and theories of police officers are not privileged.

Privilege is conditional, not absolute. The conditions of publication or broadcasting are that the news be a full and accurate report, that it be fair and impartial, that it contain no comment and that it be free of malice.

Here are examples of libelous and privileged news statements:

LIBELOUS

He is said to have murdered his former wife two years ago, but went unpunished.

Police say that Judge Whipple will give the gangsters long terms.

She loaded the gun and fired.

The men conspired to cheat the government.

In a speech at the auditorium he accused Sheriff Fisher of failing in his sworn duty.

PRIVILEGED

Two years ago he was indicted on a charge of slaying his former wife. The case was nol-prossed.

The men under arrest are charged with assault. They will be arraigned before Judge Whipple.

The witness testified that he saw her load the gun and fire.

The indictment charges that the men conspired -- quote -- "to cheat the government" -- end of quotation.

On the floor of the House, the Assemblyman accused Sheriff Fisher of failing in his sworn duty.

The Right of Fair Comment. In order that they may promote the public interest, purveyors of news have special privileges per-

mitting them to criticize fairly the activities of men, measures and institutions in the public eye.

Among the subjects of fair comment and criticism are public officers, candidates for public office, and political affairs; public institutions including colleges, churches, hospitals and organizations such as welfare and civic associations; public speeches, plays, moving pictures, radio programs and works of art.

The theory which underlies the right of fair comment is that individuals or things appearing before the public throw themselves open to criticism transcending that allowable in respect to ordinary folk. However, the comment may not be actuated by malice, allege untruths or extend into private lives.

The right to comment unfavorably upon a public performance was widely publicized as long ago as 1901 in an Iowa Supreme Court decision involving the vaudeville act of the Cherry Sisters. A newspaper reported: "Effie is an old jade of 50 summers, Jessie a frisky filly of 40, and Addie, the flower of the family, a capering monstrosity of 35 . . . Effie is spavined, Addie is stringhalt, and Jessie, the only one who showed her stockings, has legs and calves as classic in their outlines as the curves of a broom-handle." The court held the criticism to be fair comment without malice.

Take note of the fact that the comment, while extremely personal, was confined to appearances on the stage. This one, however, goes out of bounds into private lives: ". . . second-rate performance. Backstage reports say she was upset by a spat with her husband."

Defenses Against Libel Suits. In spite of every precaution, slips in scripts will occur. Once the libel is in the script and on the air, what steps may be taken to lessen the likelihood of court action and to soften the blow if it does come?

"Truth is the best defense," according to an old newsroom adage. In some states truth alone and the ability to prove it is a complete defense. In other states it is necessary to prove that the statement

was made with good motives and for justifiable ends. Other defenses against an action for civil libel are:

Proof that the story was privileged.

Proof that the story was fair comment.

Proof that the story was not actuated by malice.

After the libel is on the air and before a suit is begun or even threatened, the radio news editor has recourse to a move that frequently will soothe hurt feelings, forestall complaints, prevent legal action and serve to reduce damages, although it does not remove the right to sue. This is the broadcasting of a prompt and full retraction.

Wisdom is the better part of valor. As soon as you are sure that you have made a serious error in fact or judgment it is best to acknowledge and rectify it without delay. In other words, once hooked, get off the hook as quickly as you can—on the next regular newscast, if possible. Don't try to bluff your way out of a mistake. Admit it.

Word the apology good-humoredly if you can, but don't try to be facetious if the error was a grave one. And be sure before you broadcast a retraction that you have the correct facts or you may make things worse. In fact, you may make a dangerous admission. For example:

In our newscast an hour ago we quoted the police as saying that Josiah Larkin had been arrested on a charge of beating his wife. Since then Larkin has informed us that the story is untrue and that it was not his wife he was beating.

If you have time, consult a superior who may, if he has time, consult an attorney before broadcasting a retraction. However, it requires no legal advice to put an apology on the air if you know you have erred. Make amends immediately with a "Beg Your Pardon" like this:

In our five o'clock newscast we stated that Doctor Carleton X. Watson had been arrested on a charge of practicing without a license. This statement is erroneous. State's Attorney L-W Johnson informs us that it was caused by a confusion of names. Doctor

Carleton X. Watson is in no way involved in the Johnson inquiry. We regret the error and repeat that Doctor Watson has not been arrested nor is he in any way concerned in the investigation by the State's Attorney.

When in Doubt—Don't! Too often a radio newsroom employee views the law as something for someone else to worry about. He feels, "Oh, well, I'm just a hired man. I write what I'm given to write and told to write. Why should I worry?"

Sooner or later such a worker is due for a rude awakening. The moment you see a danger signal in a story, call it to the attention of your superior. But even if you do, you cannot lay the blame upon him if trouble ensues. The courts consistently have held that every person who passes a libel along the news conveyor belt shares responsibility for the consequences. Writer, editor, announcer and station may all individually or jointly be held liable for damages caused by radio defamation. All who "assist" in the publication or broadcasting are answerable before the law.

Even more disquieting is the fact that a writer or an editor may not safely fall back on his raw material with the excuse: "Here it is in my copy. All I did was to say the same thing in another way." The law does not allow the repetition of a false or libelous statement and it is no defense to show that it came from a source having a reputation for accuracy. While the newscast employee may be exonerated by his employer for accepting a press service or newspaper statement at face value, such a statement in itself is not privileged.

Finally, ignorance of the law and absence of intent to do an injury is no defense. A radio newsman is supposed to know the limits of his trade as well as a bartender or druggist and is presumed to intend the natural consequences of his acts.

If he cannot shift responsibility to his superior, his source or his good intentions, who and what, then, may a scriptman rely upon? The answer is: He must rely upon his own judgment based on discretion and vigilance.

It is axiomatic among libel experts that a majority of suits are

based on trivial items which would not have been missed had they been deleted. Why take a chance with a story of only slight news value? A good rule is: When in doubt—don't!

SHOP TALK

1. What is the difference between civil and criminal libel?
2. Assuming that the number of readers and the number of listeners are the same, do you believe that a libel is more damaging in print or on the air? Why?
3. Discuss the use of such qualifications as "it is said" and "allegedly." Are they ever warranted in radio news copy?
4. Go through a newspaper, inspect the stories and list examples of privilege.
5. Is it just for the law to hold responsible those who only "assist" in the publication or broadcasting of a libel?

CHAPTER XXIII

Danger—Handle With Care!

Good Taste Is Good Sense. The writing and editing of radio news is more than just a job or an occupation. It is one of the professions in the sense that it teaches, informs and advises the public. As such it carries with it responsibilities comparable to those of the teacher, the lawyer and the physician.

The reader who has followed this book has learned the values of accuracy, objectivity and obedience to the laws against libel. He should be aware that carelessness with facts, personal prejudice and ignorance of the statutes cannot long be countenanced in the radio newsroom. But there still is more to learn about the obligations and restrictions imposed upon the writer-editor. Truth, neutrality and legality alone do not insure against violation of the canons of good taste.

What is good taste in the treatment of news? Admittedly it is relative, variable and dependent upon such factors as the era or age, the prevailing sentiment in the community, the medium of transmission to the public and the make-up of the audience. Not so long ago the sight of a cigarette-smoking woman shocked almost everyone. Today it is familiar and commonplace. Liquor drinking is looked upon quite differently in some rural and small-town areas than in big cities.

A radio station, like any other agency in contact with the public, must adapt itself to the accepted standards of the people it serves.

Novels and stage plays may go much further toward blasphemy, profanity and gruesomeness than the movies or newspapers. The

novel-reading and playgoing public are relatively small adult groups, whereas the movies and newspapers are produced for consumption by more general audiences at all age levels. However, both movies and newspapers enjoy more leeway than the radio. Motion-picture theaters can hang up a sign "For Adults Only"; radio stations cannot. And "cold type" in newspapers does not stir the emotional response which is evoked by stimuli received through the ear. This is manifest in the fact that all effective demagogues are speakers rather than writers.

It may be fairly stated, then, that the radio should and does observe more and stricter taboos than novels, plays, movies or newspapers. And, to narrow the circle again, newscasts are more restricted than other types of radio programs—for example, crime and mystery dramas. In common with the newspaper the newscast deals with real people and actual events. Fact carries a stronger impact on the sensibilities than fiction.

News is not all nice. Indeed, much of it deals with extremely unpleasant subject matter which may not be suppressed. It is the responsibility of the writer-editor to determine rightly what should be omitted and what should be done to convey the necessary news without giving undue offense to the heterogeneous radio audience.

Some of the taboos are mentioned by the Communications Act under which the Federal Communications Commission was created. Others are listed by the code of the National Association of Broadcasters. Each network and station has its own special restrictions. Among these regulations there is surprising unanimity on major limitations which tend to be common to the radio industry.

Don't Deride Race, Color or Creed. America is a land of many racial and color groups and the home of peoples with diverse national origins. Our cosmopolitan make-up is evident in every hamlet, town and metropolis. Radio news programs, with the exception of those in non-English languages, reach persons of every strain and extraction.

The questions if and when identification by race is essential to an understanding of the news are subject to varied points of view, but there is no room for doubt as to the grave impropriety of using

anything derogatory to any racial strain or group in a newscast. It is to be avoided like a plague.

Rarely does a writer deliberately aim to cast aspersion upon an ethnic group. The offense is more likely to be caused by an attempt at humor. Many so-called jokes are based upon purported racial characteristics. By means of make-up, costume and gestures, as well as dialect, character actors often emphasize racial peculiarities on the stage. It is almost impossible for a radio newsmen to write acceptable humor based on racial characteristics or dialect. Don't try it.

Next to himself and members of his family there is nothing about which the average person is more sensitive than his religious beliefs. He expects them to be respected; and because the radio audience represents men of many faiths, the makers of newscasts must respect them all. It is an ironclad rule in radio that the Deity's name is acceptable only when used reverently. The same rule of reverence is applicable to news of religion in general. Statements bearing on disputed points of creed and theology need to be qualified, if used, in the same way as other news, but never in a light or slighting way.

Never deride or ridicule such religious ceremonials or sacraments as baptism, marriage and burial, or make a minister the subject of amusement. No matter how odd a religious belief or practice may seem, in your writing respect it as you would your own.

Blasphemy and Profanity. From the thin edge of levity toward religion it is but a step into the pitfalls of blasphemy, profanity and indecency. Radio learned a long-remembered lesson a few years ago from the wave of public agitation caused by a skit based on an imaginary interlude in the Garden of Eden. A national investigation followed. Although the script itself was found to be innocuous, the subject matter was such that its dramatization was criticized as sacrilege.

A majority of radio newsrooms ban anything that smacks of profanity. Even a mild "hell" or a faintly humorous "damn" is forbidden. A few allow the use of these two words if they are uttered by a newsworthy person under extraordinary circumstances. MIDT bars them both on the ground that such situations are too rare to

take the risk. Should another Sherman or Farragut make history with a "hell" or a "damn," MIDT will leave the remark to the history and biography writers just as it leaves modern-day profanity to the stage and novels.

Even worse than profanity on the air is any attempt to scrub it clean by substituting near-but-not-quite profanity such as "darn" for "damn" and "hades" for "hell." Such substitutions are grotesque and ridiculous and serve only to underscore the offense.

It may be noted here that the Communications Act forbids the broadcast of "information concerning a lottery."

It's the Way You Write It. "Sex" is a word with many meanings. To bar sex—in the sense that it motivates human behavior—from the air would be to omit one of the major elements of news. Such a ban would eliminate news of love and romance, marriage and divorce and many other newsworthy activities of mankind. But to broadcast the seamier side of sex—in the sense that it is a synonym for indecency—is simply to traffic in obscenity and vulgarity.

The spicier varieties of sex stories are generally fewer in newscasts than in newspapers, although much depends on the policy of the publication or station. Certainly from time to time stories with strong and seamy sex angles confront the radio writer-editor. He may not suppress them. His problem is mainly one of treatment.

The script editor and writer should, with deliberation, select the pertinent points which they wish to transmit to the audience. Keeping in mind that children as well as adults are listening, the writer then should find the words to express those points without giving offense. No matter how indelicate the situation, all the details necessary to understanding can be included if adroitly though indirectly written. The average adult imagination can fill in the gaps readily enough to grasp the facts. The key to good taste in sex stories is flexibility in the vocabulary of the writer. The most sensational news can be told if written properly.

Of course the disclosure of indelicate material through a camouflage of phraseology requires skill and caution, for an idea conveyed by clumsy implication can be fully as offensive as one set forth by

NEWS STORIES TO
HANDLE WITH CARE

Girl, 16, Victim in Attack;
Police Search for Assailants

**Negro Held
Without Bail**

**Asks Decree On
Adultery Charge**

BLOODSTAIN
A CLUE IN
AX MURDER

**Zoo Exhibits
Rare Reptiles
From Swamps**

**LOSES LEG
IN SMASHUP**

*Garbage Piles
Up; Residents
Protest Odor*

*Clergyman Elopes
With Choir Singer*

Finds New "Cure"

*Seven Stricken After Eating
Tainted Meat At Picnic*

Good Taste Is Needed.

bald assertion. In the preparation of news for broadcasting MIDT and most other stations omit the names of girls who have been victims of sex attacks under a general taboo against identifying minors in any kind of crime story.

Grueness in Crime. How much and what crime news should go on the air are broad questions of policy unsettled among broadcasters themselves. However, for reasons inherent in the medium, radio uses considerably fewer crime reports than the press.

Newsworthy criminal cases are complex and usually call for detailed elucidation in their early stages. This the newspapers can supply. Until they have supplied it to the public, making the principals known and whetting the desire for news of developments, radio news editors are inclined to hold back. Radio crime reports are most effective when the characters are familiar and the stage is set.

Special attention is required in the radio treatment of crimes of violence. Horror on the air often is employed as a device of escapism. But when the horror is real, it can hardly be considered as either escapism or entertainment. It strikes too close to home. Listeners associate it with themselves, their friends and relatives.

We have pointed out that the emotional impact of statements in type is less than that of spoken statements. With this difference in mind, compare the treatments of the following story:

NEWSPAPER

The beaten and slashed body of Mrs. Daisy Blenheim, 27, a divorcee, was found today in the basement laundry room of the apartment building in which she lived. The body lay in a pool of blood, one outstretched hand clutching a reddened bit of cloth which police believe may have been torn from the slayer's clothing. There was no immediate evidence of any rape attempt.

RADIO

The police tonight are investigating the death of Missus Daisy Blenheim whose body has been found in the basement of the apartment building where she lived. Missus Blenheim, who is divorced, was twenty-seven years old. She had been beaten and cut about the head. In her hand the police found a piece of cloth which they are trying to trace.

Tone down the gruesomeness in news scripts. Don't picture victims of crime or accidents having their stomachs shot open or their legs blown off. Give no details of executions or torture. Go easy on screams, moans, sounds of physical pain, death rattles. And never build up a news drama to a blood-chilling shriek. Remember that the newspaper, for which your raw material is prepared, can be more realistic than the newscast.

Observe the comparative treatment of another story:

NEWSPAPER

Red Cross and volunteer workers continued their grim task of gathering hands, legs and arms of the wreck victims. Under the floodlights, the scene was one of nightmarish horror.

RADIO

Red Cross and volunteer workers still are busy at the scene of the wreck. Tonight, aided by floodlights, they are attempting to identify the bodies not yet claimed.

Omit the grim details in writing of deaths and funerals. Simply say the person is dead without a description of his illness, and report that he was buried without picturing the body as the "corpse" or the "remains."

In reports of murders and suicides be careful to omit details which might make them justifiable or inspire imitation. Never specifically name a poison or drug in a suicide or accident story, thus enabling others to employ it.

You Are a Guest. Swift has defined good manners as "the art of making those people easy with whom we converse." As the author of a radio script you are a living-room visitor and must behave like one to remain there. You can be ejected by a flick of the wrist if you make your listeners ill at ease.

There are plenty of sour notes in life, but the place to talk about them is not in mixed company. Here are the kind of notes which spoil either a party or a newscast:

Physical handicaps. Omit unnecessary references to physical infirmities such as blindness, amputated limbs, deformity or insanity. These may be libelous as well as cruel. Above all, avoid using these subjects for humorous effects.

Insects and reptiles. In any audience there are bound to be squeamish persons who dislike these subjects. Leave them strictly alone.

Bodily processes. Talk about the internal functions and disturbances of the human body belongs in the clinic, not on the newscast. Avoid descriptions of symptoms and ailments.

Disagreeable odors and tastes. Don't mention them unless you must. Never describe or dramatize them.

It is well to remember that loudspeakers are located in dining rooms and restaurants as well as living rooms. People are especially sensitive at the table and the writers of mealtime shows should exercise double care to make those people "easy" as they eat.

Don't Doctor or Counsel. Advancement of medical care is a proper function of the radio as well as the press. The dissemination of facts about public health as shown in illness, death and birth rates, in the increase or decrease of diseases and methods of control, serves as a stimulus to that end.

There is a wide difference between legitimate health news from official sources and the broadcasting of medical advice. Discussion of remedies as well as controversial medical topics should be rigidly excluded from news scripts.

Possibilities of great harm lie in stories of new medical devices and cures. People are prone to believe what they hear and to try to treat themselves without a doctor's advice. The harm may be greater if an unethical statement is credited to a doctor, dentist, nurse or druggist.

Libel lurks in stories of illness, and the reputation of doctors is fragile. Do not blame anyone for causing the illness of another. Never ascribe an ailment to a person unless you are absolutely sure of the diagnosis, and under no circumstances hint at a lack of proper professional care. An item like this one may bring you into court:

She died of ptomaine poisoning after eating what her husband says was tainted meat at the Krossroads Kafé. Jones reports that

Doctor R-M Emanon told him that the poisoning was only acute indigestion.

Be wary of the word “epidemic,” especially in connection with the ailments of children. Only a medical authority or health official is qualified to say when illness reaches epidemic proportions. Careless use of the term causes anxiety and tends to create hysteria.

Analogous to giving medical advice in a newscast is giving legal advice. Unless you are a lawyer admitted to the bar you are prohibited from counseling or permitting others not qualified to give counsel in your copy.

Use of Trade Names. How a concern or product as well as a person may be libeled has been pointed out in the preceding chapter. It is wise to avoid using the identifications of firms or products in a derogatory way without full privilege and the strongest justification. Drugs and foodstuffs are especially vulnerable.

There is a further reason for caution with trade and brand names. When an identification tends to popularize rather than damage a product, the danger lies in giving away advertising. Obviously, if advertisers could tell their stories adequately in newscasts without cost, there would be no incentive for them to buy radio time.

It should be noted that the warning against identification of money-making enterprises and commodities is limited to caution against excesses. Any sweeping order barring such identifications would cripple newsmen beyond reason. It would prohibit the naming of hospitals, railroads, air lines, ships, stores, theaters, automobiles, even the participants in professional sports. It likewise would put in the wastebaskets many a piece of publicity of unquestioned news value.

There is but one intelligent answer to the question of using commercial names in newscasts. If the story is legitimate news or the identification is pertinent to a clear understanding of news—don’t hesitate or beat around the bush. Use it!

Scripts That Shock and Scare. The instinct of a newspaperman is to recognize a “good” story and make the most of it in print.

And the instinct of a playwright or scenario writer is to dramatize for stage or screen. Mix these two impulses, touch up with vibrant voice, serve through several thousand receiving sets—then prepare for trouble, for you have started something you may not be able to stop.

Neither the boldest type in a newspaper nor the most fearsome portrayal on a stage has so much potential power to alarm as the human tongue magnified by multiple loudspeakers.

The dramatization of the *War of the Worlds* a few years ago taught the radio industry a severe lesson in mass reaction to “scare stuff.” Thousands believed that an invasion from Mars was under way. Even doctors and nurses telephoned police to volunteer their services to “victims” of the Martians’ rays of death. The lesson is one not to be forgotten in radio newsrooms.

Exactly the same words sound more scary over the air than they look in cold type. Sound color and dramatization are assets in routine news writing but they are extremely dangerous in red-signal stories with panic possibilities. Among these are news of:

<i>riots</i>	<i>fires</i>	<i>floods</i>
<i>executions</i>	<i>storms</i>	<i>wrecks</i>
<i>lynchings</i>	<i>epidemics</i>	<i>shootings</i>
<i>eclipses</i>	<i>explosions</i>	<i>suicides</i>
<i>ship sinkings</i>	<i>meteor displays</i>	<i>earthquakes</i>

Reports of any event likely to assemble crowds, incite violence or create panic need to be stripped down to the simplest telling of the facts minus even slight exaggerations. If your story has to do with a riot, here are some phrases *not* to write: “the roaring upheaval,” “worst calamity,” “vicious battle,” “wild, mass uprising,” “mobs running wild,” “sirens screaming,” “fresh flare-ups” and “law enforcement has broken down.” Sensational adjectives, inflammatory verbs, lurid language serve only to fan the flames rather than extinguish them. These are sound safety-first rules:

Don’t use the words “flash” or “bulletin” in scare-type stories.

Don’t present a fictional event in the form of a news announcement.

HEADLINES OF RADIO
SCARE STORIES

SCHOOLS CLOSED BY EPIDEMIC

Police Fear More Rioting

Lynch Mob Threatens to Storm Jail

**Death Toll
Feared High
In L Wreck**

Maniacs Escape; Two Have Guns

FLOOD PERILS MIDLAND SUBURBS

Meteor Display Lights Sky

Don't Dramatize in Newscasts.

Don't use such imperatives as "Attention!" or "Calling all cars!"

Don't encourage an announcer by punctuation to distort scare copy.

No Room for Rumor. Accuracy plus authority in script writing automatically rules out tips, unconfirmed reports and guesswork in the guise of genuine news. Vigilance against vague and unproved gossip needs to go even further and eliminate any reference to rumor on the air.

Don't quote a rumor even for the purpose of refuting or ridiculing it. People often listen to their radios with half an ear. They may hear only the rumor—not the denial. To mention a rumor is like telling a friend, "They say you stole the money but of course I don't believe you are a thief." Tell your listeners the facts but make no reference to the existence of a rumor lest you succeed only in sending the whisper through ever-widening circles.

One of the sources of unconfirmed stories is the practical joker or the person with a spite complex. He may, for example, telephone a false report of a missing person, a birth, a marriage or a death. To protect themselves against hoaxes most stations refuse to take such notices by phone or to broadcast stories about missing persons unless they are extremely newsworthy.

Closely akin to the broadcasting of scare stuff and rumor is the use of partial and not fully confirmed accident and disaster reports in which the names of victims are unknown. To announce that "hundreds are believed to be killed" is to cause thousands to fear that their own relatives are among the victims.

Words To Watch. So that there can be no misunderstandings, some radio news editors proscribe the use of specific words by script writers. Taboo lists of any kind are likely to be too restrictive, but certainly the following are words to watch:

<i>scandal</i>	<i>orgy</i>	<i>fiend</i>
<i>degenerate</i>	<i>spider</i>	<i>spit</i>
<i>decay</i>	<i>epidemic</i>	<i>disgorge</i>
<i>tainted</i>	<i>grisly</i>	<i>gut</i>

<i>rumor</i>	<i>mob</i>	<i>gore</i>
<i>drunk</i>	<i>pervert</i>	<i>scream</i>
<i>bug</i>	<i>maniac</i>	<i>rape</i>
<i>riot</i>	<i>garbage</i>	<i>seduce</i>
<i>bloody</i>	<i>crippled</i>	<i>lust</i>
<i>gossip</i>	<i>scab</i>	<i>adultery</i>

This tabulation does not by any means exhaust the list of danger-laden words to be watched by the writer-editor. The dictionaries are full of them and there are plenty not found in the dictionaries.

Not quite so obviously dangerous, but perhaps more so for that reason, are propaganda words which tend to become derogatory by association. These include "bureaucrat," "fascist," "red," "dictator," "czar" and "henchman." Each of these words and many others like them carry damaging implications. Handle with care!

SHOP TALK

1. Specify conditions under which race and color properly may be specified in a newscast item. Under what conditions should such identifications be omitted?
2. What rule would you make regarding use of the words "hell" and "damn" if you were in charge of radio news programs?
3. Do you think radio news programs generally underplay or overplay seamy sex and gruesome crime stories? Or are they handled properly?
4. Some radio stations ban news of suicides unless of nation-wide interest. Would you?
5. Using the list of "words to watch" in this chapter, specify those you would permit to go on the air and those you would bar. Add to the list.

CHAPTER XXIV

Copyreading and Correcting

Screening the Script. In a world of perfect workers there would be no mending, pruning, remodeling, retouching or polishing. Everything would be made flawlessly. Auditors, critics, examiners, censors and repairmen would be idle. Unfortunately, to err is human and people are not infallible. Sooner or later the best craftsmen are bound to blunder.

The men and women who produce radio newscasts would be strange indeed if they made fewer mistakes than other human beings. They handle a commodity sometimes as sharp as a Damascus blade, finely spun as a spider's web, intricate as a chemical compound, dangerous as dynamite and fast moving as sound and light—the news of the day. Clearly they need as much protection against error as possible.

The protective or screening function, loosely called editing, is an essential part of radio news production. It is not ignored anywhere. However, it is performed in a multitude of different ways in different newsrooms.

One or several persons may have a hand in the work of inspection and correction—writer, copyreader, teletypist, announcer. It may be done by a single person, the newscaster, or by several individuals, depending on the newsroom organization. Although revisions usually are made with pencil or typewriter, the teletype may or may not be used in the procedure. Some of the material scrutinized for error may be raw, some partly processed for radio and some wholly

processed. There is wide variance in the radio newsrooms of small and large stations, networks, press services and newspapers.

It is quite clear, therefore, that no discussion can completely sort out, break down and classify the multiple ways in which radio news "editing" may be and is accomplished under different circumstances. In order to be specific, we shall again use for illustration our mythical newsroom at MIDT. While the MIDT division of duties probably is not exactly duplicated anywhere, it shows the basic operations involved.

"Editing" MIDT Scripts. For the sake of clarity let us first divide the general term "editing" into two jobs—correcting and copyreading. These are performed at MIDT by two persons, the writer and the script editor, in the following three steps:

1. Original correcting by the writer.
2. Copyreading by the script editor.
3. Final correcting by the writer.

We turn to the newspaper for clarification by analogy. Step one corresponds to the word-by-word, line-by-line and page-by-page corrections made by the writing reporter or rewrite man with typewriter and pencil before he parts with his copy. Step two roughly resembles the work of the newspaper copyreader, minus the latter's work with type sizes and headlines. Step three is similar to proofreading in that it is the final full revision before publication or broadcasting.

Two other individuals in the MIDT assembly line handle the script before it goes on the air. These are the teletype operator and the announcer. In order to visualize the entire line let us arrange the work done by individuals in the order that the script moves from raw material to the microphone:

1. Writer (typewriter copy)—original correcting.
2. Script editor (typewriter copy)—copyreading.
3. Teletypist (typewriter copy)—transcribing.
4. Writer (teletype copy)—final correcting.
5. Announcer (teletype copy)—emergency correcting.

The work of neither the teletypist nor the announcer is true ed-

iting. In his role as transcriber the teletypist compares to the newspaper linotype operator. He follows the marks of the writer and copyreader. The announcer, after receiving final corrections from the writer by telephone, may and often does underscore and mark pauses with virgules to assist himself in delivery. Should a gross error not be detected until he sees it during delivery, he of course tries to ad lib a correction. Both teletypist and announcer may and often do suggest corrections but they are not held responsible. Responsibility is shared by the writer and script editor. In case of disagreement it rests solely on the script editor who is in authority.

Independent inspection of script by a person other than the writer is strongly to be desired. Writers are of all degrees of professional maturity. Some are young and others careless. Few write so well that their work cannot be improved by critical revision. To the writer perhaps his own style may seem lucid because he knows what he is writing about. To another it may be obscure. Even a writer long hardened to the job shrinks from self-vivisection. Items hot from his typewriter still are a part of him. Later on he may see errors in perspective, but there is no long cooling-off period for radio script. It is written against the clock and experience shows that the application of a detached mind helps to insure accuracy.

In the absence of a copyreader, the writer should allow himself as much time as is available between takes of copy as a cooling-off period and should make a studied effort to be objective as he edits his own script.

The Role of the Copyreader. In an earlier chapter we discussed the general attributes of efficient script writing. These include the production of clean and legible typewriter copy in accord with office rules.

The extent of correcting by the writer as the first move in the screening process depends on the condition of his typed copy and the time at his disposal for pencil work. There seldom is leeway for a second typing beyond a few paragraphs. A good plan is for the writer to check each page with a pencil, making the more obvious corrections, just before passing it to the script editor.

As the receiver of incoming raw material and planner of each newscast, the script editor is in an excellent position to do the main job of copyreading. He is able to survey the script as a whole, to check it against the original and fresh raw material, to direct the patchwork which he cannot handle with his pencil or by dictation.

His duties as copyreader, in addition to checking the writer's conformity to the item line-up, are:

1. To correct errors of language.
2. To delete errors of fact.
3. To conform to copy rules.
4. To insure good taste.
5. To remove bias.
6. To guard against libel.
7. To revise unbalanced news values.
8. To check continuity.
9. To improve style.
10. To meet deadlines.

A compilation of these ten duties shows that the copyreader is far more than a mere clerical worker. He is not only critical but creative as well. He fails as a copyreader if a script is not better when it leaves his desk than when it arrived.

The Copyreader's Tools. The material aids of the copyreader are few and simple. He requires a supply of sharp soft-lead pencils, a soft eraser, a pair of shears, a pot of paste, a stack of copy paper, a handy typewriter, a spike or two and a sizable wastebasket.

Within easy reach should be standard reference books—a dictionary, preferably unabridged; an almanac; an atlas with fairly large-scale maps; a Bible. Also helpful are directories, encyclopedias, grammar guides, synonym books, books of quotations and a radio yearbook. He should have immediate access to current copies of scripts and to the alibi file as well as to whatever library, morgue or clipping file facilities are in his office.

These are the physical aids to the script editor when copyreading. His other tools are a set of symbols known as script copyreading marks.

At this point we must pause again to narrow the scope of our discussion by stressing the fact that the marks to be specified are for the sole purpose of enabling a teletype operator to make the corrections indicated by the writer and script editor. They are not to be confused with much simpler marks made by a writer on type-written copy to be handed to an announcer. These consist merely of crosscuts, inserts and substitutes for words, phrases or sentences. Nor are they to be confused with the underscoring and pause marks made by an announcer to aid delivery.

The script copyreading marks used at MIDT differ too from the well-standardized newspaper proofreading and copyreading marks, although they are largely drawn from the former. The marks are simple, practical but not fancy, and easily understood by an average teletype operator. Consult the marks set forth in the accompanying charts and you will see that they accomplish these things:

- Delete letters and words.
- Close up, transpose and insert letters.
- Separate, transpose and insert words.
- Start a paragraph.
- Note a period.
- Join separated matter.

Although no marks are needed to capitalize letters or to reduce capitals to small letters in script to be transcribed by an all-capital teletype keyboard, MIDT follows an up style because this makes for easier copyreading and prevents confusion when teletype transmission is eliminated. If a capital should be indicated at the start of a sentence it is simplest merely to pencil it in. Cross-out marks are used to delete or kill letters, words, sentences or paragraphs. Since abbreviations are taboo, there are no marks to deal with them. If figures are to be changed to numerals, or vice versa, it is done by the cross-out and write-in method.

In addition to correcting the script proper, the copyreader writes in when necessary the page number, time of the newscast, names of writer and editor, script slugs and the "more" at the lower right-hand corner of each page.

MIDT NEWSROOM
COPYREADER'S MARKS

SYMBOL	HOW USED	MEANING
I	society	DELETE LETTER
≡	and very large	DELETE WORD
()	news cast	CLOSE UP LETTERS
- 2 -	fr ^s nd	TRANSDPOSE LETTERS
- 2 -	om ^s ion	INSERT LETTER
-	per/cent	SEPARATE WORDS
[]	it (today occurred)	TRANSDPOSE WORDS
-]	went ^{to} work	INSERT WORD
┌]	true. [He says	START PARAGRAPH
⊗	the end ⊗	NOTE PERIOD
✓	done, very well indeed	JOIN SEPARATED MATTER

Symbols and Their Uses.

The Copyreader at Work. As he begins reading the text of a script, the copyreader usually marks the paragraph symbol at the beginning of the first item. Then he reads the item, his pencil running along under the words and his hand moving from one side of the page to the other.

He reads carefully, alert for misspelled words, grammatical errors, misstatements, ambiguous or inept phrases and other errors of composition. As his eyes scan the words his inner ear is assessing the language, deciding how the words will sound on the air. Copyreaders, like writers, often actually move their lips as they read in order to evaluate the listenability of the script.

The script editor weighs each statement of fact in the scale of intelligence and experience. Here and there he strikes out a dull word and substitutes one with more life and vitality. At times he combines or recasts entire sentences to clarify an item, to save space or to add wordage.

If he questions a statement, the copyreader has several courses of action open to him. He may consult the original copy, question the writer, or look at a reference book and then verify, strike out or amend the statement. He should refer the copy back to the writer to revise only if the writer has time to do it. The last resort of the copyreader is to call on another member of the staff or to use his own typewriter for rewriting.

The copyreader must keep the script legible. Otherwise it may come back to him from the teletypist or be bungled in transmission. Bold, clear—almost childish—handwriting with a pencil is a boon to the teletypist. If your handwriting is cramped or otherwise difficult to decipher, print your letters.

Guard—But Don't Butcher. In his role as copyreader, the script editor is the watchdog of the newsroom. He is the chief guardian of truth at the main gateway to broadcasting. It is important for him not only to discover errors in script which comes to him but to make no errors himself.

He trusts nobody completely. He challenges everything. It is his duty to detect and to get rid of absurd, unfit, unfair, irresponsible,

SAMPLE PAGE OF CORRECTED COPY

Page 4 10 P.M.

10. Maybe you've sometimes wondered at the possibility. Maybe you've often suspected the truth. Now at last we can give you the facts. The government uses red tape ^(two) ~~in~~ 115,000 spools ~~of~~ a year. And that's ^(a) considerable red tape even for the government. Each spool holds ^(seventy-two) ~~72~~ yards or 216 feet. And that adds up to five thousand miles.

11. The government's red tape has to meet certain ~~very exact~~ specifications. It must not run, crack or fade when washed in ^(seated to) water ~~seventy degrees Fahrenheit~~. That's a pretty stiff test for any kind of red tape.

12. The gentlemen in charge of the government's procurement of red tape don't care for wise ^(a) cracks. ~~and we're not trying to~~ ~~be~~. As one of them says -- "The government couldn't run without it." ^(that) The truth of the matter is you can't get an ^(in Washington) official document ~~without~~ red tape. No other material holds them together quite as well. Ordinary string cuts them in ^(two) ~~two~~. And only red tape holds a bowknot ^(to) ~~to~~ with out slipping.

more

How Copyreader's Marks Are Applied.

opinionated, libelous and otherwise dangerous and injurious matter. He is the nemesis of faking, exaggeration, undue emotionalism, propaganda and ignorance. These diseased portions of a script must be cut out and replaced.

The copyreader protects not only the writer but the news characters in the script. He is careful in checking names. Never without good reason does he change the language of quoted matter. Sometimes he may correct obvious grammatical errors in a speech or statement, but in so doing he makes only minor changes in the text.

Skilled and intelligent copyreading calls not only for unceasing vigilance but also for a sympathetic and constructive attitude. The neophyte writer often is inclined to look upon the copyreader as a soulless butcher, whereas he should be, and usually is, a surgeon who aids the patient. He is the partner of the writer, the helpmate of the teletype operator, the assistant to the announcer, the protector of the station and the sponsor.

Certainly there is no excuse for a copyreader to rob a script of its punch and flavor merely for the sake of wielding his pencil. When he has a good piece of script in hand the experienced script editor retains its spirit and sends it along virtually untouched. The copyreader who is forever reaching for a typewriter manifests his own inexperience. He has not learned how to subordinate his own style to that of the writer.

Moving the Script. The copyreading script editor seldom, if ever, gets an entire script at one time. It comes to him page by page. He reads and sends it on in the same way.

At a given time during the production of a script, the teletypist is sending, say, page one, the script editor is reading page two, and the writer is writing page three. Thus all three persons often are at work simultaneously and copy moves steadily without a bottleneck at any point.

The script may be coming from the writer in sections with the last part first, or in patchwork pieces. Sometimes the script editor

must completely reorganize the show. Therefore he must watch his page numbers and the script arithmetic. By retaining a duplicate of the pages sent, he continually tallies up his wordage and keeps the script arithmetic balanced.

All the duties of the script editor at MIDT are assigned with a view to allowing him sufficient time to perform them, but the timing is his own. He must know instinctively whether he should be inspecting raw material, shaping a show, reading or moving copy.

It is wise to clear copy through the teletype as rapidly as it is ready, for the machine may be needed at any time to send emergency copy. If he is suddenly occupied by emergency work, the script editor retains unread script, if it is not too urgent, until he is free to read it. But now and then it is necessary for him merely to glance at the script and "railroad" it without a thorough inspection. In that case he checks it with the writer after it has gone through the teletype.

There is no opportunity to copyread dictated script. The editing as well as the writing must take place coincidentally in the mind of the dictator. These speed-up operations will be discussed in a later chapter.

The Final Corrections. Teletype transmission of radio news at MIDT affords one final opportunity for corrections before the script is committed to the air. The announcer receives one copy of the newscast from the receiving printer, and the writer gets another from the sending machine.

During the few minutes before the show goes on the air, the writer reads over his handiwork as copyread by the script editor and sent by the operator. He thus serves as a backstop for the teletypist. The writer marks corrections with a red pencil. If an item is perfect, he makes a plain horizontal mark alongside. If it needs repairing, his mark is a red "X."

Having completed his final inspection, he confers by direct telephone with the announcer, who meanwhile has removed his script from the machine, cut it into pieces and arranged the pieces in

proper order. The two run through the items together, the announcer making the "X" item corrections with his pencil and asking the writer about any points which are not clear.

~~These last-minute changes usually are few and simple and the conference may last only a few moments.~~ Frequently it is unnecessary and unless one of the two men signals, it is understood that the script is satisfactory to both as it stands. In that case the announcer takes it directly to the microphone.

SHOP TALK

1. Describe and discuss the copyreading systems used in radio newsrooms with which you are acquainted.
2. Do you think it essential for someone other than the writer to go over his script before it goes on the air? Why?
3. Compare the revision and correction systems of a newspaper with those of a radio newsroom.
4. Make and compare lists of marks used by newspaper copyreaders, newspaper proofreaders and MIDT copyreaders.
5. Do you think that the copyreading marks of MIDT are too elaborate, too simple or about right?

CHAPTER XXV

Color in Sound

Writing Is Work. A good deal of nonsense has been written—and spoken—about writing. Young people contemplating careers in journalism often ask, “Am I fitted to become a really professional writer?” Sometimes the answer is, “You have to be born to it”; at other times, “Sure, anybody can write. It’s easy.” One answer is as misleading as the other and both are nonsense.

The notion that writing skill is a gift of providence to a chosen few can be disproved by thousands of successful newsmen who showed no signs in childhood of becoming pen-and-pencil prodigies. Shakespeares and Miltons, perhaps, are “born to it,” but no more hereditary talent is needed to become a good news writer than to become a good engineer or businessman.

Just as fallacious is the idea that literacy and literary ability are virtually synonymous. It is not easy to write well. Many intelligent but mentally slothful people express their thoughts poorly in ordinary correspondence, and experts in one form of composition stumble awkwardly on their first venture in another form.

You can learn to write radio news scripts in one way and only one way—by practice, patience and perseverance.

Writing may be defined as work with words. As any honest craftsman will certify, toil turns out better copy than talent. Mental laziness takes refuge in tags, euphemisms, stereotypes and vague slang. Mental labor spells the difference between simplicity and sophistication, precision and profusion, dash and dullness.

The right word and the smooth sentence—not fashionable phrases and purple passages—pay the rewards of labor by the radio news writer. He strives without surcease to find language best suited to his product, news, and to his medium, radio.

Appeal to the Five Senses. The choice and arrangement of words which mark one script as a drab recitation of bare facts and another as a vivid and vibrant voice composition is known in radio newsroom parlance as *sound color*. The expression is a combination of the newspaper term *color*, meaning bright word painting, and the radio term *sound*, meaning that which is heard.

Custom alone warrants the application to radio news of such a term as *sound color*. Color suggests visual portrayal. As a matter of fact, words in themselves portray nothing. They can only suggest sensations and the senses are not one or two, but five: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Sound, as used in the radio studio, includes music and artificial sound effects.

The radio news writer has no maps, photographs, ten-point or boldface type to aid him. Nor can he set a mood or shift a scene with sound-making instruments. Through one sense alone, hearing, and one instrument alone, the voice of the announcer, he must reach and satisfy all the five senses of the listener. He has only spoken "words, words, mere words." Nevertheless, these alone make him a potential wizard of many wonders.

Cowley describes words that weep; Gray, words that burn; and Balzac, words which cut like steel. And there are words that flash, gleam and dazzle; words that boom, roar and rumble; words that bite, sting and soothe; words that perfume and reek; words that cloy and choke; words that touch every emotion of the mind and nerve of the body.

With words to be spoken the writer can take you to the dock to see the homecoming ship, make you feel the deck, hear the whistle, smell and taste the salty spray. He can carry you to the scene of a burning building and let you see the fitful flames, hear the wail of the sirens, feel the biting wind, taste and smell the acrid smoke. He can seat you at a sumptuous table, show you the gleaming silver-

ware, let you touch the linen napkin, hear the sizzle of a steak, enjoy the aroma of the coffee, and taste the flavor of the dessert.

With words to be spoken—and words alone—the writer figuratively can paint in color and compose in sound. Thus he achieves *sound color*.

The Intimate “We” and “You.” Sensory impressions are intimate experiences. For this reason the radio news writer has an advantage enjoyed by the conversationalist, public speaker, editorial or commercial writer, but seldom enjoyed by the newspaper reporter and rewrite man. While the straight newscast writer may not use the first person singular “I,” he may direct his appeal from “we” to “you.” The advantage is at once apparent in these examples:

NEWSPAPER

Roses bloomed and onions sprouted today as the Midland weather bureau marked up another October heat record on its official thermometer.

Motorists were warned today that July 1 is the deadline for driving without a new operator's permit.

RADIO

If you take a walk this October afternoon you'll find roses blooming in the park and onions sprouting in your neighborhood vegetable gardens.

You'd better hurry up and get that new permit if you want to drive legally after the first of July.

The radio newsman can learn from advertising copy writers a point of value about appealing to the senses of the personal “you.” Customers do not buy things. They buy uses. They spend their money not for a house, but for gracious living; not for watches, but for accurate time; not for glasses, but for better vision; not for cigarettes, but for smoking pleasure; not for shaving cream, but for smooth faces. The ad writer boldly connects pleasant sensations to the personal “you,” as in these typical quotations:

For a little money you can have a lot of new brightness in your kitchen.

HOW ADS APPEAL TO THE PERSONAL "YOU"

YOU can learn to dance in one day --
even if YOU never danced a step before!

Shoes repaired while **you** wait.

You'll find these famous-make watches
at Jones'.

Tonight we bring YOU a sparkling pro-
gram of songs and sketches.

Trade in **your** old furniture for an allow-
ance on this lovely suite.

You'll feel like a professional when you
act as host behind this stunning he-man bar.

YOU just can't beat gloves like these for
less than \$3.50.

If **you've** been planning to pay \$100 for
your coat, don't miss this sale tomorrow.

Answer **your** doorbell looking fresh and
pretty in this cotton dress.

This apron will make YOUR kitchen chores
seem lighter

Use **your** charge account.

You, too, can sing **your** way to fame.

Christmas cards from YOUR own snap-
shots. Here's just the personal touch YOU
want in YOUR holiday cards this year.

For a lovelier **you**--a permanent wave
so soft, so natural, so easy to manage.

A Lesson for Script Writers.

You'll agree it looks like a million dollars but it's only \$139.
 An adventure in good eating awaits you and your friends.
 Your *first* edition copy of this magazine is free.
 This toothpaste uncovers the natural brilliance of your smile.
 You can become a smooth, accomplished dance partner in one day.

The basic human interests include appetite, comfort, achievement, self-improvement, faith, culture, health, romance and security. There are sensory words in abundance to build bridges into these personal impulses and emotions of your listeners.

Adjectives, Verbs and Synonyms. Nouns have been likened to men, verbs to their life and limbs, and adjectives to their raiment. As we respect a man who is clothed tastefully but modestly, so we like a writer who is selective in his word raiment. The nouns and verbs are essentials, but adjectives are accessories needed only so far as they help to clothe the principals moderately and in good taste.

Read the Book of Ruth for clarity and color without adjectives, as in this passage: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

Adjectives add color, but use them sparingly if you would avoid the copyreader's pencil. More than two modifying the same noun are seldom passed by a script editor. One or two in an item usually are enough.

Verbs make the story move more positively and swiftly, especially if you give preference to the active voice. The passive voice often is necessary in news copy, but the active voice should be used whenever possible to quicken action sentences. Examples:

WEAK

The batter was struck on the head by the pitcher's fast ball.

STRONGER

The pitcher's fast ball struck the batter on the head.

WEAK

The tidings of victory were flashed to a tensely waiting nation by weary correspondents.

STRONGER

Weary correspondents flashed the tidings of victory to a tensely waiting nation.

The verb denotes action. It is the powerhouse of the phrase, the locomotive of the sentence. To be effective it must move as the occasion demands. Consider the verb walk and observe how it can be varied to describe movement, as well as character and mood, without a clutter of adjectives:

VERB	CONNOTATION	VERB	CONNOTATION
walk	movement	totter	unsteadiness
proceed	advancement	stalk	stealth
trudge	weariness	pace	worry
lurch	exhaustion	amble	indifference
march	steadiness	stride	determination
saunter	aimlessness	strut	vanity
shuffle	shiftlessness	tiptoe	caution
sidle	timidity	stroll	leisure

An animal runs and a bird flics, but a greyhound lopes, a rabbit scampers, an elephant lumbers, a horse gallops, a condor soars, a hawk swoops.

To cut is an excellent verb unless what you mean is to whittle. chip, chop, slash, slit, slicc, carve, snip, shear, shave, cleave, hew, lop, gash, clip, mow, nick or scissor.

Specific Detail and Synonyms. An earlier chapter, "Select the Simple Word," discussed the value of specific detail in writing of any kind. A general word is one which logically contains within itself many words of more limited meaning. A specific or concrete word appeals more directly to our stock of sense impressions. It recalls to mind something seen, heard, tasted, touched, smelled. It is closer to experience itself.

For example, *structure* is a general word. *Building* is a specific word with respect to *structure* which may be a railway trestle or an oil derrick. But, in turn, *building* is general with respect to *hangar*, *cottage* or *skyscraper*.

ONE HUNDRED SYNONYMS FOR "SAY"

acknowledge	comment	insist	report
add	complain	interject	request
admonish	contend	jeer	respond
advise	contradict	lament	retort
affirm	counsel	laugh	reveal
agree	crow	lisp	roar
allege	cry	maintain	scoff
announce	declare	mention	scold
answer	demand	moan	scream
approve	denounce	mock	shout
argue	deny	murmur	sigh
ask	deplore	mutter	smile
assert	disclose	narrate	snarl
babble	divulge	note	sneer
blurt	drone	notify	sob
call	echo	object	stammer
caution	gabble	observe	state
censure	gasp	order	stutter
charge	grumble	pant	suggest
chatter	hint	proclaim	taunt
cheer	howl	protest	testify
chuckle	imply	quip	threaten
cite	inform	relate	urge
claim	inquire	remark	warn
commend	insinuate	repeat	whisper

Variants of a Single Verb.

Nine times out of ten a moment's thought will enable a writer to find and substitute a specific synonym for a general word. However, the constant striving for synonyms by the newspaper writer to avoid repetition can become a strain and often does in the copy of reporters turned radio writers. For example, *say*, *says* and *said* are useful and well-meaning words and their repetition is no sin. There are many synonyms for *say*, as shown in an accompanying chart. Certainly there are specific values in many of them, such as *assert*, *argue*, *declare*, *contend*, *agree* and *announce*. But the effect of shunning *said* may be this:

Alderman Forbes *avcrred* that the public will rebel at a ten-cent farc. He *exhorted* the Council to make up the deficit by increasing real estate taxes. Forbes *pleaded* -- and we quote -- "Children can't pay a dime to ride to school." Advocating the increase, Alderman Fogel *hoped* that the boost will not be needed, but *proclaimed* his readiness to vote for it.

The effect of this item is to call attention away from what the aldermen said and direct it to the writer's method of expression. It makes the style obtrusive and offensive to the ear. As a matter of fact, repetition of sound has a definite radio value. It is the beginning of music. So don't strain too much to find fancy synonyms for simple words.

Sound Values in Words. Many of the words in our vocabularies are mimicry of actual noises. Those with ear appeal, rather than eye appeal, are to be treasured by the radio writer.

The consonants *l*, *m*, *n*, *r*, *v* and *z* tend to give a sound effect of long duration, whereas *b*, *d*, *g*, *k* and *t* give an abrupt snap-off effect. Note the long melodic quantity value in *autumn*, *mile*, *room*, *rove*, *roll*, *lazy*, *pool*, *rumble*, *velvet*, and the short value in *bite*, *dot*, *cut*, *kid* and *tap*. Now note your sense reaction as you "listen" to more onomatopoeic words:

<i>crash</i>	<i>pounce</i>	<i>crunch</i>	<i>slam</i>
<i>squeak</i>	<i>thud</i>	<i>scream</i>	<i>plunge</i>
<i>splash</i>	<i>steam</i>	<i>blast</i>	<i>whack</i>

clink
lull

clop
soothe

bump
grate

pour
settle

You can "hear" the verbs of Edgar Allan Poe as his bells tinkle and jingle, rhyme and chime, shriek, scream, clang, roar, jangle and wrangle, throb, moan and sob. There is definite mimicry in the rumble of a bullfrog, the haunting cry of a loon, the relentless pounding of the surf, the *trill* of a canary, the caw of a crow, the buzz of bees, the rasp of a file, the rattle of parched paper, the *clug* of a train and the chatter of a squirrel or of a pneumatic drill.

Maury Maverick, inventor of the word "gobbledygook," was asked how he hit on the word. Here is how he explained it in the *New York Times*: "Perhaps I was thinking of the old bearded turkey gobbler back in Texas who was always gobbledygobbling and strutting with ridiculous pomposity. At the end of his 'gobble' there was a sort of a 'gook.'"

Consider the forceful sound-effect words in Tennyson's description of "The Eagle":

*He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.*

*The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.*

Figures of Speech. A few years after taking his last college composition examination, the average script writer forgets the difference between an infinitive and a participle. Seldom does he deliberately decide to fashion a simile or a metaphor, but he uses them every day he writes. He knows when a figure of speech is good or faulty by its "feel," by the way it sounds as he reads it to himself. For example, he knows that "inflation" means more if explained as "eggs at two dollars a dozen" and that "tolerance" is better expressed as "not pushing the other fellow around."

Figures of speech, like allusions, present the unknown in terms of the familiar. In describing a zebra to a child who has never seen

one you might say that it is like a donkey with stripes. That is an allusion or literal comparison. A simile deals with unlike objects and states the fact of resemblance. The briefer, more abrupt metaphor assumes the fact of resemblance and speaks of one object in terms of another.

Robert Louis Stevenson in "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" uses similes in describing the street in which Mr. Hyde first appears. Stevenson tells us that "the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighborhood, *like a fire in a forest*" and that "the shop fronts stood along that thoroughfare with an air of invitation, *like rows of smiling saleswomen.*"

Shakespeare's works are strewn with metaphors. Hamlet warns the players, "For in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness." Jacques refers to the world as "a stage and all the men and women in it simply players." Lady Macbeth calls life a "walking shadow" and "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Such sobriquets and fictional characters as these often are used by news writers in familiar personalizations: Jack Frost, Old Sol, Old Man Winter, Enoch Arden, Don Juan, Cinderella, Cupid, Solomon, Pollyanna, Portia, Raffles, Romeo, Ichabod Crane, Santa Claus, Adonis, Samaritan, Croesus, Father Knickerbocker, Uncle Sam.

An observant writer is ever on the lookout for effective figures of speech. He notes them in the daily doings of men and women, in the copy he handles, in the books he reads. He collects them, turns them over in his mind and stores them in his memory for future use.

Don't Mix Your Metaphors. Figurative language should be apt, fresh, in key with the mood of the item. Metaphors need not always be new—that would be too much to require of any writer—but they need not be trite.

Moving copy under pressure, the best writer falls back on conventionalities like "cart before the horse," "thick of the fight" and

“stitch in time.” But if he falls back too far into such stereotypes as “stood like sentinels,” “clear as crystal,” “straight as an arrow” and “dead as a door knob,” he will do better to omit figures of speech altogether. And to describe a scene as “indescribable” or as an “impressive spectacle” is merely to admit impotence as a writer.

Figures of speech can be abused by using them too frequently. They consume space and too many cheapen their worth and slow the action. In the words of Coleridge, we should not barricade the road by setting up a turnpike gate at every step we take.

A metaphor once started must be adhered to. The mixed figure results in an absurdity like this one from the *Congressional Record*: “They have in the past seen efforts to put over their nefarious schemes, in which the proponents have used them as bait to feather their own nests.” A few more examples:

MIXED

When you have two strikes on your husband it isn't cricket to leave him in the doghouse.

He reaped the anger of the opposition party.

The business is conducted on a solid foundation.

The probe of the police has netted five suspects.

He went through the campaign on a bed of ease and carried the county by ten thousand. The tidal wave of votes snowed under his opponent.

Clawson set the pace and made a grand slam.

UNMIXED

Don't make your husband lead a dog's life just because you have him in the doghouse.

He aroused the anger of the opposition party.

The business is built on a solid foundation.

The dragnet of the police has caught five suspects.

He went through the campaign without serious opposition and carried the county by ten thousand. The blizzard of ballots snowed under his opponent.

Clawson took the bid and made a grand slam.

Sound Pictures and Maps. There are two kinds of pictures: those which are received by the eye and those which spring from the imagination. Mental pictures, the pictures we imagine, exert the more powerful influence upon us. In this fact lies the secret of

radio's word power. You can close your eyes, listen and see pictures inside your mind.

Unaided by visible illustrations, the radio writer constantly resorts to verbal pictures and maps to set the scenery and locate his listener. Comparison and contrast with home-town views are of value. It helps if you can define a scene or a situation as resembling a pair of scissors, the shape of the letter L, T or S, a cork in a bottle, a fishhook, an outspread fan, the corner of Main and Elm Streets. Script examples follow:

Visualize a column of smoke two thousand feet high -- a sky-scraping tower of smoke that can be seen thirty miles away -- and you'll have an idea of what the Scanlon oil field looks like this morning.

If you'll look at a map of the Mediterranean, you will see that Sicily is a lopsided football just leaving the toe of the Italian boot.

It's about three miles from Island Park to Memorial Stadium -- and that's the distance separating the rescue party from the wrecked plane.

If you were standing on top of the Midland Trust Building looking at the sidewalk below you'd know how twelve-year-old Susan Blount felt this afternoon as she dangled over a cliff near Mount Mitelmer.

Keep in mind the make-up of your audience as you paint your sound pictures. Housewives understand if you liken a gear to a food chopper, and city folk get the point when you compare a straw loader to an escalator.

As a writer you are a motion-picture camera shooting a scene. The listener must know your point of view. Therefore, suggest your position so that he can see with his mind's eye as though he were standing beside you. You cannot show him the living room and kitchen from the back yard.

Also remember that in drawing sound pictures and maps, as in descriptive writing of any kind, you must not wander too far afield. With only a hundred words allowed, you do not have a permit to compare news scenes to sunsets.

Color in a Coal Strike. It takes time and raw material to put authentic sound color into radio news. Often the first bulletins contain only the barest outline of facts. As more detail comes in, the writer tries to fill in the chinks without resorting to fiction. Here is what can be done with a routine story, chosen for lead items, by an alert writer:

1. This morning, outside the roaring blast furnaces, where men forge the steel which is the backbone of the nation's industry, the coal piles are dwindling. On the sidings in Illinois, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Kentucky, long lines of empty gondolas yawn for coal. And the big locomotives at their heads puff impatiently.

2. In the dark caverns where the coal lies buried, only the gurgle of deep springs is breaking the silence. The last shuffle of miners going off shift has echoed from the pits. At midnight there was an end to the pink of picks into hard stone, to the thud of crowbars ramming home charges, to the boom of blasting powder and the clatter of coal cascading to the floor.

3. And this morning the nation awaits word of what Washington is going to do about it. The coal strike is on. The operators say it's up to the government and the miners say their lamps won't be going on again until another contract has been signed.

Thus the writer, with sufficient space to do it, did not merely tell his listeners what was happening. He took them on a journey to see and feel it. When the journey ended, they knew for themselves.

SHOP TALK

1. Define and discuss "color" and "sound" as the terms are used in newspaper and radio writing.

2. Name several commodities which are sold on the basis of their appeal to one of the five senses. Quote advertisements illustrating this appeal.

3. Pronounce a list of sound-effect words and have others in the class describe the mental pictures which the words create.

4. Cite and reword several mixed metaphors.

5. Specify persons, scenes and things in current nonlocal news and compare them to familiar local persons, scenes and things.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Human Interest Touch

Katie and the Kettle. On a dull summer afternoon Script Editor John Kerr with a “ho, hum” feeling lackadaisically looked over his line-up for the next newscast. A boundary-line dispute in the Balkans, fresh trouble in China, comment in Washington on a cabinet resignation, a tax bill debate in Congress, another Hollywood divorce, a drought report from the Dakotas, an automobile crash in the suburbs, plans for the opening of school, a forecast on fall fashions—these stories tentatively formed the show.

As Kerr signaled to Miss Thurston, the writer, his copy boy, stripping the teletype printers, remarked: “Say, boss, here’s a piece about a kid with her head in a kettle.”

“A what?” asked Kerr, swinging around to the machine.

“A kid’s head is stuck in a kettle,” the boy repeated.

Kerr pulled the copy out, glanced at it, waited for another take, pasted the takes together, slugged the story KETTLE and reshuffled the script line-up. He removed the China story, moved the others up a notch, and placed the KETTLE story under a page divider. Here is how Miss Thurston wrote it:

It’s going to be quite a while -- probably a long, long time -- before Katie Oakes tries again to use her mother’s kettle for a tin hat. Katie, who is seven years old, learned a lesson about kettles this afternoon but it took a dozen neighbors, a fire company, two police squads and a plumber to teach her.

Here’s how it happened. In the back yard of the Oakes home at

1345 Maple Street several youngsters decided to play a war game. They scattered to hunt equipment. One came back in a soldier's suit. Another brought a flag. Katie's ten-year-old brother Jimmy had a real Ranger wooden rifle. As Katie tearfully told it afterward -- "I just had an old stick." So she ran into the kitchen and came out triumphantly with the kettle. Jimmy helped to push it down over her ears. That's how it began.

Once on, the kettle stayed on. It came down to Katie's chin. Katie called for help. Her muffled cries ended the game. The other kids yanked and pulled. Jimmy got his mother, Missus William Oakes. She pulled. Then the neighbors came. And they pulled. But the kettle stayed put.

Then somebody got busy on the telephone. A fire truck and two police squad cars responded. The firemen and policemen pulled. Katie wriggled. Missus Oakes pleaded. The neighbors gave advice. No good. They tried butter and lard on Katie's neck. They tried pliers and can openers. Finally, the police summoned George Kincaid from his nearby plumbing shop. Kincaid cut the kettle off with a pair of metal shears.

Katie's ears emerged -- a little red. But otherwise she was unhurt. Her first audible words were -- "Are you going to spank me, Mother?" No, Katie didn't get a spanking. She got a hug instead. But Missus Oakes needs a new stew kettle and Katie promises -- "Mother, I'll never touch it -- never!"

The Appeal of Human Interest. It would be difficult to account for the adventure of Katie and the kettle under any definition of news as something of social significance. Nothing could be of less moment than this bit of homespun humor. And yet it was awarded a place of honor on a straight newscast, and rightly so. In the homes of many listeners it undoubtedly touched off laughter and lively discussion long after events of world import faded from memory.

What is the elusive quality in such a story that sets it apart, to the bewilderment of those with an orthodox conception of news and sometimes to the bafflement of beginners in writing and editing?

The quality is human interest or *II-I*, so called because it appeals to the instinctive interest of human beings in other human beings

and in their emotional experiences. All of us are moved to laughter, smiles, pride, sympathy and pity through participation by proxy in the behavior of others under circumstances familiar to us.

Straight news is primarily to inform. It appeals to reason. It provides meat and potatoes as food for thought. Human interest primarily entertains. It appeals to the emotions. And it provides the salad and dessert on the newscast menu as food to relish.

Far too many radio newsmen look upon the newscast as something solid and stodgy—as weighty bricks of information to be mortared at regular intervals between frivolous and sentimental music, serial dramas, comedy and quiz programs. These sober-minded folk would leave entertainment to other segments of the station log, and to the stage, theater, books and newspapers.

Such a point of view overlooks the fact that radio news is a mirror of real life and reflects more closely than fiction the image of human beings in the grip of human emotions. It also overlooks the point that people listen to what they like, and they like salad and dessert on their news menus. If these are missing, the listeners switch to a chef who will please their palates as well as satisfy their appetites.

Topics With the Human Touch. Situations which play on our normal emotions are fundamentally simple. Human interest items are easy to believe because their essence is naturalness and truthness to life. They include stories that touch on our senses of humor and pathos, our curiosity about animals, our concern about children, our love for lovers, our yearning for adventure, our delight in beauty, and our regard for sincerity, loyalty, kindness, mercy and fair play.

These—the elements of human interest—are interwoven in the fabric of general news. Frequently several of them are entangled in the skin of a single story. However, in this chapter we consider them as a special classification of news in order to show how they are selected, prepared and fitted into the newscast.

It may seem paradoxical to place humor and tragedy in one news classification. But man is a paradoxical creature. Byron calls him a

TOPICS WITH EMOTIONAL APPEAL



CHILDREN



ANIMALS



HUMOR



PATHOS



ROMANCE



ODDITY

H-I Story Situations

pendulum betwixt a tear and a smile. There obviously is a close alliance between the basic emotions. We see it in the person who says, "I'm so happy I could weep" or "I enjoyed a good cry." Many a news story simultaneously tickles our funny bones and tugs at our heartstrings.

Of all human beings children evoke the greatest interest. Their naïveté, their wistfulness, their joys and sorrows have a strong psychological appeal. They bring nostalgic memories of one's own childhood and create sympathy in every home where there are or have been children. They are the core of countless stories, especially at Christmas, Easter, Halloween and other occasions featuring childhood. From cradle to teen-age love affairs, children are our most interesting humans.

Next to people as topics of amusement, pathos and curiosity are animals, especially those most familiar and those behaving most like humans. Dogs, cats and horses, all domesticated for centuries, and the more intelligent zoo animals, such as monkeys and seals, are the actors in many an I-I playlet.

Oddities of any kind also thrust themselves up as candidates for inclusion on the list of favorite human interest topics. Contrast, distinguishing an act or an experience from the humdrum routine of ordinary experience, is the gimmick that clicks to bring many an "Oh!" and "Ah!" from radio news listeners.

People Are Like That. The twist of circumstances in a story which causes the listener to exclaim, "I know just how he felt," or to reflect, "It might happen to me," ties the unusual to the commonplace and thereby gives it human interest. Forgetfulness, for example, is an everyday experience, causing us all to appreciate items like these:

Here's a new way to make easy money. A housewife in Timber-ton needed some change for groceries, so she took her son's penny bank to the store. She shook it empty and left it on the counter. Later in the day she hurried back. The porcelain pig still was there. In it were donations amounting to forty-nine cents!

Did you ever paint yourself into a corner? Then you know how to sympathize with Professor Wilbur Watson of Midland College. His family complained about drafts in the attic. This morning the professor grabbed up hammer and nails and went to work. For an hour he pounded and banged. Finally he sealed the attic securely -- with Professor Watson inside. It took two real carpenters to pry out the wallboards and rescue him.

It's easy to give advice, and we all smile when the tables turn on the person who is too free with it. Hence, this item strikes a responsive chord:

In a Saint Louis courtroom today Doctor Samuel Masterton asked for a continuance of his divorce suit against his wife, Martha Masterton. Doctor Masterton is head of a marriage relations clinic. He told the judge he had to speak at a luncheon. His subject -- "How To Be Happy Though Married."

Did you ever remark, "Let's go over and see what those rubber-necks are looking at?" If not, you've often felt like it, for young and old alike have the impulse to peek through knotholes. Hence, listeners enjoy an item like this one:

In Jersey City a contracting firm has been accused of unfairness to sidewalk superintendents. The firm put up a fence around its steam shovels. "What! No peepholes?" the Jersey Journal demanded. Now the contractors have apologized. Said their announcement in the Journal -- "We regret the inconvenience we have caused." Yes, the building is going up, but the fence will have peepholes.

Typical H-I Items. Let us skim through a few more MIDT newscasts and inspect other items to illustrate topics with the human touch. These are arbitrarily classified for convenience:

(*Children*)

This is the first day of school in Boonville, and little Edward Tompkins, age three, wistfully watched as his older playmates clambered aboard a school bus this morning. When the next bus rolled up, Edward climbed on. Police took him off in Plainfield thirty miles away.

And there was another mixup at the County Courthouse this morning. A young man named Joseph Hutson came before Commissioner of Jurors Michael McNeill to report for jury duty. He had a summons. McNeill took one look at Joseph and turned pinkish. Joseph is five years old. His Mamma and Papa stood behind him. The Commissioner decided it was a case of mistaken identity and squared it with Joe for a nickel.

(Animals)

The Standard Oil Company at Bayonne, New Jersey, has lost a trusted employee. "Minnie Esso" is dead. For thirteen years she had served the company faithfully. Once an alley cat, "Minnie" became famous when an auditor noticed a monthly bill for \$4.40 paid for milk and salmon. "Minnie" went on the payroll, but she was no moocher. She kept mice out of the laboratory. Now her only son, "Timmie," is taking over the job as head mouser. The job will pay him \$5.50 -- the high cost of living, you know.

Down in San Antonio, "Fido" and "Rover" are going to look smarter and smell better in the future. They've just opened a canine beauty salon where a dog can get a bubble bath, a permanent wave or an abbreviated tail if the latest mode calls for it. "Complete personalized canine service." That's what the manager calls it. No cats need apply.

(Romance)

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. And today there's a Rose in Midland -- well, here's the story. A few weeks ago Rose Cjack as usual was spelling it out for a store clerk -- C-J-A-C-K. Sighed Rose -- "I wish I had a name like Jones." The clerk replied -- "My name is Jones." Today in Saint John's Church they were married.

A motorist speeding along Island Parkway squinted this morning when he noticed a young man in a full-dress suit at the roadside. Then he looked again and pulled up. The young man carried a sign which said -- "She's waiting at the church. Help!" The bridegroom-to-be, William Porter, explained that his watch had stopped and he was in danger of being late to his own wedding. Yep, he made it -- twenty miles in thirty minutes! The motorist? He got a kiss from the bride.

TYPICAL FORMULAS FOR HUMAN INTEREST

Penny bank left in store contributions

Country visitor city slicker bridge sold

Childhood lovers... surprise meeting... happy wedding

Thoughtless professor... nails up attic... professor inside

Starving rabbits mother cat rabbits saved

Golf ball Japanese beetle hole-in-one

Family asleep rescue by dog pet loses life

Destitute family... eviction notice... generous neighbors

Society wedding mouse appears bride faints

Stork arrives cop on hand triplets born

Half dollar baby swallows successful operation

Hungry husband ... crackers in bed ... divorce granted

Common H-I Combinations.

(Oddity)

Even chicken thieves are keeping pace with modern science. Earl Meyer, who raises broilers on his farm seven miles south of town, told the sheriff's office today that he heard nary a squawk last night when a dozen of his pullets vanished. Meyer says that the thieves sprayed the henhouse with something to make the chickens unconscious.

It won't be long now until you'll be wasting your time to look for pearls in your oysters. A Long Island concern announces that it will ship them in plastic shells. The shippers say plastic is lighter and stronger than the natural shell.

Also in the sports news tonight is this believe-it-or-not item from Clay City. Luke Yoder and three other golfers at the Municipal Links say it's so. Yoder's tee shot on the ninth hole stopped dead on the rim of the cup. Whereupon a Japanese beetle alighted on the ball and pushed it in. Yoder took the match -- one up!

Keep Smiles and Sobs Simple. Humor and pathos always hover perilously close to burlesque and can easily backfire on the writer and editor. Good taste and style simplicity are their surest safeguards.

The danger of slipping out of bounds with an off-color joke most often accompanies an attempt to be funny. Laugh with people, not at them. Don't use dialect or foreign accents. It never pays to make fun of a class or group of people, an occupation or an organization, unless the humor is wholly innocent.

In writing either humor or pathos, the newcomer in radio news has a tendency to exaggerate, especially when seeking to touch the listener's compassion, to spread on sticky sentiment too closely and to bury the simple and strong elements of his story under a pile of ornate phrasology. Note the unaffected yet sincere simplicity in this one-act tragedy:

There's a shortage, too, in clowns nowadays and that is why Ned Carella, who is seventy-two years old, came out of retirement last night to perform before the crippled children at Mercy Hospital in Midland. Ned was happy to be again in his grease paint.

his ridiculous pantaloons and his stovepipe hat. The old clown stamped his foot and sawed on his violin as he had not done since his appearances before the crowned heads of Europe.

Grinning from ear to ear, Old Ned shouted -- "Come on kids, follow me." The children forgot their aches and pains as they sang the songs he played. Suddenly the old clown stopped in the middle of a note. The battered violin slipped from his shoulder. The whoops of the children died. They expected another caper. Sure enough, Old Ned was up to something. One of his hands waved. He shouted -- "Here I go!" He fell forward.

The youngsters laughed. They like to see clowns fall. They still were laughing when the nurses wheeled them back to their rooms. One of the other performers, still grinning, touched Old Ned on the shoulder and said -- "Okay, Ned. The show's over." But Old Ned didn't move. He was dead. He had left them laughing.

No garish phrases are needed to adorn such a story. It needs no synthetic tear-shedding, no moralizing. It tells itself.

II-I Items in the Script. The practiced script editor saves his human interest stories with the solicitude of a miser. He studies them carefully and uses them sparingly with the same care that a hostess arranges flowers on her dinner table.

Now and then but not often a pure human interest story with a powerful pull may be used as the first item. More often an emotional touch can be used as a light lure to escort the listener into an important but heavy or aging lead story.

Shorter brighteners have great value when used to interlard heavier news items, giving the listener a breathing spell before plunging him once more into the current of more serious events. This *sandwiching* technique, which corresponds to the public speaker's "That reminds me," has been mentioned in an earlier chapter.

It is especially effective to follow a story or series of stories about disaster, despair and death with a smile, provided the transition is not made too abruptly. Here a coupling pin such as "Turning to news of a lighter vein" or "On the less serious side of the news" is needed to serve as a shock absorber. Properly cushioned, the bright-

ener does not detract from the seriousness of main events in the newscast. On the contrary, it sets them off more prominently by contrast.

The human interest story, especially the smile-at-end variety, has become a standard fixture as the final item in many newscast formats. MIDI' rules call for a last-line lift on every show unless it is crowded out by news that breaks just before or while the announcer is on the air. This time-tested technique whereby a presentation ends on a cheerful note is as old as show business. A good showman, like Old Ned, always leaves them laughing.

SHOP TALK

1. Distinguish between straight and human interest news. What are the characteristics of each?
2. As a script editor with space for only one of two items, one about "Katie and the Kettle" and the other about passage of a tariff bill by Congress, which would you choose, and why?
3. Tabulate a half dozen typical topics of human interest, citing examples of each.
4. Do you think dialect should be barred from newscasts, even in light, humorous items?
5. As a radio news editor would you make a lift compulsory at the end of each straight newscast?

CHAPTER XXVII

Drama in the Newscast

All the World's a Stage. Press and radio newsmen share in the romantic regard with which the public tends to view people in show business. As a result script writers, as well as newspaper reporters, have been glamorized by fanfare about excitement behind the news scenes, the tableau of the teletypes and the drama of the deadlines.

Veterans are inclined to minimize the portrayal of their occupation as a daily adventure replete with melodramatic thrills. They are right in the sense that all phases of news handling, like theatrical or any other kind of work, consist more of routine than romance. However, there is a definite affinity between the theater and the newsroom in the sense that they both deal heavily in drama—the one in fantasy, the other in realism.

Drama is one of the ten elements of news. It is found in many a current story, especially of the human interest variety in which facts flow over the boundaries of information and into the realm of emotional appeal. To present news of this nature effectively the script writer needs to know something of the technique of the playwright.

The average scriptman does not conceive himself to be an Ibsen or a Shaw, but unless he can at least recognize the dramatic possibilities in news and apply a simple dramatic formula to chosen parts of his copy he is marked as a dullard with slight skill and a stunted imagination.

What Is the Dramatic Formula? We have seen that a majority of radio news items are exposition. The drama story is more likely to be narration coupled with description and sometimes with dialogue. What we shall call the dramatic formula is common to plays and short stories. It consists of five parts, as follows.

1. Introduction and characterization.
2. Rising action.
3. Crisis.
4. Falling action.
5. Denouement.

This formula may be more briefly summarized as (1) opening, (2) suspense, and (3) climax. It can be charted as a short level line, followed by a line steadily rising to a peak and completed with a line dropping sharply from the peak to an end.

Motivating the plot is conflict which implies a protagonist and an antagonist. Because conflict energizes much news not necessarily of the dramatic type, it has been listed in an earlier chapter as a separate news element. As was pointed out there, the protagonist and antagonist are not necessarily human beings—a hero and a villain—but combat of some kind creates the action.

It is possible for either protagonist or antagonist to dominate the situation throughout the struggle. If the protagonist emerges victorious at the climax, you have written a happy-ending drama or comedy. If the protagonist is defeated, you have written a tragedy.

For illustration let us apply the dramatic formula to a typical human interest radio news item:

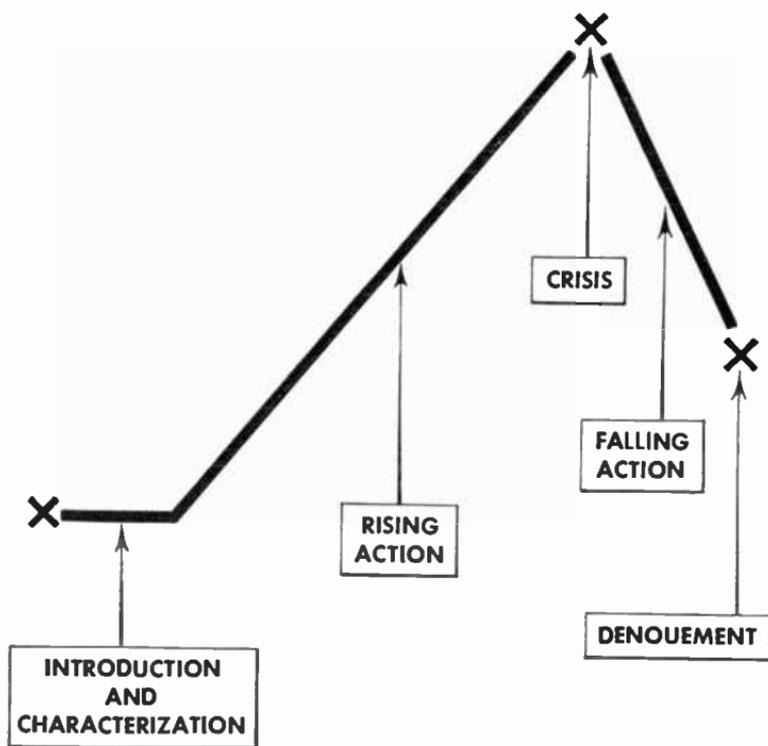
(Introduction and Characterization)

From Capital City this morning comes the story of two men -- Harry Stewart and John Harmon -- who were driving along a state highway near the capital.

(Rising Action)

They approached a railway grade crossing. Directly over the rails the car stalled. The men could not get out. A train came pounding down on them. Helpless, the two men cringed in the front seat awaiting the impact. The engineer saw the car and grabbed for the air brakes -- too late.

A CHART OF THE DRAMATIC FORMULA



A Plot Structure.

(Climax)

With sparks scattering from under its screeching wheels the locomotive plowed into the automobile.

(Falling Action)

The cowcatcher caught up the car, carried it one hundred feet down the track and tossed it into a ditch.

(Denouement)

Stewart and Harmon crawled out, shaken and scared, but unhurt. Said Stewart -- "We were saved by a miracle."

It is clear that the interest of the listener is seized and held by the form rather than the content of the story. His concern is not with the report of an accident near Capital City, or even with the threatened deaths of two men. Death is an everyday occurrence. Instead, his attention is riveted on the question, "How is it going to come out?"

To create this suspense the writer has deliberately built up the action, withholding the crisis and denouement. Had he begun "Two men escaped uninjured . . ." the dramatic effect would have been spoiled.

It should be noted that this illustrative item is based on a story of action rather than one of fact in which straight exposition would be required. While the dramatic formula is effective in a story of movement and struggle, it would be ridiculous to apply it to the tax collection report of the city treasurer or to an announcement of plans for the construction of new school buildings.

Introduction and Characterization. The introduction or prologue of a radio news drama or short story corresponds to the warmup or coupling pin. The simplest and perhaps the best openings are variations of "Now gather close, children," "Once upon a time" and "This is a story about . . ."

For characterization and stage setting the radio news writer seldom can spare more than a word or two—at most a few phrases. Often he can picture the locale and point up his characters in the warmup. For example:

Well, folks, this is a story about a cat and a squirrel in Island Park -- a stray cat named "Felix" and a squirrel named -- oh, let's just call him "Squinky." Now "Felix" was just a prowlin' around when "Squinky" . . .

Speaking of money brings us to the adventure of seventeen-year-old Lester Sparks, who is a messenger for the Midland Brokerage Company. Unaware that his brief case carried ten thousand dollars in cash, Lester asked a stranger to hold it a moment while he stooped to tie a shoelace . . .

In stories in which the characters are nonhuman, as in the squirrel-cat item, it is usually safe to dramatize the antagonist as a villain. Charles Dana once said that the only safe thing to attack with immunity is a mad dog. But even the actions of a mad dog must be treated with care if a human being, perhaps the owner of the dog, is responsible. It is not often that a human being can be characterized as a villain unless he remains unidentified, as in the case of the stranger who held the brief case, or unless the account of his wrongdoing is privileged. Therefore, in the dramatic formula item be careful with your characterizations.

Keeping the Listener Dangling. In the *Arabian Nights* Scheherazade, the storyteller, saved her life because she kept the king guessing. He had to continue listening to find out what was coming next. Suspense born of curiosity and nurtured by secrecy motivates rising action as the narrative goes forward. Who has not tossed aside a book or magazine story because he has already guessed, or found out by furtively flipping to the last page, whodunit?

In creating suspense, the radio writer has one advantage over both the fiction writer and the newspaperman who fashions a news feature story with delayed interest. A listener cannot steal a look at the last page or glance down to the end of the column for the answer. Perforce, he must wait. For this very reason the script writer may not dawdle even if he has the space in which to do it. The suspense sequence should march along, as in this item:

All that the jittery residents of Booneville want today is a little quiet. In fact, they are praying for it. They also have asked the

County Board of Supervisors to do something about it. They cite these disturbing events. Missus John Lacy was sitting in her bathtub when the ceiling fell on her. Frank Bates watched the piano in his living room take off for the front porch. And Pastor Timothy Coming has seen his new church sway and sag right before his eyes. The shimmy is caused by a night and day parade of trucks. The trucks are hauling rocks from a quarry for a new dam at the Booneville waterworks.

Customarily the scriptman writes short sentences. If the narrative is one of action, they should be shorter still. Toward the climax, as emotional intensity increases, they may be little more than fragments, thus:

Ten stories up the scaffold swayed dizzily. Wind whipped it to and fro. A second rope snapped. Then a third. Bates clung to the last remaining rope. Perry's hand reached out from the window ledge. Once -- twice -- the scaffold swung away. Suddenly it came close. Perry grasped the painter's arm. The crowd below watched tensely. Slowly the policeman pulled Bates in -- then up across the ledge to safety.

The successful news drama must be restricted to a single effect—the simple line or lines which release the tension of the scene. Setting, characters and suspense are preliminary to the climax. There can be no digressions and, above all, the point must not slip out before the climax is reached.

The news writer incurs the same obligation as the playwright to finish with a worthy climax and denouement. Therefore he must know—if not mentally write—his last lines before the first. Once you start an item in the dramatic form, presenting a conflict, you create the anticipation of a solution and your audience has a right to expect one. If you don't know the solution and leave the listener in mid-air, you have cheated.

Cumulative Suspense. Now and then a human interest story comes along in which repetition, as well as narration, piles up to the laughing point. A magician astonishes by pulling one rabbit after another out of his hat. A clever comedian can keep an audi-

AN EXAMPLE OF CUMULATIVE SUSPENSE

There also was traffic trouble in Glen Haven this evening. It started when Elmer Whittier, who lives near the Star Theater, drove home only to find a new car with no license tag parked partly across his driveway. Several times before, movie patrons have kept Whittier out of his own garage. Enough was enough. Whittier strode in to the hallway telephone. He rang the theater -- no help. He rang a neighbor -- no help. He rang the automobile license bureau -- no help. You see, the parked car had no license. Finally Whittier rang the police and a cop came. At the doorstep the policeman, Paul Morris, met Mister and Missus Whittier in animated conversation. Missus Whittier had just come around the house from the back yard. Breathlessly she was telling her husband -- "Yes, Honey, it's yours, all yours. They delivered it this afternoon. You won it at the Legion raffle."

INTRODUCTION
AND
CHARACTERIZATION

RISING ACTION

CLIMAX
FALLING ACTION
DENOUEMENT

A Dramatic Formula Item.

ence in stitches with a bit of paper hanging from his sleeve, shaking it, sitting on it, putting it behind his back or in his pocket in a mock effort to discard it. Here is the cumulative suspense treatment in news items:

Twenty-two-year-old Isaac Harrison appeared in the Midland police court today and received the following fines. For reckless driving -- fifty dollars. For driving without a license -- fifty dollars. For driving through a fire lane -- twenty dollars. For a few other things -- thirty days in jail. Harrison fainted.

"Henry," the trained seal at the Middleton Zoo, has been literally killed with kindness. "Henry" died last week. Today an autopsy revealed that his stomach contained -- \$3.72 in pennies, \$6.15 in nickels, forty cents in dimes, two quarters, one Canadian penny, two streetcar tokens and one button.

The Punch Line at End. Often the denouement to end a news drama is in the original copy and needs only to be repeated. Or, having decided on a dramatic formula, the writer may have to go fishing for the punch line. Sometimes he drops his bait and suddenly a fish is dangling from the hook. Again, he may sit for minutes without a nibble.

Nursing along the gag or tag-line—arousing anticipation without giving satisfaction—is the most difficult part of the dramatization. The last telltale words are the payoff:

- . . . And, by the way, that gun really wasn't loaded.
- On the back seat lay the baby -- peacefully snoozing.
- . . . Yes, the nitroglycerin was water -- just water.

Note how the writers of these items carefully keep the cat in the bag until they are ready to surprise the audience:

And here's the latest development in the city's campaign to stop smoking in subway stations. A dozen men lined up before Municipal Judge Crowley this morning to be sentenced for carrying lighted pipes, cigarettes and cigars on the platforms. One after another they nodded "Guilty," paid two-dollar fines and hurried away. The last -- a man in color-splashed overalls --

told the judge – “I work for the city. I was just painting signs.” Crowley asked – “Signs? What kind of signs?” The painter replied meekly – “‘No Smoking’ signs.”

Well, there’s a young man in the county jail today who’s not talking. Last night, it seems, he handed to Detective Nathan Young a penciled note which explained that he was deaf and dumb, stranded and trying to get home. Young gave him a quarter. The youth smiled his thanks and turned away. Young called after him – “Hey, how about my change?” The youth whirled about and asked – “What change? You got change coming?” That’s why he’s in jail.

The denouement must come quickly after the climax and fall with the finality of an auctioneer’s hammer. After the whip is cracked, the bomb exploded, there may be a slight echo while the listener catches on, but thereafter it’s time to move on to another item or, if the item is used as a lift at end, to finish the newscast.

SIOP TALK

1. Discuss the dramatic formula. Is it found elsewhere than in plays and short stories—for example in conversation or comic strips?
2. Define the words *protagonist* and *antagonist*.
3. Compare the structure of a dramatic formula radio news item with the delayed-interest newspaper feature story.
4. Why do short and incomplete sentences move action copy faster than long sentences?
5. Define and discuss the word *denouement*. Why should the denouement be held to minimum length in a dramatic formula item?

CHAPTER XXVIII

Patchwork With Precision

News—A Rope of Sand. There is a legend in Scotland that the devil came to a wizard and pestered him for work. The wizard assigned him to many difficult tasks. Satan accomplished them all quickly and asked for more. Finally the wizard sent him to the seashore to make ropes from sand. As fast as the devil made the ropes the surf washed them away. He is employed to this day. His work is never done.

News stories are like sand forming an impermanent rope—the newscast—which is melted away by the incoming waves and tides of time. The reconstruction task of the script editor and writer seldom is in a state of completeness. Endlessly the surf swishes in from the restless ocean of world events to destroy their handiwork.

We have seen how the editor, planning ahead, designs the script, and how the writer, following the plan, molds the stories and topics into a well-rounded whole.

Sometimes the sea of news remains comparatively calm hour after hour—so calm that many stories need to be repeated in successive shows. At other times the surf of fresh news rolls in steadily and swiftly, to be swelled now and then into a surging tidal wave. The radio newsmen, busy with their ropes of sand, remain ever on guard ready to repair, replace, revise and renew their handiwork. Like King Canute they cannot sweep back the sea.

To use another simile, work in a radio newsroom would be sim-

ple indeed if like Joshua the scriptmen could command the sun to stand still, stop the clocks and teletypes and allow themselves time to finish a script without molestation. But the clocks and teletypes run on, news changes, deadlines relentlessly come and go. There is no "Hold the press" order in radio. For better or worse, a regular news show goes on the air as scheduled. It should be up to the minute and at the same time a single well-arranged unit.

Listeners little know or care whether five minutes or five hours are consumed in the preparation of a newscast, but they expect it to be a timely and finished product. If flashes, bulletins, extra newscasts or other emergency nonregular scripts have been broadcast, revision of the regular newscast script to include at least what they have disclosed is mandatory. In stories of lesser moment which change during the script-writing period, alterations are routine.

A newscast organization is judged largely by its regular news programs. If they continually lag behind competing marchers in the news parade or stagger along out of step, they lose their listeners. Radio audiences demand and get well-timed, coherent and complete newscasts.

The Patchwork Devices. From the movies, perhaps, the public has gained a conception of a newsroom as a sort of bedlam with madmen working in a frenzy of confusion. The fact is that although tension is increased by the heat of fast-breaking news, the newsroom atmosphere actually grows cooler as purposeful work speeds up.

Patching a script under pressure is no novelty. It proceeds with precision according to a pattern used over and over again. The size, shape and color of the patches change from show to show, but the pattern is familiar to all experienced workmen. A written script can be literally torn apart and reassembled in the same methodical way that it is originally put together.

Simple corrections—the changing of a few words—are noted by the writer, transmitted by telephone and made with the announcer's pencil; but beyond these the patchwork is done with typewriters, scissors and paste or by dictation—plus energy.

We shall first examine the patchwork devices and then try out the pattern. The devices are the following kinds of script slugs:

SLUG SAMPLE	MEANING TO ANNOUNCER
S ₅ .	Substitute this for Item 5.
9A.	Insert between Items 9 and 10.
-- KILL ITEM 3 --	Destroy Item 3.
L ₁ .	Lead. Use preceding Item 1. Kill highest-numbered item.
-- AD ONE --	Kill highest-numbered item and substitute this.
LH.	Lead Headlines. Use before Headline 1. Kill highest-numbered Headline.
SH ₃ .	Substitute this for Headline 3.

It is manifestly impossible to overhaul in the space of a few minutes an entire script requiring two or three hours to write. The key to rapid revision is piecemeal replacement. This is made possible by sectionalization of the original script.

It will be observed that each of the script slugs listed deals with a separate script section—either a numbered item or a numbered headline. Thus the replacements can be made one at a time by an individual, or several can be made simultaneously by different staff members.

Script arithmetic must be observed. This is a prime rule of the patchwork process. When something new goes in, something else must come out to make way for it. Simple addition or subtraction of wordage without compensation would stretch out or cut short the show.

Compensation can be made either way with proper use of the script slugs. No time-consuming messages are necessary. Several of the patchwork slugs which add wordage, S₅., L₁., -- AD ONE --, LH., and SH₃. provide within themselves for equivalent deduction. Each specifies the matter to be replaced. The insert slug, 9A., must be accompanied by a -- KILL -- slug which also may be used to

eliminate items or headlines other than those automatically deleted by one of the addition slugs.

Simple Substitutions. Once an item has been transmitted to the announcer it may be amended in one of two ways—by correction or by substitution. If only a few words—perhaps a name, a numeral or a phrase—require changes, they usually are fixed in a conversation between script writer and announcer. At MIDT, as we have seen, this conversation takes place by direct telephone.

The script editor decides whether an alteration is of sufficient size to warrant a complete substitution. If so, a complete substitute or sub item is written. It carries the S slug. The letter S appears in no other script slug used by MIDT. S is an extremely important slug when the S item is used to kill a libelous or otherwise dangerous original item. However, since it seldom calls for instant action, it is a period slug rather than a dash slug.

The following items illustrate the simple substitution:

(Original Item)

7. A search for six-year-old Gerald Winston continues tonight in the woods east of Glenview. Since four o'clock this afternoon the lad has been missing from his home at 456 Lee Avenue. His parents, Mister and Missus John Winston, called the police when Gerald did not come home for dinner. Schoolmates say that he planned to go on a pecan hunt. The boy is wearing a gray cap, red sweater and brown corduroy trousers.

(Substitute Item)

S7. A six-year-old boy lost in the woods east of Glenview has been found by the police. Just a few minutes ago a searching party brought the lad, Gerald Winston, to the home of his parents, Mister and Missus John Winston, of Glenview. He had been missing since 4 P.M. Gerald was picking up pecans and says that when darkness fell he could not find his way out of the woods. Yes, he brought home the pecans -- nearly a peck of them.

The substitute may salvage and repeat some of the original item, including merely one new angle, or it may be a completely new story on the same or another subject.

EXAMPLES OF SCRIPT PATCHWORK

TO SUBSTITUTE

35. And here is the latest word on the condition of Senator Theodore Lee who was taken to Haven Hospital yesterday after contracting pneumonia. The Senator's doctors have just announced that Lee has taken a turn for the worse and is -- we quote -- "very low." The announcement adds that Lee has been placed under an oxygen tent.

-- END --

TO INSERT

-- KILL ITEM 10 --

4A. Five minutes after the start of the last quarter Midland's second-string end, Jimmy Lambert, returned a punt forty yards to the Eagles' twenty-five. Skaer broke through right guard for a seventeen-yard gain and first down on the eight. But the rally ended in a fiasco as Davis fumbled. The Eagles recovered and punted out of danger.

-- END --

-- KILL ITEM 11 --

4B. In the closing minutes of the game Midland tried a series of desperate passes but again lost the ball on a fumble just before the game ended. Final score -- Eagles -- seven. Midland -- nothing.

-- END --

Repairing the Body of the Script.

Coupling pins need watching, especially if the subject of the substitute differs from the original. If improper pins are contained in the item preceding or following, these also may need alterations to insure continuity.

Inserts and Kills. The insert script slug carries the number of the preceding item in the original script and thereafter a letter. If the first insert is 3A., then 3B. follows 3A., 3C. follows 3B. and so on. An insert slug always must be accompanied by a kill to compensate for the added wordage. The kill, of course, can be made at any place in the script where an item of the same approximate length can be spared. It is better to send the kill slug first, thus:

-- KILL ITEM 11 --

3A. Upon his arrival at the airport, Rutherford confirmed the report from Chicago. As he stepped from the plane, Rutherford said -- and we quote -- "Yes, the factory will be moved to Midland. Our steam shovels should be scooping dirt before the snow flies" -- end of quotation.

If there is still another development before newscast time, a second insert may be sent like this:

-- KILL ITEM 10 --

3B. From the airport Rutherford went immediately to City Hall where he talked briefly to Mayor Nelson. Smiling broadly, the Mayor told reporters that the Rutherford plant will employ twelve hundred men earning more than one million dollars a year.

The kill slug customarily is used only when it accompanies an insert slug. However, it can be used to accompany one of the other patchwork slugs, in which case it calls for the dropping of an item other than that otherwise automatically deleted. For example -- KILL ITEM 8 -- sent just before -- AD ONE -- means to compensate by dropping Item 8 instead of Item 16, the highest-numbered item. Thus, a human interest or dramatic formula item or any other valued script finale can be preserved.

On rare occasions just before or during delivery it becomes necessary to send a kill slug alone in order to knock out an erroneous item before the announcer reaches it. A strenuous effort is then made to compensate with an insert or ad later on in the script. If time does not permit the compensation, the show falls short, but this is preferable to a serious error on the air.

The New Lead Item. It now is necessary to recall the definitions and uses of these script slugs:

SLUG	MEANING
-- 875 --	Entire five-minute show, totaling 875 words, is completed.
-- 2625 --	Entire fifteen-minute show, totaling 2,625 words, is completed.

Substitute or insert items may be used during the original preparation of the script. An insert may be typed into the body of the script but out of numerical order without disturbing the script arithmetic, since the announcer will scissor it out and place it properly. When a substitute item is used, of course, both the substitute and the original item cannot be included within the 875 or 2,625 count.

The L and ad slugs are for use only after a script is completed and the 875 or 2625 slug has been sent. New leads and ads are strictly emergency devices for placing new items at the beginning or end of a completed regular script.

It has been shown how the original script can be written by sections in reverse order so that the lead item or group of items is prepared last. But once the original Item 1 and the 875 or 2625 slug has been sent, the new lead and ad devices may come into play.

Assume then that a complete five-minute show is in the announcer's hands when this new and unexpected story breaks. So urgent is the story that it should lead the newscast. It is prepared like this:

L1. A report telephoned to Midland at 10:40 A-M says that a tornado has struck the town of Oakton thirty-two miles south-

EXAMPLES OF THE NEW LEAD AND AD

NEW LEAD

Page X 10 P.M.

L1. The Midland street car strike is all over. A settlement has been reached and the trolleys will be running again tomorrow morning. Mayor Nelson announced the end of the tie-up at City Hall just before ten o'clock tonight.

L2. The Mayor's statement says -- and we quote -- "All parties in the surface lines dispute have agreed to arbitration by the State Mediation Board. Street car service will be resumed at six o'clock Tuesday morning." It was not immediately made clear whether the arbitration agreement covers the Midland South Side bus lines, also paralyzed by the three-day transit tie-up.

-- END --

AD

Page Y 10 P.M.

-- AD ONE --

And here's more last-minute news from City Hall. Both bus and trolley lines are covered by the transit strike settlement. South Side buses, as well as street cars, will resume operations tomorrow.

-- END --

Alterations at Start and End.

west of Junction City. Several houses have been wrecked and three persons are known to be dead.

L2. First news of the storm came from Edmund Lopez, Oakton correspondent for the Midland "Times." Lopez says that a twisting funnel-like cloud dipped to earth north of Oakton and raced across the outskirts of the village. The roaring wind ripped off house and barn roofs, uprooted trees and hurled people in its path to the ground. Those killed were two men and a woman at work in a tool shed. They are as yet unidentified.

- END -

The L slugs tell the announcer to read the two new items first and follow with Item 1. They also instruct him to discard the highest-numbered item or items at the end of the script to compensate. If time permits, of course, alternate items may be killed by means of kill slugs.

One more script change must accompany the new lead item. This is an alteration of the headlines. It will be discussed later in this chapter.

Adding at the End. Placement of a new last-minute item at the end of the script often is preferred to a new lead for several reasons. There is more leeway because of the lapse of time while the announcer is delivering the first part of the script. Also, although there may be an abrupt break in continuity between a new lead and Item 1, such a break between an added item and the headlines is normal and expected. The scriptmen can send one ad after another, each one complete in itself. Finally, the ad requires no changes in headlines.

Let us assume that delivery of a regular newscast has just begun when the press service printer bulletins the first report of a presidential press conference. This ad goes to the announcer:

- AD ONE -

And here is last-minute news from Washington. President Wrightman has just announced that he will make a ten-day speaking tour starting on October 10th. He will attend the State Fair at Capital City on October 17th.

- END -

This ad is complete in itself. The announcer discards his highest-numbered item and reads the ad instead. But he may get another and yet another while there still is time to use them.

-- AD TWO --

Asked if the trip will be "political," the President replied that the election campaign still is a long way off. He by-passed questions about running for another term with a refusal to comment.
-- END --

-- AD THREE --

President Wrightman also announced at the White House conference that he would approve a substantial cut in income tax rates, provided it comes within the ten per cent limit specified in his message to Congress. A bill now before the Senate would reduce taxes in the lower brackets by fifteen per cent.
-- END --

It has been noted that an abrupt break in continuity must be watched for between a new lead and Item 1. The continuity break caused by an ad is likely to come between the last item read from the original script and -- AD ONE --. Therefore it is a rule that -- AD ONE -- starts with a warmup making it clear that the news is last minute. These introductions are proper:

Here is late news.
And now a bulletin just in from . . .
And just a few minutes ago . . .
Now, the latest report from . . .
We bring you a last-minute dispatch.

If the story is extremely brief the -- AD ONE -- can be padded by repeating the content. Each ad should be complete in itself so that the listener is not left dangling.

New Lead—Then Ads. It is altogether possible by means of script slugs to replace both the first and last parts of a newscast with items drawn from the same story. Here is how the presidential press conference could have been handled:

L1. First, we bring you last-minute news from Washington. President Wrightman has just announced at his press conference that he will visit Capital City on October 17th. More detail in just a few moments.

-- END --

-- AD ONE --

Here is more about that important announcement made by President Wrightman at the White House a few minutes ago. The President says that he will visit the State Fair at Capital City on October 17th as one stop on a ten-day speaking tour of the nation.

Second and third ads would then cover the political and income tax angles of the story.

Repairing the Headlines. Alteration in the recapitulation or headlines read after the main body of the script is necessary only if new matter—a new lead, substitute or insert—has been placed in the first part of the script.

Clearly one or more fresh headlines are needed to summarize the new lead. Hence the LII slug which operates automatically like other L item slugs. It tells the announcer to read the LH headline first and drop the highest-numbered headline at the bottom of the headline group. This compensates and keeps the number of headlines unchanged.

The SH slug usually is used to recapitulate an insert or substitute item. It operates like S item slugs. For example, SH₃ tells the announcer to read the substitute headline instead of the previously sent Headline 3.

Patchwork Pattern Variations. The script slugs used by MIDT for the revision of scripts represent radio versions of slugs or guidelines used in newspaper offices and by press services. In a general way the copy-desk terms “slug,” “insert,” “sub,” “new lead” and “add” have meanings akin to the script slugs of MIDT.

All radio newsrooms follow the newspaper repair procedures to

some extent for the reason that the radio news script on paper bears a close resemblance to the manuscript of the reporter and to the proof from type in galleys. However, just as specific slugs differ in newspaper offices so they differ in radio newsrooms.

It is improbable that the full set of MIDT revision symbols exists anywhere. Nevertheless, they represent a practical and workable pattern for patchwork which demonstrates the main revision operations. The reader should endeavor to understand the purposes and results obtained by the specific slugs with a view to comprehending quickly their counterparts in any newsroom where he may work.

Look Ahead To Avoid Patching. After he learns from practice to handle the patchwork devices with ease and dispatch, a script editor is in danger of using them unnecessarily for patchwork that could be avoided by foresight.

At any given time there are a minimum of two regular scripts in preparation. While directing the patchwork on one, the editor should if possible avoid patching the one that is to go on the air an hour or two hours later. Often he can look to the latter script first, giving the writer new raw material and insuring continuity, before patching the one to be broadcast within a few minutes.

If this is impractical, then as soon as he has a moment to spare the script editor should determine the progress of the second writer. If the typing has not reached the point where the new matter is to go, the editor places the fresh copy under the page dividers, rearranges and, if necessary, renumbers the items so that a minimum of patchwork will be required.

Several things may affect the order in which the script editor can act. One of these is the capacity of his sending teletype. If the teletype operator has enough copy accumulated to keep him busy for a while, there may be plenty of time for both writers to repair their scripts from the same raw material. Duplicates of the raw material can be used simultaneously.

All regular script writing, including patchwork, is subject to

interruption and delay while flashes, bulletins and extra newscasts speed to the microphone. These will be discussed in the next chapter.

SHOP TALK

1. Point out in current newspapers several kinds of stories which probably changed in content in the course of two hours.
2. Why do radio newsmen have less time for making corrections and substitutions than newspapermen?
3. Tabulate the patchwork script slugs used by MIDT and give the meaning of each one.
4. Compare the patchwork slugs used by newspaper writers, copy-readers and proofreaders with those used by MIDT.
5. Why is it more important to put last-minute news into a regular news program than to use it merely as a flash or bulletin?

CHAPTER XXIX

Seconds To Go!

Newness Becomes Nowness. Haste is an American habit. We think fast, move fast and live fast. People of other nations where the tempo is slower paced regard speed as synonymous with America. Our own symbols of success are go-getters and first-placers. Our admiration for swiftness in any field has ever spurred and quickened the transmission of information. Clipper ships, the pony express, air mail, the telegraph and telephone typify successive step-ups in the speed of communication.

We want to know quickly who was elected. Which team won the game? What's the weather outlook? How did the trial come out? Who died and who survived? Are stocks up or down? Is this the latest? In a word—what's new?

To supply the answers to these questions the newspaper was invented. For a century the press held all speed records in news communication to the public, reaching top velocity with the re-plated bulletin and the extra edition. Then, between World Wars I and II, the microphone and loudspeaker proved their speed superiority. On Armistice Day in 1919 the American public for the last time relied wholly on newspaper bulletins and extra editions for the first tidings of a momentous world event. On Pearl Harbor Day in 1941 the speed championship changed hands and the radio supplanted the press as the fleetest carrier of urgent news.

Newspapers move the news with increasing swiftness into regular editions but they cannot keep pace with the radio. A news flash

received simultaneously by MIDT and the *Midland Times*, say at 8 P.M. during the *Times* publication period, is rushed by one staff to the microphone, by the other to the composing room. The *Times* can get a replated edition on the street in about thirty minutes. MIDT puts it on the air in thirty seconds.

Newness in the newspaper has become *nowness* in the newscast. A fire is raging *now*. The river is rising *now*. The Senate is voting *now*. The Sox are at bat *now*. At every opportunity radio newsmen emphasize the fact that they can translate the prime news element, immediacy, into something close to instantaneity.

Speed Is Salable. In bygone days newspapermen boasted when an extra rolled to the newsstands fifteen minutes ahead of a competitor's. Today radio newsmen are proud if they broadcast a flash fifteen seconds before rival stations do.

Actually there was little profit in extra editions. They usually were issued at a loss. By the same token there is no direct gain to a steamship or air line if it clips a transatlantic or coast-to-coast record. Likewise a news beat has little immediate value to a radio station. What then is the motive behind the striving for speed?

From a business point of view the answer is: *Firsts* make good publicity. They build good will, prestige and public confidence. A listener relays startling radio news to members of his family and his neighbors. For a few minutes at least, he is an important personage. *He knew it first*. Multiply him by thousands and do it often enough and you win more listeners. Larger audiences spell more advertising revenue. It is a selling point when salesmen can support the claim that "we deliver the news first." Thus, speed is salable.

However, speed can reach a point of diminishing returns if it is allowed to become a fetish. With newscasts every hour or even four or five times a day, a station can transmit ninety-five per cent of the news on regular hours without interrupting other programs.

Therefore, script editors as well as station managers should exercise restraint to prevent needless break-ins with news of secondary value. Although no sponsor wants to be placed in the position

of keeping important news from the public, agencies and advertisers are apt to complain if the newsroom staff "plays newspaper" too often by trying to needle trivia into bang-bang bulletins.

We have discussed the scare danger inherent in radio news of crime, riots and other kinds of violence. A program break-in multiplies the force of a shock. It requires no imagination to understand the effect on both sponsor and audience when the report of a mild mishap is flashed in to cut off a drama just as the detective is unraveling the mystery or the space-ship is diving to disaster. Nor is it judicious to interrupt a tender melody with a blunt declaration that a dismembered body has been found by the police.

Nonregular broadcast news therefore needs to be culled with care as well as rapidity before it bursts into the ears of the listeners. The person who controls the *flash* mike whereby he can cut into any program for an important news announcement must know what he is about.

News Not Regularly Programmed. News developments which cannot wait for scheduled program hours fall into three classifications: (1) expected at a definite time, (2) expected at an indefinite time, and (3) unexpected.

The first group may be subdivided into events fully reported in advance and events with alternative developments. Copy for many important speeches and announcements is available in advance for release at a given time. Other events, known to be important, are scheduled for occurrence at a given time, but advance copy is unavailable. For example, the winner of a contest is to be named or a public official is to announce his candidacy or his refusal to run. Into the second group—expected at an indefinite time—fall such probable happenings as the death of a newsworthy person who is critically ill or injured, the veto or signature of important legislation as an executive deadline approaches. Frequently the time of occurrence and the essential fact can be closely approximated, as in the case of the Kentucky Derby with one horse heavily favored.

Finally, there is the completely unexpected story which is as startling to the newsmen as it is to the public. It whips out of a

clear sky with lightning speed and thunderbolt impact—the wreck of a train, the death of a newsworthy man, the abdication of a king, the fall of a bomb. Ways and means of handling this kind of speed story—the unexpected—will be discussed in this chapter.

Tools for Fast Work. To handle bolt-from-a-clear-sky stories, radio newsrooms are ready with a practiced procedure which is routine, although the news itself may be extraordinary. Like school children in a fire drill, the staff follows an emergency pattern starting with an initial flash or bulletin and ending with complete coverage in a regular news program.

Signposts for this procedure at MIDT are script slugs which point the way logically from the first break-in to the complete wrap-up of the story. Typical examples of these slugs follow:

(Slug)	(Meaning)
-- F'LA --	Flash—broadcast instantly.
-- BUN --	Bulletin—broadcast as soon as possible.
X1.	Extra—first item of extra news-cast for use at :30.

The foregoing MIDT script slugs are not in general use. Individual radio newsrooms have developed their own specific slugs. However, the slugs do represent usual steps in the treatment of fast-breaking news and illustrate the necessity for brief and explicit special script identifications understood by writers, editors, announcers and program directors alike.

If a station is to compete with its rivals on a minute-to-minute and second-to-second basis, time must not be consumed by conversation or conferences. There is no leeway for explanations and instructions. These must be contained within the briefest possible slugs. Speed takes precedence over everything else—except accuracy.

First—Get It Right. A slogan made famous by International News Service reads, "Get It First—But First, Get It Right!"

Fumbling with a flash is seldom forgiven if the error is avoidable.

Psychologists have a word to explain some false news flashes. It is precognition, which means hearing a thing before it happens because you expect it to happen. By reason of his training and the ever-present desire to be first, the newsman is sensitized to the stimulus of news. The beginner is susceptible to momentary impulse rather than considered judgment. Like a hair-trigger gun he is ever in danger of shooting half-cocked.

There have been plenty of false flashes in the past and there will be more, for human beings and machines are not infallible. Sometimes such flashes are ruinous, for in these days of split-second news transmission an error can girdle the earth in a matter of moments. Like the genii loosed from the bottle, an erroneous flash can grow with unbelievable rapidity and is not to be corked in again.

Because a radio flash reaches the public far faster than a printed report, the script editor stands in a more hazardous position than the newspaper editor. During the relay of news from reporter to copyreader to make-up editor to linotyper to proofreader to press there is time to contemplate, check, catch and correct. Newspapers have been known to print editions with alternate stories, releasing one set of papers and destroying the other set, but even this rare and dangerous kind of short-cutting is confined to expected news. Unexpected reports must pass over several newspaper desks and through comparatively slow-moving machines. But radio flashes seldom pass more than two or three men and two machines. At MIDT these are the script editor, who dictates, the teletype and the announcer. Once on the air, a flash is irretrievable.

Protecting flash-handlers in the radio newsroom is the fact that news originates elsewhere and usually passes through a screening before it reaches them. It comes from either a press service or a newspaper editorial room. Thus, as in the case of libel, the safeguards of the script editor are strong in front and weak in the rear.

If the strong barriers in front are broken through and a plausible false flash comes from one of his regular sources, the script editor is trapped. He has no recourse but to broadcast the flash. It is futile

to advise him to "check" on the accuracy of a flash when he has no way to make a check. He can only put on the air what he receives from his customarily trustworthy source, and if it is false, use his transmission vehicle, the microphone of his station, to rectify the mistake as speedily and effectively as possible.

Assuming that the original flash report is plausible, the script editor exercises judgment in two ways. He decides whether the report is of enough urgency to warrant interruption of the program then on the air. Second, he determines whether it is of the shock or nonshock variety. If it is scare stuff, he must determine whether the news value is so strong that the report must be broadcast immediately regardless of its effect on the audience.

Before committing a flash to the air—in fact, before deciding to commit it to the air—the script editor must make sure that he is in possession of a *whole* fact with proper authority behind it.

Assume that the printer attracts attention with bells or signal light. The press service signals and slug give a clue to news value. Watching the printer, the script editor sees the slug FLASH. Then follow the words: "Governor Paulson dead." That's all and it is enough. The fact is whole and the authority behind it is the press service.

Now assume that the slug is BULLETIN and as the words are spelled out they begin, "Governor Paulson has been shot on the steps of the capitol and is in a critical condition, according to a report telephoned to Capital City police by Senator Glover Young." Clearly it would be dangerous to broadcast anything until the period is reached. The fact is not whole until the comma, and the authority is not established until the period. Qualifications always are potential, at least until a sentence is completed, and each qualification needs to be part of the radio flash.

Once the script editor decides that the fact is whole, authoritative, urgent and proper to broadcast he is ready to commit it to the air with all possible dispatch. The entire decision period, of course, is usually only a tick or two of the clock and the decisions are almost simultaneous.

The First Flash. As the name implies, the flash is a sudden and transient blaze of momentous news. Flashes are few and far between and are warranted perhaps no more than a few times in a month of broadcasting. For the purpose of illustration let us look at a flash as it appears on the MIDT sending teletype:

-- FLA --

AN AIRPLANE HAS CRASHED INTO THE MIDLAND TRUST BUILDING.

-- END --

It will be noted first that the flash is short but not skeletonized. MIDT flashes may not exceed twenty words or two sentences. However, they must be complete, with subject, predicate, necessary articles and connecting words. These are not required in typed or printed matter, but are mandatory to spoken language.

A standing introduction or stock announcement precedes the flash. It reads: "We interrupt this program to bring you a flash from the MIDT newsroom." This announcement is used automatically by the announcer and is not the concern of the script editor. Following the body of the flash the announcer repeats it once and ends it with this standing close: "We will bring you more details in a few moments." Here is the flash as actually heard by the listener:

We interrupt this program to bring you a flash from the MIDT newsroom. An airplane has crashed into the Midland Trust Building. We repeat -- an airplane has crashed into the Midland Trust Building. We will bring you more details in a few moments.

The stock open and close, plus the repeat give the flash, no matter how brief and abrupt, a rounded-out form. These words, automatically read, also insure cushioning which permits the listener at least a moment to adjust himself and another moment to grasp fully what he has just heard.

The promise to "bring you more details in a few moments" is a pledge that must be fulfilled. Therefore a flash, which is primarily

a clock-beating and attention-getting device, always is followed by at least one bulletin within five minutes, whether or not more facts are available. If necessary, the words of the flash are repeated or only slightly altered in the succeeding bulletin.

Special rules govern a flash transmitted to the announcer during the delivery of a regular newscast. Receiving such a flash, the announcer uses this standing introduction, "We interrupt this regular news program to bring you a flash from the MIDT newsroom." He then repeats the flash and adds, "We will bring you more details in a few moments." Meanwhile, of course, the script editor makes every effort to supply the details as ads to the show. If time does not permit, a bulletin follows soon after the end of the newscast period.

The use of the word *flash* is reserved by MIDT for an authentic news flash and may not be used for any other purpose.

Broadcasting the Bulletin. We emphasize again that the order, form and terminology of nonregular newscast copy vary from newsroom to newsroom. It is incumbent on the writer-editor to learn those in his own office.

As used by MIDT the flash is strictly a superspeed device for expediting white-hot news and winning first place. The slug - FLA - opens the right of way, sidetracking anything else on the air. In effect, however, the flash is merely a forerunner of the bulletin. In many newsrooms no distinction is made between the two. Nine times out of ten at MIDT there is no flash before a bulletin. Unless the news almost literally lifts his hair, the script editor breaks big news on the air with a bulletin.

An original bulletin must, like a flash, consist of at least one full sentence. It averages ten to thirty words, with an outside limit of fifty. Any detail extending it beyond fifty should be held for a later roundup bulletin.

As for the flash, standing opens and closes are ready for the bulletin. If the bulletin breaks into a nonnews program, the open is: "We interrupt this program to bring you a bulletin from the MIDT newsroom." However, if the bulletin is held for broad-

VARIETIES OF SPEED COPY

FLASH

-- FLA --

Mayor Nelson has conceded his defeat.

-- END --

BULLETIN

-- BUN --

Just a few moments ago Frank K. Nelson conceded the election of his opponent, W-C Lawson, in today's election. The Mayor has wired congratulations to the Independent candidate, wishing him a successful administration.

-- END --

ROUNDUP BULLETIN

-- BUN --

We now can give you the text of a statement by Mayor Nelson conceding his defeat for re-election by W-C Lawson. The Nelson statement says -- and we quote -- "Midland voters have spoken and I cheerfully abide by their decision. I have wired congratulations to Mister Lawson and have wished him a successful administration" -- end of quotation. At the time that Nelson conceded, 132 out of 150 precincts gave the Independent candidate a decisive lead of four thousand votes. Lawson will take office on January first.

-- END --

The First Flash and Bulletins.

cast between program segments or at station breaks, as it often is, the standing open reads simply: "Here is a bulletin from the MIDT newsroom." Since the body of the bulletin is somewhat fuller than that of the flash, there is no automatic repeat by the announcer, although a repeat may be included within the script.

Here is a typical bulletin as it goes over the MIDT sending teletype:

- BUN -

IT'S ALL OVER AT MIDLAND FIELD. THE BLUE SOX HAVE TAKEN THE INTERCITY PENNANT. THE FINAL SCORE IS BLUE SOX, THREE. JUNCTION CITY, TWO.

- END -

Although the standing introduction serves partly as a warmup and must not be repeated as part of the script, the bulletin itself may well begin with a few preliminary words further to pad the jolt thus:

The State Highway Police say that the Timber River has reached the flood stage north of Midland. A bridge is washed out on Highway Seventy-four. Motorists are urged to drive with caution.

In handling local or regional news which may affect public safety and yet is of bulletin caliber, MIDT includes, if possible, an authoritative note of caution, like this:

A few minutes ago fire broke out in the main plant of the General Manufacturing Company at Main Street and 9th Avenue. Four alarms have been sounded. The Fire Department asks that spectators keep away from the vicinity.

Second or Roundup Bulletin. Once he has sent a bulletin, whetting the news appetite of his listeners, the alert script editor turns his attention to satisfying that hunger with something more substantial than the first bare announcement.

He now considers several new factors, chiefly the clock. If only

a few minutes will elapse before the start of a regularly scheduled newscast at :00 or before an extra newscast at :30, no more bulletins are sent. Instead the script editor and probably other staff members have their hands full with the extra or revision of the regular newscast.

However, if there is a fairly long period of news silence ahead, say ten or more minutes, the MIDT procedure calls for a second or roundup bulletin repeating the essence of the first and clothing it with more detail. Again comes the standing bulletin introduction. Also it must be kept in mind that some listeners are new whereas others have heard the first bulletin. This situation is recognized in the following roundup bulletin example:

Just a few moments ago we announced the Blue Sox victory at Midland Field. The Sox beat Junction City by a score of three to two. With two on in the last half of the ninth, Shortstop Frank Tripp broke up the ball game. He lifted a homer into the left field grandstand, scoring Rice and Liebmann. Already champions of the Valley League, the Sox now will hold the Intercity pennant for the second straight year.

Usually a press service flash, bulletin or important new lead is followed within a few minutes by more detail. If this is not forthcoming and the script editor feels that a roundup bulletin is needed, he may quickly consult reference books or clips, summon up background from his own mind or merely reword his first bulletin.

Extra Newscast at :30. For obvious reasons the most convenient place in the radio program structure to broadcast news, except at scheduled newscast periods, is at a program break between the fifteen-minute segments. A roundup bulletin often is held for use at :45 or :15. The midway break between hourly MIDT programs comes at half-past the hour. At this break, therefore, MIDT uses an extra newscast if news is urgent. It is customary to prepare an extra if a flash or one or more bulletins are broadcast between :05 and :25. Thus the MIDT audience is assured of substantial coverage of a big news break at half-hour intervals. When the

minute hand of the clock points straight up, MIDT is on the air with news and when it points straight down it's also there if news is urgent.

The letter X preceding an item number—thus, X1.—simultaneously notifies the receiving announcer that an extra newscast is coming, that this is the first item, that the script is to be completed before :30 and that it is to go on the air at that time. The X also is used before other slugs and the end slug, thus: X2., X3., X2A., XS3. and - X END -. Use of the X enables the teletype operator alternately to transmit takes of regular and extra newscast scripts without a mix-up. A typical MIDT extra newscast showing use of the script slugs follows:

9:30 P.M. Kerr Thurston

X1. The police department reported at 9:17 o'clock tonight that an airplane had crashed into the Midland Trust Building. More details now are available.

X2. Police Chief Thomas Green says that the plane is a two-engine craft which apparently lost its bearings in the fog. It struck the ten-story Trust Building at the seventh floor. Green says that the pilot and his one passenger are dead. They are not yet identified.

X3. Damage to the building is slight. The seventh-floor offices, occupied by the Midland Fur Company, were empty. Apparently no one was near the windows.

X4. Witnesses on the street report that the plane swooped in from the north. They heard a tremendous crash. Then parts of the craft, sheared off by the impact, plummeted to the street. Firemen and policemen now are examining the wreckage.

-- X END --

In treatment the extra newscast is like an enlarged roundup bulletin or a curtailed regular newscast. It is unlike the latter in that it deals with only one topic and has no specific length or résumé.

One of the handiest and safest aids for the hard-pressed script editor preparing urgent script material is the text of an official announcement. If brief, it may be used in a roundup bulletin, or it

FORM OF MIDT EXTRA NEWSCAST

7:30 P.M. Roberts Kerr

X1. The State Police have asked us to broadcast a special warning to M-I-D-T listeners. Did you or anyone that you know buy two gallons of fuel oil this afternoon at the Benson Filling Station one mile north of Midland on Route Seventy? If so -- don't use it in your stove.

X2. Here are the facts. Frank Benson, who operates the station, has notified the police that he mistakenly sold a can of ethyl gasoline instead of fuel oil about four o'clock this afternoon. An unidentified man about fifty years old made the purchase. He was driving a green sedan. Benson says that he switched the cans by mistake.

X3. State troopers now are making a door-to-door canvass in the North Midland area in an effort to warn the buyer. And we repeat -- if you or someone you know bought two gallons of fuel oil today, it may be explosive ethyl gasoline. Don't put it in your stove. And telephone the State Police. The number -- North five seven two. That's North five seven two.

-- X END --

Broadcast at :30.

may be used as the backbone of an extra newscast. Such a text is convenient in that it requires no preparation, no reworking. It keeps the teletype operator at work and helps to hold the air, giving the newsroom staff a chance to catch its collective breath and organize material for the next script.

A text comes immediately with only certain types of unexpected stories. Without it the script editor must use what material he has, always being careful to keep rumor and hearsay out of scripts, no matter how scarce his facts may be.

SHOP TALK

1. Do you think that on the whole news flashes and bulletins should be broadcast more or less frequently? Is too much emphasis placed on beats?
2. Classify several current events as expected at a definite time, expected at an indefinite time, unexpected.
3. Suggest current news stories of flash caliber and tell why you would broadcast them instantly.
4. Discuss several historic false flashes and the circumstances surrounding them. Who was responsible?
5. Define and discuss the purposes of the flash, bulletin, roundup bulletin and extra newscast as used by MIDT.

CHAPTER XXX

How To Be Prepared

Winning and Keeping Listeners. To learn three keys to success in the broadcasting of major news, join a throng of people excited by a street-corner occurrence. You will hear three variations of the question, "What's new?" These are: "What's happened?" "Is that so?" and "Go on—then what?" To provide the answers to these queries asked by radio listeners as well as people on the street, radio news requires: (1) *speed*, (2) *repetition* and (3) *volume*.

We have studied the techniques for meeting the first two requirements. Speed is attained by means of the flash, bulletin, extra newscast and by the fast and systematic patchwork of regular newscasts. Repetition for the benefit of those who have not yet heard as well as for those who want confirmation runs through the entire gamut of news scripts. Speed and repetition are but two of the three demands for complete newscasting. The third requirement is volume, which implies the production of sufficient wordage—and continued delivery of that wordage—until the audience appetite is satisfied.

Maxims from two war periods give point to the discussion. During the war of 1861–64 General Nathan Bedford Forrest gave his classic formula for winning a battle, "Get there firstest with the mostest men." From World War II comes the negative saying, "Too little and too late." The radio news organization strives always to be first with the most and never to be too late with too little.

The radio audience can be captured with speed and held with repetition—for a while. But it cannot be kept indefinitely without sustained volume. In the tense minutes which follow a big news break listeners want a lot of specific and detailed information. If one station fails to produce it, they search for it by twisting their dials. "Dialitis" is liable to grow acute when news is hot.

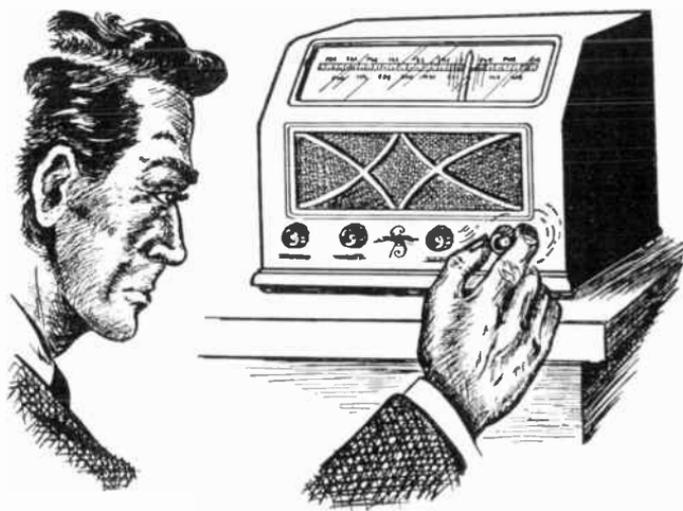
Sustained Volume Stories. Among the many lessons taught American radio on that epochal afternoon of Sunday, December 7, 1941, none was hammered home with more force than the vital need for news volume in addition to speed and repetition.

The first flash, "Pearl Harbor has been bombed!" literally lifted listeners—and radio newsmen—out of their chairs. In a matter of moments millions gathered by their radios. Bulletins were repeated over and over again—but these were not enough. Listeners wanted more, more and still more—now! They spun their dials, stopping here, stopping there, impatiently twirling up and down from one wave length to another for more about the attack which meant war. Only the stations that produced and kept on producing that news held their audiences.

Pearl Harbor bombings are not daily occurrences. Peacetime yields fewer stories of great magnitude than wartime. However, news breaks calling for sustained volume will continue to confront radio writers and editors as long as mankind exists. Roughly speaking, any major news development requires maintenance of momentum during the period immediately after the break. A major disaster such as a train wreck, hotel fire or mine entombment may call for special newscasting, especially if it creates a public emergency. Radio news pressure may continue for days as a result of a natural catastrophe such as an earthquake, volcano eruption, flood, blizzard, tornado, hurricane or tidal wave.

Strikes sometimes create a public emergency calling for sustained volume in radio news. Public utility, police, railroad, coal mine and transit tie-ups are examples. Walkouts that prevent the distribution of newspapers automatically expand the news output of radio stations. An international crisis, a national election or a

**NEWSMEN CAN HELP TO
CURE DIALITIS**



- WITH**
- 1. SPEED**
 - 2. REPETITION**
- AND**
- 3. VOLUME**

How To Hold the Audience.

political convention builds up into a major news drama, creating suspense interest that can be satisfied only by fast and voluminous radio news reporting.

All of these, then—not to speak of future events too strange and spectacular to be forecast—sooner or later come crashing into the radio newsroom and strain it to the utmost. What can news scriptmen do to get ready in advance for the production of the maximum wordage with a minimum of time wasted when the strain comes? There are several ways to follow the Boy Scout motto, "Be Prepared." Let us examine them.

Release at a Fixed Time. The most obvious news raw material suitable for advance processing is in the form of a complete document placed in the hands of news purveyors hours or days in advance of a fixed publication or broadcast time.

Governmental agencies and public offices often make announcements and present reports and decisions to the public in this manner. In order to obtain the maximum publicity, business concerns frequently see to it that newspaper and radio newsrooms have every detail of a story for simultaneous release at a specified date and hour.

Once in possession of copy covering such an advance document, the radio news editor can have his script or scripts written at convenience. Unless he wishes them to simulate urgency, he has no need of the flash or bulletin devices. Since there is no real urgency, he is more likely to prefer advance preparation of an extra newscast or parts of a regular newscast. Painstaking labor often goes into such script copy, giving it perfection unattainable when writing under pressure.

Another form of advance is the full or partial text of a speech scheduled for delivery at a fixed time. Treatment is similar to that of any advance document. However, there are dangers to be watched for if the release is dependent upon delivery. Speeches can be canceled for many reasons, including the illness of the speaker. Even if the time is fixed, a check should be made to verify the actual start of the address. Extemporaneous interpolations must next be

looked for. In some cases the newsman is protected or can protect himself by quoting the speech "as prepared for delivery." Official speeches customarily are for release when the speech begins, so that even if it is interrupted the newsreleaser professionally is in the clear if it is changed or unfinished.

Advance material is confidential and breaking a release date may cause no end of embarrassment. Reputable news organizations strictly obey an unwritten law against jumping the gun. By thus keeping faith they preserve a common advantage.

Teaser announcements sometimes can be broadcast in advance of a fixed-time release newscast. A teaser is an advertisement inviting attention to a special news program. The blurb may be used as an item in regular newscasts or during station breaks. An example:

Here is an announcement. Be sure to listen to M-I-D-T at 9:30 tonight. At that time we will bring you a report from Mayor Nelson's Civic Plan Committee. Does Midland get a new million-dollar stadium? You'll hear the answer in an extra newscast tonight. Remember the time -- 9:30 P.M. And the station -- M-I-D-T.

Teasers need to be treated carefully to make sure that they do not spill the secret and violate the release time. An editor judges from the advance how far he can go in disclosing the subject beforehand. If there is uncertainty it is safest to confine the teaser to an announcement of "important" or, if warranted, "momentous" news.

Hold-for-Release Bulletins. In an earlier chapter we showed how news events can be classified as expected at a definite time, expected at an indefinite time, and unexpected. The hold-for-release flash or bulletin may be prepared in advance to cover either of the expected kinds of events if they are of big enough caliber.

Frequently the script editor receives press service copy slugged "Hold for Release Expected About Noon." Of course he may have prepared a lengthy script, but this copy more likely would call for a hold bulletin, such as:

-- BUN --

In Washington the House and Senate have just received from President Wrightman the nomination of George Hastings to be American ambassador to Great Britain. Hastings now is an Assistant Secretary of State. His home is in Chicago. We repeat -- Congress has received from the White House the nomination of George Hastings to be ambassador to Great Britain.

-- END --

There are several ways to avoid the premature broadcasting of such a prepared-in-advance bulletin. The script editor can keep the typewritten copy in his possession and not transmit it to the announcer until he has authorization. Or if a teletype transmits, as at MIDT, he can have it punched on a teletype tape to be run through the machine at his order. Finally, the script editor may put the bulletin in the hands of the announcer and give him the release order by word of mouth.

Once in written form, the hold bulletin must be safeguarded. Pieces of tape inadvertently teletyped have been the cause of several notable false flashes. Script in the hands of an announcer, of course, is only one breath from the microphone. Mixed signals or fumbled copy may put it on the air.

Alternate Advance Bulletins. Still another time-saving method adaptable to expected events with alternative developments is to prepare bulletins covering each alternative. Then, no matter what happens, an accurate bulletin is ready for instant broadcasting.

For example, these alternate bulletins may be written when a jury retires in a newsworthy trial:

(Guilty)

The jury has just brought in a verdict at the murder trial of Justin Jorgens. The verdict is -- guilty. The conviction calls for a mandatory sentence to life imprisonment.

(Innocent)

The jury has just brought in a verdict at the murder trial of Justin Jorgens. The verdict is -- innocent. Jorgens has been acquitted and will go free.

TYPES OF HOLD BULLETINS

FOR RELEASE AT START OF SPEECH

-- BUN --

Mayor Nelson has just announced a 9 P-M curfew for all children under fifteen years of age. In a speech delivered before the Kiwanis Club this evening the Mayor announced that the curfew will be imposed starting Sunday. Nelson says that it is needed to curb juvenile delinquency.

-- END --

FOR RELEASE AT START OF GAME

-- BUN --

The Little World Series is underway. The umpire's cry -- "Play ball" -- just a moment ago signaled the start of the series between the Midland Blue Sox and the Capital City Oilers at Midland Stadium.

-- END --

FOR ORAL RELEASE OF ONE

-- BUN --

The City Council has just passed the municipal sales tax bill. The bill now goes to the Mayor for veto or signature.

-- END --

-- BUN --

The City Council has just killed the municipal sales tax bill. We repeat -- the sales tax bill has been defeated by a vote of the City Council.

-- END --

How To Be Prepared.

(Hung Jury)

At the murder trial of Justin Jorgens it's a hung jury. The twelve jurors have just returned to the courtroom. The foreman announces that they are unable to agree on a verdict.

The foregoing illustrations represent alternate trial bulletins in simple form. Such bulletins can be and have been prepared in more complicated cases to cover conviction or acquittal on a half dozen charges and counts. These can be expanded to the extent that the writer is sure of his legal facts.

Results of sports contests also illustrate the alternate advance bulletins technique. A football game, for example, can end in only three possible ways: one team wins; the other team wins; or a tie results. Advance alternate bulletins contain no score. Other sports events with two contestants and the same three alternatives—win, lose, tie or draw—include baseball, basketball, boxing and tennis. If there are several contestants, as in a horse or boat race or swimming match, alternate bulletins can be prepared to cover victory by one of the favorites.

Another kind of event appropriate for alternate bulletins is a political convention or an election in which there usually are no more than two or three contenders and a heavy favorite. The climax of an election is the concession. In a tight contest news interest might be so tense as to warrant the preparation of alternate flashes, one of them to be released by word of mouth:

(1)

Frank Nelson has conceded the election of W-C Lawson as Mayor.

(2)

W-C Lawson has conceded the election of Frank Nelson as Mayor.

A Newsroom Playlet. A one-minute, one-act drama of the MIDT newsroom shows the startling—almost magical—effect of preparation in advance for an inevitable event.

It is a quiet evening. The time is 8:07 P.M. and the hourly regular newscast ended two minutes ago. Script Editor Kerr is leaning back

in his chair looking over an early edition of the *Midland Times*. Suddenly Eve Ewald, the copy girl, rather idly watching the AP printer, speaks up: "Here comes a bulletin!" Kerr swings his chair to the teletype and reaches for the direct phone to MIDT' as the teletype ticks off: "Stephen Stone, old-time star of the silent screen, died tonight at his home . . ."

At the name *Stone*, Kerr rings the phone signal bell. At the word *died*, he tells the announcer: "Kerr speaking. Release the file script on Steve Stone." Kerr puts down the phone.

"Is that all you do?" a bystander asks.

"Put on the earphones," Kerr replies.

The visitor does so just in time to hear the announcer's voice saying, "Death has taken Stephen Stone -- 'Two-Gun Steve' -- the idol of an older generation." The voice continues, "Yes, Steve Stone has headed for his last roundup and millions of Americans will mourn his passing . . ."

It's all done in less than one minute—without mirrors. The gimmick is nothing but a radio variation of a time-worn newspaper trick. Before analyzing it, let us inspect the entire newscast as prepared in advance:

STONE, STEPHEN

(For Use When He Dies)

F1. Sickness and age have triumphed where the guns of western movie desperadoes and the tomahawks of screenland Indians failed. Death has taken Stephen Stone -- "Two-Gun Steve" -- the idol of an older generation. Yes, Steve Stone has headed for his last roundup and millions of Americans will mourn his passing.

F2. Today's cowboy picture fans know him only by reputation. But the boys and girls of a generation ago jammed the theaters to thrill and cheer when his lightning draw and deadly aim brought bad men a taste of their own medicine. The tall, thin-faced actor was among the first of the screen's western heroes. In scores of films and across thousands of silver screens his likeness flickered. Kids everywhere aoped that slow smile and tried to get into their eyes the sadness Steve expressed when he was reluctantly forced to bring justice with his smoking six-guns.

F3. The death of Stephen Stone, announced just a few minutes ago, ends a long and eventful career. Born in 1870 at Cheyenne, Wyoming, Stone was raised on a ranch. He ran away at the age of sixteen to join a circus. He became an expert horseman and marksman. Stone came to Hollywood in 1911. His first picture, "The Terror of Tombstone," became a screen epic. Then followed other smash hits, "Dead Man's Gulch," "The Cowpuncher" and many others. Stone retired in 1930 and went to live with his sister, Missus Harry Wayne, in Detroit. There, after a heart attack, the veteran actor was taken to a hospital.

F4. Back at his home his saddle is polished and his spurs shined. In a closet hang his cowboy clothes -- neatly cleaned and pressed. In a bureau drawer lie the pearl-handled guns that never fired anything but blanks. But Stone -- who vanquished hundreds of villains with his artillery in countless duels for justice -- will never use them again. "Two-Gun Steve" has fought his last battle.

The File Newscast Script. The file newscast, so called for the reason that it is placed in a file folder for safekeeping, is a radio development of the newspaper biographical obit which is set in type ready to be dropped into a column beneath a brief death announcement. Scores of these biographies of newsworthy persons rest in composing rooms awaiting the inevitable hour of death.

But file newscasts are by no means confined to stories of death. The technique can be adapted to many important news events expected to occur in the future. Before mentioning them, we shall refer to the Stone newscast to point out MIDT rules for preparation:

1. The subject is a single and specific event. *There must be no confusion on this point. If the instruction line beneath the title specifies "for use when he dies," the script may not be used when he is stricken fatally ill or expected to die. Nor may the writer assume that he died in any particular place or from a particular cause. Elaboration must be based wholly on the bare fact of death.*

2. The writer assumes that the event has occurred. *He writes exactly as though reporting the news immediately after it breaks,*

giving the script immediacy by such phrases as "a few minutes ago" or "just announced."

3. The peg fact is repeated at least three times. Repetition of the new development—in the Stone script it is that Stone is dead—gives impressions of newness and newness to the listener. The lead item always includes the peg—"Stone has headed for his last roundup." The number of times the peg is repeated varies in accordance with the length of the script, but even in the shortest it always appears at the beginning, in the middle and near the end. Synonymous phrases may be used, such as "mourn his passing," "the death of Stephen Stone," "will never use them again," and "lost his last battle."

4. The script must be timeless. Beware of statements like "last March" or "two months ago." Instead, write "March of such-and-such year." Give dates of birth but not ages at death. Be careful with words such as "recently"; prefer the vaguer "since that time" or "more recently."

A Fixed Event File Script. The simplest type of file newscast is one based on an expected event, the news of which is automatically released by the clock.

Let us assume that the Midland City Council has passed an ordinance barring the sale of liquor within the city limits. The ordinance becomes law at a specified time. No last-minute action can intercede because postponement or repeal of the measure would require several days. A file script is made ready, starting like this:

Those clicks you hear all over town at this moment are the doors of Midland's taverns and package liquor stores closing — for good. From now on it is illegal to sell intoxicating liquor within the city limits. The prohibition law passed by the City Council went into effect just twenty seconds ago . . .

The clock and the calendar are inexorable instruments. They can be relied upon. An eclipse, for example, makes a sure-fire file script for broadcasting on the dot. It may go like this:

ECLIPSE

(For Use at 10:52 A.M.)

F1. If you will look out your window, and there are not too many clouds, you will see a partial eclipse of the sun just getting underway. Just five minutes ago - at 10:47 to be exact -- Old Sol started slipping behind the shadow of the moon. The shadow will creep forward until approximately half of the sun is blacked out. Then the shadow will retreat until it disappears at 1:59 this afternoon.

Only an almanac and an encyclopedia are needed to extend this file script into as many parts as the event warrants. If he wishes, the writer can dig back into the stories of previous eclipses and enrich his scientific facts with human interest trimmings. He should be careful, however, not to introduce a scare element.

File newscast scripts need to be revised and brought up to date from time to time. This often can be accomplished by substitutes, inserts or the addition of numbered items. At MIDT this is done with the script slugs FS1., F5A., F14. and so on.

Variety of File Newscasts. There is actually no limit to the types of stories that can be handled in advance through carefully prepared and frequently revised file scripts which were developed and used effectively during World War II. Such events as the invasion of Europe and of the islands of the Pacific, the capture of cities and the surrender announcements were made the subject of dozens of file scripts which sounded like news and helped to slake the news thirst of listeners eager to drink in anything even remotely connected with those history-making episodes.

File scripts provide authentic and voluminous wordage during election night newscasting. Some may be prepared for use as fillers before returns come in, the release event being merely the election itself. Others can be released when one candidate or referendum proposal takes the lead. And still others may be ready for releases authorized by decisive results.

The signing of a treaty or legislative bill, the decision of a court, the outcome of a sports event, the appointment of a public official,

the birth of an heir to a throne or any other event anticipated with a reasonable degree of accuracy can be considered a file script topic.

In reality file scripts are only extended hold-for-release bulletins and like them can be prepared in alternate forms. The two techniques sometimes can be combined to save precious seconds and give more zest to the show.

Here is an example of what can be done with a boxing bout. Starting with F2., each of five file scripts is filled out with appropriate background and dope material. The F1 items contain blanks to be filled in with the announcer's pencil. Example:

(For Use if Johnson Wins by Knockout)

F1. George "Gunboat" Johnson is still the middleweight champion of the world. He defeated "Bruiser" Nelson by a knockout in the _____ round of their fight at Madison Square Garden.

A prize fight can turn out in only one of five possible ways. The champion can retain his title by either a knockout or a decision, the challenger can win by a knockout or a decision, or the match can end in a draw. When the bout is over, filling the blanks in one of the five F1's and giving the release to an announcer is merely a matter of moments.

Speed—Plus Volume. We have discussed some of the ways in which various kinds of script copy can be prepared in advance to provide speed and volume. The purpose of all this copy is to capture and temporarily hold the audience.

Prepared flashes, bulletins and file newscasts reach their peak of usefulness on such occasions as election night when the newsroom endeavors to keep a steady flow of news running for from three to six consecutive hours. Advance scripts are geared into the coverage machine during those hours.

But no matter how ingeniously written or how long it stays on the air, an advance script still is a synthetic and short-lived stopgap. At best it serves to provide the staff with only a few minutes' surcease.

And, of course, no advance script can be written about a wholly unexpected event. When the out-of-a-clear-sky story strikes the newsroom, the staff must write and transmit as rapidly as it can, attaining speed, repetition and volume to the extent of its resources and energy. To attain even more effectiveness it is necessary to abandon the typewriter and use dictation, a technique which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

SIHOP TALK

1. Discuss the values of speed, repetition and volume in radio newscasting. What are the shortcomings of each in the absence of one or both of the others?
2. If a rival station broke a release date and broadcast a news report prematurely, would you follow suit?
3. Specify certain kinds of news issued for release at a given time. What are the advantages of such an arrangement to a person or organization making the news public?
4. Can you specify several forthcoming local or campus events for which file scripts could be prepared?
5. Discuss the reasons for each of the four file script rules set forth in this chapter.

CHAPTER XXXI

Don't Delay—Dictate!

The Symbols of Speech. During the dawn of human life man started to communicate with his voice. He made known his feelings with grunts, howls, whines, moans and hisses. As instinct became intelligence these noises shaped themselves into symbols. Eventually they sorted themselves out into rudimentary words which at first were depicted by hieroglyphics or word pictures. The word pictures developed into alphabets and finally into languages.

Only the simplest ideas can be conveyed by instinctive sounds and primitive word pictures. The more complex thoughts must be put into words which are concrete symbols whether expressed orally or in writing. To be understood, these symbols must be visual or visualized. As thought becomes more complex, bringing experience and memory into play, the desirability of setting it down in durable form becomes a necessity.

An extemporaneous orator can interest, entertain, even entrance and enchant an audience for hours with pure artistry of the tongue. But in the background of every speech lies a manuscript—some form of writing, whether hand-scrawled notes, a typed outline, a printed text or a stock of phrases and passages engraved on the screen of memory.

News, in essence, is new. Unlike a memorized sermon or oration, each story contains a combination of words never put together in

that identical order before. And no extemporaneous speaker can transmit accurately and at length the new element in news without reference to a manuscript. Even an on-the-spot newscaster, say at a football game with the news event occurring before his eyes, constantly refers to written or memorized names, line-ups, players' records, scores of previous games and so on. Seldom does he work at length without notes or memorandums in some form or other.

Always the pen and pencil and, more recently, the typewriter and its specialized forms, including the teletype and linotype, have been emblematic of journalism. These and the more advanced writing instruments of the future will continue to be the primary tools of the newsman and his craft.

It must be kept in mind that much of any given news story is not new. It consists merely of a new combination of words which, having been visualized or written once, does not necessarily have to be set down again in order to be spoken. For example, it requires no writing instrument to repeat a news bulletin in different or rearranged words. Nor is a machine necessarily required to clothe that bulletin with background, supplementary or interpretive wordage.

To the extent that the use of pencil and typewriter can be curtailed or eliminated without diminishing accuracy, there is an important gain. In the radio newsroom, where virtually all news is received in some written form, this gain can be made by mental and oral processing.

Writing With the Voice. Straight newscast raw material originally is printed, typewritten or teletyped. It comes to the radio newsroom on paper.

The simplest way to put this copy on the air would be to read it aloud directly into a microphone. Such a practice on any sizable scale would be a throwback to the crude and clumsy attempts to read newspapers on the air. It would do away with radio news processing and it is seldom tolerated in modern newscasting.

Radio news writing and editing is the conversion of news from newspaper style into radio style. This processing must be done, re-

ardless of whether the implements employed are typewriter and pencil or brain cells and voice. This point is vital.

Is it possible, then, to process news from newspaper style to radio style without physical writing and editing? The answer is yes. Is such mental processing advantageous? The answer again is yes. At all times this processing without tools is potentially valuable as an adjunct to physical processing. Under certain circumstances it contributes so effectively to speed, repetition and volume, the three keys to nonroutine newscasts, that it spells the difference between first-class and second-class performance.

One of the mottoes of MIDT is the title of this chapter: "Don't Delay—Dictate!" Every writer-editor learns how to write with his voice and he is required to practice under pressure until he can do so proficiently. All flashes and the briefer bulletins are dictated as a matter of course, as are many of the substitute, insert, new lead and ad items. In a pinch veterans can dictate an entire newscast.

This being the case, why have we not dealt with dictation earlier in this book? The reason is that all the skills in radio news processing must be acquired first by thorough training with the typewriter and pencil. Every step in dictation matches an identical step in instrumental writing and editing. Dictation essentially is nothing but specialized and streamlined news processing. Until he can process well with the aid of tools, the scriptman can hardly hope to do so minus the tools.

Dictation is merely doing mentally what the writer and editor normally do with tools. The writer dictates to himself as he typewrites and he tests his writing by reading it as if aloud. The editor corrects and perfects. Each of these operations is carried out in dictation.

Dictation Natural to Radio. Dictation is no novelty. Since ancient times men have spoken orders, proclamations and tidings to scribes and copyists. Dictating to shorthand reporters, stenotype machine operators and recording devices is widespread in American business offices.

In newspaper reporting dictation by telephone is far more com-

mon than is generally recognized. It is a phase of news writing often neglected in training for journalism. Its omission implies that the typewriter is the only medium of expression for the reporter. The fact is that many of the best reporters rarely touch a typewriter. These are the leg men. They not only are literate; they are articulate. They telephone their stories to rewrite men and, more often than not, dictate them substantially as they appear in print.

Put on the earphones of a metropolitan newspaper rewrite man and you frequently hear a leg man begin, "Fire of undetermined origin early today . . ." or "Miss Elsa—that's E for Eddie, L for Lucy, S for Sam, A for Adam—Green—spelled like the color green—twenty-four, who lives at 703 Third avenue, was injured fatally this afternoon when . . ."

Radio commentators and analysts frequently dictate to a secretary who transcribes the copy into a script. And, as we have pointed out, spot newscasting is in reality dictation without a transcriber, plus extemporaneous speaking.

Writing with the voice is natural to radio for the reason that the end product is speaking. Dictation by the writer-editor reduces the distance between him and the microphone. Indeed, the dictator—while speaking—is virtually announcing. As he speaks each syllable he hears himself pronounce it. If a word, phrase or sentence doesn't sound right as dictated, it will not sound right as read into the microphone. Dictation thus distills good from bad in radio style.

But speed and volume are the more important objectives of dictation. With an eye on the clock and an ear on the halting unrhythmic beat of a typewriter, the script editor who lacks the ability to dictate sits helpless and impotent as precious moments roll by. The average writer types from fifty to seventy words a minute. One hundred words a minute on a typewriter approaches professional speed. By short-cutting the typewriter and dictating directly, the script editor not only can gain seconds with flashes and bulletins but, if he has raw copy available, can pile up in a few minutes enough script to hold the air for at least a few moments.

Dictation in the Newsroom. The steps in radio newsroom dictation are (1) inspection of the raw material, (2) mental processing and (3) speaking aloud to a transcriber.

At MIDT the script editor usually is the dictator. He inspects the raw copy as it arrives, does the mental processing and speaks to the operator of the sending teletype who transcribes and at the same time transmits the dictated script to the announcer. In stations where the newsroom and studio are adjacent, the dictator speaks to a typist and transmission is made by hand to the announcer.

It is possible, of course, to consider the microphone as the "transcribing" instrument in the third step, eliminating the teletype or typewriter. This highly specialized type of dictation means the elimination of the transcribing step. Its use for any extended period of time calls for a major sectional story with extremely strong and repeated suspense interest and for a person of such extraordinary ability that he combines the talents of writer, editor, dictator and announcer.

It is not unusual for a writer-editor to use the microphone for brief news announcements, to dictate to typists or teletype operators for long periods, or to do both in relays. However, any attempt by a single newscaster to perform all these operations indefinitely is bound to fail. The nearest approach to it is a newscaster with a portable microphone covering several press service teletypes. This results in a dramatization of the machines themselves and must be classified as a stunt rather than true newscasting.

One other strong reason tends to keep at a minimum dictation direct to the microphone. This is the absence of written script unless prior arrangements are made to record the talk. Records or a stenographer's notes provide alibi copy but can hardly be turned into written script fast enough for reference, which is necessary to prevent undue repetition as fast-breaking news pours toward the microphone.

Let us consider routine day-by-day dictation as it takes place in the typical newsroom at MIDT, with the script editor dictating to the sending teletype operator.

Inspecting the Raw Copy. In an earlier chapter we pointed out the perils of the false flash and bungled bulletin and cited two mandatory precautions. Before committing a flash or bulletin to the air be sure (1) that you have a full and complete fact and (2) that it comes from an authoritative source.

These safeguards are doubly important in dictating, for there is no comparatively slow typewriter and no second person, the writer, to slow up and check the split-second speed of dictation. A flash can go from raw copy to loudspeaker in five to fifteen seconds. There is something wrong if it takes more than thirty seconds. The outside limit for an ordinary bulletin should be about one minute. But within these limits must come the safeguards, for no gain in time is worth the risk of inaccuracy.

Only a tick of the clock is needed to insure authority and completeness in such a press service flash as: "Hamilton nominated." The service itself is authority. The fact is full.

Little processing is required for a flash. Speaking and writing style come close to coinciding in the announcement of flash-caliber news. At most, the dictator needs only to add words sufficient to complete the skeletonized report, making it: "Hamilton has been nominated."

Some newspaper-style bulletins also may be put on the air substantially in their original form, but others need to be broken into shorter sentences with a reversal of structure so as to state the source first. For example:

(As Received)

Boston, Oct. 3.—The 10,000-ton cargo ship *Siga* is afire in mid-Atlantic and has radioed for assistance, according to an announcement by Coast Guard headquarters here.

(As Dictated)

Coast Guard headquarters in Boston has just announced that the cargo ship "*Siga*" is on fire in mid-Atlantic. The "*Siga*" -- a merchantman of ten thousand tons -- is signaling by radio for assistance.

As the amount of copy to be dictated increases, emphasis turns from quick and sure inspection of the raw copy to the second step in dictation—mental processing. As more raw copy is provided and the material to be dictated stretches out, mental processing becomes the paramount problem of the dictator.

Think First—Speak Clearly. “Take no heed what ye shall say, for in that day and hour when ye shall speak, it shall be given you what ye are to say.” So says a Biblical prophet. He was not speaking to dictators of radio news, for only the most experienced of these rely on the inspiration of the moment for words.

The dictator is an extemporaneous, not an impromptu, speaker. An extemporaneous speaker has material and follows an outline. In practice, even with brief bulletins, it helps at first to pause and actually jot down the first few words as they are to be spoken. And if several points are to be covered, especially if they are to be re-arranged, it may be helpful to pencil quickly a brief outline so that no point will be overlooked and forgotten or left to dangle awkwardly at the end.

If several fragmentary pieces of raw material are at hand, it saves time to stop long enough to look them over, arrange them in order and form at least the first sentences on the mental screen before starting to dictate. You must think before as well as while you speak.

You can speak faster than the teletype operator or typist can transcribe and this gives you pauses in which to collect your thoughts. If you need a longer pause to form words and phrases mentally or to reassemble copy, by all means halt the operator and think before you resume talking. You can *rethink* a word, phrase or sentence two or three times if necessary, but you must speak it right the first time.

The first requisite for speaking aloud to a transcriber, as in telephoning, speaking publicly or announcing, is a clear, evenly pitched and well-modulated voice.

The most common fault among male writer-editors is talking too

loudly. A standing gibe at MIDT, usually directed at a man, is: "Hey, you don't need to broadcast that. Open the window. They can hear you all over town." A corresponding feminine fault is a nervous high-C quality in the voice. Under strain a man tends to shout, a woman to scream. Beginners of both sexes sometimes find themselves dictating in a hoarse whisper. Each of the faults is caused and exaggerated by emotional tautness. Try to cultivate a clear but moderate conversational voice pitch.

Another speaking fault is failure to talk to the ear of the transcriber. This fault is emphasized if there is a distracting clatter of other machines. Don't turn away to look at your notes or copy or look up at the ceiling while you talk. Sit or stand so that the operator can hear distinctly without straining.

Watch Similar Words. Audibility alone does not always insure clarity. Certain words are like other words in sound and perhaps in spelling, but different in meaning. We have mentioned some of these words previously. Others appear in a chart accompanying this chapter.

From their location in a sentence a transcriber may be able to spell commonly confused words correctly, especially if they are properly pronounced and clearly enunciated. However, some such words and more often puzzling proper names should be spelled out by the person dictating, as follows:

(Sentence To Be Dictated)

He says that two are too many.

(Sentence As Dictated)

He says that two (that's T-W-O) are too (T double-O) many.

Simple spelling aloud may be inadequate if a proper name is unusual. In this case it may be necessary to use a letter-by-letter alphabet, thus: "Spell it H for HENRY, A for ADAM, I for ISAAC, F for FRANK, A for ADAM."

Care must be taken to make it clear to the transcriber whether you are spelling for his benefit or for the benefit of the listener. It is customary at MIDT in the first instance to introduce the spell-

A LIST OF WORDS TO WATCH WHEN DICTATING

no—know	birth—berth	censure—censor
die—dye	click—clique	command—commend
fair—fare	dairy—diary	decease—disease
gate—gait	guilt—gilt	martial—marital
heal—heel	moral—morale	whether—weather
holy—wholly	motif—motive	formerly—formally
idle—idol	staid—stayed	mourning—morning
lean—lien	stake—steak	ordnance—ordinance
mail—male	there—their	patients—patience
mean—mien	waist—waste	conscious—conscience
odor—order	advise—advice	guerrilla—gorilla
ours—hours	assent—ascent	principal—principle
pain—pane	course—coarse	assistants—assistance
pale—pail	desert—dessert	compliment—complement
pier—peer	except—accept	difference—deference
role—roll	lesson—lessen	impassable—impossible
tide—tied	wonder—wander	persecution—prosecution
cite—site—sight		quite—quit—quiet
consul—council—counsel		rein—reign—rain
corps—cores—corpse		statute—statue—stature
metal—mettle—medal		vain—vein—vane

Enunciate Clearly or Spell Out.

ing with "Spell it," and in the second, with "That is spelled," meaning that the letter-by-letter alphabet is to go into the script.

Several kinds of letter-by-letter alphabets are used by telephone and telegraph companies. The one used by MIDDY is the traditional newspaper leg-man's alphabet with more formal names substituted for nicknames. The alphabet chart appears in an earlier chapter. This alphabet is usable for both dictating and broadcasting.

A trick to avoid spell-outs is to underline the difficult word, or write it quickly with a pencil and place the paper before the operator. This underline method also may be used to allow the teletypist to copy a piece of raw or quickly pencil-edited material rather than listen to whole repeated phrases, sentences and paragraphs.

Pauses and Punctuation. We now reach the two chief factors in successful dictation. These are proper pausing and the out-loud pronunciation of punctuation and slugs. Without them teamwork between the speaker and the transcriber is impossible.

The principle of proper pausing is to speak just enough at a time so that the transcriber can type a series of words correctly as a unit. Language, written or spoken, divides itself into sentences, clauses and phrases. If the sentence is short, speak the whole sentence. If the sentence is long, speak it in sections, phrases or clauses. Pause after individual words only if they are complex or difficult. If pronounced naturally with conversational inflections, about a half dozen ordinary words can be typed or teletyped in a single series like this:

It has just been announced in Washington . . .
 A late dispatch from Cairo says that . . .
 . . . who is twenty-four years old . . .
 He declares - and we quote - . . .
 . . . will arrive in Midland sometime today.

Between each series of words the dictator must pause until the transcriber finishes typing that series. Here a knowledge of the machine is required. If speaking to a typist the dictator of course can glance at the keys of the machine or the fingers of the typist. He

also can listen for the typing to stop. Looking at the keys of the sending teletype will not do, because the tape does not print the letters until several moments after the operator's fingers punch the keys for those words. Therefore the dictator must glance at the operator's fingers or listen for the sound of the punching to stop before he ends the pause and speaks the next group of words. A practiced operator gives a slight nod of the head, holds up a finger or says "Okay" to indicate that he is ready for more.

Every punctuation point must be spoken out loud in connection with the words it affects. The dictation of punctuation marks not only is essential to the transcriber but helps the dictator in the word grouping. The words "period," "comma," "dash" and "apostrophe" almost inevitably signify a pause.

Typical Dictation Examples. Using election returns as sample raw material, let us examine election night scripts to illustrate the dictation procedure. Script Editor Kerr is on duty. Handed the first return, he steps to the sending teletype and says:

Bulletin slug (pause)
 Here is the first return (pause)
 in todays apostrophe S municipal election period (pause)
 Tabulators have just finished checking (pause)
 the mayoralty vote (pause)
 in the second precinct (pause)
 of the third ward period (pause)
 This first return comma (pause)
 complete but unofficial comma (pause)
 shows an overwhelming sentiment (pause)
 for W hyphen C Lawson comma (pause)
 the Independent candidate period
 End slug

This is the way the bulletin looks to the announcer:

-- BUN --

HERE IS THE FIRST RETURN IN TODAY'S MUNI-
 PAL ELECTION. TABULATORS HAVE JUST FINISHED

CHECKING THE MAYORALTY VOTE IN THE SECOND PRECINCT OF THE THIRD WARD. THIS FIRST RETURN, COMPLETE BUT UNOFFICIAL, SHOWS AN OVERWHELMING SENTIMENT FOR W-C LAWSON, THE INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE.

- END -

A half hour passes and again Kerr is dictating, this time an extra newscast. He has several pieces of copy, as well as a mental background of what has happened during the past thirty minutes. Pauses in this longer example are indicated by virgules. Kerr speaking:

8:30 P.M. Kerr

X one period/ The people of Midland have spoken period/ And judging by the turnout/ at the various polling places/ they have spoken in a loud voice period/ Right now comma/ the indications are that their verdict/ means the defeat of Mayor Frank Nelson comma/ the regular Republican candidate comma/ who is seeking re hyphen election period paragraph/

X two period/ The first returns comma/ although scattered and inconclusive comma/ indicate heavy support of the Mayors apostrophe S rival comma/ W hyphen C Lawson period/ And the Democratic candidate comma/ Eugene Bishop comma/ seems to be hopelessly out of the running/ on the basis of these early returns period/ The initial tabulations/ also indicate that the entire/ Tollman Jenks spell it J-E-N-K-S faction/ has been repudiated by the electorate period paragraph/

X three period/ These early returns/ are a complete reversal of the trend/ which swept Nelson into office/ two years ago period paragraph/

X four period/ The total vote/ tabulated thus far/ gives Lawson a margin/ of nine seven six votes period/ Here are the figures period/ In fourteen precincts dash/ for Lawson one comma six five four period/ For Mayor Nelson dash/ six seven eight period paragraph/

X five period/ And here is a last hyphen minute return period/ Two more precincts have just reported period/ They show that

**FIVE WISE
DICTATION DON'TS**

DON'T STUMBLE — Think what you are going to say before you say it. Collect your thoughts before you speak. "Ers" and "Ahs" confuse the transcriber and waste time.

DON'T JUMBLE — Dictate a series of words together. Speak a short sentence as a unit. Break up a long sentence into clauses or phrases. Pause between word series.

DON'T GRUMBLE — Speak in a normal conversational tone directly into the ear of the transcriber. Don't shout or scream. Don't talk with a pencil or cigarette in your mouth.

DON'T MUMBLE — Emphasize plurals and past tenses so that they cannot be mistaken. Spell out unusual names. Watch out for homonyms.

DON'T FUMBLE — Dictate everything. Don't go all the way to the goal line and then fumble by failing to dictate punctuation, paragraphing and script slugs.

How To Speak Script.

everywhere comma/ Mayor Nelson is running far behind/ his
Independent opponent period paragraph/
X end slug/

Practice Makes Perfect. Learning to dictate, like learning any other skilled operation, results from observing the rules and from practice. At MIDT beginners are encouraged to practice as a team, one dictating and the other at the typewriter. Thus each one discovers the problems and limitations of the other. After they become fairly proficient, they practice at a teletype with dummy copy not used for broadcasting. Finally they are ready to dictate actual script, first with the help of penciled notes, and then with only raw copy in their hands.

Once having picked up the knack of dictating, the newsman finds it so natural to dictate that he is tempted to abandon the typewriter altogether and hurry through his work by the easier and swifter method. This he should not do, for at best dictation is a speed-up technique and when overused is bound to substitute looseness for lucidity, thus diluting the quality of the newsroom product. Dictate without delay, but with discretion.

SHOP TALK

1. Suggest various occupations in which dictation is practiced and describe the methods of transcribing.
2. Discuss the reasons written script is needed after speed copy has been broadcast.
3. Compare impromptu speaking, extemporaneous speaking and dictating.
4. Tabulate a list of words similar in sound but different in meaning, in addition to those listed in this chapter.
5. Why is it inadvisable to dictate routine news script?

CHAPTER XXXII

Journalism Jobs Ahead

What of the Future? Young men and women about to choose lifetime careers often find themselves in a quandary over radio journalism. Simultaneously they are attracted by its opportunities and apprehensive about its duration. From one point of view it appears in the guise of a good fairy beckoning them with a magic wand into a new wonderland for workers. From another it seems a deceptive siren who may soon snatch away their livelihoods, leaving them with obsolete training and wasted experience.

A typical observation is this: "I want opportunity. Radio journalism is linked to electronics, which is rapidly advancing. But I also want security. Is electronics advancing too rapidly? Will radio journalism last?"

These questions are well warranted. It is obvious to all that we live in an era of technological progress. The fantasies of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells have become or are fast becoming everyday realities. Atomic fission breaks open the very core of matter, explores the source of energy. The aviation and electronics industries are in the forefront as science pushes back the frontiers of knowledge. Jet and rocket propulsion, radar, radio, facsimile and television are revolutionizing transportation and communication.

What of the future?

This is the final chapter of a book on radio news writing and editing. The author does not pose as a prophet or purport to extend this study beyond the boundaries of that well-established occupa-

tion. Any attempt to discuss fully the newer wonders of electronics would result in meaningless generalizations. An effort to list "do's" and "don't's" neatly as a guide for students would be pure presumption. There is no reason, however, that we should not frankly face the fundamentals in all forms of news communication and orient our own craft in relation to the older forms, to those now developing and to those perhaps yet to come.

In the opinion of this author, calm consideration of these basic matters leads to the conviction that radio journalism holds forth security as well as opportunity and is conducive to confidence in the future.

FM and AM Radio. The most important achievement in radio during its growing years has been the discovery and development of FM—the abbreviation for frequency modulation. In essence FM is a refinement and extension of AM, or amplitude modulation broadcasting.

FM is advancing radio in two important ways. It brings better reception, especially in areas in which people have been unable to hear without a background of noise lessening the enjoyment of listening. FM is virtually static-free, for it resists interference from thunderstorms, elevators and other electrical machinery. Its clear signal and high fidelity preserve nuances sometimes lost in AM transmission. It purifies tone in music and does away with distortions of the human voice.

Of far more importance to workers is the fact that FM has multiplied radio outlets. FM has opened the air to many new stations, each of them requiring facilities and personnel.

There are no differences whatever in the preparation of news for AM and news for FM broadcasting. From the standpoint of the writer-editor, FM simply means a greater demand and a better market for his services.

Facts About Facsimile. It is possible and practical to send pages of printed matter by radio or wire and simultaneously to reproduce them on paper in a distant place. This process is known as facsim-

THE BROADCASTING BIG FOUR

AM



AMPLITUDE
MODULATION

FM



FREQUENCY
MODULATION

FAX



FACSIMILE

TV



TELEVISION

Four Fields for Newsmen.

file, and it is developing in association with FM stations because of the fact that static-free FM transmits the images clearly.

Transmission of visual words and pictures by electrical impulse is not entirely new. Morse telegraph operators translate sound dots and dashes into written words. Wirephoto transmits news pictures on a wide scale, and the teletype, with or without wires, sends and receives letters and words almost instantly.

Facsimile provides reception more adaptable to the home and reproduction more nearly like a newspaper. The receiving machine prints news bulletins and stories, pictures, comic strips and advertising, as well as fiction, crossword puzzles, road maps, coupons which can be clipped—any and every kind of printed material.

A feature of facsimile that distinguishes it from wirephoto and teletype is that it can operate coincidentally with sound radio. An announcer's voice or music may accompany the facsimile printing process. Or sound and print can be received separately through the same set at different times.

Here, then, we have a new association of press and radio—clearly one of importance to both industries as well as to the allied mediums of entertainment and instruction—stage drama, moving pictures, magazines and books. Facsimile naturally holds deep interest for radio newsmen.

A Look at Television. Perhaps the least understood and most fascinating phase of achievement in electronics is television which, like facsimile, is a technical and practical reality of our times. Television demands the attention of us all.

The discovery of what we know as electricity lies behind television as well as radio and facsimile. Two materials—one that turns light into electricity, and one that turns electricity into light—make it possible to transmit a picture through wire or space. By television a whole series of pictures, black and white or in colors, can be sent and reproduced every second.

This results in ability to combine elements of the newspaper, theater and radio in new ways. Television can transport into the home print and pictures, thereby invading the field of the news-

paper. It can animate pictures and illustrate words by action, thereby invading the realm of the moving picture and the stage. Finally, television can convey speech and music through microphones and loudspeakers, thereby invading the realm of radio.

We find in television even more varied and far-reaching potentialities than in facsimile. Yet, as we shall see, neither is complete in itself. Both influence but neither obliterates the individual attributes of live drama, moving pictures, books, magazines, newspapers and the radio.

Limitation of the Senses. A man has only five senses through which he can receive impressions. These are sight, sound, taste, smell and touch. In this discussion the last three can be disregarded, since taste and smell have no part in communication and because communication requires feeling only by the blind and the deaf. The conveyance of information to normal persons, therefore, is effective only so far as its symbols can be seen or heard.

Let us now analyze one by one the major mediums in which we are interested and find the ways in which they can and cannot deliver sight and sound impulses to the sensory organs.

First, an extremely simple analysis shows that the contents of a newspaper reach you through your eyes only. A radio program reaches you through your ears only. Facsimile reaches you through your eyes, but may or may not attract your ears at the same time. Television reaches you through your eyes and ears simultaneously.

We now must consider three other important factors which we shall call speed, motion and retention. By speed we mean almost instant transmission and reception; by motion, the reproduction of distant movement; and by retention, the quality of permanence whereby information can be kept to be seen or heard at convenience. Each of these is vital to complete communication. To summarize:

Newspaper—*sight and retention. No sound, speed or motion.*

Radio—AM and FM—*sound and speed. No sight, motion or retention.*

THE QUALITIES IN NEWS MEDIUMS

	RADIO	NEWSPAPER	FACSIMILE	TELEVISION
SIGHT →	○	+	+	+
SOUND →	+	○	-	+
SPEED →	+	○	+	+
MOTION →	○	○	○	+
RETENTION →	○	+	+	○
	Present +	Absent ○	Limited -	

Why All Are Necessary.

Facsimile—sight, speed, retention and, to a limited extent, sound. No motion.

Television—sight, sound, speed and motion. No retention.

From the position of the reader, listener or viewer—that is, the public—each of the four mediums has and lacks vital values. No two are identical. None is complete.

Until one of the mediums makes up its one or more deficiencies, or until a new medium is devised to encompass the values of all, each of them will continue to hold a legitimate place in the communication and entertainment field.

For example, television, with all the values except one, can modify but cannot possibly replace newspapers and facsimile without providing the video audience with the means to keep its images for perusal at the convenience of the viewer. People have other things to do aside from sitting in front of a television receiver, and these things will be done.

Culture Is Cumulative. A more subtle but probably more significant approach to our problem may be made through the pages of human history, which show that man discards a mechanical device as soon as he invents a better one but that he can and does absorb new phases of culture without giving up the earlier phases.

The bow and arrow replaced the hand-thrown stick or stone and were in turn outmoded by the invention of gunpowder. The sailboat replaced the oared galley and was in turn outmoded by the steamboat. Stagecoaches were sent to museums by the railroad. The horse and buggy vanished from the highways in the wake of the automobile. But these instruments of warfare and travel contained no germs of art or culture.

The beauties of an Acropolis or a Mona Lisa are not marred by the existence of color photography. Appreciation of human singing is not affected by the pipe organ or the phonograph. The reading of classic literature such as the *Odyssey* and *Hamlet* is not replaced by motion pictures. As men add to their knowledge they gain in mental capacity. Further, technological improvements tend to give

them more time for intellectual pursuits, artistic enjoyment and the accumulation of still more knowledge.

Newspapers, radio, facsimile and television, in one way, are merely machines. In another, as transmitters of words and pictures, they are instruments of the intellect. As long as each one contains a cultural element not inherent in the others, the public will demand them all.

During the same period that they welcomed radio, people continued to buy and read newspapers in ever-increasing numbers. Newspapers and the radio whet the public appetite for each other. In like manner, the public has welcomed facsimile and television without sacrificing the as yet not duplicated advantages of newspapers and radio.

News Demand Is Eternal. Through every age and in every place men have thirsted for news of happenings beyond the range of their own hearing and vision. "What's new?" is a question that always has been and always will be asked in one form or another. Man's curiosity is insatiable, his demand for information incessant.

Television can take the viewer to the scene of the news and permit him to see and hear for himself without benefit of reporter or writer. Thus it may be argued that the television camera alone can cover news. But this is true so far, but only so far, as it concerns news events upon which a television or moving-picture camera can be focused. These are largely fixed-in-advance and confined-to-a-place events such as a football game, a prize fight, a horse race, a speech, a parade and, less frequently, a flood, fire or wreck.

At least nine out of ten news events occur unexpectedly or in places unreachable by a camera. How, for example, could television report another Pearl Harbor? How can a camera cover the complexities of a national election? Will criminals ever notify television men when they are about to commit a murder or rob a bank?

Words spoken or printed always will be the backbone of news reporting; and whether they are delivered by printing press, radio speaker, facsimile page or television dramatization, news words will need to be processed for that delivery by writers and editors. Jour-

nalism consists of preparing news for "publication." The manifold means of publication are changeable and may be transient, but journalism survives them all. Therefore the positions of reporter, writer and editor in a broad sense are forever secure.

Good composition is ageless. The man of words who clearly understands this enduring vehicle of thought will not be marooned by variations in the mediums of its delivery. He still will be writing for the eye or for the ear. News script or copy will always be in demand, for nothing ever can break man's everlasting link to man, the golden chain of words.

The man or woman who enters radio journalism—who becomes a competent radio news writer and editor—may do so with full confidence in the future. The opportunities are his—to adapt his basic training and skill to new and perhaps as yet unheard-of mediums of publication. His security is anchored on human desires and instincts as firm as life itself.

SHOP TALK

1. From the point of view of today's listeners compare the advantages of AM and FM broadcasting.
2. Which do you think will develop faster in the future—television or facsimile? Why?
3. Can you suggest mechanical devices, other than those mentioned in this chapter, which have been completely replaced by new inventions?
4. Suggest and discuss instruments of culture which have been accepted without replacing earlier instruments.
5. Compare the security to be found in various professions and occupations, including radio news writing and editing.

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PRACTICE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Chapter I

THE NEWS TAKES WING

Practice. Have each student write a three-hundred-word article on "Why I am taking this radio news course." Criticize from the point of view of logic, lucidity and completeness within the time limit.

Assignment. Through the radio listings in a newspaper find and listen to at least one straight newscast and one news commentary. Describe, compare and criticize them as to style, content, delivery and listener interest.

Chapter II

THE RANGE OF RADIO NEWSCASTS

Practice. Divide the class into two parts. Using a current newspaper story of some length, have one group write a three-hundred-word commentary and the other a straight newscast of the same length. Read aloud and criticize from the point of view of an average listener.

Assignment. Prepare a three-hundred-word paper giving your views on the question: Should radio gather its own news independently of newspapers and press services?

Chapter III

WORK FOR WRITER-EDITORS

Practice. Ask each student to assume that he has been graduated and to write a letter to the head of a radio news processing agency asking for a job and seeking to qualify for it.

Assignment. Visit a local radio newsroom and write a 250-word report covering its organization, personnel and equipment.

Chapter IV

INSIDE THE NEWSROOM

Practice. Arrange for a demonstration of teletype machines, if possible in the classroom or, if this is impossible, in a newspaper or

radio newsroom. Study the mechanism. Have each student try sending a message. Inspect the copy. Have each student write a brief description of a teletype, explaining its operation as if to a twelve-year-old child.

Assignment. Using a long story taken from a newspaper, type at least five typewritten pages, following the instructions in Chapter V. Specify the time the copy would take for microphone delivery.

Chapter V

TIMEPIECES AND TYPEWRITERS

Practice. Ask each student to type one page of copy on the subject, "Why I think there should be longer (or shorter) newscasts on the air." He should type exactly 175 words, following the model page, and retype until he has eliminated all errors.

Assignment. Using any stories from a single copy of a newspaper, prepare a complete five-minute newscast in accordance with the rules in Chapter VI.

Chapter VI

NEWS SCRIPT MECHANICS

Practice. Using stories found on the first three pages of a daily newspaper, have students attempt to write a full five-minute news script. Criticize the script mechanics.

Assignment. Using either a radio script or a newspaper, study and tabulate the factors that give news values to ten stories. Note and list briefly the news elements in each one.

Chapter VII

WHAT'S NEWS—AND WHY?

Practice. Have each student write a 250-word monograph, explaining the characteristics of news as distinguished from history, fiction and drama.

Assignment. Make a list of at least twenty "dollar" words, loose phrases, generalisms and stereotyped expressions. Use each one in a sentence. Rewrite each sentence with clarity.

Chapter VIII

SELECT THE SIMPLE WORD

Practice. Have each student write a two-hundred- or three-hundred-word report of an event he has witnessed or in which he has participated, with a view to making it understandable to a person who has never attended school. Criticize for clarity.

Assignment. Choose a newspaper story of approximately three hundred words. Rewrite it in radio style, giving special attention to sentence structure.

Chapter IX

SENTENCES TO BE SPOKEN

Practice. Give students paragraphs from newspaper stories, magazine articles and fiction for rewriting in radio style. Stress sentence structure.

Assignment. Choose any campus news event about which you have the essential facts. Write three articles of 175 words each (one typewritten page): (1) as you would tell it to a friend; (2) as a newspaper story; (3) as part of a radio newscast.

Chapter X

WRITE AS YOU TALK

Practice. Have students rewrite several newspaper stories into radio news items, underscoring words indicating the use of (1) a warmup, (2) transitions or coupling pins and (3) present tense.

Assignment. Using a newspaper speech or statement story, write a one-minute item illustrating the proper use of quotations. Write another one-minute item illustrating the treatment of numbers.

Chapter XI

PUNCTUATION AND NUMERALS

Practice. Using a newspaper, have students practice rewriting financial, sports and other stories in accordance with MIDT rules. Emphasize clarity.

Assignment. Using the front page of a newspaper, underline at least twenty-five words which you would consider "bad radio." Classify them under the reasons why you would not include them in a script.

Chapter XII

HOW TO HELP THE ANNOUNCER

Practice. Give the students the facts for several items that contain unusual names, long titles, alphabetical words and technical expressions. Have them write the items in radio style with a view to helping the announcer. Read the scripts aloud.

Assignment. Listen to at least three radio news programs. Write a critical analysis of each microphone man's delivery.

Chapter XIII

THE MAN AT THE MICROPHONE

Practice. Have students write a two-minute news script and then read it aloud as if for microphone delivery. Criticize voice and diction.

Assignment. Using a daily newspaper, give a copy slug to each of twenty-five news stories. Make up a schedule of five-minute newscasts for 7 A.M., 10 A.M., 4 P.M., 6 P.M., 9 P.M. and 11 P.M. Assign five stories to each newscast, choosing them on the basis of audience appeal.

Chapter XIV

ANALYZING THE AUDIENCE

Practice. Assume that each student is the writer of a newscast going on the air at the hour nearest the start of the practice period. Using a newspaper, ask each to select the items of greatest audience appeal at that hour and write them in a five-minute script.

Assignment. Listen to three topical newscasts. In a 250-word paper analyze the special audience appeal in each one.

Chapter XV

FITTING NEWS TO THE FAMILY

Practice. Using the front page of a newspaper, assign each student to write a two-minute series of radio items for an exclusively feminine

audience; then from the same page prepare a script of the same length for an all-male audience. Compare and criticize the secondary news appeal.

Assignment. Clip from one newspaper, mount, slug and arrange the raw material for a complete five-minute newscast to be put on the air at an hour corresponding to the publication time of the paper. Outline the script arrangement, specifying the time allotted to each item.

Chapter XVI

SHAPING THE SHOW

Practice. Read and have the students copy a headline or one-line summary for each of thirty news stories. Assign students to prepare a copy slug for each story; then, using the copy slugs, arrange them in a five-minute newscast. Compare and criticize the outlines.

Assignment. Clip ten stories from a newspaper. Mount and copy-slug them. Rewrite the lead paragraph of each one into a radio-style news item, emphasizing the warmup.

Chapter XVII

WARMING UP THE LISTENER

Practice. Have members of the class rewrite the leads of a dozen newspaper stories in radio style, emphasizing the warmups.

Assignment. Using a newspaper for raw material, prepare a complete five-minute script for MIDT, including at least one of each of the following kinds of stories: (1) fact; (2) quote; (3) action.

Chapter XVIII

THE STRUCTURE OF THE STORY

Practice. Give students lengthy quote matter, fact matter and action matter. Have them write each piece of raw material as a one-minute script lead item. Criticize the structure.

Assignment. Using a current newspaper, write the body of a five-minute newscast. Underline your warmup and transitions or coupling pins.

Chapter XIX

COUPLING PINS AND CONTINUITY

Practice. Using the front page of a newspaper, have the students prepare a copy slug for each story appearing on it; then write coupling pins linking the stories into a chain as in a newscast. Read and compare the transitions.

Assignment. Find in a newspaper a multiangled news story. Rewrite it three times in radio style, emphasizing a fresh angle in each version.

Chapter XX

KEEPING THE NEWS FRESH

Practice. Read or give to the students data from a news story. Have them write a one-minute advance, a one-minute spot news item and a one-minute follow-up to be broadcast on three successive days.

Assignment. Select a newspaper editorial or column dealing with a controversial subject. Rewrite it in the form of a two-minute straight newscast script, emphasizing objectivity.

Chapter XXI

ACCURACY AND OBJECTIVITY

Practice. Give the students a newspaper editorial and have them write it in the form of news script. Practice in the same way with a newspaper column or a commentator's script. Emphasize accuracy, citation of authority, objectivity.

Assignment. Obtain a copy of the libel and slander constitutional provisions and laws in your state. Write a brief digest of them, with special reference to their effect on radio news.

Chapter XXII

LOOK OUT FOR THE LAW

Practice. Have the students rewrite in safe form several items laden with libelous material. Trap them if possible. Criticize both for

the use of libelous matter and for the omission of safe, privileged matter.

Assignment. Select from newspapers a crime story containing matter which you consider improper for radio as written. Rewrite it into a one-minute item for a newscast. Repeat with a sex story.

Chapter XXIII

DANGER—HANDLE WITH CARE!

Practice. Present facts and quotations for a scary sex story. Have it written for a newscast. Repeat with one or more crime stories with gruesome angles.

Assignment. Using the front page of a newspaper, write two or three minutes of newscast script, deliberately making errors so that you may illustrate with a pencil each copyreading device used at MIDT.

Chapter XXIV

COPYREADING AND CORRECTING

Practice. Divide the class into pairs, each pair consisting of a writer and a copyreader. Have the writers prepare a two-minute script which the copyreaders mark. Switch the roles and repeat. Criticize the copyreading work.

Assignment. Choose two newspaper stories of medium length which you think might be improved for radio by the use of sound color. Rewrite each into a one-minute script item.

Chapter XXV

COLOR IN SOUND

Practice. Give the students the bare facts of stories selected from newspapers and have them write radio news items, emphasizing sound color.

Assignment. Find in newspapers one story on each of the following human interest topics: children, animals, romance, oddity. Rewrite each into a one-minute script item.

Chapter XXVI

THE HUMAN INTEREST TOUCH

Practice. Using the contents of a newspaper for raw material, have the students prepare a complete five-minute newscast, including at least three human interest stories. Criticize the treatment of these items.

Assignment. Find and clip from newspapers an action story. Rewrite it in dramatic radio news form. Repeat with a humorous suspended interest story. Make each item about one minute in length.

Chapter XXVII

DRAMA IN THE NEWSCAST

Practice. Have the students write several items with the dramatic formula structure. Criticize the structure.

Assignment. Using the full five-minute script (Appendix III), make up fictional developments enabling you to illustrate each of the patchwork devices described in Chapter XXVIII.

Chapter XXVIII

PATCHWORK WITH PRECISION

Practice. Give each student a copy of a complete five-minute script. Pass out material for various kinds of patchwork. Have them practice with each of the patchwork devices.

Assignment. Choose, clip and mount a major story from a newspaper. Prepare from it a radio flash, a bulletin, a roundup bulletin and a short extra newscast.

Chapter XXIX

SECONDS TO GO!

Practice. Give the students press service or newspaper stories of moment and urgency. Have them practice writing flashes, bulletins, roundup bulletins and extra newscasts. Emphasize speed.

Assignment. Prepare a two-minute file newscast based on the death of a newsworthy person more than seventy years of age.

Chapter XXX

HOW TO BE PREPARED

Practice. Give the students the facts for preparing hold bulletins on the outcome of a sports event, a trial or an election. Have them prepare the bulletins. Repeat with a file script.

Assignment. Using a newspaper story for raw material, prepare a two-minute extra edition as though dictated, indicating the pauses with virgules as shown in the next chapter.

Chapter XXXI

DON'T DELAY—DICTATE!

Practice. Divide the students into teams of two. Have them practice dictating and transcribing by typewriter. Assign them to demonstrate dictation to the class, using flash and bulletin material from newspapers.

Assignment. Prepare a paper of three hundred words setting forth your views on the relative opportunities for radio newsmen in facsimile and television.

Chapter XXXII

JOURNALISM JOBS AHEAD

Practice. Ask each student to write a criticism of the course, listing its values and shortcomings from his own point of view.

RADIO NEWS GLOSSARY

- Across the board*—A program scheduled five days a week at the same hour.
- Ad*—An item added at the end of a newscast; an advertisement.
- Ad lib*—To extemporize words not written in a script.
- Advance*—A story foretelling an event expected to occur.
- Alibi file*—A file containing copies of scripts used for reference.
- AM*—Amplitude modulation.
- A.M.*—Morning newspaper.
- Analyst*—A commentator who leans toward objective analysis rather than personal comment.
- Angle*—An aspect of a news story.
- Announcement*—A brief commercial statement on the air.
- Announcer*—A microphone man; a man who delivers news prepared by writer-editors.
- AP*—Associated Press.
- Audition*—A studio test of talent or a show.
-
- Beard*—A fluff.
- Beat*—An exclusive story; a scoop.
- Bloop*—A fluff.
- Blurb*—A publicity or advertising item.
- Break*—A story when it becomes available for broadcasting; the time between programs when a station identifies itself.
- Brightener*—A short light item, usually humorous; a smile.
- Bromide*—A trite, hackneyed expression; a stereotype; a cliché.
- Bulletin*—A brief announcement of urgent spot news.
-
- Caps*—Capital letters.
- Clean copy*—Copy needing few if any pencil corrections.
- Clip*—A newspaper clipping.
- Close*—The fixed script section ending a program.
- Commentary*—A newscast by a commentator.
- Commentator*—A person who processes and delivers news with direct personal comment.
- Commercial*—A sponsored announcement or program.

- Compensate**—To add or delete wordage to adjust script arithmetic.
- Composite story**—A story containing two or more angles.
- Composition-itis**—The urge to use high-flown words.
- Continuity**—Script such as commercials and introductions read by an announcer; cohesion in a news script.
- Copy**—All news manuscript.
- Copyreader**—The editor who checks and corrects a writer's copy.
- Copy slug**—The word or words placed on a piece of raw material for identification.
- Correspondent**—A radio newsman who covers, writes, edits and delivers news, usually by remote pickup.
- Coupling pin**—A transitional word, phrase or sentence.
- Cover**—To get the facts and be responsible for a story.
- Credit**—To acknowledge or cite the source or authority of a story.
- Crusade**—A newspaper campaign for a reform.
- Cushion**—Material which can be stretched or squeezed to fill extra time on the air; a warmup or transition.
- Dangler**—A qualifying or dependent clause that dangles at the end of a sentence.
- Dash slug**—A script slug set inside of dashes.
- Date line**—The line preceding a story giving the place of origin.
- Day shift**—The daytime working period; day side.
- Deadline**—The last moment to move copy for a newscast.
- Dead spot**—Unscheduled silence on the air during broadcasting time; dead air.
- Deskman**—A script editor.
- Down style**—The style favoring lower case or small letters; opposite of up style.
- Dramatization**—A dramatized newscast.
- Dupe**—Duplicate or carbon copy.
- Editorialize**—To inject opinion into a news story.
- Exclusive**—A scoop; a beat.
- Extra**—A nonscheduled newscast or newspaper edition.
- Fax**—Facsimile.
- F.C.C.**—Federal Communications Commission.
- File newscast**—A prepared-in-advance script for release under specified circumstances.

Fixed—A script section repeated in each newscast.

Flash—An extremely brief, first report of a news event.

Flub—A fluff.

Fluff—A word or line accidentally mispronounced or distorted by a microphone man.

Flush—Typed even with the left margin of a page.

FM—Frequency modulation.

Follow-up—A sequel to a news event which has occurred.

Future—A memorandum about a story likely to develop later, and kept in a future file.

Gag—A joke; comedy routine.

Group slug—The second word in a copy slug used to show association with other stories.

Handout—A piece of prepared publicity.

Headlines—The résumé or recapitulation after the body of a newscast.

H-I—Human interest.

Hold for release—News not to be broadcast until a specified time or under specified circumstances.

Hook—A spike for incoming or discarded copy.

Human interest—Emotional appeal in news; a story or phase of a story with emotional appeal.

INS—International News Service.

Insert—A news item incorporated in a script already written.

Interview—A two-person question-and-answer news program.

Item—A slugged story in a news script.

Kill—To strike out or discard an item or part of an item.

Lead—The first item or items in a news script; to open or start a script.

Leaders—A row of periods used to indicate omitted matter or to show a pause.

Library—Systematized files of newspaper clips, reference books and other data; morgue.

Lift—A light or human interest item, usually a smile; to appropriate the facts of a story from another newspaper or newscast.

Line-up—The arrangement of a newscast.

Lobster shift—The early morning work period.

Local—A local news story; a radio program carried by a single station.

Localize—To stress the local angle of a story.

Log—A radio station program record.

Middle break—An announcement in the middle of a program.

Mike—Microphone.

Monitor—To listen to a program for the purpose of checking or studying it; a person who so listens.

More—The word put at the bottom of a page of copy meaning more to come.

Morgue—Library.

N.A.B.—National Association of Broadcasters.

Name slug—The first word in a copy slug; the title or name of a piece of raw material.

Network—Two or more stations connected by a telephone wire.

New lead—A new or rewritten item or items replacing a lead already prepared; the fresh development in a follow-up story.

Newscast—A radio news broadcast.

Newscaster—A radio newsman who delivers news or comment written and edited by himself; any news microphone man.

Newsroom—A room or office where news is written and edited.

Night shift—The night working period; night side.

Obituary—A biography of a dead person; a death story; an obit.

On the air—The period when a program is broadcast.

On the nose—A program which is proceeding or completed on schedule.

Open—A fixed script section opening a newscast or other program.

Pace—The speed of delivery.

Patchwork—Repair or revision of a script already prepared.

Period slug—A script slug followed by a period.

Phump—A fluff.

Pica—Twelve-point type.

Play up—To give prominence to a story or an angle in a story.

Plug—A commercial announcement.

P.M.—An afternoon newspaper.

- Policy**—The position taken by a newspaper on a public question.
- Press service**—A newsgathering organization serving many newspapers and radio stations.
- Primary news**—News of interest to the bulk of the audience; major news.
- Printer**—A receiving teletype machine.
- Punch line**—A surprise ending; gag or tag line.
- Quotes**—Quotation marks; a part of an item quoted.
- Railroad**—To rush script without careful copyreading.
- Regular newscast**—A scheduled newscast.
- Release copy**—Copy to be held for release at a certain time.
- Remote**—A program originating outside the studio.
- Rewrite man**—A newsman who rewrites copy.
- Round table**—A radio debate or discussion on a news topic.
- Roundup bulletin**—A second bulletin repeating the first and giving more detail if available.
- Roundup show**—A newscast which rounds up the top news that developed during the several hours preceding.
- Running story**—A story which continues over a period of time and is handled in takes.
- Sandwiching**—Placing light items between more serious stories.
- Scare stuff**—News which may cause anxiety, hysteria, panic or mob action when dramatized on the air.
- Scoop**—An exclusive story; a beat.
- Script**—The text for a radio production; newscast copy.
- Script arithmetic**—The adjustment of wordage in a script to the time on the air.
- Script editor**—A person who selects, assigns and copyreads news to be broadcast.
- Scriptman**—A writer-editor.
- Script slug**—A figure, letter, word or abbreviation placed on processed copy to specify the disposal of a section of script.
- Secondary news**—News of special interest to part of the audience; minor news.
- Section**—Any part of a radio news script which forms a unit divisible from other parts of the script.

- Sectional story**—A big story with different phases prepared as separate stories.
- Segment**—A radio time period.
- Show**—A radio program; a newscast.
- Slant**—To emphasize a phase of a policy story.
- Slug**—The name, title, letter or other notation placed on a story or item as identification or to specify its disposal.
- Smile**—A short, humorous story.
- Sob**—A tragic story.
- Sound color**—Vivid and colorful quality in radio news writing.
- Sound effects**—Sounds created in a studio.
- Spike**—A hook for incoming or discarded copy.
- Sponsor**—One who buys or pays for a commercial program.
- Sponsored**—An advertising program for which a station is paid.
- Spot**—A short period on the air.
- Spot news**—News of events which have just occurred or are occurring now.
- Spot newscast**—A broadcast by an eyewitness microphone man at the scene of the event.
- Stereotype**—A bromide.
- Story**—Any news development or piece of news copy.
- Straight news**—News without direct personal comment.
- Straight newscast**—A newscast consisting of straight news.
- Stuff**—Any news raw material.
- Stunt**—A special event or novelty radio program.
- Style**—Literary quality of writing.
- Sub**—Substitute.
- Suspended interest**—A news story or item with the feature or climax near the end; suspense.
- Sustaining**—Any program not sponsored.
- Tag line**—The final part of an item containing the surprise; punch line.
- Take**—A portion of copy in a running story or script.
- Teaser**—An announcement inviting listeners to tune in for a program.
- Tie-back**—Tie-in.
- Tie-in**—Information previously made public and included in a story to refresh the listener's mind; a local station announcement inserted in or following a network program.

Theme—Music, sound or talk which identifies a program from day to day or week to week.

Throwaway—A warmup or transition.

Topical newscast—A newscast on a special news topic such as sports, religion or fashions.

TP—Transradio Press.

Transition—A coupling pin; movement from one scene to another.

TV—Television.

UP—United Press.

Up style—The style favoring capitalization; the opposite of down style.

Video—Pertaining to transient visual image transmission in television.

Warmup—The opening words of an item used to prepare and adjust the listener for news to follow.

Writer-editor—A person who writes and edits radio news; a scriptman.

FIVE-MINUTE NEWSCAST SCRIPT

1. At this hour joy is mingled with sorrow in the home of Mayor and Missus Frank Nelson. Following a fire which destroyed one wing of their home the Nelsons' four-year-old daughter, Diane, is safe. But Diane's Scotty dog, "Pal," is dead. "Pal" gave his life for his friend.

2. The fire broke out shortly after three o'clock in the basement of the Nelson home at 405 Hillcrest Avenue. A defective water heater is blamed. The flames raced up a rear stairway to the nursery where Diane was asleep. From a neighbor's porch Missus Nelson heard the Scotty barking. She ran home. She reached the nursery barely in time to carry the child outside to safety. A few minutes later firemen put out the blaze. But "Pal" was missing. The firemen found him trapped at the stairway door.

3. Mayor Nelson estimates the damage at three thousand dollars. Says the Mayor -- "We can repair the house. The real loss is 'Pal.' He saved Diane's life and we'll never forget him. The little fellow was a hero."

more

4. Earlier in the day -- before he was called home from City Hall -- Mayor Nelson signed the Greenview bus extension bill. The bill provides forty thousand dollars to buy new coaches. These will run between the new subdivision and the Tremont Street Terminal starting on August fifteenth. The fare will be ten cents or three rides for fifteen.

5. It was just ten cents too much that John Garvin charged today for a poppy which he sold to a plainclothes man. Garvin was arrested on a charge of violating an ordinance which forbids poppy selling except by licensed war veterans. Garvin told Municipal Judge Lane that he knew about the law. But he added -- quote -- "I didn't know the guy was a cop." Garvin paid a twenty-dollar fine.

6. That's the local news. Now the latest from abroad. The situation in Palestine remains critical. Three more persons have been injured in Jerusalem street fighting. An Arab spokesman says that unless British policy changes the Holy Land may become a battleground. There is no comment from London.

more

7. Whole villages on the recent battleground of China are facing extinction. That is the report made by Ambassador Johnson upon his return to Shanghai after conferences at Nanking with Nationalist leaders. Johnson declares that the need for food and clothing in China is enormous and growing daily.

8. In Washington President Wrightman says that this nation will continue to ship rice and medical supplies to the stricken areas of China. The President also announces that Johnson will return to the capital to make a personal report on Chinese affairs.

9. The marital affairs of a couple with in-law trouble were at issue in a Philadelphia divorce court this afternoon. Morton Miller, a banker, had asked for separation on the ground that his wife refused to live with his mother. Miller's lawyer argued that this constitutes desertion. Judge Elbert Jones said -- and we quote -- "I will not compel any wife to live with her mother-in-law. One woman running a home is enough" -- end of quotation. Jones denied the decree. Miller will appeal.

more

10. Now the baseball results. The National League pennant race is as tight as ever. In Brooklyn, the Dodgers beat the Boston Braves this afternoon six to five. But at Saint Louis the Cardinals turned back the Chicago Cubs three to one to remain one full game in front.

11. Here in Midland the Blue Sox took the second straight from the Timberton Owls by a score of four to one.

12. Well, that scarecrow parade on the campus at Lincoln High School is over. You'll recall that last Monday a fraternity group vowed to observe a "hate-women" week. The boys wouldn't shave. They wouldn't date. They wore their shirt-tails out. So yesterday the girls retaliated. A dozen came to school wearing their fathers' night-shirts with regular duds underneath. The principal, Miss Jane Price, summoned the ringleaders. She told them -- "You look like so many unmade beds. All pupils not properly dressed will be assigned double homework tomorrow." Today there was nary a shirt-tail or a night-shirt in sight. The feud is finished.

-- END --

Page 5 6 P.M.

-- HEDS --

1. Four-year-old daughter of Mayor rescued as fire damages Nelson home.

2. Dog's barking saves child but pet loses life in flames.

3. New Greenview buses start running on August fifteenth.

-- END --

Page 6 6 P.M.

-- WEA --

Now the Weather Bureau forecast for Midland and vicinity.

Temperature seventy-two degrees. Humidity forty-two per cent.

Tonight cloudy with occasional showers. Lowest temperature about sixty-five. Fresh northeast winds. Tomorrow cloudy in the morning followed by clearing in the afternoon. Highest about seventy-five. Moderate easterly winds. Friday fair and cooler.

-- 875 --

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