Sam Dickson Retires

San Francisco Radio Pioneer Was With NBC 24 Years

Samuel Dickson, one of the outstanding pioneers of San Francisco radio, retired on Feb. 1 as a staff writer-producer with KNBC after an affiliation of nearly 24 years with the National Broadcasting Company.

Although he is terminating his staff duties with KNBC under the RCA-NBC employees retirement plan, Mr. Dickson will continue to author and direct “Rickey’s San Francisco Hour,” heard Sundays from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. on KNBC. He also plans other free-lance activity in radio and television and, under a commitment with the Stanford University Press, will begin working immediately on his third volume in a series of books on San Francisco. His first two volumes on the city of St. Francis, “San Francisco Is Your Home” and “San Francisco Kaleidoscope,” were based on episodes from the award-winning KNBC program “This Is Your Home” (now a part of the “San Francisco Hour.”)

Mr. Dickson gained first-hand knowledge that has made him one of the foremost authorities on the history of San Francisco and Northern California. His grandfather arrived in the Mother Lode country as a youth of 18 in the 1850’s and with the passing of the years came to be one of the most prominent and beloved of San Francisco merchants and one of the founders of the Temple Emmanu-El.

Mr. Dickson himself was born in San Francisco January 18, 1889. For the past 40 years he has resided on the San Francisco Peninsula. He currently lives at 130 Gramercy Drive, San Mateo, with his wife. The Dickens have three daughters, all married, and five grandchildren.

Mr. Dickson began his writing career at the age of 20 and was known principally as a short story writer when he made his radio debut in 1924 with a children’s serial which was broadcast Saturday afternoons from the stage of the Burlingame High School. He took his first staff job in radio in 1927 with Station KYA and in 1931 joined the National Broadcasting Company in San Francisco as a writer-producer.

His first assignment with NBC was on the old “Associated Spotlight Review.” Before a capacity studio audience, he appeared in full dress and simulated the sound of horse’s hooves by beating a pair of plumber’s friends on the floor.

The list of popular KNBC programs with which Mr. Dickson has been associated as a writer and producer includes such familiar titles as “Hawthorne House,” “Winning the West,” “Tales of California,” “Chief of Police Michael Quinn’s Police Dramas,” “Magna Minstrel,” “The Five Edwards,” “Joseph Hornick’s Viennese Hour,” “The Golden Hour,” “Light and Mellow,” “Darrow of the Diamond X,” “This Is Your Home,” and “Rickey’s San Francisco Hour.”

In the course of his career with KNBC, Mr. Dickson has taught radio writing at both the University of California Extension and the KNBC-Stanford University Summer Radio and Television Institute. For several years he maintained a private school of radio acting. His other professional credits include Editor of the Masonic Trestle Board; Editor, Manager, Publisher, Writer and Illustrator of the children’s magazine The Treasure Chest; and author of “Easy for Zee Zee,” a play holding the record for the longest continual run in San Francisco. “Easy for Zee Zee,” which Mr. Dickson adapted from a famous French farce, ran for 21 months in San Francisco during 1927-1928. Mr. Dickson also is an active member in San Francisco’s Family Club and has authored several of the club’s “Flight Plays” events.

Mr. Dickson, a dyed-in-the-wool San Franciscan, has become known as the unofficial historian of the city. It is his enduring love of San Francisco that kept him from accepting attractive offers time and time again to move to Hollywood or New York.

A “bon voyage” party was given Sam on Friday, Feb. 12. All members of the KNBC staff gathered in the office of general manager George Greaves while the NBC executive presented Sam with a leather desk set presented by staff members as a token of affection. Following the presentation, a decorated cake was cut and coffee poured. All in all, it was a very touching occasion—so much so that Sam was moved to comment, “For the first time in my life I am speechless.”