

## **BERT BUTTON COMMENTS ON RADIO – 1985**

**Willie Fennell: actor of radio, films, theatre.** In the post war years over 60% of radio features were imported from America and the United Kingdom. A Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting was concerned about Australian artists only participating in about 30% of locally recorded programs. It was about that time that the “*Colgate Palmolive Show*” was formed, which included Jack Davey, Bob Dyer, Roy Rene, Joy Nicholls, Kitty Bluett, Hal Lashwood, Dick Bentley, George Foster and Willie Fennell. Willie’s main claim to popularity was the expression “*Ow are yer mate*” and it could be claimed that his being typed this way did not do justice to the real ability he possessed. Perhaps the first public indication of this was when he starred in “*Life with Dexter*” and since then he has successfully participated in a number of TV and theatrical productions. Willie was always a fairly quiet unassuming person; not easily cultivated as a friend, but an individual who would always leave his mark in the field of entertainment.

Whilst he recollects with pleasure his participation in several top rating radio shows such as “*Calling The Stars*” (his first appearance in radio), “*Ada and Elsie*”, and “*The Cashmere Bouquet Show*”, I’ve always felt that Willie Fennell obtained more satisfaction from his association with theatrical and film productions, although he also obviously enjoyed facing up to large audiences in club shows. Now in his sixties, Willie Fennell has been associated with several commercial and ABC TV programs such as “*No. 96*” and “*Young Doctors*”, and also stars in theatrical productions and the occasional film. During his career he never resorted to suggestiveness or smut to raise a laugh, which prompts me to make a comparison between old style comedy shows and the modern trend. Radio programs like “*Yes, What?*”, “*Dad and Dave*”, “*Mrs Obs*”, “*Mal Verco and Ginger*”, plus Jack Davey and Bob Dyer productions, created lots of ‘belly’ laughs without being vulgar or placing so much emphasis on sex. It puzzles me why there have not been TV versions of such radio features as “*Yes, What?*” This program originated over 5AD Adelaide before WWII and I well recollect listening to an audition disc sent over to 2CH, which, at the time, was the key station of the Major Network in Sydney.

I was then a salesman, and one of my clients was Samuel Taylor who advertised Mortein and Wycough. Their Chief Executive, Charles Graham, would only buy one minute commercials before the evening news, but I enticed him to simply visit 2CH and listen to the audition disc. His reaction was quite spontaneous and he decided to sponsor “*Yes, What?*” on 2CH between 6.45 and 7 PM Monday to Thursday. Within six months Samuel Taylor sponsored the feature throughout Australia. Over the years, the series was repeated at least three or four times; the last occasion on 2UE Sydney as late as about 1977. It was probably the funniest and most successful radio serial of its type ever produced. Surely there must be scope for a TV version of “*Dad and Dave*”. Compared with some of the inane Australian comedy shows on TV, it would be a riot. Admittedly comedy is the most hazardous type of program to present, but it’s a pity Australia does not have, or is not making use of, script writers with the ability of those in the United Kingdom, who are responsible for such features as “*Are You Being Served*” and “*Man About the House*”.

**How to make \$1,000 in five minutes.** As the name suggests, a radio station’s audition room was previously used to audition new features to prospective sponsors. It is also available for production meetings, interviewing actors and actresses, artists, and so on. In some cases it was used by breakfast announcers to sober up after a night out and be sure they would be on the air on time the following morning. The audition room was tastefully furnished, usually including a comfortable lounge suite and the lounge was generally known as the “casting couch”. There was once a midnight-to-dawn announcer at 2UW Sydney who made fairly regular use of the auditorium to entertain his lady friend. He would arrange for the engineer on duty to present about half an hour of music without interruption, proceed to the audition room, and have a most enjoyable break. However, the time arrived when the engineer became rather tired of this procedure. Perhaps he was envious, but one night he installed a microphone behind the lounge and recorded a most interesting half hour, which, unbeknown to the announcer for some weeks, entertained quite a number of persons associated with the radio industry. When he found out, the announcer put on an awful blue and threatened legal proceedings but on second thoughts realised how stupid he would be to have the record played in court.

There was one occasion at 2GB Sydney when we were auditioning a half hour musical session presented by Charles Cousens to Sir Adolf Basser, head of Saunders the Jewellers. I knew Sir Adolf quite well and we had sold him several features. He always tried to barter about the price of a show but on this occasion I had made it quite clear to him beforehand that Charles Cousens’ session would cost \$120 a half hour to sponsor, based on a contract for 52 weeks. The audition went fine. Charles Cousens was in top form and even half way through, it was obvious that Sir Adolf was sufficiently impressed to buy the program. At the conclusion he looked towards me and said he would pay \$100 a half hour for the session and when this was declined, offered \$110. After the second offer was refused, he agreed to pay the original figure of \$120. The audition room was on the third floor of the Macquarie Building in Phillip Street and there was a long passageway between it and the lift. Whilst escorting him back to the lift I said “*Sir Adolf, why did you try to beat us down to \$100 when I had already made it quite clear to you that the price would not be less than \$120*”. He looked at me with a grin and replied “*Well Button, during the five minutes we were discussing the price, if you had accepted the \$100 we would have saved \$1,000, or \$500 if you had agreed to \$110. Nevertheless, I admire you for sticking to your price. Some people don’t*”.

In those days, production costs for programs consisting of records were included in the station time rate for sessions. Announcers like Charles Cousens who compered programs and handled commercials received no additional fee. Their salaries were considered quite adequate to cover this. Even if an announcer was given approval to handle additional assignments outside of working hours, the fee involved was generally split on a 50/50 basis. Needless to say, it’s now vastly different. Top radio and TV personalities receive fabulous salaries; charge big fees for commercials; and in several instances, operate sidelines and other business activities which net them large sums of money. I could name several personalities whose total earnings would be twice as much as the salary paid to the Prime Minister.

**“Bullpitt” gets his start as cadet announcer.** Construction of Macquarie Building, headquarters of the Macquarie Broadcasting Service was completed just about the time WWII started, but, as 2GB’s technical equipment was taken over for defence purposes while Macquarie and 2GB’s staff were located in the new building, they were forced to continue to use their old technical equipment in the old studios in Adyar House Bligh Street where 2UE was also located.

You could write a book about all the Australian and overseas stars and dignitaries who passed through the entrance to Macquarie Broadcasting building and also some of the things which happened in the board room. Jack Horner, one of radios’ pioneers was managing director at the time and all kinds of celebrations took place, particularly after a big advertising contract had been completed. After a few drinks, Jack Horner would roll his dice and, with people like Jack Davey, involved, there was some spirited play.

On one occasion, after attending a farewell dinner to our service manager Charles Fletcher, we followed the customary procedure of returning to the boardroom for more than one for the road. A scriptwriter named Martin started to chip me about the fact that I was a reasonably good middle distance athlete. Others joined in, including Ted Harris who started at 2GB as a sports commentator and finished up as managing director of Ampol, and we decided to have a race. Just imagine 12 men lining up just after 11PM outside Macquarie Building in Phillip Street right opposite police headquarters, running down to George Street, to King, up to Phillip and back to 2GB with the astonishment of theatre goers on their way home. Ted Harris finished first ahead of me while the last seen of Martin until late the next day was him boarding a tram in George Street.

It was about 5PM one afternoon when we auditioned a young lad named Ross Higgins, who impressed me so much I fronted up to Jack Horner in the board room as he and several others were enjoying a few drinks. His reaction was less than enthusiastic but he agreed to listen to Ross Higgins who had a good announcing voice, and surprised all present with his imitations of well-known stars, and proved beyond a doubt that he could sing well too. We engaged him straight away as a cadet announcer. At the time we had so much talent on our staff, including such individuals as Keith Walsh, Noel Judd, Keith Eadie and Kathy Lloyd that I inaugurated a Staff Show which was broadcast each week between 1PM and 2PM from the Macquarie Auditorium before a capacity audience. Ross Higgins went over extra well and it was only a matter of time before he graduated to top rating national shows in company with stars such as Jack Davey, George Foster, George Wallace, Gladys Moncrieff and so on. Later he became a freelance; starred in two or three stage musicals, and because of his outstanding ability to use so many types of voices, became well sought after for commercial announcements. Since his venture into TV, he has developed into one of Australia's top stars. After successfully participating in features like "*The Naked Vicar Show*" he met with Australia-wide success as Bullpitt in "*Kingswood Country*".

**How Dawn Lake got her chance to be a star.** Dawn Lake and Bobby Limb, both evergreen personalities, are two of the nicest persons I have ever met. It was not long after becoming manager of Radio 2GB Sydney that I first met Dawn Lake at Sam Babichis restaurant near the Georges River Bridge. She was singing with a terrific voice and could handle practically any type of song in a real professional manner. I asked Sam how he found her and he told me that she was dining a week ago and volunteered to sing. She made such a hit that she agreed to accept part-time employment with his restaurant band. Sam then called Dawn over and I asked her whether she had ever thought of working in radio. To cut a long story short, I arranged for her to meet George Foster who was presenting the "Bunkhouse Show" on the Macquarie Radio Network and that was the start of a highly professional association with several prominent radio shows.

It was a happy occasion when Dawn teamed up with and later married Bobby Limb, one of Australia's most professional band leaders. Bobby was associated with several high rating radio shows, and with the advent of TV in 1956, both of them became top stars in the new medium. When watching Bobby Limb acting as one of the judges in "*New Faces*" it gave some idea of his great knowledge of music. His expert advice to the contestants demonstrated Bobby's genuine desire to help up and coming young performers along the road to success. Both of them have a great sense of appreciation and I well recollect the occasion when, during an interview after returning from a successful tour overseas, Dawn Lake made special mention that I was responsible for her first break into radio.

Later when I founded Radio 2ST Nowra, Dawn, accompanied by Jack Neary (one of Australia's leading entrepreneurs) made a special point of attending the official opening ceremony. For a man of his age, Bobby Limb is a bundle of energy always looking for new projects, one of which was a multi-million dollar complex financed by a group of businessmen to create an "Aussie" type of entertainment centre and overseas tourist attraction at Walsh Bay. It's a long time since his "*Sound of Music*" program ran for 17 years but both Bobby and Dawn seem to have found the secret of eternal youth. Both of them have won several Logies and Bobby was awarded an MBE in recognition of his services in the field of entertainment.

**Presenting 'Doc' Evatt to the people.** At the time the Right Honourable Herbert Evatt decided to enter politics and contest the Federal seat of Barton, I was a salesman/sports commentator at radio 2CH Sydney. When "Doc" Evatt asked 2CH to send someone to his house to discuss election advertising I was assigned to the job and duly turned up at his home in Mosman. He was contesting the seat of Barton which covered Sans Souci where I was living at the time. Mrs Mary Evatt ushered me into a large room which "Doc" Evatt was using as an office and there were books and papers scattered everywhere. In fact, we both sat on the carpet to discuss things. He produced some copy he had written which contained various odd phrases such as "Vote for Doctor Evatt, Son of the People" etc. After reading this I decided to take the bit in my teeth and express my candid opinion. This was based entirely on being a resident of Mosman, and contesting the seat of Barton several miles away was handicap enough without using phrases that would not register with the type of voters in this electorate. My suggestion was for announcements aimed at workers in the breakfast session before 7-30 AM, then to housewives during the morning program, and finally aimed at sportsmen on Saturdays. The last mentioned suggestion was based on the fact that "Doc" Evatt had been a prominent sportsman, a life member of the University Sports Union, and Vice President of the NSW Cricket Association. He immediately reacted by saying "*well Button, I want you to handle my campaign on all Sydney stations*".

This created a problem, firstly because 2CH was run by very Liberal minded people who would not appreciate my acting in this capacity, and secondly, I doubted whether other Sydney stations would appreciate announcements originated by a salesman on another station. A compromise was arrived at under which I agreed to write his radio advertisements and leave it up to him to negotiate with other stations. I will always remember the occasion when we both sat in the Macquarie Broadcasting Service Boardroom until nearly midnight on the election day, where, but for the loss of three or four seats in Victoria, "Doc" Evatt would have become Prime Minister. Maybe I'm wrong but I still believe he would have done a first class job because he was a great Australian. After "Doc" Evatt was elected I was one of the first persons he phoned, not only to express his appreciation, but also to invite me to contact him anytime he could help me. I only did this on one occasion when I was organising a big sports carnival at Hurstville oval and asked him to officially open it, which he did in front of a capacity crowd of about 32,000 people. We met on several occasions over the years during which time he paid me the compliment of asking my advice about advertising.

At the time Ben Chifley was Prime Minister, the Macquarie Broadcasting Service had the practice of allotting a five minute "Report to the Nation" program to the Prime Minister of the day which was broadcast on Macquarie stations throughout Australia. From time to time he would pre-record this at 2GB, usually on Sunday morning, and at the same time, hold a press conference in our boardroom. One Sunday morning my son Geoff, who was attending Newington College at the time, accompanied me to the 2GB studios where I

used to meet Ben Chifley and supervise everything. I asked his P.A. whether Ben Chifley would sign Geoff's autograph book after the press conference. He said to the press representatives - "*Young People must be given first priority*".

**When do you become expendable?** These days there is a lot of talk about this. It's quite evident that younger people are occupying an increasing percentage of top executive and lesser important positions. Many advertisements stipulate an age limit around 45 and there is a tendency to regard persons above that age as being over the hill. Without doubt most young people, many of whom have taken university courses and obtained degrees, are in one way much more qualified than their elders. I wonder what their opinions will be when they reach 45 or 50? It seems a pity a situation exists where some young people regard the older generation as old hat while on the other hand some older people are inclined to believe that maturity is all important and repress them. If I was young again and had all the opportunities that now exist to become highly qualified in my profession, I would still be anxious to benefit from the experience which my elders have accumulated over many years. Conversely, there is an obligation on older people to pass on their experience and give every encouragement to up and coming young men and women.

The strange thing is that in radio and TV a substantial percentage of top Australian personalities are by no means youngsters. A few examples are John Laws, Howard Craven, Bert Newton, Garry O'Callaghan, Jim Dibble, Don Lane, Graham Kennedy, Bob Rogers, Brian White, John Pearce, Stuart Wagstaff, Brian Henderson, Des Hoysted and Bert Bryant. In fact many years ago there were many more up and coming young stars than there are now, such as Jack Davey, Charles Cousens, Terry Dear, John Dease, Bobby Limb, Norman Banks, Eric Pearce, Alan Toohey, John Harper, John Dunne, Harry Dearth and a host of others.

10 years ago I developed an ideas service designed to assist promoting radio and TV advertising. It involved visiting most radio and TV stations between Perth and Cairns giving me the opportunity of an on-the-spot discussion with station managers. It was a rewarding experience both financially, and from the point of view of assessing their local problems. What amused me most were the occasions when managers said "*It's a hard game these days Bert*". With respect, they had no idea how hard it was in the early days of radio, when station facilities were primitive and there was a great resistance to radio advertising which was only given the crumbs off the table.

I was working as a 2CH salesman and selling 2CH was made much harder due to its aerial being high up at Dundas and its signal was weak in the East of the city where many advertisers lived. Initially I slogged the streets making calls and by 2PM had just about had it. I soon realised that making cold calls on advertisers was a waste of time. It was vital to front up with a specific promotional idea after having researched the advertisers business. Nevertheless I pressed on regardless and my first big sale was to Mr. Dumbrell of A.G. Healing Ltd. He was very pro-British and signed up for a 15 minute session each night Monday to Thursday consisting of well-known music, together with details of historic places in London where I was born and worked until I was 19. I wrote the continuity and found out more about London than when I lived there. What a celebration we had that night at the pub opposite 2CH in the Grace Building.

**Payola, and how it crept into radio.** In one sense, "Payola" is a question of "*He who is without sin should cast the first stone*", provided you do not overdo things and it develops into a racket. For instance, when I was appointed as buyer for AWA's city office before WWII, at Christmas time I received presents from most of its suppliers. Being new in the job, and not wishing to blot my copy book, I sought guidance from my employers who said they had no objection, provided it was a once a year happening and the presents were not overly expensive. The fact remains it is still a mild form of "Payola", in which thousands of people throughout Australia are involved. Consequently I was not in a position to query announcers who have, from time to time, received presents, but again, with the proviso that they did not overdo things. Nevertheless, it did lead to some embarrassing situations when at the time some announcers became involved in quite a big way with "Payola" and accepted expensive gifts. It was mainly due to record companies which wanted to ensure that new releases were highlighted, particularly pop numbers which they hoped would be included in hit programs. Some of the representatives used to deliver these new releases direct to radio personalities in order to achieve their objectives.

The stage was reached at 2GB where I was manager that we had to issue an instruction not to accept these and advised representatives of record companies that if they continued this procedure, their records would not be broadcast at all which, to a large extent, overcame the problem. Apart from records, it was necessary to watch commercials which, at the time, were mostly "live". It was very easy for an announcer to stretch a 30 second announcement to 45 seconds or one minute, resulting in quite a number of them receiving gifts of the goods advertised, free holiday trips, and in isolated cases, gifts as expensive as cars. Here again however, as manager, you didn't mind if the pay-off was fairly innocuous. For instance, at 2GB on Sundays we had a series of sponsored half-hours between 9AM and 4PM presented by a very accomplished and likeable announcer. He used to occasionally slip in a brief reference to an extraneous business which had no connection whatsoever with the sponsor's activities. This I tolerated until the stage was reached where practically every half hour contained a free plug and we parted company. On another occasion my breakfast announcer started plugging a resort where his family was rewarded with a free holiday. I did not object to this provided he told me beforehand. But later on, when without any authority, a holiday to Fiji was organised, he was asked to resign.

In 1954, when organising the current affair program "*Monitor*" for the Macquarie Network, I spent two weeks at the BBC to obtain its' co-operation and I made close contact with four of its' senior executives who were most helpful. Before leaving London I purchased a handcrafted box of cigars for each of them as a small token of my appreciation. Three of them, whilst slipping the boxes into one of the drawers in their desks, said "*they were not really supposed to accept presents*" and the fourth politely declined. After my return to Australia, I arranged for a case of Australian wines to be delivered to each of them as a Christmas present. Later I received letters of appreciation from the three already mentioned, but the fourth executive sent me a letter signed by fifty pensioners saying how much they enjoyed the wines at their Christmas dinner function.

**Dolly was big reason for Bob Dyers' success.** To the best of my knowledge there has never been a book written about Bob and Dolly Dyer. They were unquestionably two of the best known radio and television personalities, with a vault of experience including sensational fishing exploits. A book would certainly be justified. Bob and Dolly came to Australia early in the thirties with the Marcus variety show. Bob did a hillbilly type act whilst Dolly was a beautiful showgirl. His first radio feature "*The Last of the Hillbillies*" was made for the Major Broadcasting Network, and at the time, 2CH was the key outlet in Sydney. Sitting next to me was a most attractive young woman towards whom my eyes kept straying. After Bob finished recording he walked over to me and said "*Pappy, I want you to meet my wife*". Why he used to call me Pappy I'll never know.

It was not until "*Pick-a-Box*" started in the early fifties that Bob and Dolly Dyer became nationally known as stars. Although Bob was the all-important quizmaster, Dolly was virtually his behind-the-scenes manager and a devoted wife. Bob would be the first to admit she was the key to his success throughout the many years that "*Pick-a-Box*" was a top rating radio and subsequently television program. That was one of the main differences between Bob Dyer and Jack Davey who, although he was the highest paid radio star, left an estate of only \$7,300, whereas Bob and Dolly carefully invested their earnings and became very wealthy. There were few, if any, quizmasters who were better than Bob Dyer and Jack Davey. They were close friends although the media at times portrayed them otherwise. Bob generously conceded that Jack was the better quizmaster, and it was a sad day for him when Jack passed away. Both of them were keen fishermen which led Bob to lose a bet on who could catch the biggest shark, resulting in Bob acting as Jack's valet for a week. As time passed by there was no doubt that Bob Dyer was the better fisherman, evidenced by his sensational shark fishing films, which he used in later years to raise thousands of dollars in community and charitable causes.

With the advent of television, instead of being rushed into it like Jack Davey, Bob Dyer wisely made a trip to America to study television techniques. Jack Davey had his radio shows simulcast, which meant that the same program was heard on radio and seen on television; a procedure which was destined to failure. Bob Dyer continued his "*Pick-a-Box*" on radio until the evening audience substantially diminished, but in the meantime began a separate television version of his program, which rapidly achieved top ratings. Perhaps that was the main difference between Jack Davey and Bob Dyer. Jack was an irrepressible highly enthusiastic person who at all times, whether it be radio star, fisherman, or simply an individual, was inclined to rush into things, therefore dissipating his money. Bob Dyer, with Dolly behind him, was highly organised and invested his money carefully, living a comparatively quiet but very full life.

Bob Dyer, OBE, and Dolly finally retired to Surfers Paradise where his health gradually deteriorated and he passed away. There will never be a more devoted wife than Dolly, or two top radio personalities like Bob Dyer and Jack Davey.

**The evergreen Gwen Plumb.** In the days when radio serials and plays were popular, there were many highly talented actresses such as Thelma Scott, Gwen Plumb, Mariel Steinbeck, Patricia Kennedy, Ruth Cracknell, Lyndall Barbour, and Madge Ryan. Making a reasonable living from radio was not easy as fees were small. Unless actors and actresses were associated with long-run serials, their weekly earnings were barely enough to live on, resulting in many having to take on part time jobs to exist. Even radio script writers had to churn out seven episodes of a radio serial each week at round about £1 or slightly more an episode to earn a worthwhile income.

Among all the actresses I met there were three for whom I had a special regard; Thelma Scott, Lyndall Barbour, and Gwen Plumb. All three had prominent roles in top rating serials and weekly radio plays like the "*Lux Radio Theatre*" and "*Macquarie Radio Theatre*". The one person who never ceases to amaze me is Gwen Plumb who, after an association of over 35 years with radio and now television, is still a nationally known star. Gwen had leading roles in many radio serials such as "*Blue Hills*", "*Big Sister*", "*Portia Faces Life*", and "*When a Girl Marries*". For several years on radio 2GB, Gwen Plumb arranged and conducted a one hour weekly feature "*Woman's*

*World*" which was presented in a relaxed, informative, and happy manner endearing her to thousands of listeners and invariably held top ratings. Later on Gwen teamed up with Gordon Chater in a daily comedy feature "*Off the Cuff*" in which they were known as Pussy and Charlie. In 1956 I had lunch with Gwen in London where she successfully featured in various BBC radio features and on one occasion represented Australia in the quiz program "*20 Questions*". While there, Gwen had a leading role in the Beatrice Lillie Show on stage and over the years she starred in several theatrical productions such as "*See How They Run*" and "*The Bed Before Yesterday*".

Few actresses possess such versatility, and perhaps the secret of her success is that Gwen was never temperamental, easy to work with, and at no time had a swollen head. Amongst the few radio stars who successfully graduated to television, Gwen Plumb demonstrated an outstanding ability which ensured that her services were in constant demand, almost from the time that television commenced in 1956. She appeared in several ABC productions, commercial programs like panel games with Harry Dearth, comedy sketches in the "*Don Lane Show*", and in more recent times a star role in "*Young Doctors*". Her service to radio and television resulted in Gwen being honoured with a British Empire Medal which in 1979 was stolen when her home was burgled. As she said later, "*who would be mean enough to steal a medal*"? When asked her opinion about modern day radio, Gwen told me it seems to have lost a lot of its ardour.

Perhaps she is right because in pre-television days there was so much oomph in radio with shows featuring stars like Roy Rene, Jack Davey, George Wallace, George Foster, Willie Fennell, Hal Lashwood, Harry Griffiths, and Al Thomas, and features like "*Dad and Dave*", "*Mrs Obbs*", "*Yes, What?*", "*Mal Verco and Ginger*", and "*Ada and Elsie*". In Gwen's opinion, it is also a shame that the line-up of radio serials between 9AM and noon disappeared so quickly because most women cannot spare the time to sit down and watch television in the morning. However, with portable radio sets they can listen while working around the house.

Finally, ask yourself this question. How many radio and television stars do you know who after nearly 40 years still remain on air as top performers? I've scratched my head and can only think of one - the evergreen Gwen Plumb.

**How June Slater became a star act.** During all the years I was manager of 2GB Sydney, staff members arriving at work would often see me drinking a cup of coffee in a café next to the entrance at the Macquarie building. My belief was that if you expected your staff to be punctual then you should set an example. Living at Sans Souci, I used to call for my secretary at Brighton-Le-Sans, and one morning she asked me whether her friend could join us, which resulted in my driving her and June Salter to work for quite a long period. June was a somewhat reserved and dignified person, not beautiful but very attractive with a slightly unusual but lovely voice. It soon became evident that she was interested in becoming an actress, having performed well in amateur theatricals. As she had a good secure secretarial position I made no attempt to persuade her to become a radio actress. When June Salter finally made this decision I asked Laurie Cecil and Tim Masen-Wood; two of Australia's top producers to audition her. Tim, who coincidentally was one of WW1's most highly decorated soldiers, produced many outstanding radio dramatic features including the Macquarie Radio Theatre, and Laurie Cecil at the time was production manager for Grace Gibson Productions.

It was in 1941 that Grace Gibson headed a company which for more than thirty years produced hundreds of radio features. There never was or never will be anything to equal its achievements which included well over 3,000 episodes of "*Dr. Paul*", hundreds of episodes of "*Portia Faces Life*", and long lasting features like "*Dragnet*", "*Night Beat*", "*Ellery Queen*", and "*Dossier on Demetrius*".

It was obvious to both Tim Masen-Wood and Laurie Cecil that June Salter possessed a special talent which would ensure her becoming one of Australia's best radio actresses and it was only a matter of time before she starred in a number of top rating radio features. Following the advent of television and with her imposing appearance and outstanding ability, it was logical that June Salter would become one of Australia's best known television personalities with star roles in several major features including "*The Restless Years*", but it was a stage performance at the Seymour Theatre as Queen Mary in "*Crown Matrimonial*" which became the talk of the town and really demonstrated what a world class actress she was. The fact remains that roles like Miss McKenzie in "*The Restless Years*" provided the long term work and income which is necessary to survive in a highly competitive industry. This particularly applied to radio when as many actors and actresses were available but few were chosen. Producers invariably played safe and relied on established performers rather than risking employing up and coming young people. Never mind that well known radio stars like Thelma Scott, Gwen Plumb, Muriel Steinbeck, Lyndall Barbour, Nova Carr-Glynn, Patricia Kennedy, Margo Lee, and many others made big money. Fees were comparatively low with many struggling to survive and lesser known actresses barely existed on their earnings. Up to a point the same position exists in television in which for every actor and actress earning good money, there are dozens of lesser knowns battling to make a crust. It's a really tough game which has broken the hearts of many young people who would have been better advised to become associated with a much more stable occupation. However, if you tried to tell them this they would probably take no notice. June Salter was one of the exceptions because she took a calculated gamble which, due to her outstanding ability, was highly successful.

**John Dease was top radio man.** In his day, John Dease was one of Australia's top radio personalities mainly due to two major national features; "*The Quiz Kids*" and "*Youth Speaks*". In fact, "*The Quiz Kids*" was probably the longest running national program with the sponsor Johnson and Johnson. Other features presented by John Dease were "*Nature Speaks*", "*World Famous Tenors*", and later on, "*Hit Parade of Popular Classics*". In those days most top radio stars were previously announcers such as Jack Davey, Harry Dearth, Terry Dear, Norman Banks, John McMahon, John Dunne, Bob Rogers, Jack Burgess, Alan Toohey, Eric Pearse, and Howard Craven.

John Dease was very proud of the fact that quite a number of his Quiz Kids subsequently became senior executives in major Australian organisations. He often referred to the fact that Premier Wran was one of the brilliant youngsters associated with "*Youth Speaks*". John had a fine voice, not only effectively gifted as a compere but as what was the practice at the time, handling practically all the commercials associated with his features, which produced excellent results for his sponsors. People believed in what he said and purchased the products he advertised. How different these days when television commercials each costing thousands of dollars to produce have little or no relationship to the features in which they are embodied.

At Macquarie Broadcasting Service we had a couple of problems with John Dease, one of which was that he 'er ed' a lot. He found it hard to believe this until his producers put on tape all the 'ers' heard in a half hour session and played it back to him. Although John heard about 45 'ers' in a row, realising his weakness, he was never really able to overcome it. The other problem was the strong Labor views which after all was entirely his own business because everybody is entitled to his or her own political views, providing, in the case of radio and television personalities, they do not attempt to inflict them on listeners or viewers. In those days however, there was a tendency to brand anyone with strong Labor views as a communist, and although there was little or no semblance whatever at anything political in John Dease's features, there were some misguided people who tried unsuccessfully to smirch him.

I could never understand why such a talented personality as John was embittered by television, as programs like "*Quiz Kids*" and "*Youth Speaks*" should have developed under his control into very worthwhile programs. Even if they did not achieve the high ratings established on radio, surely they would have been eminently suited for ABC television which is supposed to specialise in this type of programming. Unfortunately in his later years the services of John Dease were seldom used, but he will always be remembered as one of Australia's top radio stars and a man really worth knowing. "*World Famous Tenors*" never became a national feature, although its' success resulted in a similar program being presented by other personalities on many stations throughout Australia. To the best of my knowledge, no other musical session ever maintained itself for so long, being presented by John Dease on 2GB Sydney for nearly 20 years. Perhaps it could be claimed it was John's favourite program, holding top ratings at 9PM on Sundays. With the advent of hit parades with pop music I recall how surprised John Dease was on the occasion I suggested he should present a weekly half hour daytime session called "*Hit Parade of Popular Classics*" and he readily agreed to do this and it ran for some years as a top rating daytime feature.

We were always good friends with a high regard for each other although at times we both had rather fixed views and could be somewhat stubborn. Johns' great love was cricket. It is a wonder he never wrote a cricket column for the press, but at the time this was probably due to the rather strange view that you had to be a top grade cricketer before you could write about it. Whenever the English test stars the Bebar brothers were in Australia one of their first ports of call was to see Cliff Cary. Frequently you would find John Dease, the Bebar brothers and Cliff indulging in prolonged discussions about cricket. John Pearce was also occasionally amongst them.

One of John Dease's features "*Nature Speaks*" was specifically designed by Macquarie Broadcasting for Hallstrom, manufacturers of Silent Knight refrigerators. It achieved the dual purpose of firstly selling refrigerators made at a price affordable by working class people costing only \$37, and secondly it was the main promotional medium for Taronga Park Zoo which was Sir Edward Hallstrom's great love in life. 2GB Sydney ran several programs for Hallstrom in association with "*Nature Speaks*". One of them was "*The Search for the Live Albino Crow*" in an effort to find a pure white mating crow for Taronga Park Zoo. A cash prize of \$100 was offered which jackpotted \$20 each week. After several weeks the search was successful with suddenly two listeners; one in remote NSW and the other from Victoria advising us they were flying to Sydney the same night, each bringing a live white crow. Their aircraft were both due to arrive within 25 minutes of each other and Sir Edward, John Dease, and myself, a group of press representatives and a large crowd were waiting at Kingsford Smith airport to meet them. The first arrival brought a genuine albino crow and we were relieved when the crow brought along by the second listener was only a patchy white crow. Nevertheless Sir Edward paid his travel costs.

**The ups and downs of announcing.** Many top personalities, both past and present, started as ordinary announcers, such as John Laws, Bert Newton, Bob Rogers, John Dease, Jack Davey, Graham Kennedy, George Foster, and Ross Higgins, to name a few. A fair percentage of managers and station executives also started as announcers. Female announcers and personalities have been few and far between in radio although there have been notable exceptions like Gwen Plumb, Marita Gardner, Hilda Morse, Joan Reed, Mrs

Stelzer, Mrs Jordan, Auntie Maud and others. The simple fact was that listeners, particularly women, preferred male announcers. In 1950 Brisbane stations 4BC, 4BK, and 4KQ sacked all their female announcers. In television there has been a greater acceptance of female personalities originating from the time that attractive and well-endowed women handled weather reports to the present stage where highly intellectual individuals, regardless of gender, are featured in news, interviews, and current affairs programs.

With the increasing number of radio and television stations, a shortage of announcers and personalities has developed and opportunities are open for young people; the difference these days being that they have to be well educated if they expect to go places. The days when the main qualification was a good voice are rapidly passing. Over the years there has been a number of announcing schools, some of which unfortunately were primarily concerned with making money. The so-called glamour of being an announcer attracted hundreds of young people, many of them quite sophisticated, who thought they had the required qualifications. They paid good money to complete courses, whereas had some of those announcing schools been honest, they would have told them within the first few days that they would never get anywhere as an announcer. When advertising for an announcer I've listened to tapes submitted by persons completing announcing courses which have been sadly pitiful, and on several occasions when young people have called at the station for an interview I've carefully advised them to look for some other type of work. It's fairly easy to sort the men from the mice, and when a manager has difficulty in finding someone suitable, on the spot training plus debating and discussion groups which are available at times, can produce the best results. In country areas there is a fairly constant turnover of announcers, particularly those who develop well because while they are relatively well paid, there is a natural tendency to head for more lucrative jobs offered by bigger stations.

Announcing is not all beer and skittles. It is quite a demanding occupation. For example, a breakfast announcer has to be up before 5AM each day, and by the time he prepares for the following day, seldom leaves the station before 2PM. Separately, night announcers and those rostered on the weekend are deprived of normal social activities and family life. They can also get into an enormous amount of trouble. I well remember Clarke Mackay at 2GB who, in his day, was the top rating breakfast announcer. He had so many friends and fans that after he came off air he could not resist becoming involved in all kinds of social activities. These resulted in a standing arrangement for him to sleep in the station's audition room after he became tangled up in afternoon and evening affairs. This ensured that he would be on time for his shift the following morning.

Radio listeners often write letters of complaint if anything is broadcast which they do not like. After reading some, one announcer wrote this Letter to the Editor: *"A first class radio announcer has a job that is not to be envied by too many people, and sometimes when you feel like throwing the wireless set into the loud speaker and hurl any quantity of abuse at the announcer, do not forget that he does work hard and knows that at times he cannot always give the listeners exactly what they ask for. Realise that the job of an announcer calls for a man of many parts, and it is nothing unusual for the one man to be on duty at rugby football matches, Australian rules soccer, then the fight at night time, or perhaps the greyhounds, speedway, or a trotting meeting to be done all on the one day. The announcer must possess knowledge of every kind of sport and music, be able to pronounce the outrageous names of our composers, be able to tell bedtime stories, sing, and be ready at all times to fill in when a blank occurs. The average announcer works at least 12 to 14 hours a day, and at 7 o'clock in the morning or at midnight he is compelled to be just as cheerful whether feeling fit or otherwise."*

**The chequered career of DJ Bob Rogers.** If ever there was a radio personality with a mind of his own, it was Bob Rogers, which is probably one of the main reasons he has worked for so many stations over a period of nearly forty years. In fact Bob has been associated with thirteen radio stations in four states, which prompted him to say to me *"Jees, what a chequered career"*. His first job was with 3XY Melbourne in April 1942. After two years he moved to 3MA Mildura for eighteen months then to 2TM Tamworth for a similar period. He then returned to 3XY for twelve months, then to 2GZ Orange, 2UW Sydney, 7HO Hobart, 4BH Brisbane, 2UE Sydney, 2SM Sydney, back to 2UE, then 2SM, 2GB, and 2KY Sydney. Bob Rogers came under the eyes of the big boys in Sydney radio whilst at 4BH Brisbane. They were impressed by the fact that his efforts had substantially increased 4BH's ratings and also by his ability to create a new style of programming. This resulted in 2UE Sydney obtaining his services in 1956 and he was there until 1962.

It was Bob Rogers who was most successful in launching Top 40 in Australia, and he created a problem which was largely responsible for the demise of 2GB, which for fifteen years had invariably been the top rating station. It also led to my resigning as Manager of 2GB. Briefly, the position was that prior to 1958, 2GB had an unassailable line up of serials for children between 5PM and 6-30 PM such as *"Tarzan of the Apes"* and *"Superman"*. Then along came Bob Rogers with his Top 40 style of programme between 4PM and 6PM. It rapidly became evident that children and teenagers were switching dials from 2GB to 2UE.

With respect, my superiors panicked and wanted to dice the serials right away in favour of pop music using existing 2GB announcers to handle this new form of programming. I resisted this, saying that whilst I favoured changing our format, it was essential to employ personalities who were qualified to present such an innovation as pop music. My efforts were unsuccessful, and when it was suggested that programme control should be placed in the hands of another person, I resigned on a matter of principle.

This is probably where Bob Rogers and I had much in common. Within six months after my resignation, 2GB lost about six ratings points and 2UE gained about seven and became the top rating station in Sydney which was held for a long time. Bob Rogers rise to fame took place at 2UE, particularly when he took over the period between 9AM and noon. He introduced a splendidly balanced program of carefully selected music, interspersed with extremely interesting interviews and comments on current affairs. It was a shame he ever left 2UE because he had a great love for this station and a high regard for its General Manager, Alan Faulkner, who was one of the best operators in Australian radio. After the 1956 advent of TV, Bob Rogers decided in 1962 that he wanted to also present a *"Tonight"* session on TV. His management objected and Bob handed in his resignation.

Changing from one station to another is a hazardous procedure. Even John Laws experienced this. Much depends on the lead-up to a morning program. The main reason John Laws was on top last year was that Gary O'Callaghan on the 2UE breakfast program handed over a top rating audience at 9AM which John very ably retained until 2PM. Bob Rogers went through this experience while changing from 2UE to 2SM in 1962, back to 2UE in 1964, and then to 2SM, 2KY, and once again returning to 2UE in 1982. It is understandable that Bob Rogers considers ratings *"the curse of the industry"* and up to a point I agree with his views. Ratings are based on the number of people a radio program attracts, not necessarily on the quality of the program, resulting in what he says is *"so much sameness, so much inflexible format"*.

**Why Bob Rogers turned grey.** During his radio career, Bob Rogers had writs issued against him by Sir Frank Packer and Mr Harry Miller. Sir Franks' writ was for \$1 million but was eventually settled by the station paying \$11,000 legal costs and Bob Rogers making a full apology on air. In the process however, Bobs' hair started to turn grey. At one time he also upset Mr Rupert Murdoch who considered a comment made on air was an invasion of his privacy, resulting in newspapers he controlled banning any mention of Bob Rogers' name for three years. In the olden days of radio, few stations had insurance policies covering libel, but not so these days. The old saying "*The greater the truth, the greater the libel*" can on occasions be quite correct.

I only met Sir Frank Packer once when I was General Manager of 2UW although I had lunch with his son Clyde on two occasions. Sir Frank was regarded as a tough and somewhat ruthless business man. I wanted to persuade him to schedule announcements advertising 2UWs' breakfast and daytime sessions on channel 9 TV in return for 2UW publicising channel nines' evening programmes. On a dollar for dollar basis the deal was well weighted in favour of 2UW and I admitted this, but Sir Frank was a man who did not beat around the bush making decisions. He immediately saw the advantages of my proposal and agreed. Under the surface, Sir Frank was not really so tough and his good deeds relative to charitable causes and community service were performed without seeking publicity.

Bob Rogers reckons that the highlights of his career were touring with the Beatles in 1964, interviewing Frank Sinatra twice, and also many other visiting overseas stars in the days of Lee Gordon. He lived and toured with the Beatles from London via Amsterdam and Hong Kong, and then throughout Australia and New Zealand. On one occasion Bob had Bill Cosby on air at 2UE for two hilarious hours during which he was almost speechless with laughter. It was really something to render Bob Rogers almost speechless because, without doubt, when it came to interviewing overseas stars, he was without peer.

Because of surveys and ratings, Bob believes that many talented personalities have not had the chance to develop. When talking to me, his own words were "*They've been told what the management want and creative people have suffered, because the only judgement seems to be numbers, not quality. That is why the outstanding personalities are those who blossomed before radio, such as John Laws, Gary O'Callaghan, Wayne Roberts, Ormsby Wilkins and many others*". Bob found it unpleasant to watch stations employ up and coming talent, try to mould them to suit stations' image, and in the process killing them off due to frustration. Because of this entrenched management attitude, Bob often advised aspiring young announcers to go back to school or university and learn a decent profession.

On television he conducted his own program "*The Bob Rogers Show*" for three years, but he was too much of a radio man to prolong his association with TV in which he had his ups and downs. After all, when a boy living on a farm enters radio at the age of 15, becomes associated with it for nearly 40 years, and in the process develops into one of Australia's' most outstanding radio personalities, it really becomes a classic case of "*This is my Life*".

**Postscript re Bob Rogers from Chris Maitland.** Bob had come down from 4BH to 2UE in April 1958 to be the prime dee-jay for the spread of Top 40 across so many time zones. Bob did "*Bob Rogers at Six*". As Bert observes, Bob was an admirer of 2UE General Manager Allan Faulkner (as we all were - he had the foresight to turn my application for an Assistant Program Directors job into a sales position that at the time I was ho-hum about, not seeing myself as a salesman. However, he was right and I never looked back in what became 14 years of my working life at 2UE). In a piece of frustration in 1963, 2SM called Bob and invited him to come in for a talk. They offered some big money to come over from 2UE, partly because they wanted Bob but just as much so they could weaken 2UE that was beating them in the ratings. They got Bob at a weak moment, telling him this incredible offer would be off the table the minute he walked out the door. Bob's wife Jerry looked after his affairs and he wanted to discuss it with her, but 2SM were adamant, sign now or walk away. They got him and he signed that afternoon. When he got home, Jerry was less than impressed. She was worried that he may have thrown away the career he had built at 2UE. A big bonus for Bob was that he got to travel with The Beatles and recorded so much stuff that he had traded on for years. 2SM must have let him keep the tapes. Two years later, 2UE invited him back and he jumped at the chance, moving into Mornings. His old nemesis, John Laws, was back at 2UE and ended up on Drive. Quite a combination, along with Gary O'Callaghan, through until 1968 when 2UW lured Laws away for 10 years.

**Surveys and Ratings sometime create friction.** Frequently you hear people say "*Nobody has ever asked me to participate in a Radio or TV survey*". This is understandable because even in capital city areas, the number of persons approached would probably not exceed 2,000. Those who do participate are scientifically selected. In 1944 when a friend of mine undertook his first survey, 15% of those interviewed came from the upper class, 40% from the middle class, and 45% from the industrial class. As he once said to me "*You don't have to eat all the cake to assess its taste. After eating a small portion you should be able to judge its quality*".

Before then there were no official radio surveys and the success of radio advertising was simply judged on whether it rang the cash register, particularly in the case of local retailers. From 1944 onwards various types of surveys were conducted, including the telephone survey, which obviously had its weakness because telephones at the time were mainly restricted to upper class listeners. Later on, personal interview surveys were far more accurate, but even these were open to criticism because when the interviewers called at homes, most of the people they talked to were women. Their answers rarely represented the listening habits of all members of the family.

The main survey groups from 1944 onwards were Anderson and McNairs who later combined as McNair Anderson using the diary method. A representative group of listeners or viewers is approached who fill in a diary in which the family indicates what radio or TV programs they listen to or watch. The end result is fairly accurate, but many people wonder how diaries completed by around 2,000 people can represent the views of millions of listeners or viewers in an area like Sydney. A reasonable answer is found when comparing these surveys with election results, as when the first 2,000 votes are counted, one usually has a fair idea of the ultimate result.

Radio and TV surveys can probably be classified as a necessary evil. They provide the basis on which national advertisers in particular allocate their advertising budgets. Without surveys, radio and TV stations would be at a complete disadvantage compared with the press where it is much easier to present audited circulation figures. On the other hand, to listeners, and especially viewers, surveys and ratings can be a curse because outside of periods when surveys are conducted, program standards can deteriorate. At one time survey periods were kept confidential, but these days they are known beforehand, resulting in a real battle amongst stations. Managers and executives of radio and TV stations almost have sleepless nights; personalities wonder whether they will retain their jobs, and really good programmes providing a considerable amount of employment can fall by the wayside if ratings drop.

No sensible person can justifiably claim that surveys and ratings contribute towards better year-round entertainment, and it's a bad thing when they can cause friction and even ill feeling between radio and TV stations. It would be more in the interests of viewers and listeners if greater emphasis was placed on why people are not viewing or listening. For instance, when the results of surveys are published in the press, they simply show the percentage of people who are actually listening or viewing, with no reference to those who are not. It might surprise you to know that even in radio breakfast sessions, more than 50% of people are not listening at all, and during the daytime unless there is some major sporting coverage, the position is far worse in TV. More money should be spent on why people are not tuning in and endeavouring to come up with new program formats which will increase audiences. This would lead to better viewing and listening and better results for advertisers without so much of the emotional trauma caused by surveys and ratings.

**Des Hoysted followed racing tradition.** Des Hoysted's advice to aspiring young race callers is to avoid betting, as in his opinion it's hard to give an objective description if you have backed one of the field. Perhaps this cautious outlook is related to the fact that Des Hoysted, as a university student, gained a Diploma of Commerce, and is also a qualified accountant. He should certainly know what he is talking about after describing over 30,000 races between 1949 and 1982.

It was logical that Des should turn to race calling as a career because his family is steeped in racing tradition. His father was a jockey and he is related to Bob, Hal, and Fred Hoysted who were heavily involved in training in Victoria. In fact, four generations of his family were associated with racing from 1860 onwards. Consequently, it is not surprising that Des Hoysted's descriptions are based on accuracy and objectivity without the "London to a brick" type of frills used by Ken Howard and Bert Bryant. On Boxing Day in 1948 Des gave his first race description over the public address system at a Wodonga race meeting.

He formed a friendship with Mel Morris, the ABC Melbourne sports editor, who was an assistant to Joe Brown, one of Australia's most highly respected race callers. His first on-air broadcast was at Benalla in 1949, and after the ABC had appointed him as Joe Brown's understudy, his first broadcast for the Commission was at Moonee Valley in December 1949. Des also handled country race descriptions for 3DB Melbourne from 1949 to 1951. In 1952 he became associated with the Macquarie Racing Service as the 2GB race caller at a time when Ken Howard and Clif Cary were at their peak with the 2UE Racing and Sporting Service. It was a tough period for Des right from his broadcast for 2GB on AJC day when it teemed with rain for the whole afternoon and horses were barely visible until they entered the straight. Des reckons another very difficult description was the 1976 Melbourne Cup when there was a cloudburst 25 minutes before the race started. Had it not been Melbourne Cup Day, racing would have been cancelled. Among several humorous and embarrassing experiences Des recalls was one occasion when he was broadcasting the trots at Harold Park. In the middle of calling the main event, there was a loud knock on the door of the broadcasting box and a man barged in saying "Can you tell me the way to the loo"? Needless to say, Des told him very quickly where to go and listeners were most amused.

When Des Hoysted became the 2UE race caller in May 1959 after Ken Howard moved to 2GB, it marked the commencement of a long and highly successful association with the Major Networks' Racing and Sporting Service. This was well deserved because not only is he one of the most accurate callers in the history of Australian racing, but is also a quiet unassuming type of individual, always willing to help people and worthy causes, and hesitant to criticise people or racing organisations unless it is really justified. It was an amazing error of judgement in about mid 1983 with 2UE deciding to discontinue race broadcasts which naturally upset Des Hoysted. Within weeks, 2UEs Saturday afternoon ratings showed a marked decline, resulting in the reintroduction of race broadcasts, but using Johnny Tapp as race caller. It was certainly not an instance of "Well done thou good and faithful servant".

**More about racing.** Even when race clubs eventually and somewhat reluctantly agreed to race callers describing events from inside the course, they didn't make it easy for them. Most broadcasting boxes were located a fair distance from the finishing post, making it difficult to place horses in close finishes, particularly when they were spread across the track. Nevertheless, it was and still is quite incredible how seldom mistakes are made. There are, however, the odd occasions when wrong placings are given and nothing infuriates listeners more. When in doubt, wise race callers advise listeners to wait for the official result of the photo finish, even if they say that in their opinion a certain horse has won. In the past there were also occasions when certain race callers severely criticised race club officials, just the same as some football commentators sound off about how they reckon things should be run. In one sense it's a case of biting the hand that feeds you as some officials are thin skinned and resent constructive criticism.

I well remember the time when the Australian Jockey Club was worried about falling attendances and invited managers of stations providing racing services to a meeting to discuss the situation. Clif Cary and myself represented the Macquarie Racing service and we fronted up to the A.J.C. committee in a large and impressive room where many Jockeys and trainers have appeared in fear and trembling. It was decided we would collectively prepare a report covering reasons which we believed were contributing to falling attendances, and about a month later we attended another meeting to discuss them. Our report covered about 12 items such as race patrons having to battle their way to get served at bars, lining up to get a drink of water on a hot day, also lining up to get something to eat, encouraging race goers not to stand on their seats as soon as a race started and controlling louts who were using foul language, particularly at the finish of races. Our belief was that while regular racegoers might tolerate these things, newcomers, especially those accompanied by wives or girlfriends, would leave the course completely unimpressed. Clif Cary dealt with certain type of events which pleased committeemen but were not popular with the public. He also criticised the interval of about 50 minutes between the first and second races which was then the custom so that committee members could have lunch. To our amazement, we were informed that they were quite capable of managing their own affairs and did not appreciate our constructive criticism. At the time we found it easier to get on with members of the Sydney Turf Club committee who seemed much more down to earth.

Race callers have always been expected to provide selections for all events, which is an enviable task. Attempts have been made to only provide three or four selections for each meeting, but strangely enough they were unsuccessful. Rightly or wrongly, most race followers still want selections for every race. At least Clif Cary was honest with listeners, and from time to time emphasised the fact that very few people make money backing horses. Even so he added it was much easier to lose money playing poker machines, mentioning that the handle of a three wheeler poker machine had to be pulled an average of 8,000 times to win a jackpot.

**Bert Bryant, showman of race callers.** It was Ken Howard who introduced showmanship to race calling with his "London to a Brick On" style of commentaries, which became so renowned throughout Australia. Strangely enough, it was Ken who was one of two people who auditioned Bert Bryant. The other was 2UW's Keith Dunbier, a delightful person who excelled at calling the trots but did not cope well with the gallopers. In the course of time, Melbourne race descriptions over 3UZ were handled by Bert Bryant in association with Ken Howard in Sydney, certainly being a winning double, particularly in Melbourne where Bert established top

ratings and held then for over 25 years. As a showman he outshone Ken Howard, and his humorous racing expressions were unique. When the Macquarie Racing and Sporting Service was begun in 1945, with the exception of 4BC in Brisbane, all other capital city stations were members of the Macquarie Network e.g. 2GB Sydney, 3AW Melbourne, 5DN Adelaide, 6IX Perth, and 7HO Hobart. Fred Tupper was 3AW's race caller, ably assisted by Arthur Lyster in the studio, but it was not long before 3AW decided to pull out of racing, and 3UZ took its place.

Having been closely involved in the establishment of the Macquarie Racing and Sporting Service, I was very sad when in June 1981 the originating station 2GB decided to discontinue race broadcasting after being involved for 36 years. In one sense it did not surprise me, as for years before 1981, its race broadcasts had more or less become a secondary consideration. In racing you either have to be in it 'boots and all' or you are best out of it, and it is no use simply providing a service on Saturdays and public holidays. 2KY seized the opportunity of covering all race meetings, including trots and dogs, and provided the most comprehensive service in Sydney. In Melbourne, 3UZ covered just about everything connected with racing and still maintains its dominance.

So much for background information. Now on to the unique Bert Bryant who was one of three race callers who fronted up for an audition at a Gosford race meeting. The others were Geoff Mahoney, who secured a position with the ABC, and Bobby Gunn, who joined 2PK Parkes. Bert Bryant applied to Arthur Price who was the manager of 3UZ Melbourne where Tom Moon was the chief racing commentator, and after another audition at a Mornington race meeting, joined this station in November 1949. In 1950 he was appointed 3UZ's chief racing commentator. Bert started race calling in the Western area of NSW when he worked for 2DU Dubbo. His first call in 1948 was at Gowrie, about 30km from Dubbo, and he also handled most on-course descriptions at Dubbo, Wellington, Coonamble, Mudgee, Nevertire, Nyngan, Warren, and Bourke, with some meetings being broadcast and operated by Wally Grant, one of the most popular country radio station owners and managers in Australia.

I well remember the occasion when my wife and I were one of the first people to enter Dubbo after severe floods, with an assignment from radio stations throughout Australia plus the Sydney Morning Herald to organise a flood relief appeal. At 2DU Wal and Chris Grants' daughter Janet, was swimming around the stations' record library trying to salvage records near the ceiling.

After his appointment as 3UZ's chief racing caller, Bert's first big thrill in 1950 was describing the Melbourne Cup won by Comic Court, but the race he reckons he was best remembered for was the famous two horse race, the Queen Elizabeth Stakes in 1970. Bert rates Roy Higgins as the best jockey amongst other famous names like Darby Munro, Neville Selwood, George Moore, and Bill Williamson, while he nominated Geoff Lane as the best apprentice. It was a great shame when such a great race caller and likeable personality as Bert Bryant was compelled through health reasons to retire at the peak of his racing career in 1977.

**Postscript to Racing.** Bert Bryant called what has been regarded as the most difficult race to call in history; a two horse race at Flemington on 14-3-1970 between Rain Lover and Big Philou. At the ten furlong mark, Rain Lover led with Big Philou content to lob along behind. Bert said "*There's not going to be any change in the order I wouldn't think for at least five furlongs, so about the best we can tell you at this stage is that it's a glorious day in Melbourne. It's a balmy 72 degrees, the track's perfect and we're watching one of the best two horse races, as far as big names are concerned, for many a long day. Okay, that's got rid of about two furlongs, let's go over to the mile, and Rain Lover is still about two lengths in front and Roy Higgins is bowling along on Big Philou. Couldn't give a hang at this stage. I would think he would be thinking about his little daughter, only a week old. At the seven and a half furlong pole and Rain Lover is out in front. Hyland got Higgins' money too, over the birth of that baby being a daughter and not a son. You can bet your sweet life Higgins here is after getting it back and Hyland is just as anxious to keep it because it is pretty hard to get. But, at the two, Big Philou is tracking Rain Lover. He's got within three quarters of a length, now half a length and Big Philou draws level on the outside. Higgins has gone for the whip and so has Hyland as they go to the line together. Big Philou has won it by gee, at least I hope so. You'd hate to be wrong in a two horse race. You'd have to give it up for ever and go back to work*".

**Why top radio race caller had to retire.** What a loss to racing it was when Bert Bryant, due to health reasons, was compelled to retire in 1977 when he was only 50 and at the peak of his career. There were some completely tasteless speculations about the reason for his retirement, so I would like to place on record what actually happened to this otherwise irrepressible racing identity. In simple terms, he suffered a burst blood vessel near his brain. His doctor told him later on that it was a miracle he survived, but you can imagine Bert's dismay when it left him with a speech problem. It could have been worse, but when your speech ability is the basis of your livelihood, it's certainly not easy to take. With the passage of time his voice reverted to normal, but his doctor considered that a comeback to the stress and strain of race calling could endanger his health. Needless to say, Bert Bryant sadly missed race calling so much that he seldom went to race meetings as he felt lost walking around with nothing to do. I bet he also misses the three state turf talk on Saturday mornings. At one time, selections from Sydney were phoned to Melbourne for inclusion in a half hour session and vice versa, but I hit upon the idea of initiating the first two-way talk which subsequently became a three-way talk embracing Brisbane. Clif Cary in Sydney and Bert Bryant in Melbourne really enjoyed this session which not only provided detailed racing selections, but included some really interesting and at times humorous back chat.

When I was in touch with Bert in 1981, he was finding compulsory retirement boring at the age of 54, but somehow or other I feel that his services will still be used to advantage in some capacity like a newspaper racing columnist. His favourite hobby is fishing, mostly deep sea, and he has fished from Cairns to Acapulco. He lives in a townhouse near the beach at Hampton, but I can just imagine all the memories he has about his exciting career as a race caller, including the English Derby which he called on two occasions, and the Grand Prix de Paris at Longchamps which he described for use in a film called "The Finest Four". Then there was the occasion when he called a Grand National Steeplechase at Warrnambool only to find out after the race that the local technician had forgotten to switch on the microphone. Some of Bert's admirers reckoned he excelled at calling jumping races. He will also remember all the top personalities he met overseas during seven world trips, amongst whom he was most fascinated by Cassius Clay also being appointed as an accredited commentator for the 1966 Olympic Games where he covered most swimming and some track and field events.

Bert Bryant has the distinction of describing the Melbourne Cup on 26 occasions. Amongst past race callers, Jim Carroll (ABC Melbourne) and Ken Howard receive Bert Bryant's top ranking, but he speaks highly of current commentators with their own individual style. He reckons that race calling is one of the most demanding professions in the world and his advice to aspiring young callers is to concentrate on studying race colours, practice memory tests at every available opportunity, try to develop a sense of humour, and purchase the best field glasses money can buy.

In 1983, Brian White, general manager of radio 3AW in Melbourne invited my wife and myself to be his guests at the second annual presentation of the Australasian Broadcasting Awards at the Southern Cross hotel. About 700 people attended and special mention was made that it was over 50 years since I first became associated with commercial broadcasting. Imagine my delight when Bert Bryant came over to our table and the most enjoyable chat we had with Bert and his wife. We were also joined by ABC race caller Geoff Mahoney who was nominated 'Best Allcover Sports Personality'. He reminded me that it had been 30 years since I gave him his first opportunity with the Macquarie Racing Service.

**Tough beginning for newsreader Henderson.** Life was certainly not easy for Brian Henderson in his early days. He went straight from a boarding school in the South Island of New Zealand into a sanatorium suffering from a hole in one of his lungs, and was a T.B. patient for nearly three years. Even during this worrying period he formed the desire to become a reporter and later on to be a radio announcer. He achieved his ambition in 1950 after a successful audition at 4ZR in Dunedin. His subsequent move to 2ZB in Wellington was due to one of its announcers forgetting to switch his microphone off after broadcasting an advertisement for the wharf labourers union dealing with strike activities and saying "*I hate doing these bloody scab fearing advertisements*". Rightly or wrongly he was sacked. At boarding school, Brian Henderson worked as a pea picker during holidays, and while working at 2ZB, drove a tractor on the Wellington wharves in his spare time to save up the fare to Australia. He duly arrived with very little money and found it difficult to secure employment. He auditioned unsuccessfully several times with Sydney radio stations and reminded me of the occasion when he nearly obtained a job as a 2GB Macquarie newsreader. Numerous applications were received for this position which were narrowed down to two; Brian Henderson and James Dibble, and we appointed James, mainly because he was already well known to listeners. Nobody can challenge their performances over more than 20 years as the two best known and most successful newsreaders in Australia.

In commercial radio Brian Henderson admits he was not very successful, and it was not until Bruce Gyngell and Ken Hall auditioned him that he resigned as breakfast announcer at 2CH Sydney, and switched to TV. He then became known Australia-wide as compere of Bandstand for more than 18 years. Many stars such as Helen Reddy, Patricia Noble, and the Bee Gees were discovered on Bandstand and Brian also has warm recollections of appearances by Liza Minelli, Dusty Springfield, Cilla Black, Earl Grant, Dionne Warwick, Chubby Checker, and Johnny Ray in this top rating TV feature at a time when Lee Gordon was importing most of them for stadium concerts. Brian reckons that the Bandstand appearance of Bob Dylan was not a terribly rewarding experience as he didn't want to talk.

His most exciting experience was winning a Gold Logie. At the time he felt he was simply invited to Melbourne to make up the numbers, and had no thought whatever of qualifying for this top Australian award. Another exciting occasion was compering part of a spectacular show in the Myer Auditorium when, in his own words, "*he walked onto the stage and saw thousands and thousands of people stretching out almost to infinity*". His section of the show was after an appearance by Graham Kennedy, a real hard act to follow and made no easier by the fact that there was technical hitch with the microphones. It was four or five minutes before things got going again and he was able to successfully introduce stars like Dinah Lee, Billy Thorpe, and Little Millie.

As newsreader on channel 9 Sydney, Brian Henderson has been quite remarkable. It is fact that, try as the opposition might, sometimes using a team of three or four, Brian was successful in maintaining top ratings. Yet even now he admits to being nervous before the start of each newscast. He revels in the satisfaction of seeing a good news bulletin formed, but in my humble opinion it is Brian's sincere and quietly dignified manner of presenting highly informative news which registers so well with viewers.

**When 'Rickety Kate' cricket was all the rage.** In 1935 when Alan McGilvray made his first cricket broadcast, he was NSW captain. By 1985 when he intends to retire he will have been associated with over 250 Test broadcasts. His first Test broadcast was in 1938. Nobody in either National or commercial radio will ever match this accomplishment. Without question he is the doyen of cricket commentators. His quiet, authoritative and constructive style endeared Alan to all radio listeners. He knows cricket inside and out and unlike some sporting commentators, is not a stirrer. When Alan offers criticism it has always been fair and constructive, which one would expect from a person who has a great love for cricket and in private life is such a gentleman.

I had the pleasure of meeting Alan only once and this was at dinner at the home of the late Sir Lincoln (Bob) Hynes, himself a top class State cricket representative who never ceased to be reminded that he once bowled Bradman for a duck. On that night, needless to say, I was a listener because when persons like Bob and Alan got together, the topic of conversation was invariably cricket. As an individual whose association with cricket was nearly always last batsman in and fielding at 'long stop' as it was known then, I fully realised my limitation in this sport. Alan McGilvray rates Arthur Gilligan, Vic Richardson, Johnny Moyes, John Arlott, Jim Swanton, Norman Yardley, Freddie Truman, Brian Johnston, and Charles Fortune amongst the most outstanding cricket personalities he met in past years. McGilvray is currently on his 10<sup>th</sup> visit to cover Test cricket in the UK and has also travelled to the West Indies on three occasions, twice to South Africa, and once to New Zealand.

The ABC commercial synthetic broadcasts of overseas Test cricket started in 1925 over 5CL Adelaide. This was intercepted by 3AW Melbourne and also presented from a loudspeaker in a truck driven around the city, which caused traffic congestion wherever it stopped. The best synthetic coverage however, was the 'Rickety Kate' service which was originated by 3DB Melbourne in 1930 and subsequently relayed to most parts of Australia. It was a mixture of cricket and vaudeville based on continuous Beam Wireless cables from overseas. Studio effects such as the sound of bat on ball, the applause of the crowd, and the roar of the crowd when a wicket fell resulted in a most realistic phantom type of description, and breaks for morning and afternoon tea and the lunch period were occupied by a first class vaudeville show in the hands of people like Charlie Vaude. Thousands of Test cricket parties were organised in homes resulting in most of the participants arriving bleary-eyed at work. It was always a remarkable and enjoyable experience.

Over the many years since Test cricket broadcasts originated, one must give full credit to the ABC for the manner in which it presented a coverage of cricket on radio, and since 1956, on television. In my opinion the ABC was treated very shabbily when, for the sake of obtaining more revenue, exclusive television rights were given to commercial interests. It was certainly not a case of 'well done thou good and faithful servant' but unfortunately in these days of the highest bidder, whether it be cricket, football, tennis, golf, and so on, it has become an accepted practice. This is no reflection on the Packer organisation because unquestionably the commercial coverage of cricket has been more ably handled. The unfortunate aspect was that the commercial coverage became more restrictive and for a while denied people, particularly in some country areas, from viewing such a comprehensive cricket coverage. Fortunately an agreement was reached between the Australian Cricket Board, the Packer organisation, and the ABC which solved

most of the problems involved. Nevertheless, I somewhat doubt whether today's members of the general public will ever obtain as much enjoyment listening to modern day cricket descriptions as they did when the 'Rickety Kate' service was the talk of the town.

**Cyril Angles, pioneer sports broadcaster.** Cyril Angles was an apprentice jockey to Jack Phoenix, a famous horse trainer in his time, but due to Cyril's height and weight, his career was short lived. Cyril owned and trained greyhounds and even sold some to China. He worked for his father, Lordy Angles, as a bookmaker's clerk, and was also a bookmaker at the dogs. Cyril described the dog races in that classic movie "Gone to the Gods" starring George Wallace, and he was renowned for his descriptions of the "Snake Gully Cup" on radio station 2SG in that great serial "Dad and Dave". Another unusual broadcast by Cyril was from the lions cage at Wirths Circus.

In his heydays as the 2UW racing commentator, he was acclaimed throughout Australia for his unsurpassed descriptions. In 1945 he joined the 2GB Macquarie Racing and Sporting Service, later moving to 2UE, and finally back to 2UW in 1961. Cyril was the first broadcaster to describe races from Hawkesbury and Broadmeadow, and he actually made his initial race broadcast from Kensington Racecourse in 1930 for 2KY, which probably establishes him as one of the first sporting broadcasters in the world. In May 1981 the Australian Jockey Club honoured his name by introducing the "Cyril Angles Handicap" which the Hawkesbury Race Club had done two years earlier, and without doubt these will be annual events. One of his daughters, Lois, has lovingly accumulated a wealth of information about her father and is hopeful that the Newcastle Jockey Club will also introduce an annual race commemorating him.

I originally met Cyril Angles about 1940 when I was the 2CH Sporting commentator, presenting a weekly one hour session called "Sing, Song, and Sport". Both Cyril and I were interested in the formation of the first Police Boys Club at Woolloomooloo. Sergeant Perce Stevens was the officer in charge, and to help raise funds we organised special "Sing, Song, and Sports" shows. It was then that I realised that Cyril was basically deeply interested in helping under-privileged people. Nobody will ever realise the value of his continual efforts in this field, and the amounts of money he contributed from his own pocket.

Apart from being a top racing commentator, Cyril in his day was unsurpassed for his descriptions of boxing and wrestling. The Patrick Dawson and the Carruthers 'Pappy' Gait fights were simply two examples of hundreds of expert and exciting descriptions. Cyril's sporting assignments included descriptions of Walter Lindrum's billiards matches, a visit by a US gridiron football team, horse, trotting, and greyhound races plus golf championships. At one time he established a record by describing 72 races in one week, and during his career it was established that he broadcast well over 20,000 races. He was the defendant with station 2UW when the Victoria Park Race Club opposed the broadcasting of races. A Privy Council decision dismissed the race club's application, awarding costs to 2UW.

What a shame it was in 1962 when Cyril Angles passed away, surrounded by his devoted wife Ivy, (his childhood sweetheart), and his three daughters Joan, Lois, and Judith whom he so often referred to over the air as his princesses. In racing and sporting circles, Cyril Angles will never be forgotten.

**National broadcasting service under scrutiny.** Australia was the first country to introduce a dual system of national and commercial radio stations. Since the Australian Broadcasting Commission assumed its responsibilities on July 1 1932, this system has been acclaimed worldwide and several other countries have followed suit. Any criticism I make about the ABC come from a person who has a high regard for most of its activities. Commercial radio depends entirely on advertising for its existence, whereas the ABC is funded by tax payers. The original fundamental objectives when the ABC began were: 1) To inform, educate, and entertain the Australian people by satisfying a wide range of taste and requirements in fields of drama, music, variety, news, and information. 2) To cater for specialised needs in children's programs, religious institutional, political, and school broadcasts, plus rural and women's interests. 3) To reflect in programs all aspects of Australian life and provide a forum for the discussion and balanced view of public affairs. 4) To foster and sustain Australian talent in speaking, music, drama, and writing. 5) To contribute to Australian Nationhood and unity, and safeguard the national heritage. 6) To bring to Australia, programs from other countries.

The ABC was never intended, as now appears to be the case, to chase ratings. It was basically designed to provide a type of programming and attract specific audience which would not necessarily be large enough to enable commercial radio stations to operate profitably. Perhaps the biggest mistake made was when licence fees were eliminated because up until then, the ABC had to depend on this source of revenue for its existence, whereas these days, ever increasing funds are allocated from tax payers. If the general public was now aware of the cost to them of the ABC, there would be cause for concern, but even when politicians have raised this matter in parliament, there have been howls of protest from minority groups.

When Clive Robertson was welcomed back to the ABC after finding 2DAY FM was not his 'cup of tea', he was reported as making the following comment "*I like a lot of people who work here, not that many of them work, which supports my belief that the ABC, with over 6,000 employees, is overstaffed and underworked compared with commercial radio and TV*". I could quote simply one example where a country ABC TV station employs twelve people to carry out work which a commercial TV station in the same area employs six for similar duties. There was an occasion 23 years ago when the Macquarie Broadcasting Service covered the Australian Open golf championship with three of our staff compared to the ABC which had ten, and yet when ratings were released, Macquarie's audience was twice the ABC. Unfortunately this type of overstaffing, funded by taxpayers still exists. Many important country areas have been badly neglected by the ABC where practically all programming has originated from capital city stations, and only a minor effort has been made to develop worthwhile local services.

Surely during the history of the ABC, listeners in major centres like Wollongong and Newcastle have been entitled to more local involvement. Even now in these areas, only about six percent of its programming is originated locally. Consequently, whilst I will always support the need for a National radio and television service, the principle of 'first things first' should apply, and taxpayer funds made available to the ABC should be spent in a wiser more accountable and productive manner.

**Dignified Jim Dibble rarely fluffed lines.** I doubt whether anyone else in Australia can claim the distinction of being a newsreader for an uninterrupted period of more than 34 years, and few, if any, newsreaders possess Jim Dibble's ability to present news in such a competent and acceptable manner. It was in 1947 that Jim was auditioned at 2GB's Sydney office for a position 2CA Canberra. After a while Jim moved to the ABC. I recollect the occasion when after being partly responsible for the development of the Macquarie News Service in Australia, we enticed Jim to leave the ABC, and we were more than satisfied with his dedicated ability as a newsreader. He seldom 'fluffed' and possessed the sincerity which he still has to impress listeners. His dignified human approach to news was so worthwhile listening to. Nevertheless it became apparent that Jim, while happy at Macquarie, missed the ABC, and

one day in his gentlemanly fashion, he approached me and candidly expressed his views. I admired him for this and, while we were very sorry to lose his services, placed no obstacle whatever in enabling him to return to the ABC.

It's Jim's sense of honesty and integrity which endeared him to radio listeners and over 25 years as one of television's top newsreaders. Jim Dibble reckons that television newscasting requires much more concentration than radio, as the mechanics are so involved and the newsreader's personality has to be projected in two dimensions; sight and sound. One of Jim's most memorable experiences was participating in a program called "Our World" when countries all around the globe were linked for the first time in both sound and vision by that wonderful technical advance; the satellite. In his opinion, the world suddenly and immeasurably shrank. He believes that radio has responded to the challenge posed by television in a way which cannot be excelled by TV, by producing music for all tastes and by giving Mr and Mrs Everybody the opportunity of being heard per the medium of talkback radio. Perhaps without wishing to sound 'old hat' we differ on the question of music because although I thoroughly enjoy melodious pop numbers, my belief is that over the years, radio has bred a generation of listeners who in the main, appreciate only one type of music.

In his spare time, Jim Dibble performed on stage with the Genesian and Independent Theatres, but in recent years his radio and TV commitments have prevented this. His favourite form of relaxation is playing classics on a very big organ installed in his home which he considers enables him to counter the effect of reading so many news items dealing with tragedy, sadness, and industrial strife. How true this is. Sometimes I feel that the news introduction should be "*Here is the bad news*". His advice to aspiring young newsreaders is to read as clear as possible and with as much feeling for the subject of each story as is possible without being over dramatic. Always try to be as sure as you can that what you are telling people is accurate. Keep yourself well informed so that as far as possible, you know something about the news before you get your own copy to read. It is advice like this which typifies James Dibble and qualifies him as the Gentleman Jim of Newsreaders.

**Charles Moses, 30 years head of ABC.** How times change. When Charles Moses was appointed general manager of the ABC in 1935 his salary was \$4,000 a year. He started with the commission in 1924 as an announcer, became NSW sporting and talks editor in 1930, Federal talks controller in 1933, and then in 1935 started a period of 30 years as general manager. Without doubt, Sir Charles was one of the greatest men associated with radio and television in Australia. He was an extremely likeable, amiable, and considerable individual, a really top class administrator, and outstanding sportsman, and invariably the life of the party at social functions. Few people realised that before entering broadcasting, Sir Charles was a fruitgrower at Bendigo, then sales manager of a car business. However, his progress in sport was widely known as he excelled in boxing, rugby, football, athletics, and woodchopping, even making president of some. He was one of several top ABC executives who initially were associated with the commissions sporting activities. Sir Charles also had a distinguished war record. He joined the AIF in 1940 and rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in 1942. After the fall of Singapore he escaped with Major-General Gordon Bennett and later served in New Guinea. His other achievements included being appointed leader of an Australian delegation in 1952 to a meeting of UNESCO at Paris, councillor of the Royal Agricultural Society, a board member of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, member of the Sydney Opera House Trust, and trustee of the Remembrance Driveway. In spite of these numerous commitments, Sir Charles was always approachable and seldom became rattled.

I was a member of joint ABC Commercial radio stations committees which planned coverage of Royal visits, dealt with sporting rights problems, and other matters of mutual interest. At these meetings his quiet efficient chairmanship and his boyish smile usually quelled somewhat heated arguments which arose from time to time. In my humble opinion, Sir Charles had the right idea on how the ABC should operate. He was never interested in chasing ratings, and maintained the belief that the ABC was designed to appeal to minority groups of listeners embracing program features which would not be economically worthwhile for commercial radio interests. In point of fact, this resulted in the ABC catering for more discriminating and intelligent listeners, and during Sir Charles term of office, this objective was handled with great efficiency. In the process of course, some of the ABC's activities such as news, coverage of major sporting activities, documentaries and human interest programs attracted large audiences.

Before retiring, Sir Charles Moses pioneered the entry of the ABC into television and here again he stuck to what he believed was the fundamental purpose of the Commission. He was succeeded by Sir Talbot Duckmanton in 1965 who, with respect, was more inclined to chase ratings, an objective which never proved very successful. Nevertheless, one must admire his tenacity and ability and also realise the fact that during his period of service, he encountered all kinds of problems, not the least of which was controlling some very difficult senior executives. The culmination of this was the Dix report which aroused much staff hostility, but sooner or later the ABC had to realise that there is a limit to spending tax payers, money and operate on a more efficient and economical basis.

**Hector Crawford, producer par excellence.** What a wonderful contribution Hector Crawford has made to radio and television. Before 1945 he was manager of Broadcast Exchange, a Melbourne company which produced radio features, but in 1945 he started out on his own and rapidly established one of the best radio production organisations in Australia. Among his first radio features were dramatized musical shows such as "The Blue Danube", "The Melba Story", and "The Amazing Hammerstein". Later on he produced "Opera for the People", but perhaps one of his best known radio achievements in the sphere of music was "The Mobil Quest" which ran nationally for five years under the one sponsor. Many prominent singers and instrumentalists graduated from this feature and some became known internationally. Hector Crawford's love of music probably blossomed while he was a student at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, and his happiest and most satisfying times included conducting the Australian Symphony Orchestra, and producing and directing "Music for People" which attracted large crowds.

Nevertheless, he was shrewd enough to back things both ways and realised that soap opera (serials) and self-contained half hour dramatic features played a most important role in commercial radio. This resulted in features like "Woman in Love", "John Turner's Family", "Here Comes O'Malley". And "My Other Love", plus several private-eye type shows which became all the rage. From time to time Hector would call in to see me at 2GB and when he offered something for sale, you knew it would be a quality production. He was never a high pressure salesman; he did not have to be, and it was always a pleasure to meet and talk to him.

Shortly after the advent of TV in 1956, Hector Crawford made a clean break with radio productions to enable him to study and concentrate on TV. He was one of the first persons to realise the tremendous production potentialities of TV and up to a point, his line of attack followed a similar pattern to that which he operated in radio with special emphasis on both musical and dramatic shows. One of his best TV musical shows was "Showcase" which, like "Mobil Quest", was responsible for discovering some of the finest talent in Australia. It ran for nine years with Gordon Boyd as compere, himself an accomplished singer. Few people realise how

much work this type of program involves. For instance, in one year alone, nearly 2,000 prospective contestants would be auditioned before about 150 of them were considered to possess talent worthy of inclusions in "Showcase".

In television, the name of the game is ratings. Unless a TV program sustains worthwhile ratings, the axe falls involving very substantial financial losses, particularly when some shows already taped have to be canned. Hector Crawford's assessment of viewers' likes and dislikes was excellent. Programs like "Homicide", "Cop Shop", "Matlock Police", "Division 4", and "The Box" all sustained high ratings over long periods. Hector's shows and his actors and actresses have won so many awards that at times it has almost been embarrassing, but when these awards are handed out each year, he has always been present like a proud father on school prize night. In radio and TV Hector Crawford has not only provided employment for hundreds of musicians, artists, actors and actresses, but in the process he has developed many star performers, most of whom will be ever grateful. Some of these have been acclaimed overseas.

It was typical of Hector Crawford that when he developed a serious throat complaint it was months before this became known, and while he has wisely shed some of his many responsibilities, his great name in radio and television will always be revered. In 1968 he was awarded an O.B.E. but many people like myself still hope sincerely that, given time, they can acclaim him as Sir Hector Crawford.

**It isn't easy to be funny.** Being funny is a talent which few people possess. Some people who think they are funny are pathetic to watch or listen to. On occasions for instance when comedians are among competitors in Bert Newton's "New Faces", it makes one wonder why the judges do not tell them quite candidly to give up trying to be funny instead of being polite and encouraging them to persevere. Most top comedians like Mo (Roy Rene), George Wallace, Max Reddy, Reg Quarterly, Buster Noble, George Foster, Al Thomas, Les Fiddes, and Willie Kearns graduated to radio from the stage. Roy Rene was probably the most difficult to handle at the outset, being used to mainly "blue" routines on the Tivoli Circuit, and failing to realise that instead of performing before audiences who went specifically to the theatre to see him, in radio he was entertaining families in their homes. Off stage his moral standards were quite high and his wife Gale once said "Roy is a simple, serious minded man, modest in taste and ideas, and at times almost narrow minded. On occasions he came close to breaching radio's code of ethics, although these days his jokes would be regarded as quite mild. Known as Mr. McCackie of Colgate's McCackie Mansion, there was one "Gayparee" sketch in which Mo met a character known as Lady Carruthers. When asked how she was enjoying herself, she said "I've got something to confess Mr. McCackie, I've been here two weeks and haven't been to the Louvre yet". The audience completely broke down when Mo replied "Oh you poor dear".

George Wallace and his son George Wallace junior were down to earth comedians. Here again George Wallace senior's initial fault was playing too much to the audience in Macquarie Auditorium using facial expressions which created fits of laughter, and not realising that listeners were wondering what was really happening. He soon overcame this and became one of Australia's best loved comedians and a most likeable person off air.

George Foster toured Australia in variety shows then worked at 2KM Kempsey, 2LM Lismore, and 2BS Bathurst before becoming variety director for 3AW Melbourne. Later he joined the Colgate Palmolive unit, was associated with the Macquarie Broadcasting Service as a comedian-writer for six years, and became 2UW's variety director in 1955. As a schoolboy he was selected by the Australian English Speaking Union to make the first shortwave speech to the House of Commons in London in the presence of King George IV. Married and divorced twice and then having a de-facto wife, he used to joke to me about his alimony payments which made an awful dent in his earnings from radio, TV, club concerts, and commercials.

At this stage may I place on record the fact that I do not mention anybody in these columns unless I have met them and in most cases, knew them well. Occasionally I refresh my memories of the past by referring to "The Magic Spark", a book written by Bob Walker, an old friend of mine, to commemorate Radio's Fifty Fabulous Years. Also the most informative publication "Broadcasting in Australia" written by Ian Mackay who was once production manager of Macquarie Broadcasting Service.

In my day you could listen to all the comedians mentioned to date in this column, also to people like Keith Walshe, Willie Fennell, Charlie Vaude, Dorothy Foster, and Mal Verco without having to worry about coarse jokes, blue routines, insults to religion, snide comments about members of Royalty, and what is known as 'lavatory type humour'. Comedians were genuinely funny without giving offence and realised that entertaining families in their homes should be conducted in a responsible manner. Unfortunately I doubt whether this can be said of some modern day TV artists, yet you hardly ever hear of them being taken to task by members of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal.

**When you're monitored by a graph on the wall.** Americans classify some overseas business trips as 'junkets', but in my days it was not easy for a radio station manager to convince his board of directors that an overseas trip was warranted. However, having originated the Macquarie Newsreel using the services of such prominent roundsmen as Peter Barry, John Walker, Bill Weir, Len Mauger (now managing director of the channel 9 network) and John Pearce, the time arrived when I persuaded my directors that "Monitor", a program broadcast throughout America by the NBC, could be adapted to Australia, but I stipulated that my wife should accompany me. To make the approach to my board easier, I arranged contra deals through Qantas, Lloyd Triestino, and Thomas Cook and Sons, which ensured that there was no cash outlay for round the world fares. My wife and I set off for America stopping en route at Honolulu.

The first radio stations I visited were in San Francisco followed by others at Niagara Falls, Chicago, New York and Washington, and quite frankly, I was not overly impressed. There were so many radio stations with many of them operating in a relatively small way with studios and equipment which were substandard compared with Australia. Their top radio executives were good talkers, but basically, in most cases, no better than ours. Nevertheless there was much to learn, much to see, and there were many interesting personalities to meet. At the time only a few radio executives had visited the USA, and Americans certainly made Australians more than welcome. Armed with several VIP introductions, I had the good fortune to meet people like Bing Crosby, Xavier Cougat, Maxwell Dunne, Burl Ives, Steve Allen Art Linkletter, and Charles Cowley from Muzak. I studied "Monitor" for three weeks at the NBC in New York and obtained the rights for Australia. "Monitor" was broadcast throughout America from 6am Saturday to 10pm Sunday

Flying on to London I set my main assignment as being to meet BBC executives to obtain permission to use items from their overseas broadcasts for inclusion in "Monitor". While there, I arranged to meet Cecil King and Hugh Cudlip of the London Daily Mirror

which, at the time, owned 2GB where I was manager for about 15 years. Both of them were really big names in Great Britain and I was duly ushered into Cecil King's huge office expecting him to dispense with me in about ten minutes, but ultimately chattered to him for about an hour. I was intrigued by about 20 small roller blinds on the walls of his office, but within the first few minutes he pulled up one of them to display graphs showing 2GB's ratings, revenue, and annual profit. I realised after he commented that everything was going well at 2GB, and that we were simply a graph on a wall. As long as things were okay it was fine, but if revenue and ratings declined, then it was a different kettle of fish. I suppose it's a part of what seems to be an eternal chase for increased profits and popularity, but I sometimes wonder where this will all finish.

After visiting radio stations in France, Switzerland, and Italy, we were glad to board the liner 'Australia' at Naples for a four week trip home. "Monitor" subsequently became one of Australia's best known programs.

**Bert Newton: how he climbed to the top.** During an association of nearly 50 years with radio in Australia, it was my pleasure to meet most top personalities plus dozens of others who never achieved great fame in radio, but were just as nice to know. I remember the occasion when Jack Davey introduced me to a young man, and after he left said "*There goes Australia's future top TV personality*". It was Graham Kennedy. About the same time while we were having dinner at the Australia in Melbourne, Bert Newton's name cropped up and Jack said "*If he survives the temptations and pressures associated with the entertainment business, Bert will develop into a top radio and television star*". How true. Before I forget, it was on that occasion Jack Davey had all the diners at the Australia laughing their heads off. While in Melbourne his favourite meal was grilled flounder and he asked the waiter to serve the largest one they had. In due course the waiter arrived carrying a huge platter head high, which attracted the attention of all the diners, being placed gently in front of Jack, and in the middle of it was a tiny flounder about three inches long. Behind him however, was another waiter carrying a silver platter on which was one of the largest flounders I have ever seen. Its head and tail protruded over both ends of the platter. After the laughter subsided, Jack achieved what I thought would be the impossible task of consuming the whole lot and, incidentally, during the course of the meal, dispensed with about ten Tia Marias. In actual fact, I never saw Jack Davey really under the influence of liquor, and at public functions he was quite a moderate drinker.

His predictions about Bert Newton proved quite correct. Bert Newton had his ups and downs but to his credit, he fought back and not only became one of Australia's most outstanding radio and television personalities, but also never let it go to his head and is still quite a modest person. How fortunate Bert was to marry someone like Patti, a wonderful backstop who has played such a vital role, steering him to the top and working with him in their top rating morning radio program on 3UZ Melbourne. I was delighted to read that they would star in "Superquiz", a modern day version of "Pick-a Box", and without doubt, Bob and Dolly Dyer were the first to congratulate them. Bert and Patti followed in the footsteps of Australia's best ever and best loved husband and wife combination.

At the age of eleven, Bert Newton made his first appearance in a program called "Peters Pals" on 3XY Melbourne. He started as a full-time announcer on this station in 1950 and was there for seven years. Bert later moved to 3AK in 1960, returned to 3XY in 1962 and since 1976 has been associated with 3UZ. He reckons his most successful radio programs were "Kay's Capers" on 3XY working with Graham Kennedy as "Graham and Bert" on 3AK, and now his highly successful morning program "Monday to Friday" on 3UZ in which he is so ably assisted by Patti.

Some of the names he had worked with in radio are Alwyn Kurts, John Ford, John McMahon, Roly Barlee, Hal Todd and Sir Eric Pearce, all prominent radio personalities in Melbourne. This reminds me of the time I was working at 2CH when Claude Fleming, previously a leading Australian theatrical star, was program manager. He was auditioning a young man who was a purser on a Canadian ship, who wanted to be an announcer, and asked my opinion about him. It was Eric Pearce and he had a glorious voice. We offered him immediate employment but he had to return to Canada to obtain a discharge. He not only became a top announcer-actor-comper, but was later appointed general manager of 5KA Adelaide. After this he became the best known newsreader in Victoria. For his many services in radio and television, and his devotion to many worthy causes, he was knighted. More about Bert Newton next week.

**Bert Newton: Australia's master of ceremonies.** The main secret of Bert Newton's success is the fact that he has always been totally involved in what he does and thoroughly enjoys doing it. He bubbles with enthusiasm which infects studio audiences and viewers alike. As he said to me "*While my workload is reasonably heavy, I have a great love for my calling and was also brought up in a school of showbusiness where hard work and long hours were essential to a successful apprenticeship*". It's a hard workload indeed when one considers Bert is up before 6am Monday and Friday and arrives at 3UZ about 7am in preparation for his three hour morning assignment with Patti. Twice a week he would spend hours at channel 9's Melbourne studios preparing for his participation in the Don Lane Show with which he was associated for over five years, and then of course, he compared "New Faces" each week from 1976 until 1985. On top of all that, with the blessing of Bob and Dolly Dyer, he achieved one of his greatest ambitions when Patti and he presented the "Ford Superquiz", the 1981 successor to the original "Pick-a-Box" which ran for over 16 years on radio and several years on TV. Somehow or other I suspect that the show he liked best was "New Faces". As soon as Bert comes on stage it's so evident that for the next hour he is really going to enjoy himself and his repartee with the judges which is all ad lib, stamps him as a compere par excellence. In fact it's one of the reasons why I classify Bert Newton as "Australia's Master of Ceremonies".

In both radio and television Australia has produced some of the finest talent in the world. This fact has been endorsed by many overseas stars who have visited Australia, whether it be in relation to actors, actresses, singers, quiz-masters, talk-back exponents, comperes, instrumentalists, dancers, or what have you. When Jack Davey was in action a rival network brought one of America's leading quizmasters who failed to have any impact, and frankly admitted that Jack ranked as one of the best quizmasters in the world. In the field of comperes, names like Harry Dearth, Eric Pearce, Terry Dear, George Foster, Bobby Limb, Graham Kennedy, Norman Banks, John McMahon, Dick Fair, Don Lane and several others come to mind. They all possessed outstanding ability, but in most cases it was limited to a specific type of radio or television feature. In my considered opinion it was in May 1980 when one person demonstrated his ability as a compere and outshone all others, which is why I classify Bert Newton as a "Master of Ceremonies". In the presence of Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, his handling of the Royal Charity Concert was a joy to witness. Dignity combined with clever original humour ranked Bert Newton above par compared with comperes of most other Royal Command Performances, and every Australian was proud and delighted to see him rise so well to such an auspicious occasion.

Before that of course, Bert had distinguished himself at Logie Award nights. When you add to that his performances in "New Faces", "Ford Superquiz", the "Don Lane Show" and his top rating morning radio program and consider his versatility, Bert qualifies not only as a Superstar but a Master of Ceremonies. He tells me that John Wayne, Debbie Reynolds, and Sammy Davis Junior rank high

amongst overseas stars appearing in his shows, and there were many others including Eartha Kitt, Raymond Burr, Mickey Rooney, Burt Lancaster, Glen Ford, Lee Major, and Shirley Bassett. Bert still has a love for radio and once said to me “*Radio just goes from strength to strength, and it pleases me that once again there is so much emphasis on personality radio*”. It was a fitting tribute when I appeared in “This is Your Life” in 1978, but in one sense life is still beginning for Bert Newton, one of the ‘greatest’ ever.

**How the Church’s approach to radio changed.** When dealing with religion and radio in his book “Broadcasting in Australia” published in 1967, the author Ian Mackay, a senior radio executive and an old associate of mine said “*The present church tends to provide an inspired form of Christian belief instead of a fighting faith and those responsible should not be exempt from attack. Possibly the majority of Australians do not care one way or another but there is a glorious opportunity for someone to institute reforms. The standards of most radio church broadcasters are not high, and the services are frequently uninspiring. Although the church speakers possess complete sincerity, they lack penetration and are, in the main, unimpressive*”.

This was not intended to be destructive criticism but simply a sincere effort on Ian Mackay’s part to persuade church leaders to modernise their approach to radio. Well prior to the publication of his book there were several occasions when I had the opportunity of discussing religion’s association with radio with representatives of the main denominations, and candidly informed them that religious broadcasts were mainly inclined to ‘Preach to the converted’ instead of endeavouring to obtain converts. They were delightful people to talk to. Some of them appreciated the logic of my comments but most others, particularly old style preachers for whom I had the greatest respect, were apprehensive of making changes. Nevertheless with the passage of years, church leaders began to adopt a much more positive and sensible approach to the use of radio. They agreed somewhat reluctantly to discontinue daily 15 minute talks after they were shown surveys which proved that most listeners switched off their sets, and replaced them with the religious equivalent of a normal commercial, realising that brief messages heard by most people had far greater impact. They became more involved in radio newsreel interviews, and the stage was reached when talkback sessions conducted by religious leaders now provide a broadminded approach to many controversial discussions on subjects like abortion, prostitution, divorce, adultery, drugs, and so on.

If I had to nominate the most aggressive minister I met it would be Rev Sir Alan Walker, who was often on my doorstep when I was manager of radio 2GB, and so often in newspaper headlines that I almost formed the opinion he was seeking self-publicity, but not so. Alan was a fiery and outspoken person who would forcibly condemn things ranging from prostitution, drink and gambling to vigorously opposing apartheid and being in the Vietnam War. We joined forces when he established a hostel for country girls seeking employment in Sydney, and when he established a night club for young people at a loose end in amusement parlours and cafes. One showed their appreciation by going out into the streets and enlisting the support of other youngsters who were previously unapproachable.

**Grace Gibson; the girl from Texas.** One of the nicest persons associated with the radio industry was Grace Gibson. Nobody has or will ever produce as many radio features as Grace did. She was a dyed in the wool radio operator, and remained so even after the advent of TV in 1956. There was not a well-known radio actor or actress who did not appear in one of her productions, and she was warmly regarded by all of them. Most older readers will remember “*Dr Paul*” and “*Portia Faces Life*” which were among many long running serials Grace Gibson produced. “*Dr Paul*” finished after being on the air for over 19 years when 4,634 episodes had been recorded. “*Portia Faces Life*” ran for more than 16 years with 3,544 episodes. Among other well-known serials released through Grace Gibson Productions were “*Mary Lane*”, “*Charlie Chan*”, “*Dossier on Dumetrius*”, “*Chandu the Magician*”, “*Pinto Pete and his Ranchboys*”, and “*The Air Adventures of Jimmy Allen*”.

Grace Gibson was born in Texas. She wanted to be a movie actress but realised this was not her cup of tea. She joined a radio station where she first displayed her special selling ability. During the mid-thirties, the Managing Director of 2GB Sydney Mr A. E. Bennett went to the United States to purchase some American radio features. He was so impressed with Grace Gibson that he asked her boss if she could work with him for six months. The end result was Grace staying in Australia ever since. Grace subsequently became the first manager of Artransa which produced many radio features, and is still successfully operating in TV and film productions.

It was in 1944 that Grace Gibson started her own production company, and the first feature, “*Drama of Medicine*”, which ran for 14 years, was widely acclaimed throughout Australia. Originally she had a staff of three, all women, and operated from a small office in Savoy House, Bligh Street, Sydney. At that time, Grace preferred women employees, believing that they were easier to get on with than men, working harder, and were not clock watchers. Grace Gibson was a most attractive woman with a contagious smile, a charming Texas accent, and the determination to prove that a woman could become a top executive. This she certainly did and was rated as one of the most successful business women in Australia.

Few people realise that there were two Dr Pauls, Alistair Duncan and John Saul, who alternated in this role between overseas trips without listeners ever noticing. Dr Paul’s wife was Dinah Shearing for 15 years before Lynne Murphy took over. In a previous column I mentioned three radio actresses for whom I had a special regard, the evergreen Gwen Plumb, Thelma Tate, and Lyndal Barbour. All of them occupied star roles in many radio productions, but it was Lyndal Barbour who was the one and only Portia in “*Portia Faces Life*” for 3,544 episodes. Lyndal was a striking looking person with a thrilling compelling voice, quite outspoken in private life and a really good mixer. Her services were much sought after by producers who realised she could handle any role without batting an eyelid.

In the post-war years there was a line-up of serials between 9 AM and noon which dominated the listening audience of mainly women. I tremble at the thought of how many unfaithful husbands, erring wives, and seductive secretaries were exposed in radio serials. Apparently times have not changed that much because most TV serials follow the same pattern.

Radiowise, Grace Gibson became known as the “Queen of Australian Radio Soap Opera”.

**Grace Gibson productions have to end with a bang.** I could fill a column with the names of actors and actresses employed by Grace Gibson Productions. They include Peter Finch, Rod Taylor, Neva Carr Glynn, John Meillon, Gwen Plumb, Lyndal Barbour, Roger Climpson, June Salter, Dinah Shearing, and Charles Tingwell just to name a few. Production Manager Lawrence H. Cecil was one of Australia’s best known and experienced producers. From a small set-up in Bligh Street Sydney, Grace Gibson Productions moved into elaborate studios in the City Mutual Building in Hunter Street in 1952. In August 1978 Grace Gibson retired and sold her production company after an association of 40 years with radio. It is still recognised as the leading radio production company in Australia.

Although Grace Gibson considers modern-day radio probably gives the listening public what it wants, she believes too many radio stations sound alike. Her opinion is that there is a place for dramatic radio features in capital city areas where they are now practically non-existent. Many country stations still successfully feature dramatic shows. 2UW Sydney dropped their very popular morning serials in 1964, and received over 50,000 complaining phone calls from listeners. I am inclined to agree that if a survey of women was taken, a worthwhile percentage of them would welcome the return of morning serials which, with small portable radios, can be listened to while working around the house. Many listeners tire of talk-back sessions and music, bearing in mind that more radio sets are switched off during the daytime than tuned in. This creates good grounds to support her reasoning.

While Grace Gibson merited being known as the Queen of Soap Opera, she was equally renowned for producing many other types of features and sessionettes. Top rating dramas included *"Night Beat"*, *Nyal Radio Playhouse*, *Dossier on Dumetrius*, *"Drama of Medicine"*, *"Dragnet"*, and *"Dramas of the Courts"*. Sessionettes included *"Passing Parade"* and *"Earl Nightingales Changing World"*.

With the advent of TV in 1956, Grace Gibson decided to stay with radio, and altered the pattern of her productions to meet changing times. She is delighted that the new owners retained the name of Grace Gibson Productions, and they have inherited her ability to produce many worthwhile productions such as repackaging the immortal *"Dad and Dave"* series into 500 five minute episodes. Also dramas like *"Night Story"*, *"The Last Rose of Summer"*, *"Hunters Moon"*, and *"Babylon Run"*, plus specials like *"The Spirit of Xmas"*, *"A decade of Country Music"*, *"The Willie Nelson Story"*, and Bert Newtons Christmas Specials.

The saying that behind every successful man there is a woman is reversed in the case of Grace Gibson. In 1944 she married an amiable good looking Irishman named Ronald MacDonald Parr and it certainly created a winning double. His behind-the-scenes influence and his executive ability proved invaluable. Anybody who has been entertained at their superb Potts Point penthouse will testify to their hospitality. While they have many friends in the upper bracket of society, and were involved in many worthwhile charitable causes, they were always a down to earth couple who made just as much fuss of ordinary people.

In 1973 a book entitled *"The Magic Spark"* was written by Bob Walker to commemorate the first 50 years of radio in Australia. In one section, paying tribute to Grace Gibson, he quoted the following comment made by one of the chief scriptwriters, Kathleen Carroll, mentioning the tests made by Grace Gibson in script evaluation: *"If Grace fell asleep before page three, my scripts had no chance of being accepted. If she got a little further, then maybe I could get by with a re-write. If she read the first episode to the end and reached for the second, then I was definitely on. So I figured the best way to keep Grace awake was to open each new show with a lusty battle between two characters. Maybe that is why Grace Gibson shows were so successful. They all had to open with a bang"*.

**Selling radio advertising was fun.** Imagine a contract being signed on a dicky - a starched detachable false shirt-front worn with a dinner suit. It happened at a 1940 AWA Ball held at Sydney's Trocadero when Frank Coghlan's band was all the rage. A 2CH salesman named Stan Clark had been vainly contacting Bill Woods of W.E. Woods famous cough remedy for years, but after a quite a few drinks at the ball, persuaded him to sign an advertising contract on the dicky Stan was wearing. When he produced this to Bill Woods the following day, he was politely informed that a contract signed under the influence of alcohol was not legally valid. Nevertheless, Bill had a great sense of humour and went ahead with the advertising. A worthwhile advertising contract was then often an excuse for a celebration at the hotel opposite the 2CH studios in Grace Building on York Street. On occasions we were joined by friends from 2GB including Jack Lumsdaine, Bill Cousens, John Dease, and Jack Davey who, more than once did a tap dance on the bar counter.

Radio stations were and still are devising special promotions and competitions, some of which could be classified as completely crazy, regardless of the appeal to most listeners. As examples, during my time as manager of 2GB Sydney, we ran a competition when John Hudson was breakfast announcer, called *"Why my dog needs a holiday"*. The prize was for a family of four at the Ritz Hotel in Leura, plus transport to and from the hotel, accommodation for the dog, and \$100 spending money. The winner was a boy aged about 10, the departure point was the 2GB Phillip Street studios, and the family arrived with a huge bloodhound which promptly put its paws on John Hudson's shoulders and knocked him over. The car was too small for the dog and a special van was organised to transport it. Nevertheless, the bloodhound spent most of its time in the saloon bar, and bar takings at McNivens Hotel were almost a record. On another occasion when 2GB was commencing *"Hopalong Cassidy"* and wanted to obtain good press coverage, our publicity manager Reg Kelly booked a Mr Cassidy into the Hotel Australia. An actor dressed like Hopalong duly arrived on horseback, obtained his room number from the booking office and then asked the booking clerk to stable his horse overnight, which according to law at the time was still the hotel's responsibility. You can imagine the consternation it caused, and the incident was well covered by pressmen and photographers from all newspapers and Cinesound news.

There was once a remarkable salesman/announcer at 2CA Canberra - Rex Morrisby. He signed up lots of advertising but most of his clients did not renew. At the time this was quite a common fault among salesmen who failed to realise the importance of long-term advertising by overselling in the initial stages. Rex once sold advertising to a small hotel in a one horse town about 50 miles from Canberra. While on air Rex extolled the local attractions such as fishing and shooting. During the evening, radio station signals can be heard far and wide and a listener in Queensland decided to book at the hotel. His train arrived after midnight at a small unattended platform, and he lugged his suitcase, gun, and fishing gear about half a mile to the hotel. After a little sleep and a very ordinary breakfast he asked the publican what there was to shoot in the area and where to fish. When told that there were only rabbits and the nearest fishing spot was 40 miles away, and that it was Rex Morrisby exaggerating on air, he threatened to travel to Canberra and shoot him. The publican phoned George Barlin, the manager of 2CA who, to be on the safe side, sent Rex on holiday for two weeks. I also remember one station manager who told all new clients that their radio advertising qualified them for a display advertisement in the local newspaper. The only problem was that the newspaper knew nothing about this.

**Reg Grundy: from unemployed to the top.** *"Sale of the Century"*, a Reg Grundy production, staggered the television industry throughout Australia with its meteoric rise to top ratings on the channel 9 network. In the process it caused dismay and concern to rival networks seriously affecting other previous top rating features like *"Willesee at Seven"*. It was one of the highlights of Reg Grundy's career which commenced as an announcer on 2GZ Orange in 1947. He was born and educated in Adelaide and moved to Sydney at the age of 16 where he became a trainee executive at David Jones, specialising of all things in women's fashions. Most people admire a self-made man, and when one stops to think that Reg was unemployed in 1958 and again in 1960, experienced two

very difficult years in 1963/1964, and despite this is now a millionaire, demonstrates what a “gutsy” type of operator he is. What is more, success did not go to his head and Reg is still an approachable and considerate person.

In 1947 Reg moved from 2GZ Orange to 2SM Sydney where he became a sports commentator, news reader, and disc jockey. It was during this period that he started handling boxing commentaries, although he admits not knowing much about boxing at the time. It was around then I first met him as I used to sit next to Cyril Angles at Rushcutters Bay Stadium, and even Reg will be the first to agree that Cyril was the best boxing and wrestling commentator in the history of radio. In those days the stadium was often filled to capacity with large crowds listening to amplified descriptions outside and Harry Miller, the stadium manager, laughing all the way to the bank.

In 1951 Reg Grundy broadcast the Davis Cup for 2SM. Here again he was up against tough opposition as at Macquarie Broadcasting our commentators were Ted Schroeder, Jack Kramer, and Ted Harris who is now Managing Director of Ampol. Nevertheless the descriptions by Reg were causing increasingly favourable comment, and in 1952 he was appointed Sporting Director for 2SM. In 1954 he conceived the idea of covering the Carruthers-Toweel boxing contest from South Africa, which led to a most embarrassing experience. The fight only lasted 19 seconds and was all over in the first round. You can imagine how Reg felt when advised that the South African engineers had not recorded the fight due to a breakdown in radio telephone transmission. Few people in Australia realised that what they subsequently heard was a “phantom” description. In 1956 Reg moved to 2CH Sydney where he handled boxing and other sporting descriptions plus regular nightly sporting sessions. During that year he was the official boxing commentator for commercial radio throughout Australia for the Olympic Games, which reminds me of an experience at that time I will never forget.

From 1928 onwards I was an above average middle distance and cross-country runner, and in one year was a member of the team which won every cross-country championship in NSW. When my running days were over I became involved for years with the NSW Amateur Athletic Association as a tribute to which I was selected to carry the Olympic Torch in 1956 on the first leg of the final run from Sydney to Melbourne. To qualify for this I had to pass two tests, in both of which the Athletic Association officials decided to have a laugh on me by selecting two of the most difficult one mile sections. One started at the Mooni Mooni Bridge South of Gosford and ran all the way up a very steep hill. Somehow or other I survived the tests, and the memorable night arrived when the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Pat Hills, handed over the Olympic Torch to me at Sydney Town Hall in front of an immense crowd.

**How a quiz show led Reg Grundy to fame.** Continuing the fascinating story of Reg Grundy’s rise to fame, it was at 2CH Sydney around 1959 he introduced a radio telephone quiz between 2PM and 4PM Monday to Friday called “*Wheel of Fortune*”. In those days 2CH was somewhat conservative with a small following, whereas now it is one of Sydney’s most progressive stations, reflecting the ability of Bruce Rogerson who was mainly responsible for introducing a completely new program format. When at 2CH Reg Grundy felt he could have improved the station, but he ran into rough seas and says he resigned just before he might have been dismissed. This led to his second period of unemployment. Even though it was only for three months it was a blessing in disguise because during that time he decided to start Reg Grundy Enterprises operating from his flat in Double Bay.

His first TV production was in 1960 with “*Wheel of Fortune*”, named after his 2CH radio show. It ran five nights a week for half an hour and one hour on Saturday. This in itself was a major assignment and the first TV show in Australia to be strip-programmed. His second production was “*Concentration*” which started once a week and was later televised five days a week on 18 TV stations around Australia. Reg stepped down as compere when he discovered Jimmy Hannon. In 1962 Reg struck another bad patch when 17 weekly half hour programs were suspended by a network. Nevertheless to his credit for the next two years he kept his company going by paying staff out of his own pocket. This again demonstrated his consideration for persons associated with him.

Undaunted, it was in 1965 that Reg again surfaced, this time in Brisbane where he promoted three shows “*Queensland Tonight*”, “*I’ve Got a Secret*”, and “*Play Your Hunch*”. In 1966 he returned to the big smoke producing “*Marriage Game*” for channel 10 in Sydney and “*Guessing Game*” for channel 9 in Melbourne. From then on TV management began to realise that here was a man possessing a very special ability to create many and varied types of popular TV quiz shows. It’s almost like a Who’s Who of this type of programming when one briefly reviews programs produced by Reg Grundy Productions between 1967 and 1980. They included “*Split Personality*”, “*Numbers Game*”, “*Blind Date*”, “*Family Game*”, “*Match Game*”, “*Newlywed Game*”, “*Celebrity Game*”, “*What do you Know*”, “*New World Temptation*”, “*Tell the Truth*”, “*Price is Right*”, “*Junior Money Makers*”, “*Name That Tune*”, “*Pot of Gold*”, “*Celebrity Squares*”, and of course the super quiz show “*Sale of the Century*”.

Don’t get the idea that Reg Grundy was simply involved in quiz shows. He became just as successful in dramatic features such as “*Chopper Squad*”, “*The Restless Years*”, “*The Young Doctors*”, “*Glenview High*”, “*Prisoner*”, and “*Cell Block H*”, successfully selling some of them to the USA. He produced several telemovies like “*The Night Nurse*”, “*The Death Train*”, “*Demolition*”, “*Roses Bloom Twice*”, and “*Plunge into Darkness*”. Reg also delved into documentaries such as “*Confessions of Ronald Biggs*” and movies including “*Barry McKenzie Holds His Own*”.

What a remarkable man. It’s a classic rags-to-riches story and a great tribute to a very likeable self-made person who, incidentally still has a soft spot for radio. He loves jazz and classical music, considers that F.M. radio has a great future (he is a shareholder in 3-FOX) but still reckons it’s a pity there is no Jack Davey now, nor does modern radio include a format for a Jack Davey type personality.

**Terry Dear: Product of depression years.** Few, if any of Australia’s top radio and TV stars can claim such wide experience in the field of entertainment as Terry Dear, covering a period of nearly 50 years. He modestly classifies himself as a product of the depression years, working in 1929 as a printer’s devil, and later a salesman. While studying music at that time, his Italian singing teacher was responsible for Terry Dear’s entry into radio, working for 3UZ Melbourne for £5 per week. He was fired after two months for “gross incompetence”. He then joined 3KZ Melbourne where Norman Banks and Eddie Balmer, two of Melbourne’s top personalities, took him under their wings. After five years at 3KZ he moved to 3AW Melbourne where he became Chief Announcer. During the war years he served with the Royal Australian Corps of Signals as a Lieutenant. He was based in Lae as the Commanding Officer for radio station 9AB, one of 26 military stations in the Pacific region that were established to entertain our troops during WWII. After his discharge he became assistant General Manager of 3AW.

Australia’s biggest advertising agency at the time, J. Walter Thompson, offered to double Terry Dear’s salary if he joined them. Even though no official contract was signed, it marked a subsequent association of nine years with Australia’s Amateur Hour. Terry Dear

travelled over 30,000 miles annually, directing and presenting this top rating program from all parts of Australia. He reckons it was the best assignment he ever had for job satisfaction and salary. Terry was not the first director; Harry Dearth and Dick Fair preceded him. Australia's Amateur Hour holds a world record for 17 years continuous sponsorship; Lever Brothers, now Unilever. Clifford Grant, later acknowledged as one of the world's finest bassos, competed in the first Australia's Amateur Hour program directed by Terry Dear. Subsequent competitors included Rolf Harris, Donald Smith (one of the world's greatest tenors), Gino Zinicare (who became a top operatic star), Frank Ifield, Angela Rina (the first foreign singer to perform at La Scala in Milan as principal artist), and Marie Tyson. As with many other top radio features, TV caused the demise of Australia's Amateur Hour, and although an itinerary was lined up in 1956 to take the program to Fiji, New Zealand, and New Caledonia, its sponsors switched to TV and the tour never eventuated. Terry Dear was sent to the United States to assess the prospects of adapting Australia's Amateur to TV, but in the early days of TV there were technical problems which prevented this from eventuating. In television, Terry Dear was compere of Concentration for five years, and when New Faces was subsequently introduced as the TV successor to Australia's Amateur Hour, he also compered it for five years.

After withdrawing from TV, Terry Dear spent 10 years with the Macquarie News Service as chief newsreader. In the early sixties he also handled one of Australia's first "Talk Back" radio features; "At Your Service". Terry Dear is not over enthusiastic about modern day radio and does not feel that the great radio days of the forties and fifties will ever return.

During his career, Terry Dear was closely associated with many overseas artists like Richard Crooks, Lawrence Tibbett, Tommy Trinder, Joe E. Brown (who he reckons was one of the meanest men he ever met), Jimmy Edwards, and Frankie Lane. He recalls many humorous incidents in radio, such as when the effects operator dropped the needle on the wrong track during the recording of an episode of "Coronets of England". Instead of the tolling of the Westminster bells, up came a cuckoo clock, resulting in the actress taking the part of the Queen Mother laughing so much her false teeth dropped out on the stage floor. The recording was abandoned for that night.

Shortly after announcing his retirement, Terry became somewhat scared of "vegetating", and for the first time in his life, moved into industry in association with the W.R. Carpenter group. He will always be remembered not only as one of radio and TV's greats, but as a thorough gentleman.

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**Editors' note:** These "*Bert Button Comments on Radio*" originally appeared in the Orange *Central Western Daily* newspaper in 1985. I am indebted to long-time 2UE Sales Manager Chris Maitland, the Sydney Mitchell library, and the Orange public library, without whose assistance this research would not have been possible.



Bert Button was well known for his long association with commercial radio, starting his career in the late 1920's with 2CH. He was a sports commentator, program compere, and sales manager with 2CH, and an announcer at the 1938 Empire Games in Sydney. After serving with the RAAF in WWII he joined 2GB as manager, moving to 2UW in 1961 as General Manager. Bert was a director of 5DN, 2LF, 2LT and 2CA as well as being President of the Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations and the "Time Club". He was the founder of the "Broadcasting and Television" (B & T) industry magazine, and founding director of 2ST Nowra in 1972.