

WENDELL WOODS HALL AN EARLY RADIO PERFORMER

BY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During radio's early years, 1920-1925, broadcast entertainment drew upon a rich tradition of vaudeville entertainment in America. It reflected whatever was currently popular among vaudeville-theater audiences; there was no attempt to develop programming designed specifically for broadcasting. According to radio historian Robert Landry this resulted in programs that were "necessarily crude and congenitally amateur."¹ Mr. Landry went on to say that the standard concept of early radio entertainment was:

... to use theater, vaudeville, or amateurs who work for the publicity involved. On smaller stations programming consisted of a number of phonograph recordings interspersed by an announcer's remarks. It was added velvet if the station obtained live talent. An amateur tenor, soprano, or pianist was considered quite delectable and almost any kind of diversion was welcome just so long as it was "on the cuff."²

Through the years other broadcast historians have echoed these same sentiments. Giraud Chester and Garnet R. Garrison wrote that:

... broadcasters found themselves for the first two or three years under no great pressure to offer topnotch performers. Instead they relied on the phonograph and on the seemingly endless supply of free talent that came to the studio. This was the period of the "great plague of mediocre sopranos...."³

This then seems to be the general impression of early radio entertainment; it was crude, mediocre, and performers consisted almost entirely of amateurs because they, by and large, were the only ones who would work for free.

While this may be partially true, it is not the whole truth. To say that vaudeville and other professional entertainers merely went from the stage to the studio along with and performed alongside amateurs of limited talent, is to suggest that the professional performers are to be considered as being in the same class and possessing no more ability than the amateur entertainers. In effect, what has been propounded by broadcast historians is that there was really very little difference between the amateur entertainers who performed on radio during its first four or five years and the professional entertainers who performed on radio during the same period.

There existed in the early days of radio entertainment, a hard core of seasoned, professional entertainers who had served their apprenticeship on vaudeville stages, behind store counters plugging songs, in cafes, and in church choirs throughout the country. These people, while never achieving great success in their chosen field, were nevertheless professionals in the sense that they were trained and accomplished entertainers who made their living by performing; they were not amateurs. What broadcast historians have failed to do is make clear the distinction between the amateur and professional radio entertainers, and the

contribution of the latter to broadcasting. Professional performers were the innovators in broadcast entertainment, and it was their lead that the industry followed. It's not only what they did that's of importance, but the fact that they were the first to do it which makes them deserving of at least some recognition.

The Significance of the Study

The amateur and medicore entertainers that flocked to the microphone and the facts of early radio programming have been documented by several historians, but the study of the first professional entertainers to broadcast has not been sufficiently investigated. Although there have been other studies similar to this one, that is, studies written on similar topics, none of them has dealt specifically with early radio entertainers.

Autobiographies have been written by Ted Husing and Graham McNamee; biographies have been written by Paul K. Crawford on the rise of the Reverend Charles E. Coughlin, by David G. Clark on H.V. Kaltenborn, and by Juanita J. Larkin on the radio career of Fulton J. Sheen; there have been many biographical sketches contained in popular magazines of the day; and there have been several historical studies of important radio stations throughout the country, however, little if any attention has been focused on radio's pioneer professional performers.⁴

With the passing of many early radio pioneers, and due to misplaced or forgotten station records and logs, it is important, in light of the success of radio as a medium of entertainment, that information concerning the contribution of these professional entertainers to that success be explored.

The purpose of this study on Wendell W. Hall, who decided to cast his lot with radio, is to examine and determine why certain professional entertainers entered radio and others did not; the role of the professional performer in the development of radio as an entertainment and commercial medium; the period of their greatest popularity; and the circumstances surrounding their decline.

The Plan of This Study

The study is historical in scope and method. The career of one professional who entered radio, Wendell Woods Hall, will be examined within the frame of reference of national and local broadcasting trends, and other historical events. Wendell Hall has been chosen for emphasis as being representative or typical of the professional entertainer who went into radio for two reasons: Mr. Hall's life offers the opportunity for comparison and examination because of the preservation of his manuscripts; the largest single collection known of a professional entertainer who made the transition to radio, and the fact that Mr. Hall is alive and consented to be interviewed for the purpose of this paper.

Primary source materials include an interview with Mr. Hall; the Wendell Hall manuscript collection which is housed in the Mass Communication Center of the University of Wisconsin Memorial Library; another manuscript collection of Mr. Hall's which is on loan to Arthur Hostetler, founder of the National Music Hall of Fame in Warren, Ohio; correspondence with Mr. Hall and other persons who worked with and knew him; Mr. Hall's personal collection of unpublished documents; the newspapers and such early magazines as Radio Digest and Radio Broadcast. Secondary source materials include general histories, radio histories, and other publications dealing with the period.

The writer is indebted to the University of Wisconsin Graduate School for providing the funds which made it possible to interview Mr. Hall at his home in Alabama.⁵

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

¹Robert J. Landry, This Fascinating Radio Business (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1946), 82.

²Landry, 43.

³Giraud Chester and Garnet R. Garrison, Television and Radio (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950), 25.

⁴Some other stories and studies of broadcast performers and related historical studies of broadcasting include: Graham McNamee, You're on the Air (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1926); Ted Husing, Ten Years Before the Mike (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1935); Paul K. Crawford, "The Rise of the Reverend Charles Edward Coughlin, Radio Speaker" (unpublished Ph.M. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1936); David G. Clark, "The Dean of Commentators: A Biography of H.V. Kaltenborn" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1965); Juanita J. Larkin, "Fulton J. Sheen's Career on Radio and Television" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1954); Lawrence W. Lichty, "The Nation's Station: A History of Radio Station WLW" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1964); Bruce A. Linton, "A History of Chicago Radio Station Programming, 1921-1931, with Emphasis on Stations WMAQ and WGN" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1953); Chester F. Caton, "Radio Station WMAQ: A History of Its Independent Years, 1922-1931" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1951); Ansel H. Resler, "The Impact of John R. Brinkley on Broadcasting in the United States" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1958).

⁵Mr. Hall was interviewed at his home at the Oak Haven Cottages, 355 Mobile Avenue, Fairhope, Alabama, from June 7-11, 1967 by the writer. We talked for about eight hours each day during that time. The most important parts of the interview were recorded on audio tape. This interview, together with the Wendell W. Hall manuscript collections at the Wisconsin State Historical Society, Mass Communications Center, and the National Music Hall of Fame in Warren, Ohio constitute the major primary source materials for the study. In subsequent footnotes the personal interview with Wendell Hall will be referred to as "Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall". Materials from the Wisconsin State Historical Society, Mass Communications Center are identified as "U.S., Mss, 50 AF," and by volume, box and scrapbook number. The materials from the National Music Hall of Fame in Warren, Ohio are identified as the "National Music Hall of Fame" by scrapbook number and by newspaper and date when the latter is available.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY YEARS 1896-1920

THE DAWN OF A NEW CENTURY

Social Climate

The period 1896 to 1920 was one of change throughout the country. As a new century dawned an odor of complacency and smugness was in the air. Populism was dead; the free-silver agitators were dying and mourning over a lost cause and, since the end of the depression of the mid-1890's, cries of inequality between the rich and the poor was but a faint wail in the wilderness.

With communities widely separated from one another, and people relying wholly or in part upon railroads and horses for transportation, "... each region, each town, each farm was far more dependent upon its own resources--its own produce, social contacts, amusements--than in later years."¹ Thus, the outlook and the shared common interests were not international, not even national but local.

There was a great reliance on the individual. A man was shaped by forces and ideas with which he was familiar and could cope with. His horizon was limited by the absence of an adequate communications system and centered around those townspeople and neighbors with whom he felt comfortable.

With the growth of industrialism and the advance of technology came an influx of immigrants to America. Although the Statue of Liberty held high a torch of hope and promise, those crossing the Atlantic found little to look forward to upon their arrival; industrialism was rapidly changing the face of America, and to the newcomer from abroad, the face was sometimes stern and unsmiling.

The tempo of production, which rose to new heights during the latter part of the nineteenth century, roared on into the twentieth without missing a beat. America was rapidly becoming a land of cities and booming industrial towns.

As the decade rushed on, capitalism was king with many fighting to wear the crown. The economic law of the period was that of laissez faire. Everything worked best when you let it alone. Young boys learned from Horatio Alger, Jr. that the way to get ahead was by working hard, saving what you earned, and being good. But not everyone who worked hard, saved, and was good, received the story book rewards. Immigrants and smalltown or rural people who were filling up the cities found crowded conditions, poverty, crime, corruption, and ethnic chaos. Wealth and poverty grew side by side.

Political Atmosphere

If the business of America was business, the government seemed perfectly willing not to interfere. The reason could be explained simply: business was no affair of the government.

The three men who occupied the White House from 1900 to 1912 were Republicans and all adheared in large measure to the theory that government should play little or no part in business affairs.

During the McKinley era (1897-1901), business was content in the knowledge that its interests would be safeguarded. When an assassin's bullet ended McKinley's life, there was widespread concern among the business community that the new president, Theodore Roosevelt would be more difficult to deal with. There was little cause for alarm.

The three and one-half years of Roosevelt's first administration were cautious ones. He gained the support of the Republican party be retaining the McKinley Cabinet, and achieved popular support by invoking the Sherman Anti-Trust Act against the Northern Securities Company and pushing through Congress such laws as the Pure Food and Drug Act. But Roosevelt, like McKinley before him and Taft who followed, was a Republican. He couldn't afford to aleinate the business interests too much or too often.

Progressivism, which began at the turn of the twentieth century, saw that reform movement taken over by others when William Howard Taft assumed the Presidency in 1908. The undistinguished record of the Taft administration, and the schism which developed within the Republican Party, paved the way for a Democratic victory in 1912 for Woodrow Wilson. But the seeds of reform had been sown, and throughout the first 15 years of the twentieth century these seeds were to take root and become the dominant theme in American affairs.

Though the conflict in Europe would put an end to Progressivism in the United States, the reform movement and the battles fought by those who believed in that movement, had not been in vain. People were looking about them with a new pair of spectacles, investigating what was going on, and doing something about it. The interests of all the people were important, not just those of a privileged few. The people were forging an identity, coming to the realization that they had a common destiny and that their fortunes depended, in great measure, upon one another.

For the first year and a half of his administration, Woodrow Wilson fought hard for his "New Freedom" program. Then, just as it looked like the Progressive's new champion might lead the reform movement to fruition, war broke out in Europe. As the conflict across the Atlantic rushed on, the Progressive movement at home slowed down. By the time America entered the war, other issues had assumed such importance that the spirit of reform was overwhelmed.

If Americans were less united and somewhat lacked the fervor and spirit they showed during World War II, the enthusiasm they did display might be attributed in part to the desire to get the war over in a hurry in order to "make the world safe for democracy."

Following the war, America returned to conservatism. In 1920, Wilson, his party, the treaty, the League of Nations, and the war itself were repudiated. The people had had enough of the Progressive rhetoric and the Progressive mood. They were ready to relax and take things easy.

Entertainment-Communication

The first twenty years of the new century witnessed the first stirrings and gradual development of what we now call mass entertainment, and the subsequent rise of mass communications which would assume undreamed of importance in succeeding years.

Films, phonograph recordings, books, the increase in newspaper and magazine circulations, radio, and the vast vaudeville and theatrical circuits that linked the nation, were, in their own way, slowly but surely contributing to the formation of a national identity and the sharing of common interests. It is not too surprising that during this period, entertainment, following the trend in other American activities, became big business.

In light of what is to follow, two media of entertainment warrant a brief comment at this point.

Radio. Radio, the medium which would usher in a new era in entertainment in 1920, was making steady progress since Marconi first experimented with wireless telegraphy in 1895. Even those most responsible for its development did not comprehend its future possibilities for most of the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Vaudeville. During this period vaudeville was in its hey-day, with acts providing entertainment that ranged from acrobats to xylophone players.

A young man growing up during this period with at least some kind of musical or performing ability, theatrical ambitions, an urge to travel, and a lot of hope headed for vaudeville and the wonderful world of entertainment. It was during this era that Wendell Woods Hall came of age, and being a talented youngster with a great desire to travel headed for vaudeville and the beginning of a long and successful career in show business.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Wendell Woods Hall was born August 23, 1896 in St. George, Kansas, the third son of George F. and Laura Woods Hall. Mr. Hall's first four years were spent in Decatur, Illinois, where his father was minister of the Christian Tabernacle and his mother served as church organist. In 1900 the family moved to Chicago where Reverend Hall started the Bush Temple.

Wendell Hall's early musical training came first from his mother, then later developed at the various schools which he attended. Commenting on this early period Mr. Hall said:

My mother taught me all the music I knew as a kid. They tell me that as a baby, I would be found behind the organ; they had the old pump organ in the old days, and I would go to sleep back of the organ while dad was preaching and mother was playing.²

Mr. Hall's formal education consisted of a succession of schools including Kemper Military Academy in Boonville, Missouri; Lakeview, Lane Tech, and University high schools in Chicago. His first formal

musical training began when he enrolled at Kemper and joined the school band. Mr. Hall recalled that while at Kemper:

... I learned clarinet. That was my first instrument in a band, and then I took up trombone the next year. I was so musically full of it that I didn't bother to practice. I would hear a tune once and have it in my head. I didn't learn to read music to speak of in those days; I'd just sit down and play it. I was also the bugler at Kemper.³

Throughout Mr. Hall's high school days, which culminated in 1917 when he graduated from University High School, he was constantly engaged in developing his musical talents by performing in and around Chicago. At various times he could be found singing in quartets, as a church soloist, and performing at lodge meetings and in amateur theaters. At one point during this period, Mr. Hall got together with a neighborhood friend and formed a team which they called Hall and Hoyt. Mr. Hall recalled that, "Hoyt was my straightman, I was the blackface artist and played a little toy xylophone and told gags. We were just kids having a good time."⁴ The boys usually appeared only in amateur shows around Chicago, however, they once accepted a cafe offer. As amateurs Hall and Hoyt were not paid but allowed to keep all the money thrown on stage by the patrons. According to Mr. Hall, "That was our biggest take; I think it was ten bucks that night."⁵ This was the only time in Wendell Hall's career that he didn't work alone.

While performing in amateur shows around Chicago, Mr. Hall also found time to appear in school plays, join a dramatic club and form a glee club. He was a member of the track team and once held the Chicago high school record in the high hurdles.

Summers Mr. Hall spent with his family in Michigan and Wisconsin. It was during one of these summer trips that he first learned to play the ukelele, the instrument that would later become his trademark on radio. However, it wasn't the ukelele but rather the xylophone with which Mr. Hall first commenced his professional career. A xylophone manufacturer had his business a block from the Hall residence in Chicago and was interested in promoting his instrument. J.C. Deagen, the manufacturer, was a friend of the Hall family and knew of Wendell's musical interests and of his appearances throughout the city. Reverend Hall was induced to buy his son a xylophone and a career was launched. It was Mr. Hall's mother who taught him music and would often provide the accompaniment when he practiced on his new instrument. According to Mr. Hall he was the first person in vaudeville to sing and play the xylophone at the same time; there were many xylophone players on the circuit but no singing-xylophone performers. His first professional performance was a concert at Chicago's Medina Temple in 1915. Other xylophone concert engagements were with the Edison Symphony orchestra and at numerous churches around Chicago.⁶

If Wendell Hall had any thoughts about going to college following his graduation from high school in June, 1917, it was only wishful thinking. The family was bankrupt and it was all they could do to put their son through high school. Several years earlier, Mr. Hall's father retired from the ministry to speculate in Florida real estate. He purchased 30,000 acres in the middle of the state and planned to sell lots as soon as the land was developed. Although some 250 persons were attracted to the area and formed a community called Hall City, the project failed due to a lack of adequate transportation facilities; the hoped for railroad never materialized because of World War I. With the loss of the railroad the people deserted the town and George F. Hall was unable to salvage his investment. Later he took over a Standard Oil agency and then became a representative for Pepsi Cola in the South. Just out of high school and realizing the family's financial situation Mr. Hall saw that, "... I immediately had to make some money and the only way I knew how to do it was through music, because that was all I knew."⁷

VAUDEVILLE

According to Douglas Gilbert vaudeville was, "America in motley, the national relaxation...the theater of the people. Its life was incredibly brief--some fifty or sixty years...the end came with the folding of the New York Palace as a two-a-day in 1932."⁸ Despite

its short tenure and troubled existence, vaudeville became an American institution, "an integral part of American life,...reflecting the taste of the American people."⁹

Vaudeville was a personalized business. "The theaters were small; you could almost touch the actors on stage. Their personalities reached over the footlights"¹⁰ People throughout the country were eager for entertainment. In many cities the vaudeville house was the most important if not the only theater in town, and you didn't have to be wealthy to attend. The price of admission ranged anywhere from five cents to three dollars, and the entertainment was arranged to suit all tastes; everything from acrobats to comedy, singers to jugglers, and jazz to the classics. Vaudeville offered something for everyone.

Mr. Hall enters vaudeville. In 1917, the year America entered the war and Wendell Hall entered vaudeville, show business was suffering. Money that formerly bought tickets, was now buying Liberty Bonds. "Close to a million men abandoned theater attendance for close-order drill. Many more millions were busy with war plant overtime...."¹¹ Theater construction was halted when the government froze steel supplies. "Between 1914 and 1918 there were often more hardships in being a trouper than being part of the troops. When the Government took over the railroads ... trains were abruptly cut out of time-tables, and actors headed for Denver frequently wound up in Dallas."¹² When the draft thinned out casts as well as audiences, the single acts became more prevalent.

Wendell Hall broke into vaudeville doing three shows a day at the Rialto Theater in Chicago for \$75.00 a week. He was billed as "The Singing Xylophonist", and because of the impression he made, the lack of available talent, or both, the bookers decided to put him out on the road.

In vaudeville an artist, and all performers were called artists, was booked either on the big time or the small time circuit and in some cases worked both. The difference, according to Joe Laurie, Jr., was that "...calling the cheaper and smaller houses 'small time' clearly divided the better time (Big Time-two-a-day) and the small time (the house that did more than two-a-day or charged a cheaper admission)."¹³ The two major booking groups were the Keith and the Orpheum circuits, "which together constituted what was known as big-time vaudeville."¹⁴ Small-time or independent vaudeville organizations included: Loew's, Incorporated, the Pantages Circuit, The Greenwood Agency, and The Western Vaudeville Association.¹⁵ Brand new artists, or established artists who wanted to try out new material for the coming season, were offered by an agent first to a small-time booker for a tryout, "... for the act must break in, as they say in vaudeville, or it will never get a chance to show itself for a real route."¹⁶ These newcomers, as well as artists of limited talent were usually assigned by the booker to small out-of-the way theaters doing anywhere from three to five shows a day. The artists were paid so little they could barely get their meals out of the engagement. At the end of the break-in period, which usually ranged

from four to six weeks, the artist was submitted to regular bookers for a route over the circuit usually at the less important theaters. The hope of the small time artist was that a booker of big time talent would catch the act and like it. If this happened, "... a tentative route is laid out,...and the act begins to work in earnest. A few acts, if they prove sensationally good, are routed through for the entire season, but most of them get routed about six weeks at a time...."¹⁷ The big acts of the Keith and Orpheum circuits, the sought-after stars of vaudeville such as Nora Bayes, Fred Stone, Elsie Janis, Eva Tanguay, Bert Wheeler, and at most three hundred others, because of their ability and drawing power did not have to put up with the inconveniences suffered by the small timers. The established stars could and did command larger salaries, better routes, more consecutive weeks of work, shorter railroad jumps, and so on. The small timer was always at a disadvantage and always on the outside looking in, for there were always more acts than engagements.

Booked by The Western Vaudeville Association at \$95.00 a week, Wendell Hall toured the Midwest. His first route included engagements in Sandusky, Lorain and Cleveland, Ohio; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Sioux City, Iowa; St. Louis, Missouri; and numerous small towns in Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan.

The struggle. For the small-time vaudeville artist financial survival became a way of life, and Wendell Hall was no exception. Out of \$95.00 a week he had to pay ten per cent to his agent for the

privilege of working, railroad expenses, shipping costs for his six foot xylophone, room rent, meals, clothing, and any miscellaneous expenses. With little left he was unable to send any money home which had been his original intention.

The booking routes, the split weeks, and the number of shows per day were a constant source of irritation to the small-time artist. The jumps were terrific and the acts had to play three days and lose the rest of the week to make the next jump. They would owe themselves money when they finished the tour.¹⁸ Mr. Hall, commenting on this period said:

... you'd finish up at midnight, pack your clothing and equipment, and catch the 1:00 A.M. train and work three shows the next day. At one time they booked me from St. Louis to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. That's a big jump and I didn't have any money. My three big meals every night that week consisted of a hot dog for five cents, and in the morning I would have an egg. I never starved in my life until that point, but I made the jump and I kept working. I'd get caught once in awhile on more than three-a-day. I'd catch a four-a-day, I'd catch a five-a-day. I caught one in Gary, Indiana, the Broadway Theater, it was a little dump of a joint, probably seat a hundred people, I worked six shows a day. You didn't know how many shows you were going to do until you got there. You were just booked and you took it. You agreed to it. There's no agreement as to how many shows a day. As far as the big names, no I didn't work with big names to speak of, because I was working small time....¹⁹

The vaudeville program. The primary consideration in laying out a vaudeville bill was to give the audience a taste of everything. The booker had to be thoroughly familiar with hundreds of acts, so that he could tell almost instantaneously upon being offered a

certain "turn" (act) whether it would fit into any one of the programs he was laying out at the moment. A bill was built around its headliner, and in big-time theaters there might be anywhere from seven to nine acts on a program, with five acts for the small-time houses.

The position of the artist on the vaudeville bill was an indication of his importance. Mr. Hall always worked second which was the place reserved for musical or team acts. The bill was built around its headliner and that act was always scheduled next to closing, the best location on the program and the one which every act aimed at. Opening and closing any bill were either "dumb acts" -- acrobats, wire walkers, jugglers, trained animals, magicians, and the like, or flash acts--full stage acts with special scenery, lots of costumes and lighting effects, tending toward ostentation in production. Second spot on the bill, which was considered a fill-in position, usually went to a musical or a team act; an act that could work in front of the curtain while the stage was being prepared for the third act which was usually a full-stage affair. Fourth spot on a five-act bill was always reserved for the headliner.²⁰

A tentative bill was always laid out on paper by the booker, but a bill that looked fine on paper, even if it fit in to his weekly budget for that theater, would not always line up satisfactorily on the stage. That is where his practical and mechanical knowledge came in. It was not enough to have a bill that afforded the audience as great a variety of entertainment as possible. It had to work into

the backstage arrangements at the same time. In a vaudeville theater the scenery for one act had to be set while another was on the stage. Consequently there couldn't be too many full-stage acts. As a rule the booker tried to have the acts alternate, so that a full-stage act followed one played down in front of the curtain. The first act was always a full-stage act, and the second an act in one. While that "turn" was on, the stage was set for Number Three, which could be a full-stage act. These arrangements were arbitrary; often an act would open in one and go into a full stage along about the middle of the act, or an act would open with a full-stage set and close in one to accommodate the full-stage act which followed. A typical small-time theater which usually offered a five-act program, might have presented a bill which consisted of acrobats-full stage, followed by a musical act-in one, followed by a full-stage sketch, then a comedy team or a single in one (the headline act), and finally a full-stage flash act.²¹

Mr. Hall would open his act playing the xylophone and singing popular songs of the day such as "O' Johnny O'", "Dardnella", and "St. Louis Blues". In the middle of his performance he would always include one classical number, his favorite being "My Heart of Thy Sweet Voice", then wind up with a fast, flashy popular song. In most of the theaters played by Hall the acoustics were terrible, and coupled with the absence of an adequate sound system, "...you'd just have to get up there and belt it out. We had no such thing as

a loud speaker in those days and your voice had to be loud enough to carry to the back balcony or you didn't hold a job very long. There was no such thing as crooning. The song had to be belted out."²²

During this first vaudeville tour the idea of writing songs first occurred to Mr. Hall. Being number two, which was considered the lowest act on the bill, Mr. Hall would have to rehearse last. While waiting his turn he might hear the headliner or some other musical act use the songs he was prepared to sing. There was one way to remedy this Mr. Hall recalled, "...I'm going to write my own stuff, then they won't have it except me. That's how I got to write songs. That's how I started it."²³

After six or seven months of travelling from one vaudeville theater to another, Mr. Hall decided to go back to Chicago. "I could make more money there because I could live at home and wouldn't have the expenses that I had on the road."²⁴

He was booked by Benson Entertainment, an agency that supplied talent for various fraternal functions and social clubs in and around Chicago. Any given evening might find him providing entertainment for a Masonic Lodge gathering, an Elks Club dinner-dance, a fireman's picnic, or a special out-of-town convention. While the salary wasn't enormous, the work was steady and the expenses minimal.

Working in Chicago and living at home provided Hall the time for writing and publishing songs. His first, "Will You Forget Me While I'm Away" was published around June of 1918, just before he went into the service. By the time he entered the Army in August,

Mr. Hall had written three more songs: "Floatin Down the Mississippi on a Houseboat Built For Two", "Louie Louisian", and "All the Sammys Think a Lot of the Girls". Knowing a fertile field when he saw one Mr. Hall, "...took the songs into service and sold them to the boys."²⁵ On August 31, 1918 the draft caught up with Mr. Hall and he entered the Army.

THE WAR PERIOD

"In the Spring of 1918 10,000 troops a day left America's shores. There was Chateau-Thierry in July....",²⁶ and in September Wendell Hall was assigned to the 1st Pioneer Infantry and sent to Spartansburg, South Carolina. He was there two or three days when his musical past became known and was made Battalion bugler. The job didn't seem too arduous, "... we just sat out under a tree instead of getting in physical shape for the service. We'd just lay out there and let the other boys practice. I'd blow the bugle once in awhile just to get the lip in shape."²⁷ Three weeks later Hall and his battalion were sent to Camp Upton, New York.

At this time the country was suffering a flu epidemic, during which almost a quarter of the nation's population fell sick.

"Nineteen out of every 1,000 downed by flu died. Deaths tallied were between 400,000 and 500,000. Reaching into Army camps at home, the flu killed off half as many soldiers as died overseas."²⁸ At Camp Upton Mr. Hall recalled that, "... we we're there a week and

they started to die like flies with the flu."²⁹ Although he was exposed to the flu at Camp Upton, it didn't take effect until his battalion arrived in France.

For the 13 days it took to cross the Atlantic, Mr. Hall kept busy entertaining the officers by singing and playing his ukelele.

Several days after arriving in Brest, France the flu, which Mr. Hall had contacted at Camp Upton, finally caught up with him. This illness, combined with the pressure of blowing the bugle caused Mr. Hall's ear drum to break.³⁰ He was taken to the hospital where he spent the next several days with an extremely high fever. Following the crisis and while recovering, the Armistice was signed. Mr. Hall spent the next two or three months touring the convalescent wards entertaining casualties returning from the front.

When he wasn't entertaining troops Mr. Hall, assisted by two soldiers he met in the hospital, would entertain at various night clubs around Brest in order to earn a little spending money. "We'd pass the uke around and the customers would fill it up with francs. That's the only way we lived, because I had no money or mail. The Company didn't know where I was, they thought I was lost or dead."³¹

Shortly after the first of the year Mr. Hall's battalion, which had been sent to the front while he was in the hospital, came back through Brest. He joined them for the return trip to the United States. Arriving at Newport News, Virginia Mr. Hall came down with the mumps and spent the next several weeks in the hospital. He was then sent to Camp Grant, Illinois where he was discharged.

FROM VAUDEVILLE TO RADIO

Vaudeville in 1919 was having its troubles. Many of the top stars were deserting the theaters for the films and the Ziegfeld Follies. The public was discovering the cabarets and other forms of amusement. "King Vaudeville, once omnipotent, watched the crowds to in doddering bewilderment."³²

Home from the service and back in Chicago Mr. Hall was again faced with the necessity of having to earn a living, and he again chose vaudeville. Booked once more by The Western Vaudeville Association and later the Butterfield chain, he spent the next several months on the Canadian circuit and in theaters throughout Michigan and Wisconsin. For the first month of the tour he appeared on stage in his uniform having no money to spend on a theatrical wardrobe. Reviews of his work during this period may give some insight into his ability as an entertainer.

Wendell Hall intersperses a rousing xylophone concert with songs and southern negro impersonations. He received an enthusiastic reception.

Wendell W. Hall and his xylophone playing kept the audience calling for more selections until he exhausted his repertoire, which was a long one.

Wendell W. Hall, sweet singer and hailed as the champion xylophonist of the world, opens with a performance on the xylophone that brought out applause as vigorous as his playing. He uses four mallets in rendering his selections and the effect is very enthusing.

Wendell Hall--singing xylophonist, dressed in a tuxedo, wearing a chevron and happy smile, dashes out and rolls out melodies from the wooden instrument. Aside from his excellent playing, he possesses a splendid voice. He has a better offering than any other of its kind.

Wendell hall plays the xylophone with dash and brilliancy, evoking most pleasing music, from his unusually fine instrument. His thorough enjoyment of what he is doing is irresistible.³³

Taking these reviews as representative of the many he received, it seems reasonable to assume that Mr. Hall could well be considered a very entertaining and enthusiastic personality, and somewhat unique among vaudeville xylophonists. There were not many artists who sang as they played the xylophone and what is more, sang the songs they themselves composed.

Although conditions in vaudeville were slowly improving hardships still plagued the small time artist. He still coped with poor routes, split weeks, long railroad jumps, and low pay. A look at two of Mr. Hall's contracts during this period shows that the small timer was still struggling to free himself from the financial straightjacket imposed by the system. For playing the Strand Theater in Saginaw, Michigan, Mr. Hall's salary, after deducting his agent's commission was \$54.30, and for playing at the Bijou Theater in Lansing, Michigan he received \$40.20.³⁴

If Mr. Hall entertained any thoughts of leaving vaudeville at this time, events themselves relieved him of that decision. The end came because of an altercation with one of his bookers. It all

started in Oskosh, Wisconsin where, "... I had been with this act for a couple of weeks and was sweet on the girl singer. She told me this fellow, who had done a lot of my bookings, had gotten fresh with her. So, I knocked him on the jaw and was immediately blacklisted. I got no more vaudeville. I was done."³⁵

It appears Mr. Hall was blacklisted at just the moment in his life when the doors to the big time were about to swing open. Shortly after the fight with his booker he was offered a contract on the Pantages Circuit which would have taken him out of the small time category and given a big boost to his career. Mr. Hall remembered the incident clearly. It happened when:

... this fellow called me up and said he could book me 20 weeks or more at a week at a time. So I went out and bought myself a new white tuxedo with black trim, a new tailored trunk for the xylophone, and a new wardrobe trunk. I put out close to \$500 which was a lot of money in those days. Two weeks later I learned that it all fell through. So I think the fellow I hit told this booker to cut me out. I never got it, and I had all this new stuff on hand. That's when I went back into clubs.³⁶

Although finished with vaudeville for the time being, Mr. Hall would come back to it in 1927 at 30 times the salary he made in 1919.

Once again it was back to Benson Entertainment and club work. From the latter part of 1919, and for the next two years Wendell Hall was probably one of the busiest entertainers in Chicago. He appeared with the first ice show in the United States at the North American restaurants. "They would push the xylophone out on the ice and I'd do my fifteen minute act out there standing in these thinsoled,

patent leather shoes. I guess that's where I learned to get hot."³⁷

For a year he performed nightly at the Merry Garden ballroom as a member of Caesar Lyndon's dance orchestra. Days he could be found plugging songs behind the music counters of various Chicago stores. Since writing his first song in 1918 he continued composing and established the Hall Music Company in order to publish his own compositions.

Song pluggers abounded in Chicago and other cities during this period. They were singers and musicians who were employed by publishing firms, and who travelled not only from counter to counter, but wherever the opportunity presented itself to promote their company's songs and sheet music. Some of the better-known talent and the firms they worked for included: Lew Farris, Charley Harrison, Joe Vergus, Big Boy Yagel, Art Gillham, George Givot, and The Harmony Girls (Edith Carpenter-Grace Ingrahm) for Ted Browne Music Company; Tom Quigley, and Al Beilin for the Witmark Music Company; Rocco Vocco, Chester Cohen, and Ned Miller with Leo Feist Company; Billy Thompson, and Charley Straight with Remick Music Company; Frank Clark, Lew Butler and Charley Dale with Watterson-Berlin-Snyder Music Company; Abe Oleman, and Ray Zaher with Forester Music Company; Tell Taylor and Isham Jones with the Tell Taylor Music Company; Vernon and Don Bester, Jack Gould, and John Baxter with the Rossiter Music Company.³⁸ In the next few years many of these same people, along with Wendell Hall and other performers, would form the vanguard of early radio entertainment.

Mr. Hall made his first phonograph recording during this period. He was asked by band leader-composer Isham Jones to play the slide whistle. Mr. Hall had first taken up the instrument for his own amusement, and became so proficient that the manufacturer asked him to demonstrate it at the Century of Progress exhibition being held in Chicago. Mr. Hall responded to the invitation and spent the next few weeks in a booth out on Navy Pier. According to Mr. Hall:

I forgot whether they paid me or not; it was advertising for me because I would play my own songs. I was always plugging my music. The people crowded around our booth and we sold those whistles just as fast as they could be wrapped. I guess I made playing the instrument look pretty easy because the people got them home and they couldn't play them.

Isham Jones heard that I played the slide whistle and asked me to make a record with him. He was recording for Brunswick at the time in a little studio overlooking Wabash Avenue. So I went up, and with the room holding an 18-piece orchestra plus a grand piano, it was a pretty crowded affair. Recordings in those days were made by singing or playing into an inverted, six-foot, cone-shaped horn, and you had to get right up close before it would record effectively. Well, this studio being so small and so crowded that when it came time for the chorus, I had to crawl under the grand piano in order to whistle my part into the horn. Then I had to crawl back out again. That was the first recording I ever made and I didn't sing a note.³⁹

Mr. Hall left Caesar Lyndon's orchestra during the latter part of 1920 and formed his own trio. The Wendell Hall Society Trio, as it was known, consisted of a xylophone, piano, and drums. The group provided dance music for various society functions in and around Chicago.

Club dates, society engagements, song writing and song plugging occupied Mr. Hall throughout most of 1921. In the Fall of that year Mr. Hall recalled that:

I was on State street in one of the music stores and somebody said, hear that stuff over there, that's radio. I said, what's radio? They had a little crystal set and I put on the earphones and started to listen. First time I ever heard radio. I thought to myself, why not go into radio and see what happens. If I could make my songs go behind a music counter, and radio, I imagine covers many more people, then that's for me.⁴⁰

It seems quite logical and reasonable that once Mr. Hall heard of radio and learned of its potential coverage, he would seriously consider its possibilities as a medium that could further his musical career. He couldn't go back to vaudeville because of the blacklist and any new novelty that might possibly sell more songs was certainly worth thinking about.

It's not too difficult to find reasons which might have prompted many other small-time vaudeville artists, club performers, and song pluggers to turn to radio. It's reasonable to assume that for the small-time vaudeville artist tired of gypping agents, grafting bookers, high commissions, split weeks, cancellation clauses in the contracts, and the switching of routes, radio might be the vehicle which would lead to better bookings through wider exposure. For other artists who wouldn't or couldn't go back to vaudeville, radio offered the possibility of a new career in a new medium. For the entertainers booked on the club circuit there was little to lose by

giving their time and talent to radio; they weren't going anywhere anyway. It would take a supreme optimist to foresee a big time vaudeville career emerge from working club engagements. Thus they too stood to gain from radio in much the same way as the vaudeville artists. As for song pluggers, the value of radio to them would become obvious; by promoting their songs and sheet music over the air they could reach a greater audience than ever before, and audiences contained potential customers.

The fact that Mr. Hall was willing to explore this new medium does not mean that all small-time entertainers and song pluggers looked on radio as offering the possibility of a new career. Indeed, from the time radio first seized the imagination of the public, there were conflicting opinions from all walks of life concerning not only its utility but its longevity as well. There were many people who saw no future for radio. According to broadcast historian John J. Floherty:

The infancy of radio was an anxious period; few thought it would survive. H.G. Wells said in an interview, "The whole broadcasting industry will dry up." So uncertain were radio officials of the future of broadcasting that they introduced this clause into their contracts with radio entertainers: "The entertainers understand that the company may decide to discontinue radio broadcasting at said station and agree that in this event the company may forthwith terminate this contract without any liability for so doing."⁴¹

Contributing to the feeling that radio was not only a passing fancy but harmful as well were rumors that listening was bad for the ears, and that electric storms started fires in homes with radios. Radio was also blamed for dizzy spells, changes in weather and creaky floorboards. William S. Hedges, later to become an important broadcast executive and historian, in the early 1920s considered it completely unnecessary that the Chicago Daily News carry a radio section. According to Eric Barnouw, Hedges became radio editor of the paper and "was advised not to be unhappy; the thing might blow over like mah-jongg."⁴²

Despite the numerous gloomy predictions that radio's survival was at best tenuous, there were a few visionaries who saw in this new medium something of significance. Owen D. Young, chairman of the board of directors of the Radio Corporation of America said in 1922 that:

The possibilities of (radio) for progress are almost infinite. Radio can reach far more people than the phonograph, and can bring along with the music the information and culture and ideas which will make us wholly one democratic people, sharing ideals and purposes and plans.

.....
Radio will very soon be in the homes of both rich and poor everywhere. It will be the most universal and the cheapest form of publication man has imagined.⁴³

Former advertising executive Bruce Barton wrote in 1922 that, "Radio is here to stay," and was greatly optimistic over its future possibilities;⁴⁴ while David Sarnoff, later to become the chief executive of the Radio Corporation of America predicted in 1915

that the receiving set of the future would be what he termed a "Radio music box." According to Alfred N. Goldsmith and Austin C. Lescarbours, Sarnoff saw radio "clearly as a leading entertainment medium when others regarded it as a remarkable electric toy for grown-up children."⁴⁵ There were many persons who would play a part in determining whether radio would succeed; not the least of whom was Wendell Woods Hall.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter II

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³Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

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⁹Marion Spitzer, "The Business of Vaudeville," The Saturday Evening Post, May 24, 1924, 18.

¹⁰Joe Laurie, Jr., Vaudeville: From the Honky-Tonks to the Palace (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953), 4.

¹¹Abel Green and Joe Laurie, Jr., Show Biz From Vaude to Video (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951), 113.

¹²Green and Laurie, Jr., 116.

¹³Joe Laurie, Jr., 237.

¹⁴Spitzer, 18.

¹⁵Joe Laurie, Jr., 237.

¹⁶Spitzer, 19.

¹⁷Spitzer, 125.

¹⁸Joe Laurie, Jr., 243.

¹⁹Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

- ²⁰Spitzer, 130.
- ²¹Spitzer, 130.
- ²²Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ²³Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ²⁴Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ²⁵Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ²⁶Green and Laurie, Jr., 114.
- ²⁷Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ²⁸Green and Laurie, Jr., 114.
- ²⁹Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ³⁰Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
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- ³²Green and Laurie, Jr., 204.
- ³³Wendell W. Hall manuscript collection, University of Wisconsin Historical Library, U.S., Mss, 50 AF, Volume 1.
- ³⁴Wendell W. Hall manuscript collection, Volume 1.
- ³⁵Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ³⁶Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ³⁷Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ³⁸Letter from Ted Browne, Brandon Music Company, Chicago, Illinois, December 3, 1967 to George C. Biggar, forwarded to the writer.
- ³⁹Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ⁴⁰Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ⁴¹John J. Floherty, Behind the Microphone (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1944), 33.

⁴²Eric Barnouw, A Tower in Babel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 99, 103.

⁴³Stanley Frost, "Radio Our Next Great Step Forward," Collier's, April 8, 1922, 4.

⁴⁴Bruce Barton, "This Magic Called Radio," The American Magazine, June, 1922, 72.

⁴⁵Alfred N. Goldsmith and Austin C. Lescarbours, This Thing Called Broadcasting (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1930), 96.

CHAPTER III

A CAREER BEGINS 1920-1923

THE PERIOD OF THE "TWENTIES"

As the second decade of the twentieth century dawned, America awoke war-weary and disillusioned. The soldiers who marched off "to make the world safe for democracy" returned with second thoughts about the noble purpose of that crusade.

The enlightened Progressivism embraced in the early years of the century was formally abandoned. A general weariness seemed to envelop the country. The people were tired; tired of war, of reformers, and of being stirred up by political leaders. They felt it was time to relax and take care of themselves rather than looking after other people and the world in general. Americans wanted, and felt themselves entitled to a good time. The ship of state was about to set sail upon a search for "normalacy."

Political Atmosphere

In November of 1920 with the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations defeated and Woodrow Wilson a sick and broken man, the electorate sent to the White House Warren Gamaliel Harding. Handsome and amiable, his vague and soothing cliches seemed just what the people wanted after eight years of listening to the sermons of Wilson on duty, obligation, and national mission. For two years the

conservative Administration seemed to roll along with no program, no plan, no mission. Its undistinguished record came to an unexpected end with Harding's death in 1923.

Social Climate

If conservatism reflected the political climate of the early twenties, this philosophy did not permeate the social atmosphere of society in general. The minds of Americans were not on legislative matters or contests for office. People were preoccupied with ways of making money, with prohibition, with sports and amusements and, sometimes, with questions of race and religion.

During the first year of the period intolerance led to red scares, and because of labor unrest people listened to rumors of a huge radical conspiracy against the government and institutions of the United States. Intolerance took many forms including an ugly flare-up of feeling against the Negro, the Jew, and the Roman Catholic. It was during this period that the Klu Klux Klan came into power.

Perhaps it was the restlessness and tension caused by the aftermath of war which led to the hysteria over radicals and communism. In any event by 1921 the Big Red Scare was dying and the country was ready to relax. Although a sense of disillusionment remained it did not deter the people from becoming interested in, and amused by the new fads, scandals and trivialities which engulfed the country.

The revolution in manners and morals was one of the most noticeable results of disillusionment and the accompanying individualism of the American public. War had all but demolished the Victorian moral code that had long dominated American life, and the "roaring twenties were marked with a widespread moral laxity undreamed of only a few years before."¹

If the parents of this younger generation seemed overly confused, worried, and concerned over whether or not their children were becoming too obsessed with sex, cigarettes, gin, and games, they had every reason to be. For as Frederick Lewis Allen noted, "... the revolt of the younger generation was only beginning..."²

Recreation

The desire to have a good time was reflected in the recreational activities of the people. Better working conditions led to increased leisure time and this new sort of freedom saw automobiles crowd the highways with families out for a ride; a growing interest in professional sports; and a phenomenal increase in the numbers of golfers, tennis players and amateur baseball players.

Not all Americans, however, spent their leisure time engaged in outdoor activities. Across the country public libraries, museums, art and music classes increased, and by 1922 the Chinese game of Mah Jong had captivated the nation.

Entertainment-Communication

The revolution in morals and manners was greatly accelerated by novels, sex and confession magazines, tabloid newspapers, lurid motion pictures, Hollywood scandals and, to a certain extent, radio.

Books. In literature certain authors found themselves very influential and their books widely read and discussed. While some writers shocked the public through sex with such novels as Fabian's Flaming Youth and Newman's The Hard-Boiled Virgin, others such as Sinclair Lewis preferred to chronicle the revolt in manners by writing Main Street and Babbitt.

Magazines. The influence of the change in America spawned a bumper crop of confession and sex magazines. Stories like "What I Told My Daughter the Night Before Her Marriage," and "Indolent Kisses", are typical of the content contained in these magazines which flooded the newstands.

Newspapers. Tabloids such as the New York Daily News and Mirror were booming, and American life was presented not as a political and economic struggle, but as a three-ring circus of sport, crime, and sex.³

Motion Pictures. By the turn of the twenties the American film industry had become big business, and Hollywood was the "big time". Producers and directors might be colorful and rich, but they were overshadowed in public acclaim by their stars.

By 1922 according to Arthur Knight, "Hollywood had gained the reputation of being not only the most glamorous but also the most

corrupt city in the United States".⁴ With the general relaxation of morals that took place, not only in Hollywood but throughout the country, it's not surprising that the films reflected this change in moral standards.

Radio. While many Americans were content with the latest novels, newspapers, magazines, and movies others were not, and turned their attention to that fascinating device called radio which, in a few short years would literally change the habits of a nation.

RADIO IN THE NATION 1920-1923

The Beginning

Broadcasting in the United States developed slowly. Prior to 1920 radio transmission was of an experimental nature. Marconi in 1901 was successful in sending a wireless signal across the Atlantic Ocean, and nine years later it became mandatory that certain American passenger ships be equipped with wireless equipment. Sending and receiving messages by wireless was not considered "broadcasting", but rather point-to-point communication. Broadcasting as we know it, was made possible by Lee de Forest in 1907 when he discovered the audion tube which permitted the modulation of sound; and just three years later the voices of Enrico Caruso and Emmy Destinn were broadcast from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

From 1910 to 1917 experimentation in broadcasting focused on investigating various forms of program materials. When the United

States entered World War One, the government stopped all radio experimentation and took over nearly all wireless installations.

When the government removed the war-time radio restrictions late in 1919, it didn't take long for interest to develop. As Robert E. and Harrison B. Summers commented, "... early in 1920, equipment manufactures and amateur radio enthusiasts renewed their experiments with the broadcasting of radio programs -- talks, vocal music, or music from phonograph records."⁵

There are many radio stations which lay claim to the title of "first" with KDKA, Pittsburgh, WHA, Madison, WWJ, Detroit, and KCBS, San Francisco considered among the most prominent contenders. However, despite the claims and counterclaims, "most historians consider that regular broadcasting in the United States began on November 2, 1920" when station KDKA broadcast the returns of the Harding-Cox election and began a regularly scheduled program service.⁶

Popular acceptance of radio as a means of mass communication developed with amazing speed. What had been for years the beguiling hobby of amateur experimenters, fascinated by the details of technical exploration, began to grip the imagination of a vast non-technical public. For the thousands whose radio interest had a scientific basis there were soon to be millions whose interest was aroused solely by the novelty of a new source of entertainment and information.⁷

Growth and Development

Stations and sales. In November of 1920 when KDKA broadcast the election returns, there were probably no more than 20 stations in the United States, serving at most 1,000 homes. The year 1922 witnessed the growth of a fantastic number of stations; from 28 stations in January the total grew to over 570 by December and receiving sets were in use in nearly a million homes.⁸

Sales of radio sets and parts which had reached \$60,000,000 in 1922 went up to \$136,000,000 in 1923, and by 1924 the public investment in equipment zoomed to \$358,000,000.⁹ Gleason Archer noted that the first issue of Radio Broadcast contained the following comment:

The rate of increase in the number of people who spend at least a part of their evening in listening in is almost imcomprehensible. To those who have recently tried to purchase receiving equipment, some idea of this increase has undoubtedly occurred, as they stood perhaps in the fourth or fifth row at the radio counter waiting their turn only to be told when they finally reached the counter that they might place an order and it would be filled when possible.... The movement is probably not even yet at its height.... It seems quite likely that before the movement has reached its height, before the market for receiving apparatus becomes approximately saturated, there will be at least five million receiving sets in this country.¹⁰

Receivers. For the first two or three years most of the receiving sets were home-made; many were of a 'crystal' type. Stanley Frost, commenting on two types of early receivers said that, "One ... is the little black box, with knobs on top and a telephone

headpiece with which one can hear concerts and lectures a hundred miles away, and the other the little crystal set, smaller and cheaper and good for only about twenty miles."¹¹

Although almost all listening was done through earphones, loud speakers were available by 1922, but they were crude devices given to distorting sounds. They also placed a drain on the batteries which powered all receivers. According to John Spalding, "The usual practice was to connect the set to earphones, and as Gleason Archer remarked in his history of radio, wearing earphones was hardly a pleasant way to spend an evening."¹²

Networks and equipment. There were no networks during this period although the idea of linking stations together had been discussed. Many broadcasting studios were merely converted cloakrooms, too small to accommodate audiences, or even small orchestras as in the case of the KDKA Little Symphony Orchestra. According to Alfred Goldsmith and Austin Lescarbours, "Until it was decided to broadcast the band, all the transmitting was done in a very small room. The entire band would not fit in it, to say nothing of the tubas, horns and trombones."¹³ Studio walls were draped with old rugs, burlap, and later monk's cloth in order to eliminate the resonance. Only carbon microphones were used and these came in assorted shapes and sizes. At station WJZ, Newark, "... one resembled a dishpan, another a tomato can suspended from a music stand."¹⁴

Problems. During this period chaos was in the air. Prior to October of 1922 all transmitters were compelled to operate on the same

wave length of 360 meters. This resulted in no end of interference, and the listener often found himself receiving not one station, but two or even three stations at the same time. Then, in the Fall of 1922 the Department of Commerce introduced a special class "B" designation for those stations of high power, good programming, and good rendition. Class "B" stations were allowed to operate on the 400-meter wave length, making them non-interfering with stations broadcasting on the 360-meter wave length. Even with two wave lengths available, the scores of additional stations entering the field each month led once again to the interference problem. As a result broadcasters began drifting all over the dial -- anywhere from 280 to 420 meters -- in an effort to reduce mutual interference.¹⁵

Commerical operation. Throughout this stage of development stations were owned by many different groups for varying reasons; manufacturers of radio receivers who hoped to profit from the sale of sets; newspapers and department stores for the purpose of promotion and good-will; colleges and universities as a means of extending the classroom; churches with the hope of bringing religion to people who would otherwise be without; and numerous other concerns such as radio repair shops, insurance companys, labor and fraternal organizations, and amateurs. There was no full-time operation by any station. Until around 1923 a station broadcast on an average of no more than three or four hours a day.¹⁶

Although the first commercial message was broadcast in August of 1922, potential advertisers did not stand in line to go on the air.

Because direct advertising was prohibited, many business concerns were wary of the results. In time many tried it and were enthusiastic. Early sponsors included Gimbel Brothers, Macy and Company, a dentifrice manufacturer, a motion picture producer, and a political organization. December of 1923 saw 13 sponsors, and by April of the same year, the first commercial program designed exclusively for radio was broadcast.¹⁷

Programming. With radio being non-commercial entertainers were not paid for performing over the air, and on many stations even regular announcers worked for nothing.

Programs were of a hit and miss nature. Regular schedules, exact timing, formal openings and closings did not exist; news broadcasts and the idea of a program series had yet to be developed. There was some recorded music, however, broadcasters were limited mainly to live entertainment such as music and talks. Larger stations made wide use of 'remotes' such as broadcasting football and baseball games as well as operas and plays.

THE CHICAGO ERA

The City

Chicago at the turn of the twenties was, in many respects no different from other large cities; although the end of the war brought peace, peace brought problems.

Organized crime was on the rise. With prohibition, gangs were getting interested in liquor, and fighting over territories.

Bruce Linton noted that, "Jim Colosimo was the first vice lord in 1920, followed by Johnny Torrio. He in turn, was overrun by a hoodlum from New York called Al Capone."¹⁸ With brothels, bombings, booze, and gambling Chicago was fast becoming a pasture for pleasure, and apparently many Chicagoans as well as political bosses couldn't care less. Both the Democratic and Republican parties were buried in corruption and Mayor William "Big Bill" Thompson did little to alleviate the situation.¹⁹

With the peace, war production ended and widespread unemployment began; especially among the Negroes who were slowly building the ghettos of the city. Race riots and labor unrest were common, and people who complained were thought to be reds.

It was in this atmosphere that Wendell Hall and broadcasting first got together. Eric Barnouw commented that it was a glorious time. All was optimism. Very little of the turbulent world showed through the surface. Along with mah jongg and the hip flask, radio was reflecting the nation's determination not to look at its problems.²⁰

Radio in Chicago

The first station. The Westinghouse Corporation opened Chicago's first radio station, KYW on November 11, 1921, with the studio located in the Commonwealth Edison building.²¹ A member of the KYW staff at the time, Gayle Swift recalls how this came about:

The Edison Company was one of the Westinghouse organizations largest customers in the midwest, and they approached the Edison Company with the idea of a radio station in Chicago. They were to furnish the equipment and the technicians and the Edison Company was to furnish the station, studio space and programs.²²

The KYW program schedule for the 1921-22 season was, according to Eric Barnouw, "... entirely Chicago Civic Opera. All performances, afternoon and evening, six days a week, were broadcast -- and nothing else."²³

It appears that the decision to inaugurate broadcasting in Chicago with opera was a wise one; it was also wise on the part of publicity-minded Mary Garden, general director of the Chicago Civic Opera, to allow the performances to be broadcast. Some of the wisdom and shrewdness of both station and opera company may be seen in the statistics of the estimated audience. At the beginning of the season there were an estimated 1300 receiving sets in Chicago. By the end of the opera season 20,000 sets were in use in Chicago alone.²⁴ This boom was not confined to Chicago but extended to the entire Middle West, and radio dealers in the entire region were frantically endeavoring to supply the demand for radio outfits.²⁵

According to Mr. Swift, the first broadcast over KYW was from:

... the Auditorium Theater with the opera Aida. The pickup consisted of one carbon-type microphone encased in a cardboard tube about the size of a poind can of coffee. The mike was hung about 20 feet down from the ceiling, and the engineer sat in the front row in the second balcony with the amplifier in his lap. This continued until the end of the opera season on February 2, 1922 when the studio was opened on the top floor of the Edison building.²⁶

The KYW studio which opened in February of 1922 was very similar to others around the country. Mr. Swift said that:

This studio had no windows, velvet drapes from ceiling to floor, two aeolian grand pianos and a small reed organ. The microphone was hung at one end of the room on a wooden tripod affair, in front of which were brass strips screwed into the floor at one foot intervals. This was to the artist where to stand, as the engineer had no volume control and ran the amplifier wide open.²⁷

It appears that KYW built up a rather large audience by broadcasting the Chicago Civic Opera. The popularity of these broadcasts thus presented a problem to station officials when the opera season closed. The management of KYW realized that the vast radio audience must be entertained. Having listened to the best of musical offerings, the public would scorn phonograph records or amateur talent. Therefore, if the station was to maintain its quality image, it was imperative to engage competent personnel and professional entertainers. From an opening night nucleus of no more than two or three people, by February of 1922 the KYW staff had grown to approximately ten persons. When the opera season ended, KYW was ready to substitute a 12-hour broadcasting service of the most comprehensive type yet offered by any radio station in America.²⁸

Personnel. The pioneer KYW staff which finally emerged included: E.L. Jasper and Wilson Wetherbee, directors; Walter Evans, chief engineer; Morgan Eastman, musical and program director; Gayle Swift, assistant musical director; A.W. "Sen" Kaney, announcer; E.H. Gager, assistant engineer; Sallie Menkes, accompanist; Wendell Hall, staff artist.²⁹

Programming. Following the opera season a typical KYW day began at 9:30 A.M. and ended late at night. Market quotations started the broadcast day, then came livestock quotations, news flashes, bedtime stories, sports reports, and classical music. The best entertainment commenced in the evening and every attempt was made to keep these musical programs up to the standard set by the Opera Company. Although not all of the entertainment was on the artistic level of the opera, nothing second-rate or amateurish was permitted.³⁰

9:30 A.M. Reading board of trade prices--repeated at half hour intervals until market closes.

1:30 A.M. Market summary with live stock receipts and prices.
Chicago Tribune furnished quotations and general news.

Afternoon Various programs of talks and special music.

7:15 P.M. Children's programs.

7:30 P.M. Sports round-up

8:00 P.M. (except Friday and Saturday) Chicago Opera Company.

Sunday afternoons Chapel services.

A typical evening musical program heard on KYW in the Spring of 1922 is as follows:

Cradle Song, Song of the Soul, Carolina Rose, I Wonder if You Still Care For Me, I know a Lovely Garden....In the Gloaming, Oriental Jazz.

Emilia Cipriani	-- Soprano
Sallie Menkes	-- Accompanist
Dimitri Styop	-- Baritone
Herbert Carlin	-- Acompanist
Wendell Hall	-- Singing Xylophonist
Frank Healy	-- Monologue

In assembling this schedule Bruce Linton noted that the programming was basically music with a rather surprising variety of informational talks, stories, and sports reports.³¹

Wendell Hall: The Beginning

Throughout his radio career Wendell Hall was always closely associated and identified with station KYW. No matter how far he traveled in the succeeding years, Mr. Hall would always return for an occasional visit to the station where it all began.

There is some confusion as to the exact date Mr. Hall first broadcast over KYW. Mr. Hall remembers that his first appearance over KYW was in late 1921, however, available evidence indicates that his first appearance before the microphone probably took place shortly after the station opened its studio in February of 1922. It is not surprising that station officials, looking for quality entertainers, engaged Mr. Hall who had come out of vaudeville and was performing professionally around Chicago. Commenting on Mr. Hall's debut over the air, Wilson Wetherbee, Director of KYW said:

The radio, all by itself, has made quite a number of reputations. One day a young red-headed singer and song writer came to our office and said he wanted to try broadcasting some of his songs. At that time he was known to a few music fans and people in the song writing business.... This chap saw he would have to make his songs go, if they were to go at all; and he decided to tackle the biggest of all audiences -- the radio listeners. He got his chance; and in a very short time became famous.³²

For the first few months Mr. Hall entertained on the average of two or three evenings a week over KYW. The rest of his time was spent making club appearances around Chicago. In time, the expense and inconvenience of hauling his six-foot xylophone to the studio led to his changing to the ukelele, and later accepting a job as the station's first paid sustaining staff artist. He received \$25.00 a week and worked from 3:00 P.M. to 3:00 A.M.³³

Radio appeal. It was at KYW that Mr. Hall first tasted the success and popularity that had so long eluded him; and it was there that he first developed and later perfected his broadcast style. Throughout 1922 and up until his radio tour in June of 1923, Mr. Hall was probably the best known and most listened to entertainer in Chicago. Wilson Wetherbee commented that the station received "more requests for songs from 'Wen Hall' than from anybody else;³⁴ and A.W. Kaney recalled that rather than dialing for distance, "many listeners would be looking for Wendell thereby increasing the station's audience."³⁵

In addition to his rising popularity, Mr. Hall was also seeing the tangible results of radio as a promotional medium. In pre-KYW days Mr. Hall's musical compositions were only moderately successful, and made no appreciable headway in the hands of a publisher who resorted to the usual avenues open to publishers for exploiting a new creation. Mr. Hall's purpose in going on the air was to gain publicity for himself and create a demand for his songs. His decision to use radio to promote himself and his songs apparently paid off. While

singing and playing his ukelele over KYW Mr. Hall found that many of his sheet music increased enormously during this period. Sheet music sales of one composition, "Mellow Moon" was estimated to have sold more than a quarter of a million copies.³⁶ Mr. Hall's idea of using the radio to promote his songs was quickly seized by other music publishers and before long, the many Chicago stations which came into existence during 1922 found themselves overrun with song pluggers anxious to "work for nothing."

While performing as a staff artist over KYW Mr. Hall would occasionally entertain over other Chicago stations as well. In this way he hoped to reach more people and thus sell more of his music.

In addition to broadcasting, making personal appearances, and recording on such labels as Edison and Vocalion, Mr. Hall continued writing songs, many of which became hits. In 1921 he wrote "My Carolina Rose"; in 1922 he authored "Underneath the Mellow Moon"; 1923 saw his most popular song published, "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'"; in 1924 "Piccaninny Lullaby" came out; in 1925 the country first heard "Land of My Sunset Dreams"; and in 1926 "Wispering Trees" hit the market. Mr. Hall once commented that he seemed to have been able to write just one outstanding hit each year. Three of these songs, the hits of 1923-24 had a total circulation of over five million copies.³⁷

Mr. Hall's activities at KYW were not confined solely to entertaining. Because of his professional contacts around Chicago, and the station's desire to maintain a high level of programming he was kept busy recruiting talent who would broadcast for nothing.

Emphasizing radio's large audience and the publicity value of broadcasting, he had little difficulty engaging professional artists to appear over the air. These performers usually entertained two or three nights a week on a program known as the "Midnight Review" or "Midnight Frolics". The programs, arranged by Mr. Hall consisted of 14 or 15 all-star vaudeville acts and ran from 10:00 P.M. to 3:00 A.M. Many of the artists who appeared over KYW and who first brought a touch of professionalism to this new medium, later became stars in their own right either on radio itself, or because of radio, in vaudeville.

Radio style. Coming from the stage to the microphone required a certain ability to adapt to a totally new environment. Not only was it the lack of payment that kept the finer artists from the air, but also the fear of the unknown; those with reputations would not risk their good names by submitting to the harsh fate that might await them over the air.³⁸ Then there was that nonstrous mechanical microphone that caused even the most seasoned performer to quiver and quake. The small-time professional, however, had no such reputation to lose and everything to gain.

There is nothing to indicate that Wendell Hall had any great difficulty adjusting to the microphone, even though it took him awhile to get use to playing to an empty house. It appears that Mr. Hall realized early in his radio career the difference between playing to a live audience and playing to an unseen audience, and what adaptations were necessary in order to please the latter.

Being vaudeville-trained Mr. Hall had to revise his entire technique and adopt a new method of approach; one that would capture and hold this new kind of audience; an audience whose laughter or applause did not register until it began to trickle in the morning mail two or three days later.

Mr. Hall learned what kind of songs to sing and how to sing them; what kind of jokes to tell and monologues to spin, and above all he learned the importance of personality and variety. Mr. Hall felt the only thing a radio entertainer could convey to his audience was his voice, and that all of his personality had to go into that voice. He understood that a distinct personality was needed to be successful on the air, and as he put it, "... the radio performer must feel his invisible audience; while the stage star gets continual stimulus from the listeners right in front of him, the mike entertainer must possess good imagination to picture his tuners-in."³⁹ Mr. Hall realized that, as Robert Landry phrased it, "Personality made the medium, built the ratings."⁴⁰

In an interview at the time Mr. Hall said he felt his programs were successful as long as he was enjoying his own entertainment. As long as he could laugh at himself the audience would laugh with him. He said the same jokes could not be used more than once; that a fresh program was needed every night because a radio entertainer could never have a fresh audience. He contrasted this with the vaudeville act that could be used for years on the circuit without any necessity for

a change arising. He also became accustomed to working in a vacuum, pointing out that "... there is nothing so quenching to a joke than silence, and the joke of a radio entertainer is followed by the silence of a continent."⁴¹

Mr. Hall varied his program from night to night, often interspersing jokes and stories between musical selections. His microphone manner was informal, and depending on the song being sung or the story being told, ran the gamut from boisterous enthusiasm to quiet intimacy. A newspaper article describing Mr. Hall's broadcast style noted that:

His facial expression changed every second with the changes in his song. His voice jumped from low to high and back to low. He shook his head at the mike, now coxingly, moving over close and almost whispering to it, then jumping away and standing with feet apart singing his loud and defiant tones. The next minute he was back in his chair again bending over to sing coxingly to the mike. He finished in his innimitable negro dialogue.⁴²

Mr. Hall might well be called the originator of the one man show on radio. He did everything expected of a versatile entertainer; played a variety of instruments including the xylophone, ukelele, slide whistle, trombone, saxophone, and clarinet; sang and popularized not only his own songs but the songs of others. His repertoire included ballads, blues, jazz, novelty, and classical selections. His speaking voice was warm and friendly; his approach informal. Between songs he would often chat with his unseen audience about himself and his relatives. He loved a good joke and was fond of telling stories in a two-voice negro dialect.

Much of the early informality on radio would be greatly curtailed with the advent of the networks who demanded a more formal and serious approach to broadcasting. During this period broadcasting was fun, it was new, it was exciting, and the people engaged in this activity were young, optimistic, and enjoyed themselves immensely. Mr. Hall fondly recalled that he had "... more fun in the early days of radio than at any other time during my career in show business."⁴³

A number of Mr. Hall's contemporaries, recalling his broadcast style and presentation, may offer some insight into the reasons for his success and popularity. An article in the Herrin Journal told of his "... intimate, friendly style of presentation,"⁴⁴ and C.E. Ahrens writing in the Akron-Times Press said, "... it isn't all ukelele and drawling voice that made him top-notch in radio. It's a personality which surrounds him with an aura of friendliness."⁴⁵ Station KYW's first announcer A.W. Kaney felt that Mr. Hall was a "... good singer ... exuberant and had a firm quality to his voice that registered well on early radio. Above all he was 'clean' -- never sang an 'off color' song...."⁴⁶ Mrs. Gleason Archer, a former radio songstress whom Mr. Hall first put on the air under the name of Polly Willis, recalled that he was "... always admired for his fine character and cheerful personality." And that he did "... a great deal for early radio -- setting the style and ease of air delivery. He made the standard type of song a lasting style."⁴⁷ Mr. Fred Smith, former program director of station WLW, Cincinnati called Mr. Hall a "unique personality:

jovial and lovable."⁴⁸ Mr. George Biggar, former station manager of WLS, Chicago recalled that Mr. Hall "... really put over his words with good diction and plenty of enthusiasm. His use of different voices ... was a great evidence of the artist's showmanship. His singing might also be called 'infectious'".⁴⁹

RADIO PIONEERS

Giraud Chester and Garnet R. Garrison expressed the opinion that:

... broadcasters found themselves for the first two or three years under no great pressure to offer top notch performers. Instead they relied on ... the seemingly endless supply of free talent that came to the studio.... Good, bad, and indifferent musical artists were coaxed to the microphone.... This was the period of the "great plague" of mediocre sopranos....⁵⁰

Others such as Robert Landry said that, "During the twenties radio programs were necessarily crude and congenitally amateur.... program managers could not be choosy."⁵¹ While the above statements may be partially true they do not tell the whole story. During the first three or four years of radio, there was throughout the country a relatively small group of talented, professional artists who, although working for little or no money, were slowly developing the form, and setting the style and pattern which radio entertainment would eventually adopt, modify, and improve upon. It might be well to recall some of the early performers who contributed so much to the development of radio entertainment.

Midwest and Western Pioneers

With Chicago the center of musical and theatrical activities in the midwest, it is not surprising that such a large reservoir of professional talent was available when the broadcasting boom hit the city in 1922.

Entertainers. The singers and musicians who entered radio in Chicago all followed the lead of Wendell Hall. It was Mr. Hall's success and popularity that prompted other Chicago entertainers to try broadcasting. Some of the early artists who came out of vaudeville into radio included "The Harmony Girls," Edith Carpenter and Grace Ingram; "Happy" Harry Geise; Grace Wilson; Riley and Goss; Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll who appeared over WEBH in 1924 as a harmony team and later became famous as Amos 'n' Andy; "The Gaelic Twins," Eddie and Fanny Cavanaugh; Carson Robinson; the team of Little Jack Little and Tommy Malie; Paul Lougher, who later teamed with "Little" Jack Little as "Little and Small"; Ford and Glenn, Ford Rush and Glenn Rowell; "The Whispering Pianist", Art Gillham; Don Bester; and the orchestra of Coon-Sanders out of station WDAF, Kansas City. Although there were many studio orchestras, "The Nighthawks" were probably the most popular and widely imitated group in the midwest.⁵²

Announcers. At most stations announcers preceeded entertainers and thus came to radio fame earlier. However, most announcers were hired not only because of their speaking ability, but also because of their musical talents; in this way they could fill-in if a scheduled

entertainer failed to appear. Most of the early radio announcers worked single-handed. They not only announced the programs, but organized them as well. In addition they adlibbed the announcements, and in a pinch, had to supply the entertainment themselves.⁵³ Those in the midwest who set the style for future radio announcers included: A.W. "Sen Kaney, KYW, Chicago; the "Solumn Old Judge," George Hay of WLS, Chicago; Jack Nelson and Ralph Shugart of Wdap, Chicago; "Gloomy Gus," Gayle Grubb of KFAB, Lincoln; "The Hired Hand," Harold Hough of WBAP, Ft. Worth; "The Merry Old Chief," Leo Fitzpatrick of WDAF, Kansas City; and Edwin "Ty" Tyson of WWJ, Detroit. According to Robert Landry by 1925 probably a dozen of the best-known announcers were national celebrities, some on the basis of good diction and all because of an engaging personality.⁵⁴ Ted Husing remarked that many of these local station announcers, who had built up personalities under various whimsical tags were essentially parlor or informal entertainers; comedians, philosophers, and neighborhood types who talked to the audience in a relaxed manner.⁵⁵

While these pioneer performers were contributing to the development of radio entertainment in the midwest, other entertainers were playing just as important a part in the eastern section of the country.

Eastern Pioneers

Just as station KYW in Chicago pioneered professional entertainment in the midwest, so it was with stations WJZ, Newark, and WEAJ, New York in the East.

Entertainers. Some of the professional singers and musicians who very early came before the microphone, and stayed to serve as models for those that would follow included: "The Original Radio Girl", Vaughn de Leath of WJZ who was not only a composer and singer, but a talented pianist as well; "The Harmony Boys", Billy Jones and Ernest Hare who came out of vaudeville and set the style for future song and patter teams; "The Sweethearts of the Air", May Singhi Breen and Peter de Rose, the first of the popular song and instrumental duos; "The Silver Masked Tenor", Joseph White; the Shannon Four, a quartet later known as the Revelers; comedians such as Stoopnagle and Budd, Ed Wynn, and Will Rogers; Dr. Walter Damrosch who helped popularize serious music in America; and the orchestras of Vincent Lopez, Paul Whiteman, Fred Waring, B.A. Rolfe, and Larry Funk with his "Band of a Thousand Medodies".⁵⁶

Announcers. The men who became the vocal symbols of their station and later legends in their own time included: Thomas Cowan and Milton Cross of WJZ; Cowan once served as an extra with the Metropolitan Opera, and Cross was working as a church soloist when first asked to broadcast; Graham McNamee of WEAJ was a trained singer, had experience as a church soloist, and had appeared in many concerts prior to going on the air. Other pioneer announcers were Nils T. Granlund, Major J. Andrew White, Normal Brokenshire, John Daniel, Phillips Carlin, S.L. "Roxy" Rothafel, the style-setting master of ceremonies of the Capital Theater in New York; and Lambdin Kay the "Little Colonel" of WSB, Atlanta.⁵⁷

Pioneer Sponsors

During this period rules pertaining to radio advertising were quite rigid and kept many stations from experimenting with it. What was called "direct" advertising was not permitted. William Banning said that, "it was largely through the gift of entertainment that the station facilities began to be used for the promotion of public good will."⁵⁸ Many early sponsored programs developed from sustaining features which had secured wide public acclaim. These features were made available to business concerns that wanted to test radio's appeal to the public.⁵⁹

Programs and performers. Just as Wendell Hall became popular throughout the country as "The Eveready Red-head," under the auspices of the National Carbon Company, other performers acquired sponsor identities. Billy Jones and Ernie Hare became known as the "Happiness Boys" when the Happiness Candy Stores began to "sponsor" their entertainment. In time Jones and Hare became variously known as the "Interwoven Pair" for Interwoven Socks, the "Best Foods Boys" for Best Foods, and the "Taystee Loafers" for Taystee Bread. Promoting good will and identifying the sponsor or his product was also sought for Cliquot Club Ginger Ale by broadcasting the music of Harry Reser's "Ipana Troubadours" reminded listeners of a toothpaste by that name. The "Gold Dust Twins," performed in behalf of a like-named cleansing powder. The "Silvertown Cord," orchestra was sponsored by the manufacturers of the Silvertown Cord auto tire and featured "The

Silver Masked Tenor." There was a "Lucky Strike" orchestra, and an orchestra known as the "A. & P. Gypsies," conducted by Harry Horlick.⁶⁰

The early "ether" entertainers came to radio for a variety of reasons; some for publicity, others for promotion, and many because they had failed to achieve success in their initial profession. Those who stayed found that radio opened up a whole new career; one that in a very short time could lead to undreamed of popularity.

Early radio entertainment was sustained and nurtured by the performers who brought a professional background with them to the microphone. These artists not only offset the amateur and mediocre people who flocked to the studios, but provided the fledging industry with a framework for the future.

During this period the importance of professional entertainment and featured personalities began to be recognized. People started listening to certain performers and programs rather than merely DXing (dialing for distant stations). This change in listening habits was due in no small measure to Wendell Hall and other pioneer professional entertainers.

Entertainers are constantly looking for new horizons to conquer and Wendell Hall was no exception. Sometime during the latter part of 1922 he conceived a plan which would make him a nationally-known celebrity. This plan became a reality in 1923.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter III

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CHAPTER IV

THE GOOD YEARS 1923-1930

THE PERIOD OF THE TWENTIES

When Warren G. Harding died--sometime before the full enormity of the scandals of his administration became known--he was succeeded by Vice President Calvin Coolidge.

By the time Coolidge reached the White House, the tensions of the earlier years of the Post-war decade had been largely relaxed. The people expressed little interest in genuine public issues, and turned their attention to such ballyhooed events as murder trials, sports spectaculars, and trans-atlantic flights. The march of tremendous trivia was about to begin and the country lined up to watch the passing parade.

The Economic Climate

The Coolidge era was one of frenzied, speculative prosperity and business had the encouraging support of the Administration. The President himself stated that, "... this is a business country; it wants a business government. The man who builds a factory builds a temple and the man who works there worships there."

Un-brideled prosperity plummeted ahead and shortly after the Florida real estate boom exploded in 1926, the Big Bull Market in common stocks began. In addition to stockmarket speculation,

prosperity was stimulated by the increase in installment buying. People found it easier and more convenient to use credit rather than cash when purchasing goods.

The Political Situation

The Administration accomplished little in the way of foreign or domestic matters. Business, aided by the rise of advertising and the absence of government interference, prospered and became almost the national religion. When the scandals of the Harding Administration were uncovered, Coolidge remained calm and the public apathetic. Business was good; why dwell on the past? Concerning Prohibition the President expressed no opinion except to say the laws should be enforced. If he did nothing else Coolidge at least maintained the status quo for the benefit of business.

Many persons felt that the chief prophet and high priest of Republican prosperity and conservatism was neither Harding nor Coolidge, but rather Herbert C. Hoover who had served under both men as Secretary of Commerce, and who was himself elected President in 1928.

Hoover was in office less than a year before his philosophy of government was tested and found tragically inadequate. What halted the forward progress of business was the fact that the businessmen of America had become bemused with paper values. In October of 1929 the bottom literally dropped out of a bullish stock market and a decade of unparalleled prosperity came to a sudden end.

Social Climate

The seven years from 1923 to the end of 1929 saw the country seize just about every new event, fad, fashion, or novelty and push its importance far out of proportion to its actual worth.

Intolerance continued to be a factor in American social life. More and more Negroes were finding conditions intolerable when forced to live in city ghettos, and antisemitism still prevented many Jewish children from attending the school of their choice.

As the decade rushed toward oblivion manners and morals continued to take a beating. Sex was taken out of the closet and allowed in the parlor; it had arrived. Women, having won the right to vote were demanding full social equality as well. They had fought hard for their economic independence and they meant to enjoy every dollar of it. The Victorian code was crumbling rapidly and high heels could be found on the brass rails of speakeasy bars from New York to San Francisco.

Prohibition and crime went hand in hand. Al Capone was firmly entrenched as head of the Chicago underworld and gang rule and gang violence quickly penetrated other major American cities.

Recreation

Whenever America became wound to tightly and wanted to relax, to take things easy, it did so with reckless abandon. Following the same frenzied pattern of life so typical of the decade, people pursued relaxation so intensley, it's a wonder the country didn't suffer a

massive heart attack; the chains of national habit had been forged too well to be broken by mere will power.

People weren't merely content to do the Charleston or the Black Bottom, they now clamored for and participated in marathon dance contests. Indeed, anyone who could do anything longer, or harder, or faster than anyone else was a champion, and it didn't matter what -- running, sitting on flagpoles, or swallowing goldfish.

Games such as Mah Jong and auction bridge became all-out contests; cross-word puzzles were not worked but devoured; and the question and answer craze became a minor epidemic. Away from the roar of the crowd the more sedate availed themselves of the country's public libraries, museums, art and music classes; while the more competitive took up golf, bowling, and amateur baseball.

It was during this period that big-time sports captivated the country and ushered in a golden age when champions were gods. Never before had such lavish attention been given to the heroes of the diamond, the gridiron, and the prize ring.

It appears that one of the characteristics of this generation was the hero-worship that took place. Just as Ruth, Grange, Jones, Tilden, and Dempsey were the idols of the sports world, the stars of the motion picture industry were the darlings of the entertainment world. Women fainted over Valentino while men oggled the "It" girl, and a whole nation held its breath until "Lucky Lindy" landed in Paris.

Entertainment-Communication

The instruments of mass communication played a significant part in bringing about the revolution in morals and manners. It was now possible for more people to enjoy the same good show at the same time than at any previous time in history. There was mass production in news and ideas as well as in automobiles. Books, magazines, newspapers, movies, and radio as an influence, was played upon by all the others; it's doubtful that any of them alone could have changed to any great degree the folkways of America; together their force was irresistible.¹

Books. Intellectuals of the literary world rebelled against prudishness and dealt with sex in a frank and open manner. Writers such as Theodore Dreiser and John Dos Passos scorned the values of the country, and pictured America as an intellectually and culturally sterile land dominated by businessmen and business values. Though many books castigated the direction America was heading, many more advocated having a good time along the way. If F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote about what the youth of the country were doing, Ernest Hemingway told why they were doing it; and when Gertrude Stein said the generation was lost, many were ready to agree.

Magazines. Of the fast-changing pace, the new thoughts, the emphasis on good times, sex and wild living, no better record exists than that found in the leading magazines of the period. The Saturday Evening Post and Life were very popular among all classes of society, while Vogue set the fashions for the nation's elite. Many of the more

intellectual writers published in such magazines as the Delineator, Vanity Fair, Harpers, and H.L. Menken's American Mercury.

Newspapers. Although there were fewer newspapers throughout the country than at the beginning of the decade, circulation was larger and they were standardized to an unprecedented degree by the increasing use of press-association material and syndicated features.

This was the era of "jazz journalism," or as some called it, "gutter journalism". Press historian Edwin Emery commented that the press, preoccupied in many instances with sex, crime, and entertainment, reflected the spirit of the times. The majority of newspapers went with the tide, rather than attempting to give the country leadership either by significant news or through interpretation.²

Motion Pictures. Celluloid entertainment had come a long way from the peep-show and nickelodean days. Even though the motion picture industry now had a "Czar," his influence was questionable. "The Hays Office" did try to promote a new image of Hollywood, however, many films revealed clearly how superficial the new morality really was.

Despite the fact that Hollywood films dominated the screens throughout the world, the industry experienced a profound uneasiness during the late twenties. Attendance fell off due in part to the powerful competition presented by the radio and the automobile. In 1926 Warner Brothers took a chance on a daring novelty -- the Vitaphone. Their gamble paid off when on October 6, 1927 they presented the first talking feature on Broadway, The Jazz Singer. Its success marked the end of an era.

In the United States the silent film died with alarming suddenness. By 1930 the silent film was a thing of the past and so were many of the stars who had ridden this noiseless meteor to fame and fortune.

Radio. Just as the absence of vocal quality led to the demise of many silent film stars, it was the possession of this same attribute that proved such an asset for those contemplating a career in broadcasting.

The seven good years from 1923 through 1929 were booming years, and with many talented, professional entertainers going on the air, the idea of a radio career was not as farfetched as many once thought. With the seeds of the radio industry already sown, the blooming was about to begin.

RADIO IN THE NATION 1923-1930

Radio:1923-1926

Development. It was during this period that the idea of commercial broadcasting gained a firm foothold; when the sale of time, rather than the sale of receiving sets loomed as a possible source of revenue. This period also saw the development of basic program types and new types of equipment as the public became increasingly radio conscience.

Receivers. Sales of receiving sets doubled their 1923 figure in 1924, reaching a total of \$358,000,000 in retail volume, and by the late autumn of 1926 an estimated 5.5 million families owned radio sets.³ Batteries still powered almost all of the receivers, however, by the end of 1926 "plug-in" alternating-current sets had been introduced.

Complicated three-dial tuning was still required to bring in signals, and although each set came equipped with a pair of earphones, more and more loud speakers were finding their way into the homes. With the advent of loud speakers, whether sitting on top of the set-enclosed cabinets or hanging from the wall, several persons were able to listen at the same time.⁴

Growth. There was little growth in the radio industry during this period; many stations had gone off the air or were combined with other stations. Between 1925 and 1927 many stations increased their power in order to be heard over larger areas. By 1925, most of the larger stations broadcast with power of from 1,000 to 5,000 watts. No station had gone to 50,000 watts, however, and the majority of stations, those licensed before the end of 1922, used power of 100 watts or less. No stations as yet operated on a full-time basis, and it was common practice for several stations to share time with other stations using the same frequency and located in the same general area.⁵

Networks. In 1924 station WEA, New York moved into a definite pattern of network broadcasting. After experimentation, the proposal was made to set up a network of 17 cities whose stations would accept the commercial programs of EASF. The network was launched in October of 1924. This was the first time that network broadcasting had been established on a permanent commercial basis.⁶

This was not the first time that stations had been linked for broadcasting purposes. The idea of linking stations together by telephone lines for simultaneous broadcasting of programs was not new;

in January of 1923 the first recognized "chain" broadcast had been presented over WEAJ and WNAC in Boston. Several months later, a program originated by WEAJ was carried over an experimental network that included WGY in Schenectady, KDKA in Pittsburgh, and KYW in Chicago. During the Winter of 1924-25 and again the following season, two different groups of stations were operating on an informal network basis; stations in each group, most of which were owned by electronics companys, carried programs simultaneously three or four evenings a week.⁷

Equipment. Studio facilities and transmitting equipment continued to improve. Numerous stations were building studios large enough to accomodate full orchestras, and some were providing for the seating of studio audiences of as namy as 100 people. Draped walls were still in evidence in most studios, and carbon microphones, though still in use were slowly being replaced by more effective types.⁸

Commerical operations. The majority of stations were still non-commerical -- operating much the same as prior to 1923. During this period, however, a few stations were operating on at least a partially commercial basis. Although a number of advertisers in large cities were using radio on a regular once-a-week basis by the winter of 1924-25, sponsored programs made up only a small proportion of the total program offereing....even of major large-city stations.⁹

Programming. There were major program advances and noticable program trends during this period. Stations were consistent enough in their over-all programming that they could be recognized by the

programs they carried. There was increased experimentation within the program types. A great amount of time was given to serious music programs, however, there were a few more features of popular music on all stations. There was a trend toward increased hours of broadcasting, and a desire to bring the same program to the audience at the same time each day, or same day each week. In addition, the programs were often scheduled five or six times a week.¹⁰

A few stations experimented with broadcasting dramatic programs featuring amateur actors reading scripts written for theater productions. Several stations presented late-night programs using a loose variety form. Song-and-patter teams borrowed directly from vaudeville were introduced to radio, and many stations in large cities were presenting weekly sponsored musical programs, usually featuring small orchestras or novelty musical groups.¹¹ Stations still relied heavily on vocal soloists and continued to present a number of remote specials.

Radio: 1926-1930

Development. During this period the sponsors "discovered" radio and commercial broadcasting became solidly established, especially with the development of the networks.

Receivers. By 1926 there were 20,000,000 listeners in 5,000,000 homes. As of January 1, 1929 Daniel Starch reported that there were approximately 12,000,000 receivers in nearly 10,000,000 homes; roughly 35 per cent of the nearly 30,000,000 homes in the United States were available to radio programming.¹² Between 1928 and 1929 receiving sets

were: enclosed in cabinets, powered by ordinary household electric current, except in rural areas, equipped with loud speakers, and nearly all used single-dial tuning. According to Daniel Starch, "approximately 67 per cent of the receivers ... contained the five or six tubes necessary to put a satisfactory signal into a loud speaker, while an additional 8 per cent were even more powerful." Starch went on to say that some 20 per cent contained less than five tubes, may or may not have been connected to earphones. Only three per cent of the radios were crystal sets.¹³

Growth. In 1926 a federal court held that the Department of Commerce had no licensing authority. The result was chaos. Prior to 1926, in order to cut down interference stations were required to obtain licenses granted by the Department of Commerce which specified each station's frequency and hours of operation. Now, with the Commerce department stripped of its power, the nearly 600 stations on the air were free to change frequencies at will, and broadcast whenever they chose, regardless of conflicts with other stations.

In 1927 the Federal Radio Commission was created which had the authority to assign station frequencies, hours of operation, and transmitter power. This resulted in many stations being forced off the air and those that remained had to comply with the Commission's restrictions on frequencies, power, and operating hours.

In 1927 WGY, Schenectady became the first station to regularly use 50kw, and by 1930 a total of ten major stations were operating with power of 50 kw. Of the remainder nearly 350 used power ranging

from 250 watts to 5kw, while some 260 stations operated with power of 100 watts or less.¹⁴

Networks. The first permanent network, NBC-Red inaugurated service on November 15, 1926, and on January 1, 1927 the NBC-Blue Network started operations. In the beginning NBC-Red had 20 stations, while NBC-Blue had only five stations. In September of 1927, CBS was organized with 16 stations. Coast-to-coast service was inaugurated by NBC-Red in December of 1928; the following year both NBC-Blue and CBS were also hooked up with Pacific coast stations.

Equipment. By 1930 studios in large stations were able to accommodate anywhere from 200 to 300 people, although glass partitions separated the audience from the entertainers. During the period carbon and condenser microphones were replaced by the more efficient ribbon type, and phonograph records were being played with increased frequency in practically all the larger stations.

Commerical operations. With the advent of the networks expenditures for radio advertising shot up rapidly. During the four year period 1926-1930, network and station revenues from the sale of commerical time skyrocketed from \$200,000 to approximately \$50,000,000. However, individual stations probably averaged no more than \$12,000 per station, and it is doubtful whether more than 100 stations at the end of 1929 had revenues great enough to cover costs of operation.¹⁵ Advertising was still of an institutional nature. Networks permitted no "sell" commercials, only courtesy announcements identifying sponsors of programs.

Programming. The most popular network program forms were musical variety. As early as 1927 network dramatic programs appeared using materials adapted especially for radio. Several minstrel-show types of variety programs were carried on network schedules during the period, and around 1929 an early form of comedy variety appeared.

Song-and-patter teams continued to be popular throughout the period and by 1929 comedy patter teams appeared. One of the earliest was the Amos 'n' Andy program which presented patter five nights a week for a 15-minute period.

Daytime programming consisted chiefly of talks and light music with religion filling the air on Sunday.

Local stations presented song-and-patter teams, variety programs, light music featuring amateur soloists or pianists, and of course, talks.

Problems of the Industry

Regulation. Throughout the period of the twenties radio was not without its problems. One of the first was that of regulation. How the hundreds of stations were to be regulated in order to create a minimum of interference was not resolved until the FRC was formed under the Radio Act of 1927. By the end of the decade stations either complied with the regulatory agency or went off the air.

Finance. Another problem was that of supporting broadcasting in terms of economics. Possible solutions ranged from listener contributions to government subsidy. Other proposals advanced were that

set manufacturers would support radio because it was they who made a profit from the sale of receivers; some people advocated a tax on receivers, levied not against the buying public, but against the set manufacturers; still others felt that promotion was the answer, where large corporations would support a radio station hoping that such a service would increase public acceptance and support of the parent company.¹⁶ The final concept, advertising, was the method finally adopted by almost all stations, and by 1930 the question of who is to pay was resolved.

ASCAP demands. Another problem which plagued broadcasters involved royalties to be paid for the use of copyrighted music used over the air. The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers obtained copyright laws and demanded that broadcasters take out a music license and agree to pay the society a stated schedule of performance fees.¹⁷ This request for money was embarrassing to an industry which, at least until the latter part of the decade, had no income. In time the broadcasters formed a National Association of Broadcasters to fight ASCAP demands.¹⁸ The conflict was not resolved until the early 1940's when ASCAP was forced to moderate its demands.

RADIO FIRSTS

During the first four or five years of broadcasting, it was professional artists like Wendell Hall who originated many of the ideas and innovations in radio entertainment that were later adopted and refined by the radio industry.

As radio entertainment developed and became more sophisticated, one didn't have to stretch the imagination to recognize the influence of the early performers on those that followed. Just as future radio teams adopted the song-and-patter style of Jones and Hare; the comedy patter of Amos 'n' Andy; the singing style of Breen and deRose; and the announcing manner of Cross and McNamee, so too did many single acts copy the air style of Wendell Hall.

It was more than style that Mr. Hall contributed to radio. In addition to being radio's first paid staff entertainer and the first to use radio to promote his songs, he was also responsible for many other innovations. A.W. Kaney remarked that Mr. Hall was "an inovator in the sense that almost anything one did on radio was new -- it had never been done before."¹⁹

Mr. Hall lays claim to a number of radio "firsts". Documentary proof of anything connected with the radio industry as a whole is difficult to obtain for the years preceding 1930, however, available evidence supports the chaims made, and they are indicative of Mr. Hall's leadership in broadcasting.

The First Radio Tour

Sometime during the latter part of 1922 Mr. Hall conceived the idea of touring radio stations in order to promote his music. His feeling was, if he could make his songs popular locally by singing them over station KYW, why not nationally by singing them over various

stations throughout the country. In June of 1923, driving his father's Buick automobile which had been converted into sleeping quarters, Mr. Hall set out on radio's first tour.²⁰

During this original tour Mr. Hall appeared over some 35 stations and covered close to 5,000 miles. Station managers who depended on local talent for entertainment, were delighted when Mr. Hall appeared and asked for the opportunity to broadcast. Not only were the managers getting a professional radio entertainer, but one who would work for nothing; and work he did. In that stations adhered to no definite time schedule, Mr. Hall would often sing and play for two or three hours as a stretch. When he wasn't performing he would spend his time visiting music counters throughout the city promoting his songs. He made sure the clerks knew he was appearing over the local station, and saw to it they had an ample supply of his sheet music on hand.²¹

In addition to singing and playing over the various stations he visited, Mr. Hall often would assist station managers in planning future programs and inform them of events currently taking place at other stations.

A number of interesting things happened to Mr. Hall on this tour, two of which took place at station WOS in Jefferson City, Missouri. It was here that Mr. Hall first met Harry Snodgrass, a convict at the Missouri State Penitentiary.

An example of the popularity radio could create was demonstrated by what happened to Snodgrass. He came to prison around the first part of July, 1923 under a three-year sentence for complicity in a robbery at St. Louis. Snodgrass had been a pianist in St. Louis cafes, and while in prison became a well-known radio entertainer by playing over station WOS. In January of 1925, Snodgrass was pardoned on the basis of the popularity he built up and left prison with \$3587.25, the gift of radio fans. He and Don Witten, an announcer for WOS, then began a two-year vaudeville tour.²² Mr. Hall was quite impressed with the piano artistry of Snodgrass and asked him to record one of his (Hall's) compositions. Following his release from prison Snodgrass complied and recorded Mr. Hall's composition "Land of My Sunset Dreams" which became a best seller.

The other incident which took place was in the nature of an experiment. Mr. Hall was asked to sing over WOS while his accompaniment was played from a station in Columbia, Missouri, 50 miles away. He consented, and while listening to the music through a set of earphones sang his composition "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'."²³

One other episode reveals one of the more harrowing aspects of the tour. It happened after Mr. Hall ran across an old friend A.E. Davidson, a salesman who was on his way to Washington D.C. Davidson accepted Mr. Hall's offer of a ride and the two set out on what was to be a rather perilous journey through the Allegany mountains. Handicapped by fog, darkness, and narrow, winding roads

without guard rails, the men often came extremely close to driving over the edge. They later learned that several persons had been killed when their automobiles plunged off the road into the gorge several hundred feet below.²⁴

The tour started at station WOC, Davenport, and included stops at WOAW, Omaha, KFAB, Lincoln, WDAF, Kansas City, KMOX, St. Louis, WGF, Des Moines, KDKA, Pittsburgh, and WCAP, Washington. It ended sometime in late September or early October with Mr. Hall appearing over WJZ and WEA, New York. The trip had taken Mr. Hall through 16 states and covered close to 5,000 miles. During this tour Mr. Hall placed 14 of his new compositions, eight of which were placed in New York, making a total of 22 compositions now on the market in the hands of 12 different publishers.²⁵

Following a short stay in New York where he discussed a recording contract with the Victor Talking Machine Company, Mr. Hall returned to Chicago driving back through Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Detroit, appearing in the radio stations of each city.

When he arrived at station KYW an unexpected surprise awaited him. Westinghouse Corporation presented Mr. Hall with a check, based on his old salary, which covered the five months he was on tour. A note accompanying the check said in part, "... Mr. Hall, you have done more for radio broadcasting than if you had been here right on our local station."²⁶ Although Mr. Hall wasn't promoting receiving sets or parts while on tour, he nevertheless was promoting radio, himself and his

songs, and helping to make broadcasting popular. Perhaps Westinghouse, in its memo to Mr. Hall, should have said he was doing a great deal for radio sales as well as radio broadcasting by going on tour; for as Eric Barnouw noted, at the start of 1924, RCA sets and parts, made by General Electric and Westinghouse, were selling at double the rate of the previous year.²⁷

Exactly how much of a part Mr. Hall played in popularizing radio during his first tour can only be estimated. Nevertheless he did open up an entire new field, one that, in time proved to be a blessing for listeners and a boon to advertisers. Mr. Hall remarked at the conclusion of his tour, "... this trip nearly broke me, but it proved the game had great possibilities and I stuck to it."²⁸

Radio's First Song Hit

In February of 1922, Mr. Hall had been nuturing in his mind a new song made up of topical verses that sounded a note of optimism. The first time he sang this composition, "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'" over KYW, the response was overwhelming. Recalling the incident Mr. Hall said, "... the telephone switchboard went wild, and letters requesting the song poured in for a week. At last I had a vehicle, an identification."²⁹

There have been conflicting opinions about the origin of "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'". Some say it was an adaptation of a southern folk song, and others claim it was written by the famous minstrel man Lew Docksteder. According to Mr. Hall, his melody is similar to an

old Negro folk song he traced back some 100 years, which was passed down through generations by work of mouth. As a child he sang this folk song, then later modernized the melody and composed new lyrics in keeping with times.³⁰

This song, which Mr. Hall first published himself, went unprotected for a little over a year, at the mercy of any songwriter who might steal it. Finally in 1923, realizing that four bars of music could be copyrighted -- which is all the song contains, the verse and the chorus being exactly alike -- he did so and turned the publishing rights over to the Forster Music Company.³¹

Thus was this famous novelty song born. It was first popularized on radio and became a national craze because of radio. Throughout his career, Mr. Hall became more closely identified with this song than that of any other. Wherever he toured requests for the "Rain" song led all the rest. Perhaps it was the optimistic nature of the song that, as Fred Smith said, "... caught the fancy of the (fickle) public."³² In any event, by 1924 according to Frederick Allen, "... at any moment you could turn a knob and get ... 'It Ain't Gonna Rain No more' by way of respite."³³

Over the years the song sold close to 10,000,000 copies of sheet music and records, with Mr. Hall's own voice selling well over 2,000,000 recordings. From 50 verses in the original composition the number grew to 1,000 and became one of the greatest novelty numbers in all music publishing; the song to carry "One Million Copy Edition" on its title page. Part of the reason for the song's success

might be attributed to the plethora of verses; many of which Mr. Hall wrote while waiting to broadcast at the various stations throughout the country. He found that most people bought the sheet music in order to obtain the verses; the more verses he wrote, the more copies he sold. Commenting on the song Mr. Hall said, "I made 'It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo', and it made me. Yes sir, it and radio."³⁴

First Victor Artist to Broadcast

It was in November of 1923 that Mr. Hall signed a \$2500 contract with the Victor Talking Maching Company. The contract stated that Mr. Hall was to record exclusively for Victor for one year with an option for at least two. Mr. Hall thus became the first Victor Record artist allowed to broadcast.³⁵

Convinced that radio could sell records and anxious to put his songs on a Victor label, it was Mr. Hall who first approached the Victor Company concerning a contract. Up until this time no Victor recording artist had been allowed to broadcast because of the fear that broadcasting might adversely affect the sale of their recordings.³⁶ Why then did the Victor Company sign Mr. Hall, a broadcast artist to a contract? One suggestion is that the Victor Company wanted to test the effectiveness of radio as a medium for promoting records, and rather than sacrificing one of their own artists should the experiment fail, chose to gamble on Mr. Hall after learning of his background and future plans.

Mr. Hall's success the following year apparently convinced the Victor Company that radio did give recording artists a popularity which, in turn stimulated their record sales; on January 1, 1925 two Victor artists, John McCormack and Lucrezia Bori made their debut before the microphone. The Victor Company at last realized the importance and power of radio, and as Gleason Archer said, "... decided in the spring of 1925 to conform rather than perish."³⁷

Although Mr. Hall's composition "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'" became one of the largest selling songs in the Victor catalogue, Victor was not the first to record it. Surprisingly enough the number was first recorded by the Gennett Record Company only a short time before Mr. Hall signed the contract with Victor. An article by George W. Kay in The Record Changer explains what happened. According to Mr. Kay, Fred Gennett was entertaining a delegation of music dealers at the Starr Piano Factory in Richmond, Indiana, home of the Gennett Record Company. Wendell Hall walked in and asked to make a few records. Gennett agreed, and for the rest of the afternoon Mr. Hall recorded a continuous stream of songs that culminated in his signing a royalty contract. Before he left town that evening Mr. Hall asked for a test pressing of "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'" Mr. Kay goes on to say that, "... within a matter of days, Wendell Hall took the test to Camden, New Jersey, where on the strength of the one song, he secured a \$10,000 contract with Victor. Gennett did not complain. His own company made a small fortune on Hall's records, all of which were made that single afternoon."³⁸

Most of what Mr. Kay wrote is true. Mr. Hall once mentioned that the first recording of "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'" was indeed cut by the Gennett Company. It's also possible that Mr. Hall wanted a test recording to in order to help him secure a contract with the Victor Company. However, the Victor contract was not for \$10,000 but rather \$2500, and it's highly unlikely that Mr. Hall secured the contract solely on the strength of that one recording.³⁹ Victor was undoubtedly under pressure to allow its artists to broadcast, yet fearful of the results. When the company was approached by Mr. Hall it recognized a golden opportunity. Mr. Hall related to the Victor people not only the success his records enjoyed due to radio, but also the fact that he was again going on tour. Possessing this information the Victor Company awarded Mr. Hall a one year contract. The 1924 tour, which saw Mr. Hall accompanied by a Victor salesman, culminated not only in the McCormack-Bori broadcast, but also in Victor picking up its option and signing Mr. Hall to a two year contract.

Although Mr. Hall's contract was only for \$2500 a year, the Victor Company had to pay his publisher royalties of two cents per record -- one cent for the music and one cent for the lyrics -- of which Mr. Hall received 50 per cent. For the next two years Mr. Hall recorded some 30 songs for the Victor Company, and with sales running into the millions, his income was considerable.⁴⁰

Mr. Hall recorded for Victor until 1926 at which time he signed a \$100,000 contract with the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company to make records exclusively for them.⁴¹

Mr. Hall's success as a songwriter and recording star was acknowledged not only in this country but abroad as well. A newspaper article notes that Mr. Hall was:

A songwriter of many of this country's greatest hits, and holds the distinction of being one of the best known record artists in the world. In Australia and particularly in New Zealand he is perhaps the most popular of all record artists. In the U-S his record of his own song "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'" had the largest sales in record history.⁴²

First Sponsored Radio Artist

In January of 1924 Mr. Hall signed radio's first national advertising contract after coming to terms with the National Carbon Company. He became the first entertainer to use radio under the wing of a sponsor.⁴³ Details concerning the actual contract negotiations such as exact dates and salary involved have apparently been lost. A letter from T.J. McDermott of N.W. Ayer & Son, the advertising agency who handled the National Carbon account at the time states, "... accounting records and other data from that vintage year just do not exist. Records have gone the way of all flesh and so too have gone the early pioneers."⁴⁴

From available evidence it is quite likely that Mr. Hall either contacted or was contacted by N.W. Ayer & Son sometime during the latter part of 1923, following completion of his first tour. It seems evident that the Ayer agency was interested in obtaining talent for a program it was about to launch in behalf of its client the National Carbon Company. The inauguration of that program, the

Eveready Hour took place on December 4, 1923 over WEAJ in New York. This was the first regular series of broadcast entertainment and music to be sponsored by an advertiser; and N.W. Ayer & Son recommended, staffed, and originated the program.⁴⁵

N.W. Ayer & Son was the first advertising agency to study broadcasting seriously and to organize a radio service department. The Eveready Hour came about when the Ayer agency persuaded the National Carbon Company, makers of Eveready batteries, that radio was a natural medium for it because batteries were needed for radio receiving sets. Thus, the Ayer organization became the pioneer advertising to advocate broadcasting as a developer of consumer and dealer interest.⁴⁶

The Eveready Hour was a new concept in radio programming, and is credited with establishing many innovations in the building of radio programs. As Eric Barnouw noted, "... it may have been the first program to become known by its series title rather than by the name or pseudonym of a performer or group. Under supervision of the N.W. Ayer advertising agency it received lavish attention and financial backing."⁴⁷

The variety and cultural content of the Eveready Hour caused it to stand out among the programs of early radio. Immediately after its debut in 1923, it became the most important program in broadcasting. Offering drama, music comedy, poetry and factual material, it appealed not only to the mass desire to easy entertainment, but also to the adult intelligence.⁴⁸

The influence on radio of the Eveready Hour is part of advertising history. The program itself as gradually developed by the Ayer staff, headed by Paul Stacy was, according to William P. Banning, "... the most ambitious project of the day -- a full hour of entertainment and information that was a radical departure from the ordinary 'sponsorship' of a dance orchestra It was a venture that ... was extremely imaginative and courageous."⁴⁹

Mr. Hall was now standing on the threshold of the big time and the door was about to swing open. The next seven years would see him become one of the most popular and widely known entertainers in the world.

First Sponsored Radio Tour

Wendell Hall spent the first two or three weeks of 1924 appearing over WEAJ in New York as a member of the Eveready Hour. While the program was well received there was a growing desire on the part of the National Carbon Company for a wider circle of listeners. It must be remembered that the first radio programs were broadcast from the station of origin alone, and this fact seriously limited their value to advertisers. There were no networks or chains of stations like those of today to carry the programs to all parts of the country. The Eveready Hour, for example, initially reached only the territory covered by WEAJ. Dealers of the National Carbon Company elsewhere, of course, desired radio publicity in their markets and felt that the New York

area was being favored unduly. Until network broadcasting made possible the delivery of the Eveready Hour to distant stations, the National Carbon Company met the need of its dealers by sending out groups of artists to give broadcasts over stations throughout the country.⁵⁰ The first sponsored tour in radio history was about to begin and Wendell Hall was selected to lead it.

What led to the selection of Mr. Hall? The choice, according to T.J. McDermott, was due to, "... Mr. Hall's stature and Mr. Stacy's evaluation of his ability as a performer and as a salesman...."⁵¹ This evaluation quite likely took place during the two or three weeks Mr. Hall appeared over WEA. In Wendell Hall or "The Red-headed Music Maker" as he called himself, the Ayer agency found an entertainer well suited to promote batteries. His style, personality, and music all reflected the qualities one would expect to find in a battery; qualities such as spark, durability, energy, and performance. Mr. Hall's act was lively and fast-paced, things were happening all the time.

In a work Mr. Hall was a showman and showmanship has been described as a combination of unity, variety, pace, and punch.⁵² Mr. Hall's act was unified in the sense that it hung together; it was not just a lot of musical numbers laid end to end. His act had a "flavor" all its own, dominated by its star's dynamic personality. Mr. Hall used a variety of songs, constantly mixing the tempo of each musical number in order to keep the listeners off balance, never allowing them to become bored or indifferent. His pace was fast. Something was going on every minute. There was excitement in the air,

and his energy seemed inexhaustable. The punch or climax to his act; that which made listeners remember his performance, came with the singing of "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'". This was the high spot, his trademark, and listeners eagerly awaited it. Commenting on Mr. Hall's brand of music, Hubbell Robinson noted that :

There is no question but that music of a peppy type, the sort that sets your toes a-tapping, ... gets a hearty welcome from ... listeners. There is something exciting about music of this sort, something that stimulates, that takes the mind off worries and cares, something that has a tendency to make us gay.... Any program that can produce this result will be providing entertainment of a sort that people want.⁵³

It might also be suggested that the N.W. Ayer agency, will aware that Mr. Hall had just completed the first radio tour, was eager to utilize his experience and capitalize on his popularity.

Sometime during the latter part of January, 1924, Mr. Hall, accompanied by a salesman for the battery division of the National Carbon Company and a representative of the Victor Talking Machine Company, set out on a trip that, over the next three years would take him to every principle radio station in the United States and half way around the world.

The first sponsored tour in radio history covered some 21 stations, and took Mr. Hall as far west as Texas. With most of the stations booking talent from night to night from what was available at the moment, Mr. Hall was enthusiastically received by station managers,

who were happy to allow his advertising trademark to go out over the air in return for his services as a professional entertainer.

Although there was no "direct" advertising at this time; no written commercials extolling the virtues of Eveready batteries, it was a woefully inattentive listener who failed to get the message everytime Mr. Hall was introduced as the Eveready Redhead, "Eveready Red," the "Eveready Entertainer," or the "Eveready Red-headed Music Maker." These identifying tags were used not only at the beginning and end of each program, but between practically every song that was sung.

Mr. Hall would spend a week at each station entertaining anywhere from 15 minutes to two hours nightly, depending on the number of telephone requests. During the day he visited music stores promoting his sheet music and Victor records; although he was under contract with the National Carbon Company, he was also under contract with the Victor Company, and as such was expected to promote Victor products. While the National Carbon representative was out visiting dealers and promoting Eveready batteries, Mr. Hall and the Victor salesman were out promoting and selling records. It's apparent the Victor Company was quite familiar with Mr. Hall's itinerary and knew exactly the dates, cities, and stations from which he was scheduled to broadcast. Many times the company would send out flyers to their dealers suggesting they start promoting Mr. Hall and Victor records. One such flyer read:

Victor Distributors

The Ohio Talking Machine Company
Cincinnati, Ohio March 25, 1924

The first Radio Broadcast by a Victor Artist, Wendell Hall, will broadcast the selections he has recorded on Victor Records from station WSAI, Cincinnati, on April 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th, and station WBAU, Louisville, Kentucky the following week.

This is a great opportunity for all of our dealers to tie up with the First Personal Broadcast of a Victor Artist. No matter where you are located, hundreds of sets in your vicinity will receive this broadcast and the effect will be more widespread than a personal appearance in your town. Tie up strong with this event. Put an ad in your local paper. Show a Wendell Hall window and get your order for records to us early.⁵⁴

A typical example of the schedule Mr. Hall followed throughout his first tour was printed in a Dallas newspaper in April of 1924. It read:

By arrangement with the National Carbon Company, Wendell Hall the "Eveready Red'headed Music Maker" will broadcast according to the following schedule:

WFAA, Dallas ... Monday, April 26... 7:00-7:30 P.M.
Tuesday, " 27... 8:30-9:00 P.M.
Wednesday," 28... 2:30-3:00 P.M.

WBAP, Fort Worth..Thursday, April 29...9:30-10:00 P.M.
Friday, " 30...9:30-10:00 P.M.
Saturday, May 1...9:30-10:00 P.M.

WRRR, Dallas... Monday, May 3... A 30-minute period between
8:00 and 9:00 P.M.
Tuesday, May 4... A 30-minute period between
8:00 and 9:00 P.M.
Wednesday, May 5 ...5:00-5:30 P.M.

KPRC, Houston.. Thursday, May 6...8:30-9:00 P.M.
Friday, May 7...12:30-1:00 P.M.
Saturday, May 8...10:00-10:30 P.M.

Announcements similar to this one were always sent out by the National Carbon Company a week or so prior to Mr. Hall's scheduled appearance.⁵⁵

Mr. Hall's first tour for the National Carbon Company was completed sometime during the latter part of May. When he returned to New York and station WEAf, Mr. Hall found nearly 20,000 letters of appreciation waiting for him, besides the thousands he received during the course of the tour.⁵⁶ At one station alone, WOC, Davenport, Mr. Hall received over 5,000 letters and all kinds of little tokens of gratitude.⁵⁷ During the next few years Mr. Hall averaged close to 6,000 letters per week, and by 1927 adding machine slips showed that he had received close to 1,000,000 pieces of mail.⁵⁸

The letters sent to New York reveal that not only was the tour itself highly successful and well received, but that Wendell Hall emerged from it with a national reputation.⁵⁹ While the tour had given Mr. Hall national exposure, it was the listeners who made him a star and they were lavish in their praise:

... when I hear a happy fellow like you, it makes me happy too. I forget my troubles. I have to laugh.

At the end of your show we all sigh and lament that you can't lease the air all evening.

We love your songs and the way you sing them, and most of all your real friendly chats in between.

When I hear anything good on the radio I want to buy it on a record. Like Harry Lauder you get your personality across in your songs.

You are a great fatigue chaser for those of us who feel tired in the evening. You also relieve our tense minds with your attractive songs.

After you hear him two or three times and you pick up the paper and find he is going to perform, you feel just like you are going to a nice big party and someone you know is going to be there.

You sure are a card, a real live fellow that can drive away the blues and give one pep. If the battery service company which you represent are half as good as you, they sure must be high powered.

We certainly did enjoy the selections of Wendell Hall, the Redheaded Eveready Battery Entertainer. I certainly do believe that the Eveready Battery people picked the best all around entertainer in the country to represent them.

My compliments to the National Carbon Company, whose Eveready batteries I will henceforth demand. Hall is just great.⁶⁰

The success of the tour must have been a great source of pleasure not only to Mr. Hall who achieved national prominence virtually overnight, but also to the National Carbon Company and N.W. Ayer; for as William P. Banning noted, "... the fact that battery sales increased wherever they appeared proved the commercial possibilities of broadcasting a program simultaneously from several stations."⁶¹ Writing at the time Mr. Hall said:

This idea of touring broadcasting stations is probably one of the best things that has struck the broadcasting managers, especially those in small towns where lack of talent prevents variety in programs. With the advent of the traveling artists, however, this problem is solved and the manager welcomes the artist as well as the tired listeners.⁶²

Once Mr. Hall started touring under the sponsorship of the National Carbon Company, other business concerns quickly realized the commercial advantages of the venture, and began sending out sponsored artists of their own. Prior to Mr. Hall's first tour in 1923 entertainers touring radio stations were unheard of; 1924 saw the situation change radically with the proliferation of artists touring the country. A few of the more popular groups included: the "Mono Motor Oil Twins," John Wolfe and Ned Tollinger; the "Ray-O-Vay Twins," Russ Wildey and William Sheehan; and the "Shell Oil Twins," Bill and Bob. Artists touring for music publishers included: Little Jack Little; Ford and Glenn; "The Whispering Pianist," Art Gillham; the Barrell House Quartette; "The Gaelic Twins," Eddie and Fanny Cavanaugh; and "The Eiffel Tower of Radio," Lew Farris.

The numerous groups that went out on tour usually followed the pattern set by Mr. Hall; a week in each town, 15 minutes to an hour nightly on local stations, sustaining but billed under the name of a sponsor, plus daily promotional appearances.

During the three years Mr. Hall toured on behalf of the National Carbon Company, he appeared at some 300 stations throughout the United States, Canada, Hawaii and Cuba. He became so well known that once, a letter from Australia, addressed simply "The Red-Headed Music Maker, U.S.A." reached him while he was broadcasting over station WCAP in Washington D.C.⁶³

First Network Nuptials

By June of 1924 the broadcast of a marriage ceremony was nothing new. A year earlier station WIP, Philadelphia had held a radio wedding and in August of the same year WLW, Cincinnati broadcast the wedding of Alice Hazenfield and William F. Mains. Later, according to Lawrence W. Lichty, "... so many other stations did the same thing that it almost became one of the standard publicity tricks."⁶⁴ Although there had been several local radio weddings, what makes Mr. Hall's ceremony unique is that, as Eric Barnouw noted, "... it probably deserves the title of first network nuptials and first to be solemnized under advertising agency auspices."⁶⁵

The marriage ceremony between Wendell Hall and Marion M. Martin of Chicago was broadcast on June 4, 1924 over a four-station hookup originating from the WEAF studios in New York. Linked with WEAF were WCAP, Washington D.C., WJAR, Providence, and WGN, Chicago.

The idea to broadcast the wedding probably originated with Paul Stacy, head of the radio department of the N.W. Ayer advertising agency. Neither Mr. Hall nor Miss Martin, who was a member of the Chicago Tribune editorial staff, wanted the marriage broadcast. They consented after receiving assurance that station WGN, Chicago would be included in the hookup.

Several months prior to the wedding, while Mr. Hall was on tour, he would chat about his forthcoming marriage and dedicate a song each night to his "little girl in Chicago." By the time the tour ended so

much interest had been created among listeners, and so many letters written asking for invitations to the ceremony, that it was decided to broadcast the wedding as part of an Eveready Hour program.⁶⁶

Five people were present in the room where the ceremony took place; Mr. Hall and Miss Martin; the Reverend Finis S. Idleman, pastor of the First Christian Church of New York; Thomas Campbell, the best man; and Dorothy Fullerton, attendant to Miss Martin. A New York newspaper described the event:

... there in the flower-filled room, the bridal party marched about while the strains of "Here Comes the Bride" boomed out on the organ. It wasn't hard to see why Wendell Hall has been such a success over the radio when his great voice boomed out the "I do."

Then came the bridegroom's kiss to the bride. That was also broadcast, and it was such a smack that told all the world what an enthusiastic kiss it was.

There was no promise to obey in any part of the ceremony, but all the other nuptial vows were exchanged.

The "I do's" had hardly been said before a veritable army of messengers filed into the room bearing hundreds of telegrams of congratulations. They were still coming in when the last people left the studio at midnight.⁶⁷

According to Francis Chase, Jr., "This particular broadcast was the first in which remote control was used. The wedding took place in the WEAH studios, but the organ music for the service was 'piped' from the loft of the Skinner Organ Company, on Fifth Avenue."⁶⁸

The wedding received a great amount of publicity in the newspapers, and it is estimated that some 40,000,000 people listened to the broadcast.⁶⁹

First Canadian Radio Tour

Shortly after the wedding Mr. and Mrs. Hall launched the "First Canadian Radio Tour" under the auspices of the Canadian National Carbon Company. The tour included radio and personal appearances in Winnipeg, Calgary, and Vancouver. In Calgary one evening, the telephone requests were so numerous that Mr. Hall was obliged to entertain for over three hours.⁷⁰ This was probably the longest continuous performance in Mr. Hall's career.

Reaching the Canadian Pacific Coast the couple then toured radio stations in Washington, Oregon, and California. Following the West Coast tour, Mr. and Mrs. Hall spent two weeks in Hawaii where Mr. Hall entertained over station KGU, Honolulu.

After two weeks in Hawaii Mr. and Mrs. Hall toured the Eastern section of the country, covering over 4,000 miles and appearing at over 50 stations including PWX in Havana, Cuba.⁷¹

Throughout the remainder of 1924 and up until October of 1925 Mr. Hall continued touring radio stations and making personal appearances around the country.

Mrs. Hall didn't accompany her husband on all of his trips, but when she did was a valuable asset and a resourceful companion. According to Mr. Hall, "She was a good mixer and got along well with people."⁷² Mrs. Hall once remarked that, "When I accompany my husband on one of his trips I do so mainly to answer the questions fired at him from vistors before he goes on the air. This enables him to concentrate on what he is going to sing and say to the radio listeners."⁷³

After touring radio stations throughout the United States, Canada, Hawaii, and Cuba it surprised no one when, on October 7, 1925 Mr. and Mrs. Hall sailed for Europe to complete radio's first world tour.

First European Radio Tour

The idea of touring European radio stations first occurred to Mr. Hall sometime during the spring of 1925. Correspondence with European station managers followed, and after securing a leave of absence from the National Carbon Company, the Halls embarked on what has been described as the first European radio tour by an American artist.

The couple's first stop was London where for the first time in his life, Mr. Hall was thwarted in his efforts to broadcast by a system with which he was unfamiliar.

The European system of broadcasting differs in several respects from that in the United States. Whereas in this country broadcasting facilities are owned by private individuals and are operated for profit, broadcasting facilities in Europe are owned by the government and operated on a noncommercial basis, with support derived from an annual government-imposed tax on owners of radio receiving sets. In addition, the European system is monopolistic and all programming is highly centralized.

In 1925 station 2LO in London, from which Mr. Hall planned to broadcast, was owned and operated by the British Broadcasting Company. Technically this was a private company; its stock was owned entirely

by British manufacturers of radio receiving sets and equipment. Otherwise, however, the company had all the characteristics of the European system of broadcasting. It had a monopoly on broadcasting activities, programming was on a centralized basis, its operation was noncommercial, and support was provided by a government-imposed tax on radio receiving sets.⁷⁴ Into this system strolled the "Red-headed Music Maker" and what followed changed the complexion of the entire tour.

The first time Mr. Hall set foot inside station 2LO he unknowingly stepped into what was probably the most frustrating period in his entire career. Accustomed to visiting stations throughout the United States and looked on as heaven-sent by the talent-starved managers, Mr. Hall expected the situation to be no different in Great Britain. He assumed that all he had to do was walk in, introduce himself and go on the air. He was in for a surprise. Under the British system entertainers didn't just "walk in" off the street and perform over the air. They were first invited to audition, then if accepted, required to attend rehearsals, and finally "dated" for a performance.⁷⁵ Unknown to Mr. Hall was the fact that the British Broadcasting Company did not suffer from a lack of talent. Captain P.P. Eckersley, head of the BBC at the time said:

We have a centralized control of broadcasting and money to spend. Every performer who broadcasts for the BBC is reimbursed. We have an income of about \$2,000,000 a year from taxes and sets ... and we are thus able to engage the best talent and pay well. As a result everybody is happy; the artist for being reimbursed and we for getting the artist to broadcast.⁷⁶

Not everyone was happy. It took Mr. Hall six weeks before he was allowed to broadcast. Although armed with several letters of introduction he refused to show them, preferring instead, as he put it "... to bust in there my own way."⁷⁷ After a month and a half he was finally given an audition, required to attend rehearsals, and booked for a feature the following week.

Mr. Hall was apparently well received by the 2LO listeners. A London newspaper critic wrote:

... he typified something which the BBC is earnestly trying to find more -- a broadcast personality. There was no possibility of going to sleep during Mr. Hall's broadcast. His performance came through the ether live and vigorous. He managed to convey more through the single medium than almost any artist I have ever heard.⁷⁸

Mr. Hall's four or five broadcasts from 2LO were over a 21-station chain of the BBC which linked Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales.

Having spent more time than anticipated in London and anxious to complete the tour, which called for appearances in France, Germany, and Italy, the Hall's left for Paris shortly after Mr. Hall's final broadcast, around the end of November.

In Paris Mr. Hall broadcast several times from the Eifel Tower. There is very little information concerning the Paris broadcasts, but apparently the French people had some difficulty understanding the humor implicit in Mr. Hall's southern jokes and stories, as well as the comic nature of some of his songs. Reasoning that if his material wasn't understood in France it wouldn't be understood in Germany and Italy, Mr. Hall cancelled the tour and returned to the United States. A magazine article at the time said:

"The Redheaded Music Maker" Wendell Hall has returned to the states from Europe and once again his softly crooning ukelele songs have been heard by the radio audience. He's more popular than ever before. Never in the history of Radio has an artist been missed so much and his absence so keenly felt by the radio audience. Without the popularizer of "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'," radio just didn't seem to be itself.⁷⁹

When he finished the European tour Mr. Hall completed what has been described as the first world radio tour. His travels had taken him throughout the United States, Canada, Hawaii, Cuba, England, and France.

Other Radio Firsts

Election broadcast. In November of 1924, Mr. Hall along with Will Rogers and a number of other entertainers, participated in the first commercial radio hookup -- broadcasting returns of the presidential election. The broadcast emanated from the studios of WEAJ in New York with the artists supplying entertainment between announcements.

Two-voice dialogue. According to Mr. Hall he was the first radio entertainer to do two-voice Negro dialogue when he used the imaginary characters "Sam 'n' Henry in 1922. Mr. Hall said that:

I had two voices I used; one was a high voice and one was a low voice, and they were colored boys. The low voice was Sam and the other was Henry. Sam and Henry were my characters. I even made a Victor record using the two voices. One song I recorded was "Ain't the Sunshine Grand" and the other was "It Struck My Funnybone." I recorded those songs in 1923.⁸⁰

Many radio historians have credited Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll with originating on radio the name Sam 'n' Henry. However, available evidence indicates that the first time Gosden and Correll used this technique and name on radio was sometime between 1924, when they broadcast weekly blackface routines over WEHB, Chicago, and on January 12, 1926 when they began their program Sam 'n' Henry over WGN, Chicago. Whether Gosden and Correll had heard Mr. Hall using the name two years earlier is not known but it is not unlikely. In 1928 Gosden and Correll took the name "Amos 'n' Andy" when they moved to WMAQ, Chicago because WGN had obtained ownership of the name "Sam 'n' Henry."⁸¹

Mr. Hall not only spoke in two-voice dialogue but vocalized in this manner as well, and many listeners believed the songs were being sung by two different singers. One letter addressed to "The Wendell Hall Singers" said, "... your barytone [sic] is alright but I don't like the fellow with the high voice."⁸²

Musical innovations. As well as originating and popularizing the expressions "yes suh," "hello folks," and "hey hey," which found their way into many hot tunes of the day, Mr. Hall, in 1923 was first to introduce what he called vocal squeals and throat noises, which were used to fill in the breaks of a particular popular song. This was the first step in what later became known as vocal orchestrations. Ukelele Ike, John Marvin, and Phil Cook imitated and improved upon this original idea by making more peculiar and more kinds of various throat noises. The Revelers Quartette continued this style with their vocal arrangement creations, but it was Helen Kane who profited the most from the idea when she started the whole country "boop-boop-adooping."⁸³

Along this same line Mr. Hall created what became known as "chatter" with his composition "Tellin' the Birds, Tellin' the Bees." The chatter style meant doubling up the chorus lyrics by introducing additional descriptive lyric rhymes. This too was designed to fill in the breaks of a song with carefully rhymed words sung to a catchy melody. With these additional many-rhymed lyrics, the complete "word-picture" is strengthened with continuity, and the whole "vocal orchestration" develops into a more "finished" presentation.⁸⁴

Mr. Hall was also the first male vocalist to introduce on radio the "whispering" or "half-voice" style of singing. Later this technique became known as crooning. The first record using this style was Mr. Hall's Victor recording of his composition "Land of My Sunset

Dreams" in 1923. The recording session took place in Camden, New Jersey. Mr. Hall sang the first verse and chorus "full-voice" and the second verse and chorus "half-voice" or "whispering." The recording didn't come out. After cutting 14 masters and finally singling six inches inside the recording horn, Mr. Hall reproduced a record that the Victor Company put on a Red Seal label which sold over a million copies.⁸⁵

Songs for radio. Mr. Hall was one of the first songwriters to compose music exclusively for radio, and throughout the ASCAP-radio altercation vigorously defended radio's position. Broadcasters had from the start used copyrighted material without permission. In time songwriters and publishers, through ASCAP began to demand royalty payments from stations who broadcast ASCAP-controlled music. In a letter to the Washington Radio Conference, ASCAP urged that all stations using ASCAP music be required to pay an annual license fee. The broadcasters were outraged. They felt that radio helped to popularize music. ASCAP felt that stations were using songs "publicly for profit," and as such should reimburse those who helped make possible this profit. In 1923 when WEAJ agreed to pay the annual license fee many stations followed suit, but many others did not. When WJZ said it would use no more ASCAP music, the broadcasting trade press applauded. Radio Broadcast condemned ASCAP for "grasping after revenues." Efforts to reverse the precedent set by WEAJ were begun through the courts and in time led to the formation of the National

Association of Broadcasters. The NAB became a standard bearer in many battles -- against ASCAP and others.⁸⁶

Mr. Hall, who didn't join ASCAP until 1935 was thus able to sing and play his compositions over any radio station, regardless of whether or not the station had paid the annual license fee. With this in mind it's no wonder Mr. Hall was such a prolific songwriter and so warmly welcomed by certain station managers. Whenever he appeared over non-licensed stations all he had to do was reach into his bag of compositions, pull out a few hundred favorites and entertain for hours.

Recognition. In April of 1926 Mr. Hall was selected by a New York newspaper to head its first All-American radio team, and later the same year was nominated for the first Radio Hall of Fame.⁸⁷

A RADIO-MADE STAR

A few local radio appearances in Chicago followed Mr. Hall's return from Europe in December of 1925. During 1926 Mr. Hall fulfilled his obligations to the National Carbon Company by again touring radio stations throughout the country. Sometime around the latter part of the year his contract with the National Carbon Company expired. During the three years Mr. Hall toured on behalf of the National Carbon Company, he had risen from virtually obscurity to become one of the most popular and widely known performers in the world; the almost instant success radio could create had been conclusively demonstrated, and the radio personality became acknowledged as a star in his own right.

Eric Barnouw commented that, "During 1924 and 1925 the spotlight of broadcasting began to center itself on idols and the business of developing them."⁸⁸ Echoing these same sentiments was Francis Chase, Jr. who wrote, "Radio's star system was beginning to take hold and, more important, radio was reaching a stage of development where such stars could begin to look for payment for their services."⁸⁹ With the growth of this radio star system according to Chase, "People like Wendell Hall ... and other pioneer radio performers were in constant demand for personal appearances in various communities...."⁹⁰ With the expiration of the National Carbon contract, "The Red-headed Music Maker" was ready and eager to capitalize on his world-wide popularity and acknowledged star status.

Radio Guest Star-Vaudeville Headliner

Throughout 1927 and 1928 Mr. Hall was an extremely busy man in the way of personal appearances. During this two-year period Mr. Hall not only guest-starred on radio at \$1,000 a performance, but headlined in practically all of the R-K-O vaudeville theaters at up to \$2,000 per week. According to a newspaper article at the time, Mr. Hall "... played to enthusiastic, capacity audiences." The article went on to say that the "... Paramount theater played him at the highest vaudeville salary ever paid a radio artist."⁹¹ Most of Mr. Hall's vaudeville work consisted of two and three-night stands, while his radio schedule called for no more than one or two guest appearances per station.

The Wrigley Hour. One exception to the above schedule occurred sometime during the Summer or Fall of 1927 when Mr. Hall was featured on the first Wrigley Hour over WBBM, Chicago. This program also introduced Guy Lombardo to commercial radio. The idea for the Wrigley Hour was apparently the brain child of Charles P. Hughes, a program salesman for WBBM. According to Mr. Hughes WBBM had outgrown its location and arrangements were made with William Wrigley to have the station moved into the lower level of the Wrigley Building. In a newspaper article Mr. Hughes recalled that, "... during my talk with the senior Wrigley I offered to give him an hour of dance music with Guy Lombardo and the 'Red-headed Music Maker,' Wendell Hall. He bought fast and I put this ... [pair] out over a coast-to-coast Columbia network,"⁹² Although Mr. Hall and Guy Lombardo both appeared on the Wrigley Hour, they didn't work together. The program was arranged so that Mr. Hall entertained out of the WBBM studios and Guy Lombardo from Colosimo's restaurant, a supper club on Chicago's southside. The two alternated numbers with Mr. Hall singing two or three selections, then switching to Mr. Lombardo for a medley or two.⁹³

The Majestic Hour

By the end of the twenties listeners were beginning to tune for programs rather than distance, and one of the favorites was the Majestic Hour, or as it was also known The Majestic Theater of the Air. This was possibly the first big variety show on radio. Ted Husing commented that programs such as the Majestic Hour enormously increased

the popularity of tuning in. He said, "As the big names of stage, screen and concert platforms began to appear in the broadcast schedules even the most finical artists could no longer look on radio as a cheap toy."⁹⁴

In January of 1929 Mr. Hall was named Director of Broadcasting for the Majestic Hour, sponsored by the Grigsby-Grunow Company manufacturers of Majestic receiving sets. The program originated in the studios of WABC, New York and was fed to 58 stations coast-to-coast and Canada over the CBS network.

As director of the Majestic Hour Mr. Hall not only supervised every production, but also entertained, acted as Master of Ceremonies, selected the talent, produced the programs, and directed the productions. He also paid the bills. The program had a budget of \$10,000 a week. Out of this Mr. Hall paid CBS \$6,666.66 and himself ten per cent of that or \$666.66. The rest of the money went for talent and production equipment.⁹⁵

After assuming directorship of the Majestic Hour, Mr. Hall had considerable difficulty in finding an announcer who could properly open the program. Dissatisfied with Ted Husing whom Mr. Hall felt lacked the dignified voice so necessary for the formal opening, he settled on Normal Brokenshire. Thus on Sunday nights at 9:00 P.M., the Majestic Hour officially got under way when the voice of Mr. Brokenshire boomed out, "In the majesty of motion from the boundless everywhere, comes the mighty name Majestic, mighty monarch of the air."⁹⁶

Under Mr. Hall's direction the Majestic Hour became extremely popular not only among listeners who appreciated the talent presented, but among radio producers who watched the program for new ideas. Mr. Hall brought to the Majestic microphone such stars as George Gershwin, Helen Morgan, Ruth Etting, Eddie Cantor, Edgar A. Guest, Fannie Brice, Weber and Fields, Eddie Leonard, and the Vitaphone 3. Mr. Hall introduced more than just popular artists to the program. When the production "Alibi" was presented, it marked the first time a sound film had been adapted for radio using the actual stars who made the screen version of the drama. Later, Mr. Hall paid Ring Lardner \$2500 to write an original radio sketch. Speaking of this Mr. Hall said, "So far as I have been able to ascertain, this was the first time a famous author had been engaged to write a radio drama on a topical subject."⁹⁷

Mr. Hall was with the Majestic Hour until February of 1930 during which time production of Majestic receiving sets quintupled. According to Mr. Hall, "When I went to work for Grigsby-Grunow they were making 500 sets a day, and when I left they were turning out 2500 sets a day."⁹⁸ A former member of the program staff, Fred Smith recalled that, "Wendell came to New York in full charge of the Majestic Hour. He employed me as a program advisor and program consultant.... the Majestic Hour was one of the really big variety programs."⁹⁹ In 1929 Wendell Hall was at the peak of his career.

In the world of entertainment fame and popularity are, more often than not, only illusory and transitory accolades, bestowed on a performer by a demanding and capricious public. What the people delight in today they may well disdain tomorrow. If Mr. Hall reached the zenith of his career in 1929, he dropped to the nadir of that career only a few years later.

Mr. Hall's career seemed to parallel the period of prosperity in the nation. When the stock market crash ended that prosperity, it also ended the kind of radio entertainment symbolized by "The Red-headed Music Maker." The tide of change in broadcasting, which began as a trickle in the mid-twenties and crested near the end of the decade, reached flood proportions in the thirties. Wendell Hall would spend the rest of his career struggling against that tide, which threatened to engulf not only him, but all of radio's pioneer entertainers.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV

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¹⁷Landry, 43.

- ¹⁸Linton, 25.
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- ²²New York Times, January 17, 1925, 8.
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- ²⁸Wendell W. Hall manuscript collection, Scrapbook 1.
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- ³⁰Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
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- 59 Wendell W. Hall manuscript collection, Scrapbook 2.
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- ⁷⁹Radio Digest, December 26, 1926, Wendell W. Hall manuscript collection, Scrapbook 2.
- ⁸⁰Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ⁸¹Barnouw, 226, and Evans Plummer, "How They Started, " Radio Digest, May 1931, 13.
- ⁸²Wendell W. Hall manuscript collection, Scrapbook 2.
- ⁸³Wendell W. Hall manuscript collection, Scrapbook 2.
- ⁸⁴Wendell W. Hall manuscript collection, housed in the National Music Hall of Fame, Warren Ohio, Scrapbook 2.
- ⁸⁵Wendell W. Hall manuscript collection, University of Wisconsin Historical Library, Scrapbook 1.
- ⁸⁶Barnouw, 119-121.
- ⁸⁷Wendell W. Hall manuscript collection, University of Wisconsin Historical Library, Scrapbook 2.
- ⁸⁸Barnouw, 164.
- ⁸⁹Chase, 25.
- ⁹⁰Chase, 26.
- ⁹¹Wendell W. Hall manuscript collection, University of Wisconsin Historical Library, Scrapbook 1.
- ⁹²Chicago Daily News, October 16, 1934, Wendell W. Hall manuscript collection, National Music Hall of Fame, Scrapbook 4.
- ⁹³Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ⁹⁴Ted Husing, Ten Years Before the Mike (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1935), 107-108.
- ⁹⁵Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.
- ⁹⁶Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

⁹⁷Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

⁹⁸Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

⁹⁹Letter from Fred Smith, January 24, 1968.

CHAPTER V

THE TWILIGHT OF A CAREER 1930-1940

THE PERIOD OF THE THIRTIES

On the morning of October 24, 1929, the structure of American prosperity cracked wide open. Not until November 13th did prices reach their bottom for 1929. The Big Bull Market was dead. Billions of dollars' worth of profit -- and paper profits -- had disappeared. The legend of Wall Street had been punctured. Coolidge-Hoover Prosperity was not yet dead, but it was dying. The Post-war Decade had come to its close. An era had ended and the Great Depression was on its way.

The Country in Chaos

Hoover homilies. At first business and industry in general did not seem to have been gravely affected. During the spring of 1930 there was a Little Bull Market, but in May this glimmer of hope came to an end.

During these bewildering years President Hoover at first tried to organize national optimism by calling business leaders to Washington to declare that conditions were basically sound and that everything was all right, nothing seemed to work.

The failure of President Hoover to lead business out of depression coupled with the striking gains of the Democrats in the 1930 November elections, caused many Republicans and Democrats alike to cast a hopeful eye toward 1932.

The Roosevelt Era

Domestic policy. During 1932 the average number of unemployed people in the country was estimated at from 12 million to 17 million, and the nation was fast losing patience with adversity. Rebellion was in the air; riots and hunger-marches had broken out around the country. This was the atmosphere early in June when the Republican party nominated Herbert Hoover for re-election, and in July when the Democratic convention chose to follow Franklin D. Roosevelt. On election day the country decided to give the job of saving the United States to Franklin D. Roosevelt, and he accepted willingly.

On March 4, 1933 -- the day that Herbert Hoover left the White House and Franklin Roosevelt entered -- the banking system of the country came to a complete halt. Hoover, committed to orthodox economic theories, had become one of the victims of the collapse of the going system.

President Roosevelt, stating in his Inaugural Address that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself," charged into a hurricane of action. He successfully reopened the banks and promised the American public a "New Deal"; that lively program of reform, relief, and

stimulation which was to keep the country going during the middle thirties and bring at least a measure of recovery.

Although the New Deal did not bring a full return of prosperity, in many ways it did permanently alter the nature of the American economy. It was not until the shadows of war began to darken, and America began to arm feverishly for defense, that this new system really began to work.

Foreign Outlook

During the middle 1930s American disapproval of warlike nations bent on conquest was intense, but the great majority of people felt that we shouldn't intervene. The country was in an isolationist mood, convinced that it could live in safety behind a wall of neutrality.

From 1937 through 1940 the sequence of events in Europe -- plus Roosevelt's efforts to awaken America to the full meaning of Hitler's onrush -- shocked the country into a gradual change of conviction as to the ability of the United States to live in isolation. With each bit of news from abroad American opinion shifted; however, neutralism died hard.

Social Climate

Although the Depression did not cause a revolution, it did bring an epidemic of proposals for economic panaceas -- the cult of Technocracy, Upton Sinclair's EPIC, and the Townsend Old Age Revolving Pensions Plan; it brought the dictatorlike Huey Long to brief

regional power; it brought riots at farmers' bankruptcy sales, a Communist-led "march" on Washington, and the brief Bonus Army march of 1932.

Americans were deeply scarred by the Depression. What was happening to them seemed without rhyme or reason. Most of them had been brought up to feel that if you worked hard and well, and otherwise behaved yourself, you would be rewarded by good fortune. As time went on there was a continuing disposition among Americans old and young to look with a cynical eye upon the old Horatio Alger formula for success. They had learned from bitter experience to crave security.¹

The contrast in manners and morals between the social climate of the 1920s and that of the 1930s did not become clearly marked until about 1933, when the New Deal came in and the Eighteenth Amendment was repealed.

Already by the end of the 1920s the revolution in morals and manners that had characterized the era was playing itself out. By the time of the Panic, "Flaming Youth" was beginning to flicker. As the 1930s got under way, the change in the climate became clearly discernible. Not that there was any general return to the old conventions which had been overthrown in the 1920s. The freedom won by the flappers had not been lost. What departed was the excited sense that taboos were going to smash, that morals were being made over or annihilated, and that the whole code of behavior was in flux.

Gone was that hysterical preoccupation with sex that had characterized the Post-war Decade.

In December, 1933 Utah became the 36th state to ratify the Twenty-first Amendment to the Constitution, repealing the Prohibition Amendment.

Hotels and restaurants blossomed with cocktail lounges and taprooms. So many bright new bars appeared along the city streets that most of the metropolitan speakeasies withered and died.

Nothing better illustrates the loss of faith in local governments and the new prestige of the federal government than the nation's changing attitudes toward crime detection. With few exceptions the apprehension and punishment of lawbreakers had always been a local function. But in the 1930s local government proved inadequate to deal with the new gangs, which often operated not in a single city but over a wide region.

The country was so shocked by the brazenness of the criminals and the helplessness of local police that it approved an unprecedented extension of federal authority to deal with particular crimes. The published exploits of the FBI helped persuade many Americans that only the federal government could deal adequately with serious national problems.

For a generation conservationists had been warning the country that it was misusing its land, forests and fields. The public paid little attention until November of 1933 when the first of the great

dust storms swept across South Dakota. During the next two years numberless storms swept the Plains and laid waste thousands of square miles from the Texas Panhandle up to the Canadian border.

The sodbusting that had made the Great Plains the American breadbasket now led to the Dust Bowl. By late 1933 the area had been dry for 18 months, and the song "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'" found no favor with people from Oklahoma to South Dakota. Farmers were forced into tenancy and, in time, banks and mortgage companies took over the debt-ridden farms. The farmers, broke, jammed into jalopies and headed for California -- and fresh disaster.²

The most shocking chapter of the Dust Bowl tragedy came when the migrants reached the promised land. They found an agriculture even more depersonalized than the one they had left, and joblessness also. There were far more people than there were jobs. Living conditions were horrible and wages ranged anywhere from 45 cents an hour to 45 cents a day, depending on how many crop pickers showed up in answer to a call to work.

In 1937 the U.S. Farm Security Administration moved in to help the migrants. But the problem was really never solved until the 1940s when the war came and swept the migrants out of the fields and into the booming factories.

Recreation

Perhaps no change that took place during the decade more sharply altered the weekly routine of millions of men and women as did the five-day week. During 1931 and 1932, when factories and business offices were short of work, there were very general reductions in hours. The Depression had sharply accelerated the trend toward shorter work periods and longer play periods.

The relief and public-works agencies put millions of unemployed men to work building motor parkways, public bathing beaches, playgrounds, and other conveniences for people who were looking for relaxation.

The simpler and less pretentious sports like softball, skiing, miniature golf, bicycling, and roller skating made the best headway. Although college and professional sports were still pre-eminent events to watch, they attracted a somewhat less devout interest than in earlier years.

During the Depression Americans amused themselves in a variety of ways. There was an increase in bridge playing and in gambling. Gambling devices such as pinball, slot machines, punchboard, and jar games enabled Americans to wager a small amount of money in the hope of a big return. A different kind of gamble was represented in the tremendous American participation in the Irish Sweepstakes, "Bank-Night," and bingo (or beano, or keno).

As the end of the decade approached many Americans eagerly anticipated the opening of the New York World's Fair. The theme of the Fair was "The World of Tomorrow," and as the summer of 1939 slipped by the country wondered what kind of a world it would be.

Entertainment-Communication

During the depression-ridden thirties Americans sought entertainment that helped them forget their troubles, and the instruments of mass communication provided the escape mechanism not available elsewhere.

Books. Novelists during the 1930s fell into two classes; those who reflected the secular religion of social consciousness, and those who did not.

The social authors of the decade were deeply moved by the Depression and the suffering it caused; they felt that action was desperately needed to set things right.

Limited in size as were their audiences, the writers who were engaged in the search for social significance produced perhaps the most vital and certainly the most characteristic work of the decade. However, only one or two books which could fairly be said to reflect the mood of social consciousness reached the top of the best-seller list during the 1930s. One was Sinclair Lewis's It Can't Happen Here, which showed how fascism might come to the United States, and the other was John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath, which was a very vivid account of the plight of a family of "Okies" in California.

An examination of the annual best-seller lists would seem to suggest how limited in size was the public which wanted social documents. To command the attention of several hundred thousand readers, books like The Good Earth, Gone With the Wind, Northwest Passage and Life Begins at Forty succeeded largely because they offered the opportunity to escape from the Depression and anxiety.

Magazines. The tendency of magazines in the 1930s was toward a timid discretion in the treatment of public affairs. The big popular magazines with circulations of two or three million very rarely, if at all, touched controversial issues. They confined themselves mostly to fictional entertainment and to the discussion of matters which no one could take exception.

That there was money to be made nevertheless by the sharp presentation of facts, and particularly of facts about America, was shown by the growing success of Time, Life, their younger sister Fortune, and Newsweek. Although general entertainment magazines such as Collier's, the American, Cosmopolitan, The Saturday Evening Post, and the New Yorker continued to be successful in terms of advertising and in circulation, it was the rapid rise of the Reader's Digest to huge popularity which seemed to prove that readers liked to save time, if their reading could be ably condensed and reassuringly simplified.³

Newspapers. Throughout the 1930s the influence of the newspapers tended to be conservative. Newspaper publishing had become a branch of big business, obedient to the economic law which concentrated power

into fewer and fewer hands. Although the tendency of newspapers to be combined into chains under a single ownership seemed to have been halted during the 1930s, the tendency toward monopoly or duopoly of newspaper control in each city but the very largest continued.⁴

The rise of interpretative reporting was the most important development of the 1930s. "Why" became important, along with the traditional "who did what," because the reader, more than ever, wanted and needed to know the meaning of the news.

Motion pictures. American films during the early 1930s were "realistic" and reflected the national disaster, while pictures during the middle and latter years of the decade were usually lighthearted, unchallenging, and avoided real discontents and disturbing conflicts.

The American public did not suddenly demand "realistic" pictures during the first several years of the Depression, but they did seek a more recognizable image of their own problems on the screen. As Arthur Knight noted, "What the public obviously wanted was a hard-hitting, naturalistic form of drama that took its themes directly from the headlines of the day."⁵

With the election of Roosevelt in 1933, a new note of optimism appeared in motion pictures. At the same time a new sense of caution and constraint was forced upon the industry by the formation of the Legion of Decency; set up to implement a new Production Code. With the rise of the Legion in 1934, many of the crude excesses of the realistic school of film making were eliminated.

By the middle thirties the industry itself quite consciously began laying greater emphasis on purely escapist themes -- big Westerns, costume dramas, musicals, historical films and adaptations of the classics.

During the 1930s, millions of Americans followed the careers of Greta Garbo, Clark Gable, Carol Lombard, James Cagney and countless other idols with avid interest. The movies themselves were often panned by serious critics. But the depression-ridden fan in the darkened theater found the reassurance he wanted. In the comfortable half-world of film, women were beautiful, men were handsome and success always lurked around the corner.

Radio. During the Depression when money, along with everything else, was scarce people thought long and hard before investing even a portion of their earnings in entertainment outside the home. With the fantastic growth and development of radio during the nineteen-thirties, it was possible to be entertained and informed without leaving the living room; and far less expensive.

It may seem strange that the relatively new radio industry should grow during the Depression while many established allied industries declined, and that many established radio stars declined while relatively unknown entertainers grew; yet this is exactly what happened.

It might have been expected that a nation thrown into the throes of a depression would turn to such established mediums of forgetfulness as the movies or vaudeville; but with money in short

supply a converse reaction occurred. People, hard-pressed for the necessities of life, who could no longer afford the luxury of touring troupes or movie-theaters turned to the one medium that could provide forgetfulness cheaply -- radio.⁶ As Francis Chase Jr. said:

It was not a peculiar development in the history of radio, then, that its greatest strides forward were made during the very depths of depression when other, older industries were closing their doors.... In fact, the development of radio in a period when other business failures were creating widespread unemployment is one of the logical and wholly normal aspects of the industry.⁷

RADIO IN THE NATION 1930-1941

Radio: 1930-1935

Development. The Depression did not depress radio, but added greatly to its ever-increasing audience. While many movie theaters closed, and theatrical stock companies disappeared, radio boomed. Here was a medium of entertainment that was free, a mode of amusement available to rich and poor alike without cost and in the privacy of the home. Thousands of families who had purchased much of their household equipment on credit gave up their vacuum cleaners, their cars, and their furniture, but kept up payments on their radios. Radio had become part of their lives.⁸

By the beginning of 1930 the framework had been laid for what was to become an important American industry, and by that autumn radio was well established in the United States. The next ten years saw

radio undergoing a great expansion -- an expansion in size of audiences, one in revenues of the broadcasting industry, and one in the forms and quality of programs provided to listeners. From 1930 until America entered World War II, radio found itself in a period of phenomenal growth, becoming probably the nation's most important source of entertainment.⁹

Homes and receivers. There was a tremendous increase in the number of radio homes during the period; in 1930, homes with radio receivers increased to almost 12 million -- more than double the number reported four years earlier. By the fall of 1935, the number of radio homes had grown to nearly 23 million, or about two-thirds of all homes in the United States.¹⁰

Receiving sets improved in quality, with better circuits than prior to 1930. The major change, however, was in the increasing popularity of lower-cost table models, as opposed to "console" sets. This change might have been responsible for much of the increase in total sale of sets during this period -- since the average cost of sets dropped from about \$120.00 in 1929 and \$80.00 in 1930, to around \$40.00 in 1934 and 1935. The proportion of AC sets continued to increase; battery sets were by this time powered usually by dry batteries, but were used only on farms -- or in automobiles. Auto sets were introduced in 1930; by 1940 more than seven million auto sets had been sold to the public.¹¹

Industry growth. There was no increase in the number of stations during the period, although a number of new stations had received authorizations. In January 1935, there were approximately 600 stations in operation, the same as in 1930. However, in 1935 some 332 stations were licensed for full-time operation, and most of these full-time stations were on the air for from 16 to 18 hours a day. General increases in station power also marked the period; by 1935 some 27 stations were using 50,000 watts of power, and approximately 140 others were broadcasting with 5,000 watts of power.¹²

Networks. The Depression had little real effect on the network companies who were operating on a national coast-to-coast basis. In 1934, the two network companies already in the field were joined by a third, the Mutual Broadcasting System which consisted of only four stations. In 1930, approximately 130 stations were affiliated with NBC or CBS, and at the beginning of 1935 NBC's two networks provided service to 89 stations, CBS had contracts with 96 outlets, and Mutual still included only its four original stations.¹³

Studio equipment. One major change took place during this period -- the glass window between entertainers and audience in the studio was removed; first on the networks, and later in most stations. By 1935, nearly every station had a transcription or library service, and turntables for playing either 33 rpm transcriptions or 78 rpm phonograph records.

Commerical operation. As radio listening increased, so did network and station revenues from the sale of time to advertisers. The industry's total revenue doubled to nearly \$80 million over the five years from 1930 to 1935, with an increasing proportion of the revenue going directly to stations instead of to network companies. This period also saw the networks allow "direct selling" on network programs; and stations began accepting "spot announcements" as opposed to program advertising, especially toward the end of the period.¹⁴

Programming. Between 1930 and 1935 more new program forms were developed than any other five-year period in radio history. Broadcasting had become an important advertising medium; if network advertising was to be effective, programs carrying advertising messages had to capture the attention of large numbers of listeners. Networks were forced to develop more attractive programs than those provided during the first ten years of radio's history. With advertisers willing to pay the bills, money was not a limiting factor. Some of the new forms introduced on networks, or program forms taking new "slants" during the period included: a vaudeville-type of variety using different "guest" acts from vaudeville each week; the comedy-variety form, built around a featured "name" comedian; the "barn dance" or "country and western music" type of program; the daytime variety form such as the Breakfast Club, and the "amateur contest" form, of which the Major Bowes Amateur Hour was the most successful

example; human interest program, of the interview and advice type; public affairs forum programs; 15-minute, five-times-a-week network news programs; March of Time dramatized news programs; women's daytime serial drama; and late afternoon children's dramas in serial form.¹⁵

During this period, the 15-minute comedy dramatic serial inaugurated by Amos'n' Andy became more prevelant, as did the use of prestige and family dramas.

Local station programming was far less spectacular than that on the network. During the period a large proportion of stations scheduled daily local programs featuring pseudo-scientific talks and music. Many stations serving rural audiences presented "live" programs of country and western music. Commerical religious programs were also introduced on local stations during the period. Many local outlets asked listeners to contribute money to the station -- part of the receipts going to the program's sponsor, and part to the station.

Some development was made in the area of local news programs, however, few stations gave more than a single 15-minute news broadcast per day, or perhaps two or three 5-minute news programs. Most news presented was taken from stories appearing in local daily newspapers. There was some expansion of recorded or transcribed music programs, but most of the locally presented music was still of the "live" variety.¹⁶

Radio: 1935-1940

Development. This period saw radio revenues reach new heights. There were not too many new program forms introduced, but older forms were greatly improved.

Homes and receivers. Between 1935 and 1940, the number of radio homes continued to increase. From about 23 million radio homes in 1935, the number grew to nearly 30 million by 1940. There were no major changes in receiving sets; table models continued to be the most popular type, with prices on all home sets sold averaging about \$40.00. Many of the larger sets had push-button tuning, which enabled the listener to tune in a desired station simply by pushing a button.¹⁷

Industry growth. From 1935 to 1940, the number of stations steadily increased. By January of 1940 a total of 754 stations were on the air; and the number of 50,000 watt stations had increased to 39, with an additional 140 stations using 5,000 watts of power or more.¹⁸

Networks. By January of 1940, a total of 386 stations were affiliated with networks, including all 39 of the 50,000 watt stations and 116 others with power of 5,000 watts or more. Most stations without network connections were stations with limited power or outlets operating on a part-time basis.¹⁹

Studio equipment. There were no major changes in equipment used by stations during the period; however, the increased emphasis on news resulted in the availability of special radio news services to stations, provided by such news-gathering agencies as United Press and International News Service.

Commercial operation. With four coast-to-coast networks, more than 700 commercial stations, and revenues from sale of time totalling more than \$150 million a year, radio by 1940 had become a major business enterprise. Use of national spot advertising continued growing, and local merchants kept increasing expenditures for local radio advertising, so that starting in 1935, station revenues from sale of time exceeded the amounts spent each year for network advertising.²⁰

Programming. The number of new program forms was considerably less than in the early half of the nineteen-thirties, however, some new types were developed. New forms appearing on the networks included: news commentary programs; quiz programs with audience participation; panel quiz shows, dramatic crime programs; telephone give-away programs; and comedy participation programs of the "Truth or Consequences" type.²¹

Network news programs became an important part of network service in the late nineteen-thirties, especially when events in Europe created great interest in national and international affairs.

Except for the new forms introduced, programs showed little change from those provided before 1935. Most of the successful individual programs of 1935, and nearly all of the "name" radio personalities of 1935, were still on the air and still successful during 1940.

By 1940, local station programming was highly diversified. Station schedules included a wide variety of network programs; almost two-thirds of all stations had network affiliations, and were devoting nearly ten hours a day to network originated programs. Nearly all stations carried several hours of "live" music each week, however, local stations expanded their use of recorded music. Most stations also scheduled at least one "man-on-the-street" remote interview program a day.²²

Industry problems. In addition to the ASCAP problem which continued until 1941, two other problems plagued the industry. One involved relations with the American Federation of Musicians. To make work for its members, the Federation in 1937 announced its intention of requiring broadcasting stations to employ as regular staff members a number of union musicians. The following year, contracts were signed with most stations, putting the union's demands into effect. Networks and recording companies were forced to refuse program service to any station failing to meet the union's demands. The contracts were declared illegal by the Justice Department, so upon their expiration in 1940 they were not renewed. However, until 1946 the pressures on networks and recording companies continued.²³

Another problem concerned the use by broadcasting stations of news from the wires of the national news-gathering agencies. During the early nineteen-thirties, publishers of newspapers were disturbed by the increasing number of news programs carried by stations and

networks, and decided to cut off the supply of news materials used on such programs. Pressure was exerted on the three news services; the result was that in 1933 the three news agencies announced that they would no longer accept radio stations or networks as subscribers. The following year a compromise was worked out between broadcasters and the news services under which a newly-created organization, the Press Radio Bureau, would supply a limited amount of headline news each day to broadcasting stations, which, among other things, were required to advise their listeners to read local newspapers for complete details. The radio industry was outraged by the demands imposed by the wire services; networks began setting up news-gathering organizations of their own; while many stations subscribed to the newly-created news service Trans-Radio. Within two or three years, UP and INS gave up the fight and again made their services available to broadcasters. In 1939, the AP formally withdrew restrictions on the use of its news on radio, and a year later activities of the Press Radio Bureau ended.²⁴

THE TIDE OF CHANGE

During the latter part of the nineteen-twenties a succession of events took place which would change the entire complexion of radio. Shortly after the turn of the decade these events culminated in a swelling tide of vaudeville and movie actors, night club entertainers,

and concert stars destined to add luster and ingenuity to broadcasting;²⁵ the struggle of Wendell Hall against that tide was about to begin.

During the nineteen-twenties Mr. Hall became one of the most popular and well-known entertainers on radio; during the nineteen-thirties it was a different story. Not that his career suddenly ground to a complete halt at the dawn of the new decade; in fact during the first few months of 1930 Mr. Hall was earning more money per week than at any other time in his career. However, by 1935 the tide of change had caught up with "The Red-headed Music Maker," and the competition, brought on by a series of events, proved too formidable an opponent with which to cope. Within three years an illustrious career came to an end, and with it a form of entertainment that would never return.

To say that a single event caused the demise of oversimplifying the matter; rather it was a combination of factors, culminating in the talent boom of the early nineteen-thirties which led to his downfall, and over which he had no control. The Depression was a contributing factor, but only in the sense that it served as the catalyst which brought to fruition sooner, the end result of other events begun several years earlier. These events included: the development of the networks; the improvement in equipment; audience growth; the rise of radio advertising; and the collapse of vaudeville. Hastened by the Depression, this combination of events resulted in the greatest entertainment boom in radio history.

Internal Change

Impact of the networks. As early as 1927 Mr. Hall sensed the impact the networks would have on broadcasting in general, and on entertainers specifically. In an interview at the time he said:

The network program is the same as the chain store. Radio is going through a transformation. In the old days radio fans would shop around for entertainment. They liked, above all, distance. I would find them following me across the country. Now they will tune in on one station and stay, or they won't tune in at all. What was termed "fishing" is going out of style. Just as the chain store destroys competition, so will network programs, in time, kill independent stations -- and some very good entertainers as well.²⁶

If Mr. Hall was thinking about his own career he didn't mention it. However, by 1929 the era of the single, multi-talented act on radio was fast coming to a close. By the early nineteen-thirties radio listeners had become more sophisticated and discriminating in their choice of entertainment. This change in audience taste was brought about largely by the networks which stretched coast-to-coast and exposed the country to an entertainment world they never knew existed -- at least for free.

The rapid development of network systems brought a national audience within reach of a single microphone. No longer were local stations, affiliated with national networks, considered to be "remote" from such theatrical centers as New York and Chicago; no longer did local stations suffer from a discouraging lack of talent capable of furnishing adequate programs; no longer was it necessary or even

feasible for vaudeville performers to troupe from town to town, playing to perhaps two hundred thousand people in the course of a season, when they could now play to as many as ten million on a single evening; and no longer was it profitable for sponsors to finance radio tours around the country. Network radio had become the "big time," bringing big programs with lavish productions and big stars into American living rooms; and the depression-plagued public was content to sit home and enjoy every wonderful moment of it. As Alfred Goldsmith and Austin C. Lescarbours noted:

Network broadcasting ... proved to be in considerable measure the solution of broadcasting economics. It ... brought about the broadcasting of programs of real merit. It provided sponsors with an audience of such proportions as to justify the most lavish expenditures for programs.²⁷

Improved equipment-conditions. During the late nineteen-twenties, the technical facilities for broadcasting and for receiving broadcasts had improved to the point whereby station signals could be transmitted dependably and at the same time reproduce the signals in the home with reasonably fidelity. By 1929 transmitting stations were capable of putting out a broadcast signal on a regular basis with a minimum of interference; new and better transmitters made it less likely that a station would suddenly go off the air.

It was the activity of the Federal Radio Commission that broadcasters could assure advertisers of a full daily, stable program schedule. In 1927 the Commission established a standard broadcast

band and severely restricted the number of stations authorized to operate at night. The following year it made even more progress toward its goal of an interference-free national radio service. Radio stations were classified according to the size of the locality they were to serve, definite hours of operation were established, and just about every station in the country had its assigned wave length altered in an attempt to reach the greatest number of people with radio signals.²⁸

Just as problems of networking and transmitting signals tended to be solved by 1929, so developments in receivers tended by that date to have reached a point at which the quality of the sound available to the listener might induce an advertiser to take up radio program sponsorship. Receiving sets by 1930 were relatively inexpensive, powered by ordinary AC electric house current, and capable of satisfactory reproduction of sounds.²⁹

Audience growth. The radio audience grew steadily during the nineteen-twenties. In 1922, a radio could be found in only 60,000 of the 26 million homes in the United States (less than one home out of every 400), and the total audience was estimated at only 75,000 persons. By 1926, there were 20 million listeners in five million homes. During the 1928-1929 season, there were nearly 12 million receivers in almost 10 million homes. This meant that one-third of the nearly 30 million homes in the United States were available to radio programming.³⁰

The growth of the radio audience meant three things: listeners had accepted the medium as a legitimate source of information and entertainment; broadcasters could point to a sizeable number of prospective buyers of advertised products who could listen to radio programs; and entertainers no longer would be content to play to an audience of thousands when they could be heard by millions.

The acendency of advertising. The development of radio advertising resulted from the desire of early commerical sponsors to extend the range of their programs beyond the receiving area of local stations and thus multiply the number of their potential customers.³¹ The rapid expansion of network facilities in 1928 and 1929 provided sponsors with a vehicle capable of reaching vast audiences through a single program, and at the same time solved one of broadcasting's biggest problems -- providing more and better programs designed to appeal to an ever increasing and discriminating public.

When the networks were formed, almost all programs were developed and produced by network or station. There were exceptions, such as the "Eveready Hour," produced by an advertising agency. However, during the formative years of network systems, broadcasters were seriously hampered in their effort to provide quality programming because of the reluctance of "name" entertainers to donate their talent in exchange for publicity. As Alfred Goldsmith and Austin C. Lescarboursa said: "Publicity paid the bill. It was the legal tender of the broadcasting industry."³² During the late

nineteen-twenties the volume of broadcast advertising really began to reach impressive figures and the era of publicity-payment had passed forever.

By 1931 virtually all sponsored network programs were developed and produced by advertising agencies; and it was a highly profitable business. In 1931 an hour over NBC coast-to-coast network cost the sponsor about \$10,000. The advertising agency received from the network a 15 percent commission; or \$1500 for arranging this sale, and had minimal expenses in connection with it. The agency had established an additional commission. If it expended \$6,000 on program talent, it added 15 per cent, or \$900, in billing the cost to the sponsor. Thus an agency could earn \$2400 on a single network hour, or \$83,600 for a 39-week series. The developing wealth and power meant a flow of funds to the networks. By 1932 network approval of agency-built programs was considered a formality; and talent, around which to build those programs, was no problem.³³

By 1929 a vastly increased radio audience had long outgrown the novelty aspect of broadcasting, and was insisting on genuine entertainment. They expected of the broadcasting industry the same quality and perfection of entertainment which the stage and screen were wont to furnish.³⁴ They didn't have to wait long; the talent bomb was about to explode.

With the networks flourishing; equipment improved; and advertising pumping millions of dollars into broadcasting, one other event occurred which gave impetus to the entertainment explosion.

External Change

Vaudeville's final curtain. The collapse of vaudeville resulted from a series of events that stretched back as far as the early nineteen-twenties.

Radio certainly played a part in the demise of vaudeville. According to Francis Chase Jr.:

... radio, drawing more and more upon the type of act formerly found only in vaudeville, was rapidly making the entertainment circuits an economically unsound proposition. Advent of the depression and the disappearance of spare change from American pockets, far from reviving variety, was like the final spade pat on vaudeville's grave.³⁵

Motion pictures also helped kill vaudeville. Variety writer Joe Laurie Jr. noted that:

Pics at first helped vaude, and vice versa. Pictures played to masses and classes; vaude played in a limited sphere. Picture houses with the tremendous seating capacities and continued performances could outbid the vaude manager for the standard acts. The salaries became fantastic ... rising so high that even the most prosperous pic houses couldn't afford to pay them, but they did, until vaude was killed.³⁶

Another contributing factor to the decline of vaudeville was dissention within the industry itself. According to Joe Laurie Jr.:

On the part of management, there was hypocrisy and egoism. They beat down the opposition, starved the vaude actor, kidded him, made a spy of him on his fellow artists by dangling forty-week routes before his caved-in stomach. They had a blacklist that kept many a good act away from the big-time bills on which they belonged.³⁷

Entertainment historian Douglas Gilbert feels that the decline of vaudeville was due in great measure to Edward F. Albee, head of the Keith Circuit in the nineteen-twenties. According to Mr. Gilbert:

... Albee himself delivered a blow to ... [vaudeville] when ... he forsook his one-time beloved two-a-day for "presentation" five-a-day shows. This "generosity" at the expense of the actor bled thinner its arteries. It also ate up material faster than the writers and gag men could supply it. And a weary public, tired of stale jokes, offended by the lapse into vulgarity, sick to death of the same old pans and the ancient sets, turned to movies and sports.³⁸

Mr. Gilbert also feels that the backbone of vaudeville was low comedy. When dinner coats, white tie and tails, and evening gowns replaced the baggy pants, slapshoes, and fright wigs; when faces were made beautiful instead of grotesque; when wisecracks, risque gags, and the goosing stick were substituted for dialect jokes; when fashion-plate comics entertained between numbers instead of a roaring slapstick turn -- vaudeville was devitalized.³⁹ According to Mr. Gilbert, Edward Albee was again to blame:

He dressed up vaudeville fit to kill and it committed suicide. It became something that was neither variety, burlesque, nor review. The performers, forced to dress to match Albee's million-dollar theaters, looked no different to the audience who could see tuxedos anywhere and for nothing. Anyway, the customers stopped coming in.⁴⁰

Plagued by internal and external problems, vaudeville was in no condition to weather a brutal depression. By 1929 less than 1500 out of 6000 vaudeville acts were working. The following year another 1500 acts dropped out of vaudeville and the Palace Theater, once the proud pillar of the industry, was losing an estimated \$4000 a week. The trade paper Variety described the plight succinctly by reporting, "Vaudeville in 1930 stood motionless on a treadmill that moved backward."⁴¹

Result of the Change

The rush to radio. The plethora of talent that came to radio during the first years of the Depression, did not come simply because there was no where else to go, but rather, by that time circumstances were such that nothing could have prevented their coming.

Granted the Depression was in large measure responsible for the general collapse of the amusement world, and because of it many night clubs closed, vaudeville declined, the motion picture industry slumped and concert hall doors closed; but to say that the economic paralysis which immobilized the entertainment industry was the reason performers flocked to radio, only continues to pump life into a fallacy which should have expired long ago.

By the time the Depression hit, conditions within the radio industry had reached the point whereby the talent boom was both imminent and inevitable. The Depression, accompanied by the collapse of other

amusement mediums, far from causing the talent boom, merely hastened its arrival. The radio industry would have experienced a bombardment of talent -- Depression or no Depression; the collapse of vaudeville notwithstanding. The time for talent was right; broadcasting's moment had come; it needed artists and could accommodate them. That this moment came at the same time the Depression was pounding the final nail in the coffin of theatrical employment elsewhere, was coincidental.

By the time the Depression struck, artists from all areas of the entertainment spectrum were not only willing, but eager to go on the air. The time for scorn had passed; radio, as Will Rogers once remarked, was "too big a thing to be out of."

The tide of change in the attitude of artists regarding radio could be seen as early as 1926 when John McCormack and Lucrezia Bori appeared over the air for the Victor Talking Machine Company. By the spring of 1928 many of the Old Guard of those concert and operatic stars who refused to appear before the microphone had dwindled perceptibly; Galli-Curci gave way. Lawrence Tibbett made his debut. Sir Thomas Beecham had conducted an orchestra over the air. A few others had failed to appear, not necessarily because they wanted to, but because of contracts forbidding such performances. Managers were even thinking of radio as the primary field and the concert tour as secondary. Those who held out were in the minority, a minority whose ranks were growing ever thinner. As the finest operatic and concert stars were giving their voices to the microphone, there were other

singers rising from the obscurity of the opera chorus and small-time vaudeville to stardom via the air.⁴²

Along with many of the concert artists, many of the better popular entertainers had tried radio and became national celebrities. Performers such as Wendell Hall, Jones and Hare, Vaughn de Leath, Will Rogers, Ed Wynn, and Vincent Lopez were only a few of radio's stable of stars.

By the season of 1930-1931, entertainers not connected with radio were well aware that broadcasting was a lucrative business. They knew that the networks were firmly established; that radio had an established galaxy of stars; that sponsors were investing millions of dollars in the industry; and that improvements in the technical end of broadcasting, along with the production of superior receiving sets all but guaranteed the public clear reception. All this they knew -- and they wanted to be a part of it.

Radio had become a legitimate medium for advertisers and a respectable and profitable medium for entertainers. Nothing, not even prosperity could have stopped radio's entertainment explosion.

This Business of Broadcasting

To many a vaudevillian, night club performer, and stage star broadcasting was the promised land. According to Sam Slate and Joe Cook, "... by and large, performers wanted to get on the broadcasting bandwagon because it was the talk of the times."⁴³

Entertainers knew that radio, in addition to the fabulous salaries, could give them new prestige; build up their reputation in the eyes of the public. Success on radio meant that performers could go back to vaudeville and command far more money than they had been getting. They were well aware that Joe Penner went from \$300 a week to \$8,000 a week due to his radio build up, and that Edgar Bergen went from \$300 to \$2800 a week because of radio.⁴⁴

However, broadcasting was one thing, the ability to broadcast was another. It was not easy to move into radio. Robert Landry commented that, "The business of being funny, of entertaining the public, was changing so rapidly that men and women ... found themselves hopelessly out of date, trained to a style of working that was no longer in demand."⁴⁵ Artists contemplating a radio career would have to accept the fact that, apart from the economics radio entertainment differed substantially from that of vaudeville. Robert Landry noted that:

Radio played to an unseen audience. It was one-dimensional. Sight business was lost. Pantomime, make-up, scenery, all effects which were not purely aural were meaningless. There were a special style and pace for the air. Worst of all, radio was a monster down whose always open gullet a lifetime of vaudeville material could vanish in a few weeks, leaving the performer with nothing more to offer.⁴⁶

During the nineteen-thirties it was radio that could make or break a career; everything else was secondary. However, if a performer couldn't make it big in radio, and many of them didn't,

there was always Hollywood. But, success on the stage did not guarantee success in films. Arthur Knight commented that, "Ed Wynn's simple-minded funny man, Beatrice Lillie's cool sophistication, Fanny Brice's broad dialect humor and even broader bathos found scant acceptance outside New York. Even Eddie Cantor ... was never warmly received in the movies."⁴⁷

Radio's Surfeit of Stars

1930-1935. During the nineteen-thirties radio artists became the idols of the entertainment world, their popularity surpassing that of many motion picture stars.

Between 1930 and 1935 the biggest names in radio included: Amos 'n' Andy; Rudy Vallee, the "Vagabond Lover"; Ed Wynn, the "Fire Chief"; Jessica Dragonette; Gertrude Berg; Kate Smith, the "Songbird of the South"; Arthur Tracy, the "Street Singer"; Harry Frankel, "Singing Sam, the Barbasol Man"; Julia Sanderson and Frank Crummit; Stoopnagle and Budd; Jane Froman; Eddie Cantor; Jack Pearl, "Baron Munchausen"; George Burns and Gracie Allen; Willie and Eugene Howard; Al Jolson; Bing Crosby; Jane and Goodman Ace, the "Easy Aces"; Jack Benny; Fred Allen; Joe Penner; Russ Columbo; Ruth Etting; Fanny Brice, "Baby Snooks"; Will Rogers; and the orchestras of Ben Bernie, Paul Whiteman, Fred Waring, Jan Garber, Wayne King, Vincent Lopez, and Isham Jones.⁴⁸

1935-1940. In 1935 Major Edward Bowes' "Amateur Hour" became one of the biggest shows on radio, and "Fibber McGee and Molly" began their radio series. Other entertainers who rose to stardom included; Harriet Hilliard and Ozzie Nelson, Phil Baker, Bob Burns, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Tommy Riggs and "Betty Lou," Bob Hope, Phil Cook, Mary Margaret McBride, John J. Anthony, and Don Ameche.⁴⁹

By 1940 the entertainment explosion had just about come to an end. During the past ten years radio had become so big and so important in the United States that it frequently set the pattern for all other fields of entertainment. Radio stars were better known than most stage and screen stars, and frequently Hollywood paid huge sums to sign up radio personalities for pictures. Stars like Bing Crosby, Jack Benny, Burns and Allen, and Joe Penner -- people essentially identified with radio -- were recruited to make movies in Hollywood. Often the films they appeared in had radio backgrounds, the Big Broadcast series, for example. As Irving Settler said: "It was a case of the tail of the dog growing so big and powerful that it was wagging the dog itself."⁵⁰

The Way it Was

From 1930 until the end of the decade, radio was blessed with a seemingly endless supply of talented performers. This in turn led to fierce competition among artists for spots on the bigger programs. The result was that many of the internal problems which plagued vaudeville could now be found in the broadcasting industry. Within

five years the role of artist and broadcaster had been completely reversed. While artists could no longer afford to remain aloof from broadcasting, broadcasters could be highly selective as to the choice of artists; and for many of radio's pioneer performers this spelled disaster.

During the nineteen-thirties hundreds of performers appeared on radio; many were destined to long stardom, others to fleeting popularity, and still others dropped from the limelight altogether.

A STRUGGLE AGAINST THE TIDE

Riding the Crest

During the first year of the new decade Wendell Hall breathed deeply the rewarding air of the big time. He was one of the biggest stars on radio and among the highest paid. The following year was quite different, for it was the one which saw "The Red-headed Music Maker" step into the twilight of his career.

Presentation houses. 1930 was a rather profitable year for Wendell Hall. Following the demise of the "Majestic Hour," which went off the air in February, Mr. Hall entered the ranks of vaudeville for three months, appearing as a featured headliner on the R-K-O Circuit.

In 1930 vaudeville theaters offering a combined variety and screen program were known as "Presentation Houses"; a motion picture followed by live entertainment. Between February and May Mr. Hall worked from eight to ten presentation houses at a salary of \$2500 a week.⁵¹

An indication of Mr. Hall's magnetism might be gleaned from an incident which took place in Toledo. It came when 14 women fainted and had to be carried from the theater during Mr. Hall's rendition of "My Dream Sweetheart." Years later Mr. Hall commented:

From that actual experience came the idea to plant 30 or 35 women throughout the audience who would scream and faint whenever a singer opened his mouth. This practice reached its zenith during the Sinatra years, and it came right from my show ... don't think it didn't.⁵²

The Shell program. In April of 1930 Mr. Hall signed a contract with the National Broadcasting Company. At this time the networks were operating artist's bureaus which collected ten per cent of the artist's salary for the privilege of being signed. It was felt that an entertainer striving for appearances on NBC would have a better opportunity to achieve his ambition if he were managed also by NBC. The networks, in their dual capacity as buyer and seller of talent, were providing a competition to individual talent agents which such individuals were unable to meet. According to Francis Chase Jr.:

Artists frequently suffered under network-owned management. In a "package show," where the network built the entire program and furnished broadcasting facilities as well, broadcasting time is a fixed factor. Its costs do not vary. But in the bargaining for the sale of the show as a package, network salesmen have one price factor which is not fixed -- talent costs. And rather than lose a sale of time when differences arise between advertiser and network, it is easily conceivable that the network might take a lower price for its talent in order to make the larger sale.⁵³

Thus while there were drawbacks to being under contract to the networks, there were also advantages; once an artist was signed he at least knew the network would find a show for him -- even if he did have to pay for working. Mr. Hall certainly didn't object too strenuously to paying NBC ten per cent of his salary. Commenting on this he said: "Why should the networks do a favor for the artist and not collect?"⁵⁴ In May the National Broadcasting Company placed Mr. Hall on a show sponsored by the Shell Oil Company.

From May through October Mr. Hall served as master of ceremonies on the Sign of the Shell program. This 26-week series originated from the Chicago studio's of WENR, and was broadcast over the NBC-Red network. According to the Akron Times Press this new Shell contract made Mr. Hall "the highest priced artist working out of the NBC Chicago studios."⁵⁵ Another paper, the Goshen News Times wrote that, "In this new Shell contract, he receives one of the highest salaries ever paid a radio artist in Chicago studios."⁵⁶

According to Mr. Hall the Shell program got off to a bad start and for the first 13 weeks was not well received. He felt this was due to the fact that the network had cast him opposite Adolphe Dumont and his 33-piece symphony orchestra. To have Wendell Hall, a sparkling, dynamic personality singing snappy songs and telling funny stories one minute, and introducing such artists as Chauncey Parsons singing excerpts from "Lohengrin" the next, just didn't find favor with the audience.

When it was realized that the program was not catching on, a search was launched to secure a new orchestra leader. By July the broadcasting industry was buzzing with speculation over who Dumont's replacement might be. This item appeared in the New York City Telegram:

All 'round about the Broadcasting Sector they were talking about the possibility that Vincent Lopez may become maestro of the new Shell Oil program. Lopex, until last Tuesday, was director of the Pure Oil program, which originates in Chicago, and he admits that he is considering "a big commerical account." They say that Shell would be willing to break all records by going on the air six hours a week, if it could get a good maestro in its clutches.⁵⁷

When the Shell program began its second 13-week run it wasn't for an hour a day, six days a week, nor was Vincent Lopez wielding the baton. In August this item appeared in the Ft. Dodge Messenger:

On Monday, Shell goes on the air over the NBC-Red network with a sparkling new type of program, especially designed to meet today's demand for sintillating dance music; snappy song hits; the highest type of entertainment featuring well known artists having a large radio following. Featured on this new Shell program are such nationally known artists as Art Kassel with his renowned "Kassel's in the Air" dance band; Ray Perkins, one of America's favorite singing comedians, night club entertainer, popular vaudeville star and widely known on radio as "Judge Jr." and the "Old Topper," Wendell Hall will continue as host of the Shell Program.⁵⁸

The new program was a super-show of high-powered entertainment, and apparently was far better received than the old one. After moving the program from WENR to WMAQ, one Chicago columnist wrote:

The new studios in the Merchandise Mart seemed to add zest to the program and we class the half hour's entertainment as the best that has ever emitted from the local studios.... Even Wendell Hall caught the spirit of the occasion and shortened his announcements. The absence of waits, so noticeable in previous Shell broadcasts, added the snap which the program has lacked.⁵⁹

Although Mr. Hall, Kassel and Perkins appeared on the same program, only Mr. Hall worked out of the Chicago studios. Perkins' entertainment, though not so explained to the radio audience, was brought from WEAF, New York and spotted at the proper time by a quick shift of long-distance lines. Mr. Hall would introduce Perkins and announce what he was going to do, then the engineers would switch to New York. Art Kassel's band was playing at Colosimo's restaurant on Chicago's southside; the same restaurant Guy Lombardo broadcast from when he appeared on the Wrigley Hour.⁶⁰

With the addition of Ray Perkins to the program Mr. Hall's role was limited mainly to serving as master of ceremonies. One newspaper wrote; "Although Wendell Hall is a star, Ray Perkins is the real ace of the air on radio."⁶¹ Though Mr. Hall did sing occasionally, introducing several Peter De Rose compositions, his main function was to open and close the show and introduce the talent. How well he did this seemed to be a matter of conflicting opinion. The Buffalo News wrote that, "In his original announcements, Hall displays the pep and go, dash, spark and spirit of the Shell and always gets his show off to a good start."⁶² Evans Plummer, Radio Editor of the Chicago Hearld and Examiner wrote; "... Mr. Wendell Hall if I may be so bold

why don't you ... drop a bit of the pseudo-Southern dialect, so that at least your ... friends will know what you are master-of-ceremonying about?"⁶³ Another columnist, David Bratton wrote: "We do not care for Hall's type of announcing, but we do like to hear him sing."⁶⁴

The Shell program went off the air during the first week in November, 1930. The New York Evening Journal described the circumstances surrounding the show's departure:

Thus has passed a weekly bill that was developing, with the aid of Ray Perkins, into a fac simile of what Broadway might call a wow. Undoubtedly an industrial drama's gloomy finale precipitated Shell's sudden cancellation of its contract with NBC -- the drama of its conflict with Standard Oil. And evidently the peace terms were such as to deny the vanquished the luxuries of radio's exploitation. However, it is the fadeout of a program that held promise of becoming institutional, rather than a sordid story of a business battle that interests and saddens the radio addict.⁶⁵

During the time Mr. Hall was appearing on the Shell program he was also publishing a magazine called What's on the Air. According to at least one newspaper account, it was a lively and informative journal:

Mr. Hall gets out one of the best radio magazines in existence. He knows his stuff and while the magazine is chiefly devoted to midwest and to chain features, it is still interesting. It is profusely illustrated and has had pictures of radio stars both known and unknown to listeners.⁶⁶

It is not known how long Mr. Hall continued to publish the magazine, nor could he remember the circumstances of its demise.

The Beginning of the End

Between November of 1930 and May of 1932, Mr. Hall's career plunged to its lowest point. The big shows were already staffed and no one seemed willing to give him a coast-to-coast spot; thus he was forced to accept whatever programs happened to be available.

During this period Mr. Hall served at various times as the "Prince of Pineapple" on a daytime, 15-minute show for Libby, McNeil and Libby over a regional hookup out of Chicago; "Professor Fiddle Dee Dee," a 15-minute sustaining song and gag show over a New York station; and did a 15-minute comedy-musical program for R.G. Dunn cigars over WJR in Detroit.⁶⁷

Dissatisfied over what had happened to his career and eager to again regain the stature that was once his, Mr. Hall approached the F.W. Fitch Company in Des Moines, Iowa about sponsoring a program. Fitch bought the idea of using radio to promote its products and in doing so, gave the faltering career of Wendell Hall a much needed boost.⁶⁸

The Fitch program. There apparently some reluctance on the part of the Fitch Company to invest heavily in radio until it was shown that the medium could in fact increase sales. Rather than promoting their best-selling shampoo, the Company came up with a Fitch toothpaste and agreed to sponsor a local, weekly program over WOC, Davenport for 13 weeks. According to Mr. Hall the program was so successful that: "The Fitch Company was simply amazed. In fact we

did such a big job for them in 13 weeks that they started mixing toothpaste in bathtubs to keep up with the demand." Following a successful trial period in Davenport, and substituting shampoo for toothpaste, the program was taken to Chicago. For 13 weeks it was broadcast over WBBM to a CBS regional network audience; it was then transferred to NBC. For the next three years, from 1933 through 1935 the Wendell Hall Fitch Program from WMAQ, could be heard Sunday evenings at 7:45 over a 52-station hookup of the NBC radio network.⁶⁹

The Wendell Hall Fitch Program was a combination of songs, stories and contests. Mr. Hall's songs were backed up by an orchestra which the Chicago Examiner called a sort of miniature league of nations. It was composed of Ennio Bolognini, cellist, an Argentinean; Robert Dolejsi, violinist, a Bohemian; Fritz Wolff, violinist, German; Vincent Miraglio, harpist, Italian; Earl Roberts, banjo, French; and Joe Gorner, violinist, Russian.⁷⁰ In addition to offering music and stories Mr. Hall thought it would be a profitable idea to have the radio audience participate in the program. Each Sunday evening Mr. Hall would award watches and radios to the listeners submitting the ten best four-line jungles to the tune of "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'." Each entry had to be accompanied by a carton from a bottle of Fitch shampoo. From all indications the contest was a huge success and provided Mr. Hall with some 10,000 entirely original verses; some of which he used, many of which he didn't. The following verse is probably typical of the thousands he received:

I saw Wendell's picture
In the Sunday Roto-view
From the looks of the mustach-Oh
It sure needs Fitch Shampoo

Mr. Hall was earning \$250 a week on the Fitch program and even though, as Fred Smith said, "... he pepped it up from a one-station broadcast to national coverage,"⁷¹ he couldn't command an increase in salary. As Mr. Hall recalled: "I kept doing more and more business for them and yet didn't receive a raise. So I walked out on them."⁷²

The Fitch show, while keeping Mr. Hall before the public, was not one of the most listened to programs on radio and did little to substantially increase his stature. During the three years Mr. Hall was with the show, it had an average rating of about 4.3; far below that of other light music programs of the period.⁷³

If the Fitch program failed to help Mr. Hall regain a place among the current luminaries of radio, his next program did even less.

The Gillette Community Sing. From September of 1936 through 1937, Mr. Hall served as song leader on the Community Sing program. The show was sponsored by the Gillette Razor Company, and broadcast Sunday evenings at 10:00 o'clock from New York over the CBS radio network.

Early in 1936 Mr. Hall conceived the idea of broadcasting a community sing over a national network, and contacted the Gillette Company concerning sponsorship. Gillette agreed to the feasibility of such a venture, and in order to insure the program's success took a leaf from the theater and used the out-of-town try-out procedure for probably the first time in radio.⁷⁴

Usually a program is rehearsed for several weeks and then broadcast immediately over a national network. However, Gillette wanted to find out what weaknesses there might be in the show before it went out coast-to-coast. Throughout the spring and summer of 1936, in several different cities, the program was tried out locally; that is, the show was heard only in the town from which it was broadcast. After studying the criticisms, and when Gillette, their advertising agency (Ruthrauff and Ryan), and CBS executives felt they had a smooth-running program, it was presented to the nation.⁷⁵

A typical Community Sing program would be conducted in the following manner. Each Sunday evening at 9:30 Mr. Hall would step on stage before an audience of some 1500, including 30 or 35 paid singers planted throughout the studio in order to stimulate as much participation as possible. A warm up period preceded the show which made it mandatory that the audience be in the studio and seated a full half hour prior to air time. Extensive use was made of a slide projector which flashed the words to the songs on a screen, located directly behind the song leader; this way the audience at least had the lyrics in front of them even if they didn't know the melody.

As the song leader, Mr. Hall would first have the audience sing the scale. After having sung the scale up, he would have them sing it down. He would then ask the operator to flash a song lyric on the screen. After going through the preliminary steps Mr. Hall would acquaint the audience with his signals. It was this system of

signals, practiced and rehearsed before the program went on the air, that insured against enthusiastic singers holding on to the last note for a long time. A sharp downward motion with his right hand meant stop; a fluttering motion with both hands at shoulder height meant sustain; hands thrown violently in the air meant sing louder; and hands pushed toward the floor meant sing softly.

Unlike most community sings, in which the vocalizing by the audience was the whole show, this one employed a few comedians who would entertain between songs in order to relax the audience and give them a breathing spell. To show how it fit into the program and to ease the tension proper to broadcast time, Mr. Hall would summon Milton Berle to the stage. Berle would cut a few comic capers and tell a number of jokes. He would be followed by Jones and Hare, the "Happiness Boys" of a decade ago, and now the "Gillette Gentlemen." They would do a novelty number, then wander through the audience carrying portable microphones conducting nonsensical interviews.

As 10:00 o'clock approached everything was in readiness. The Jamaica Press reported that:

You could hear a pin drop in this theater which is seating more than fifteen hundred. Dan Seymour, the announcer, steps to the microphone to greet the air public -- Andy Sannella, the musical director wangs his steel guitar with the proper cord, Hall brings down his arms -- and a great avalanche of song starts rolling out to radio stations from coast-to-coast.⁷⁶

According to Mr. Hall once the program reached New York, "it evolved into more of a variety show with incidental community sing."⁷⁷

As the program developed, more and more emphasis was placed on comedy and less on singing. Mr. Hall recalled that:

... as it turned out I didn't have very much to do; just one song. In fact there wasn't a great deal of singing at all. They just used the community sing to wake up the audience at the beginning of the program, after that Milton Berle took over. It wasn't at all like I expected it to be.⁷⁸

In the Spring of 1937, the program was taken to Hollywood where it underwent a complete change of format; Jones and Hare were fired and Mr. Hall was asked to leave. Having previously signed a contract for the 1936-1937 season at \$750 a week, he refused. What followed was probably one of the most discouraging periods in Mr. Hall's career.⁷⁹

When the show returned to New York Mr. Hall found himself with virtually nothing to do. His only contribution to the program consisted of a two-minute song. As the weeks passed there were constant reminders that he was no longer wanted, and he was under considerable pressure to quit. The program folded after its first season, and as it turned out everyone lost their job. As for Mr. Hall, he had had enough. Recalling this episode he said: "I vowed I would never go through that kind of pressure again. Right then and there I said I'm through with radio."⁸⁰

Radio had changed in the 15 years since Wendell Hall first went before a microphone, and following his experience on the Gillette program, it would be almost that long before he approached another one.

Mr. Hall's radio career had come to an end -- at least for the time being. He returned to Chicago where his wife and two sons were living and, for the next three years, devoted himself entirely to his family. He made no radio appearances; accepted no night club engagements and, like vaudeville, faded from the entertainment world completely.

A Career in Retrospect

In broadcast entertainment there is no guaranteed formula for success. What appeals to one generation may or may not find favor with the next; the jokes laughed at today may be considered "corny" tomorrow; the songs sung and listened to one week might be scorned the week after; and an entertainer upon reaching the peak of his popularity one year, may find himself fading the next.

By the end of 1930 the radio career of Wendell Hall was in decline and his popularity rapidly fading. Even at the height of his career in 1929, there were indications that suggest perhaps he was already of another era. The Buffalo News wrote:

Wendell Hall is not the same Red-headed Music Maker that used to sing in the early days of radio. He was master of ceremonies in the Majestic Theater program Sunday night, but his announcing was neither witty nor entertaining. It was quite boresome.⁸¹

A writer for the Toledo Blade said that:

I cannot see where the Majestic people have strengthened their programs by putting Hall on their broadcasts. Hall did a fair job Sunday evening but I believe the policy of scheduling other and better artists will prove to be more successful.⁸²

The Cleveland Press commented that:

... we who have listened to radio since the beginning of regular broadcasting, welcome Hall as an old friend. We find his voice, mannerisms satisfactory, but largely through their appeal to the memory. New listeners hearing him for the first time often are disappointed. They know about his fame and expect too much.⁸³

The period before the national networks were firmly established was the real heyday of performers like Wendell Hall. This was the time when commercial programs were dim daydreams in a few impresario minds; when announcers and staff pianists carried much of the nightly burden of broadcasting; and when Mr. Hall and all the other one man acts were god sends to the studios and bright spots of the evenings to listeners. These entertainers were new; they were experts at broadcasting in a manner that was effective despite the distorted reception common in those days; and they had scant competition. According to newspaper columnist Ben Gross: "Broadcasting was still in its dungarees, with an occasional attempt to garb itself in the flashy habiliments of a sideshow spieler."⁸⁴ Gross went on to say that the entertainers of this school lacked subtlety, but were rich in sentimental corn. They did not creep up on an audience, but almost literally hit their listeners over the head with a dynamic outburst of

patter or song.⁸⁵ In time this form of entertainment, which characterized many of the early radio performers and reflected in part by Mr. Hall, no longer found favor with the growing radio audience. They demanded more -- and more was available.

The decline of the one man vaudeville type of entertainment began when the national network companies became firmly established, and were able to provide the necessary financial and technical resources for the construction of programs of higher quality and greater variety. Moreover, this same development made it possible to carry to the American public presentations originating in the great talent centers of the country.⁸⁶

Accompanying the changes in broadcasting, which culminated in the talent boom of the early nineteen-thirties, was a change on the part of the audience. Not only did the audience increase but, with vocal artists of national and international prominence, and specialists in the musical and entertainment fields flocking to radio, the public became more sophisticated and discriminating in the matter of programs. It demanded better programs and more variety. According to Francis Chase Jr.: "Programs -- and not just broadcasts -- had become the life blood of the industry."⁸⁷

No longer was the public satisfied with listening to one entertainer do many things well, when they could tune in many entertainers doing similar things better. Francis Chase Jr. noted that, "... the Rudy Valle type of glorified variety presentation had

replaced the individuals and personalities who had dominated early broadcasting."⁸⁸ The radio audience sought quality in music and subtely in humor. They were no longer content to hear one song sung over and over again; no matter if the 50 or 100 verses were different. Herman Hettinger remarked that:

... the very simplicity of popular music causes the listener to tire quickly of any given number and tends to introduce problems with regard to the maintenance of continued novelty and distinctiveness in the program. As one program manager remarked, "Avoid riding new popular tunes to death, they are short-winded brutes." Moreover, because of the multiplicity of such broadcasts, it becomes necessary to create a distinctive form of presentation in order to have one's program stand out from the general run of similar endeavors.⁸⁹

According to Mr. Hettinger this was done by securing an outstanding soloist, by achieving a unique rhythm or manner of orchestration, or by including a well-known comedian or musical comedy star in the program. In the latter case when a script was added to the program it became a variety presentation.⁹⁰ With the many specialists developed because of radio, it was possible to produce programs that had a certain "distinctive" touch; the "quality" that older, earlier shows lacked. Programs were no longer the creation of one man, but rather the combined efforts of several men; each an expert in his own field.

The one man act on radio who was his own manager, played his own instrument; sang his own songs; and composed his own jokes and stories was hard-pressed when it came to competing with; lavish production

programs employing large orchestras and presenting, as Herman Hettinger noted, "... vastly more sophisticated and musically superior presentations than that of the early years of broadcasting";⁹¹ the popular male and female vocalists who had discarded the extreme rhythms of the post-war period in favor of better melodies and more subtle rhythms; and the comedians who not only worked hard at mastering the technique of radio comedy -- as opposed to farce -- but also employed script writers, "gag" artists and a manager whose duty it was to make the most money possible for his client; and has to be ready at the drop of a hat to protect his client's interests. When asked for the reasons behind the decline of Wendell Hall, broadcast historian William S. Hedges said:

Competition is my answer. The nation, as a whole, was exposed to the artistic abilities of the greats of opera, vaudeville and the stage, whose appearance on radio networks became more prevalent as time went on. The beginnings of commercially sponsored shows brought to the public well organized programs, created with skill and replete with the best of stage and screen. This is why, in my opinion, Wendell Hall sort of faded away.⁹²

The broadcasting pattern had changed radically since such entertainers as Wendell Hall, Jones and Hare, Vaughn de Leath, Art Gillham, Jack Smith, Nick Lucas, Eddie Squires and other single acts had achieved success and popularity via radio. By 1935 their vogue had passed; they no longer commanded a large listening audience, and there were few if any sponsors willing to take a chance on, what

Francis Chase Jr. called "these veritable Methuselahs of broadcasting," when the trend was toward giant musicales.⁹³ Wendell Hall, along with the other pioneer radio entertainers, had struggled against the tide of change and lost. There was nothing they could do; they were simply of another era -- one which would never return. Like Graham McNamee, who once said during his waning years, "They don't want me any more."⁹⁴ Their day in the sun had drawn to its end.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER V

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CHAPTER VI

THE END OF A CAREER: 1940-1951

THE WAR PERIOD AND AFTER

Global Conflict: 1940-1945

America at war. During this period the United States shifted, in December of 1941, from a threat-of-war situation into actual involvement in World War II.

Throughout the war years Franklin D. Roosevelt guided the ship of state, and with the support and cooperation of the American people turned the country into an "arsenal of democracy." Roosevelt was re-elected to a third term in November of 1940 after defeating Wendell Willkie, and to a fourth term in 1944 after turning back the challenge of Thomas E. Dewey. In April of 1945 the death of Roosevelt brought Vice President Harry S. Truman to the White House where he remained until 1952.

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor profound changes took place in American life. Millions departed for the services. Millions more left their hometowns to live in drab rooms in war-boom cities. Well-fed Americans had their diets curtailed by food rationing. A people accustomed to going everywhere by car had to get used to gasoline rationing. A populace inured to waste was asked to save tin cans, rubber and newspapers, grow "victory gardens," and to put up with citywide dim-outs to conserve power.

Americans at home earned more money and had less to spend it on than ever before in their lives. So they bought war bonds and paid off old debts. They also looked for useful things to do -- and found them. They served on draft boards and rationing boards, stood watch as aircraft spotters and, as air raid wardens, and gave millions of pints of blood to be administered as plasma to the battle wounded.

During the war years America rang with the clamor of war production. The war-boom brought unprecedented prosperity to millions. The "Okies," the migrant farm workers who had been pariahs during the 1930s, found themselves welcomed at employment offices; and this situation did not end in 1945.

The long-awaited day of victory in Europe came on May 7, 1945, and on August 14th, following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the fighting in the Pacific ended. The war was over; almost four years after it began.

Aftermath of War: 1945-1950

Domestic America adjusts. Despite President Truman's warnings, conservative elements in Congress forced the end of price controls soon after the war. Inflation took over and the cost of living soared to new heights. But ever rising incomes within the booming American economy offset high living costs.¹

Prosperity continued during the years following the war, and this prosperity speeded up technological change on a different level. The jingle of cash in the pocket prepared innumerable Americans to buy and

use more machines just as soon as these became available; shortly after V-J Day the rush for automobiles, electric refrigerators, deep-freeze units, and dishwashers was on.

In domestic matters the American public showed no overwhelming desire, or need, to return to "normalcy," to forsake outright the liberalism and social progress of the 1930s for the more conservative political formulas of the distant past. There was no longer any great sense of urgency about domestic reform; essentially this was a period when the social experiments, and to a considerable extent even the ideology of the New Deal, were being ever more thoroughly institutionalized and consolidated within the fabric of American life.²

The Cold War. Following the global conflict peace and security were not to be long enjoyed by a war-weary world, for disunity among the former allies was apparent almost as soon as the war ended. A bitter "cold war" broke out between the East and the West, and the United Nations very quickly became the scene of continuous disagreements between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Recreation

Leisure in America. During the war years Americans still attended professional and collegiate sporting events despite the fact that most of the better athletes were in service. Participation in amateur sports continued, however, the lack of equipment and facilities prevented many with time on their hands from taking up this kind of relaxation. The vast majority of Americans, unable to travel

due to war-time restrictions and gasoline rationing, stayed home and listened to the radio, read books, went to a neighborhood movie, hosted card parties, or visited museums or art galleries.

The years following the war saw Americans again jamming the ball parks, football stadiums, boxing arenas, and race tracks. Weekend golfers and tennis players abounded throughout the country; beaches were thick with swimmers and sunworshippers; and with automobiles, gasoline and tires available, Americans discovered again the formerly inaccessible fishing streams and hunting sites.

Entertainment-Communication

Books. During the 1940s the growing popularity of paperback books, along with the book clubs, had a strong impact on American reading habits. The clubs served not only as large-scale distributors but also as reading counselors and through them millions of Americans shaped new reading habits and tastes. The revolution of paperbacks was accomplished by mass-production cuts in cost, by a shrewd editorial selection of titles suggesting sex, crime detection, and violence, along with a number of classics, and finally by a revolution in distributing techniques. This was achieved mainly by adding drugstores, thus bringing the reading habit to the ordinary American in his everyday haunts.³

Magazines. Time-tested periodicals such as the Saturday Evening Post, Collier's, the American, the New Yorker, Harpers, and the Atlantic continued to be read and enjoyed by Americans concerned with

public affairs, and interested in reading well-written features and fiction articles. Circulation of the Reader's Digest, Time, Life, and Look increased enormously.

Newspapers. The war years of 1940 to 1944 caused 197 newspaper deaths, most of them small dailies pinched by production problems. Postwar expansion brought an excess of new starts over suspensions in the daily field. The mid-1940s were profitable years for newspapers in general.

Despite the "Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press" which outlined what could and could not be published, coverage of World War II by the American press and radio was considered by most observers to be the best and fullest the world had ever seen. The code became a Bible for American newsmen, who usually erred in the direction of over-suppression of news possibly harmful to the war effort.⁴

Motion pictures. As World War II drew nearer, Hollywood films began to depict the joys of the military life. Once the United States was committed to war Hollywood films exposed, denounced -- and exploited -- Nazi and Japanese brutality. At the same time, our newly acquired Russian allies, who had been stock villains before Pearl Harbor, were suddenly turned into brave, solid characters. When it came time to showing American troops in action, Hollywood's directors became increasingly adept at creating a persuasive image of the war. For source material they had not only the weekly newsreels of actual combat but also a steady stream of documentaries from every

theater of operation. Aside from combat documentaries and war dramas, the wartime screen afforded space for little other than comedies and musicals; films that tried to take a nation's mind off the war.⁵

Following the war a series of films was produced, notable not only for their liberal sentiments but for their courageous appraisal of the problems of the postwar world. The question of economic security for the hundreds of thousands of newly discharged veterans was squarely faced in a half-dozen or more films, and pictures dealing with anti-Semitism and racial prejudice were openly discussed. By 1947 the liberalism of the Roosevelt years was fast running out. Conformity became the new order of the day, and congressional committees began to institute investigations into "un-American" activities in every sphere of American life. While the House Un-American Activities Committee's charge that Communists had penetrated the motion-picture industry was never substantiated, the investigations effectively dampened Hollywood's enthusiasm for controversial subjects.⁶

RADIO-TELEVISION IN THE NATION

Prewar Television

Although public attention was centered on radio during the 1920s and 1930s, the foundation was already being laid for a new form of broadcasting that after the war was largely to replace radio as a source of home entertainment.

Prior to 1941, approximately 17 experimental television stations had been authorized by the Federal Communications Commission, and were operating on a part-time basis. In 1941, the Commission authorized commercial television broadcasting. Between July and November, five stations were granted commercial licenses. Other television stations continued under experimental license.⁷

The outbreak of World War II in December of 1941, brought commercial telecasting to an end. Regular television operation was not resumed until two years after the end of the war.

Radio During the War

The war imposed many hardships on broadcasters as it did upon those engaged in other occupations; electronic firms were shifted to war production, with the result that broadcasting equipment, tubes, and receiving sets were hard, if not impossible to obtain; costs advanced; and employees were drafted into military service. Although broadcasting was subject to wartime restrictions, the period from 1941 to 1945 was the big money-making period for American radio.

Radio homes. Although virtually no radio receiving sets were produced from mid-1942 until the end of the war, the number of radio homes increased. From an estimated 31 million in 1941 to almost 34 million by the end of 1945. The sets used in these additional homes were primarily second sets borrowed from relatives.⁸

Radio stations. There was some increase in the number of operating radio stations during the war. By the end of 1945 approximately 940 stations were licensed and on the air.

Radio networks. Only one major change took place in the network situation during the period. As a result of the "duopoly" order of the FCC, effective in 1941 and prohibiting the ownership of more than one network by a single network operating company, NBC in 1942 sold its "Blue Network" to a different corporation; the name of the network was changed to the American Broadcasting Company.

Television. Television activities were brought to almost a complete standstill during the war. With no more than 10,000 receiving sets, many of which were not in working condition by 1945, there was no incentive for sponsors to buy time on television stations. During the war, the existing stations operated only on a token basis, broadcasting for from two to four hours each week.

Radio advertising. In spite of the war, advertising revenue increased tremendously. From a total of \$155 million in 1940, advertising revenue doubled to \$310 million by 1945. Two factors which had a great effect on the increase in radio advertising were the shortage of newsprint which cut down the amount of advertising magazines and newspapers could carry, and the enactment by Congress of a law imposing a 90 per cent tax on excess profits of corporations. This meant that a company whose income was subject to the tax could in effect buy radio advertising at an actual cost of only ten cents

for each dollar's worth of radio time; the remaining 90 cents would otherwise go to the government in taxes.⁹

Programs

Programs, both on networks and locally originated, reflected the war situation. Throughout the entire war period, there was strong emphasis on news, and human interest programs using men and women in the armed services as participants.

Network programming. No new network forms appeared during the war, but the fact that the country was at war was strongly reflected in the content of programs offered. News and commentary programs increased and substantial increases were made in the areas of informative and comedy drama, comedy variety and serious music.

Local programming. Aside from greater emphasis on materials related to the war, there was little change in local programming during the war.

Postwar Broadcasting

This was an important period in the history of American radio and television. It saw an enormous increase in the total number of radio stations, the erection of more than 100 television stations, and the beginning of a shift in importance from radio to television, especially on the network level.

Stations

Radio. Following the close of World War II, the FCC authorized construction of daytime-only AM stations and also opened a substantial band of frequencies for FM or frequency-modulation broadcasting. The result was a tremendous increase in the number of FM and AM stations; AM stations increased from approximately 940 in December of 1945 to nearly 2400 by 1952, while FM stations increased from the 50 operating on an experimental basis in 1940 to nearly 640 commercially operated outlets by 1952.¹⁰

Television. Television stations came into existence more slowly. In January 1946 only six stations were actually on the air, and until the FCC could decide as to the channels to be used for broadcasting, manufacturers did not dare attempt to produce sets. Not until 1948 was the problem of channel allocations finally resolved. Up until October of 1948, 109 television stations were authorized by the FCC; during that month, the Commission declared a "freeze" on the granting of additional licenses until it had the opportunity to review certain problems within the industry. The "freeze" was not lifted until April of 1952. By September of 1952, there were 108 television stations in operation.¹¹

Homes

Radio. After the electronics companies were able to shift from war to peacetime production, they turned to manufacturing radio sets.

During 1947 alone nearly 20 million new radio sets were produced, and by 1952 the number of radio homes had increased to 46 million.¹²

Television. The number of television homes increased more slowly. By the end of 1949, receiving sets had been installed in an estimated 2.8 million homes; by January 1952, 15 million families were able to receive television programs.¹³

Networks

Radio. The same four networks continued to provide service to radio stations throughout the period, however with an increased number of affiliated stations. In addition, a fifth network company, the Liberty Broadcasting System came into being in 1946. In 1951 the rapid expansion of television forced the Liberty network to suspend operations.

Television. Television networks came into being almost before any television stations had been constructed. By 1946 and 1947, three of the existing radio network companies -- CBS, NBC and ABC -- and one new organization, DuMont, were hard at work in attempting to line up affiliates. The first year of network television operation was during the 1948-49 season. By 1952, nearly all television stations had network affiliation contracts.

Advertising

Radio. The volume of radio advertising continued to increase throughout the period, in spite of the emergence of television.

Revenues from sale of time jumped from \$310 million in 1945 to \$473 million in 1952. Radio revenues were still increasing in 1952, but at a less rapid rate than in earlier years. Slowly but surely national advertisers were shifting their expenditure from network radio to network television.¹⁴

Television. In 1947, combined revenues of the 17 television stations on the air at the end of the year were less than \$2 million; expenses were many times greater. In 1948, television stations and networks had a combined operating deficit of nearly \$15 million. It wasn't until 1951 that television operators saw revenues climb higher than expenditures.¹⁵

Programs: Radio

Network radio. Several changes occurred in the programming provided by radio networks. Evening variety programs decreased as did evening musical programs, quiz and audience participation programs. News programs and evening talk programs held at about the same level. There was an increase in daytime low-cost variety and in daytime quiz and audience participation programs, while daytime serials decreased slightly. Up until 1952, daytime network radio was not greatly affected by the competition of television; although evening radio network programs were rapidly losing popularity, the ratings of daytime programs showed only a slight decline, and the total number of sponsored hours of daytime network programs per week remained almost unchanged between 1945 and 1952.¹⁶

Local radio. By 1952 television was forcing radio stations to look for low-cost program forms. The lowest-cost form available was that of recorded music; as a result, aside from the retention of news broadcasts and of a few talk programs, virtually all local programming by 1952 was of the recorded music type.

Programs: Television

Network television. Program forms used on networks were almost without exception those previously existing on network radio. During the first year or two of network television operation, more than 30 per cent of all sponsored programs were broadcasts of sports events. Network programming in 1950-1951 was strongly influenced by the early success of such variety shows as the Milton Berle program and Ed Sullivan's Toast of the Town; in January 1951, no less than 24 hours on evening schedules were devoted each week to the presentation of sponsored variety programs. By 1952 dramatic programs had replaced variety as the dominant form; comedy dramatic programs filled nearly 40 per cent of the networks' evening schedules. Daytime network programs followed the pattern set by radio; in 1951-52, about 60 per cent of all daytime programming consisted of low-cost variety programs.¹⁷

Local television. During the years preceding 1950, most television stations limited their broadcasting operations to evening hours. Many stations experimented with the use of recorded music -- disk jockey programs chiefly, but in some instances, pantomime by "live" entertainers to music played on records. Sports events were fairly

popular; in particular wrestling and roller derbies came into prominence. Old motion picture films -- Westerns in particular -- were available to stations. Network programs and syndicated filmed materials filled only a part of the broadcasting day, and television stations in 1952 had to depend heavily on locally produced "live" programs.¹⁸

It is hard to imagine that anyone having spent most of his life in broadcasting would long remain apart for the medium. If Wendell Hall could not come back as an entertainer then he would come back in another capacity.

THE BUSINESS WORLD BECKONS

An Advertising Venture

Adsongs. During the three years Mr. Hall was in semi-retirement he conceived the idea of establishing his own commercial production company. From 1941 through 1948 Mr. Hall created, produced and sold transcribed musical spot announcements or "adsongs" as he called them, to various advertising agencies in and around Chicago.¹⁹

It is not too surprising that when Mr. Hall decided to go into business for himself, he would choose one that dealt with both radio and advertising. Throughout his career he had worked closely with several advertising agencies; advising and assisting them on such matters as content and preparation of copy, methods of approach, and program development. If there was one business he knew as much about as radio, it was radio advertising.

The eight years Mr. Hall was engaged in the advertising business were profitable but frustrating. After writing and producing the musical spots he would have to take the transcription around to various advertising agencies and try to persuade them to use his material on behalf of their clients. For every adsong the agency bought, Mr. Hall was paid \$500, however, not everything he created was sold. He soon realized that the advertising business was much more profitable and there was less risk involved if he worked on an agency account or secured his own account and worked through an agency. This way he had only to direct his creative efforts toward selling one product rather than a multitude of brands. His most successful advertising campaigns were on behalf of Bergoff Beer, Hollywood Bread, Royal Crown Cola, Orange Crush, and Mrs. Karl's Bread.²⁰

During the latter part of 1945 Mr. Hall ran afoul of union regulations concerning recordings and was forbidden to make commercial transcriptions. Unable to record his adsongs and distribute them to the agencies, he accepted an offer from a Milwaukee agency to work on the Mrs. Karl's Bread account. For a year Mr. Hall visited three radio stations a day, five days a week singing the Mrs. Karl's Bread commercial live from the studios. By the time he returned to Chicago the union had lifted its restrictions on commercial recordings, and once again Mr. Hall was back creating adsongs.²¹

By the end of 1948 Mr. Hall could no longer command \$500 per adsong and decided to leave the advertising business. It seems that when the agencies began paying \$25 for acceptable radio commercials,

the response was so great that there was no need to pay an independent producer \$500 for one spot when, for the same amount of money, they could have 20 times that number.²²

From 1949 through 1950 Mr. Hall served as sales manager for the J.C. Deegan Company in Chicago; the same company that back in 1914 sold Mr. Hall's father the xylophone which his son first took into vaudeville and later radio.²³

AN ENTERTAINER'S FINAL PERFORMANCE

Final Radio Program

Once an entertainer always an entertainer and perhaps this explains what prompted Mr. Hall to take a job with WGN radio for a short period in the 1940s.

For two years Mr. Hall conducted a daily afternoon program over WGN called Reflections. On the program he would sing a few songs and read poetry. This program marked the end of Wendell Hall's radio career; a career which began at KYW in Chicago and ended at WGN in Chicago -- a few blocks away. Only one more medium was yet to be tried before the "Red-headed Music Maker" would leave the broadcasting stage forever.²⁴

A Television Try

On August 9, 1949 an item in the Chicago Sun Times read:
"Wendell W. Hall is coming out of retirement -- radio retirement, at

least -- to make his debut on television. He is set for an appearance on WGN-TV's 'Silhouettes in Song' at 7:45 p.m. next Monday as guest of Nancy Wright."²⁵ This guest appearance apparently proved that there was still a place for Mr. Hall in broadcast entertainment, plus the fact that local television stations needed "live" program material to fill their network-thin schedules.

Following several guest appearances over a two-year period, Mr. Hall was offered a regular show in 1951 over WBKB-TV in Chicago. For six months the "Wendell Hall Trio" appeared five nights a week from 10:00 to 10:15. Mr. Hall's trio consisted of a tara guitar, a bass and an accordion. The group played and sang jazz songs; quite a departure from the string ensemble Mr. Hall used on the Fitch program.²⁶

It didn't take Mr. Hall long to realize that entertaining before a camera is far different and much more demanding than entertaining before a microphone. As a radio performer it was not necessary for Mr. Hall to memorize the songs he sang or the music he played. With no audience to impress it was natural for him to read the words and music; television was something else. Prior to every television show Mr. Hall would have to have the words and music written down, diagrammed and held by stage hands next to the camera. The fact that he couldn't memorize, coupled with his distaste over the number of unions involved in producing a 15-minute program, caused broadcasting's pioneer performer to take his leave of show business. Commenting on television Mr. Hall said:

I tried it; I didn't like it; and I couldn't take it. I came from radio and I couldn't memorize the television material. My 15-minute show had nine unions connected with it. It just didn't make sense to me. I wouldn't work that way.²⁷

AN ENTERTAINER EXITS

Retirement

By the autumn of 1951, Wendell Hall's career in show business was over. He never again performed before a radio microphone or a television camera; on a theater stage or a night club floor. When Mr. Hall left the world of entertainment he left it physically as well as mentally. For two years he traveled throughout the United States looking for a place to retire. In that two-year period Mr. Hall covered some 40,000 miles through 35 states; spending a week in one town, as much as two weeks in another.²⁸

The community he chose, Fairhope, Alabama, was perhaps a logical choice when one thinks back over his career. Although he wasn't born in the South, Mr. Hall's musical compositions and stories, in great measure all revolved around, and reflected the pastoral pleasures of southern life. In a sense it was a world into which he could escape the frantic pace of show business. When he retired he turned a dream into a reality.

The "Music Maker" is no longer red-headed and is somewhat heavier than when he was entertaining millions of people throughout the world. Now 72 years old, Mr. Hall has been retired for 17 years. Commenting about retirement Mr. Hall said: "I'm happier now than I've ever been in my life. I've found happiness and contentment." When asked about his career he replied:

Radio did it, of course. Never before had songwriters been able to plug their tunes on an entertainment medium that extended coast-to-coast. I made "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'" and it made me. Yes sir, it and radio....²⁹

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER VI

¹Richard D. Heffner, A Documentary History of the United States A Mentor Book (New York: The American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1956), 295.

²Heffner, 295.

³Max Lerner, America as a Civilization (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 798.

⁴Edwin Emery, The Press and America (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), 604.

⁵Arthur Knight, The Liveliest Art A Mentor Book (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1957), 243-246.

⁶Knight, 247.

⁷Robert E. Summers and Harrison B. Summers, Broadcasting and the Public (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1966), 62.

⁸Summers and Summers, 63.

⁹Summers and Summers, 64.

¹⁰Summers and Summers, 70-71.

¹¹Summers and Summers, 74-75.

¹²Summers and Summers, 68.

¹³Summers and Summers, 75.

¹⁴Summers and Summers, 68.

¹⁵Summers and Summers, 78.

¹⁶Summers and Summers, 72.

¹⁷Summers and Summers, 78-79.

¹⁸Summers and Summers, 79-80.

¹⁹Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall, Fairhope, Alabama, June, 1967.

²⁰Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

²¹Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

²²Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

²³Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

²⁴Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

²⁵Chicago Sun-Times, August 9, 1949.

²⁶Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

²⁷Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

²⁸Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

²⁹Personal interview with Wendell W. Hall.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

The Period Before 1920

Radio telegraphy was being used experimentally as early as 1897, and by 1910 was in general use for ship-to-shore communication. This was not "broadcasting", but point-to-point communication. From 1910 to 1917, there was considerable amateur experimentation with radio voice communication and some broadcasting, along with various forms of program materials -- chiefly talks, vocal music, and phonograph records. With the entry of the United States into World War I in 1917, all radio experimentation was stopped by government order.

This period saw Wendell Hall enter vaudeville and become a professional entertainer. Billed as "The Singing Xylophonist," he traveled throughout the Midwest appearing in obscure little theaters and suffering the plight of all small-time performers unable to break into big-time vaudeville. After being blacklisted from the circuit, Mr. Hall turned to club engagements and concentrated on writing and publishing music.

1920-1923

This period marked the real beginning of broadcasting and witnessed a fantastic growth in the number of radio stations. Throughout this period broadcasting was on an experimental, non-commercial basis.

During this period Wendell Hall and other small-time professional artists entered radio. The impact of these pioneer entertainers on listening habits, led to the beginning of a shift in emphasis away from dialing for distance to dialing for programs and performers.

1923-1930

The first three years of this period were a time of transition; they saw the beginnings of broadcasting on a commercial basis and witnessed the development of basic types of programs. It was also the time in which a few persons saw in broadcasting a possible source of revenue -- from the sale of time, rather than from the sale of receiving sets. By 1930, commercial radio had become solidly established; the networks had been developed and national advertisers were presenting network programs.

During this period Wendell Hall was responsible for a number of innovations in radio and became an important leader in the development of broadcast entertainment. This period also saw Mr. Hall become one of the most popular and successful radio performers in the world.

1930-1940

By the Fall of 1930, radio was well established in the United States. The next ten years saw radio undergoing a tremendous expansion -- an expansion in the size of audiences of programs, one in revenues of the broadcasting industry, and one in the forms and quality of programs provided to listeners.

During these Depression years, vaudeville collapsed and the entertainment vacuum was filled by movies and radio. This was the period when the "name" entertainers climbed on the broadcasting bandwagon and the pioneer radio performers were let off and left behind. Mr. Hall withdrew from radio entertainment and did not return for almost ten years.

1940-1952

During World War II the broadcasting industry prospered; both network and station revenues were substantially greater than in the pre-war period. Programs, both on networks and locally originated, reflected the war situation; there was strong emphasis on news and human interest types using servicemen as participants. Following the war there was an enormous increase in the total number of radio stations; more than 100 television stations were erected; and there was a shift in importance from radio to television.

This period saw Wendell Hall actively engaged in broadcast advertising, and witnessed his return to the microphone. He appeared on radio for a short time and briefly explored television entertainment,

however, his day in broadcasting was over. He retired from show business and, following a cross-country tour, took up residence in the South.

CONCLUSIONS

The contributions of Wendell Hall and other professional entertainers to broadcasting may be forgotten but can never be minimized. Of all the early radio performers, Mr. Hall emerged as one of the most popular, well-known and successful of the group. This paper suggests that Wendell Hall and other pioneer radio entertainers played a significant part in the development of radio as an entertainment and commercial medium.

1) Mr. Hall was representative of the first of the vaudeville performers to enter radio and among the first to sense its potential as a promotional medium.

2) Mr. Hall was the first person to use radio as a means of promoting his music.

3) Mr. Hall was the first person to conceive and implement the idea of writing songs exclusively for radio.

4) Mr. Hall and others were instrumental in showing that radio contributed substantially to the sale of phonograph records and sheet music.

5) The impact of Mr. Hall and others on listening habits, was in large measure responsible for the shift in emphasis from DXing to dialing for programs and performers.

6) Mr. Hall was the first entertainer to tour radio stations, thus inaugurating the idea of syndicated or packaged programs so prevalent later in broadcasting.

7) Mr. Hall and others were instrumental in showing potential and hesitant advertisers the commercial value of radio.

8) Mr. Hall and others paved the way for many professional performers who subsequently entered radio, and also influenced the "name" entertainers who were reluctant and/or afraid to broadcast.

9) Mr. Hall and others were typical of the instant success radio could create.

10) Mr. Hall's demise was symptomatic of what happened to many of radio's pioneer performers, and why it happened once the bigger stars of the entertainment world entered broadcasting.

Early Professional Entertainers

It was of inestimable value to the development of radio entertainment to have professional performers on the air; not only did they bring better entertainment to the public and offset the negative image given radio by the amateur talent, but also helped to raise the quality of entertainment. These professional artists developed the form, and set the style and pattern which radio entertainment would eventually adopt, modify, and improve upon.

By touring stations throughout the country, Mr. Hall and others were doing good missionary work for future radio; not only did they bring professional entertainment to small, remote communities isolated from the talent centers of the country, but also helped to make people entertainment-radio conscious.

Programming

The contributions of Mr. Hall and others to the development of radio programming are significant in light of radio's role as an entertainment medium. By writing innumerable songs each year, Mr. Hall was the first person to adapt to radio's voracious appetite; realizing the value and potential of a new and varied radio act as often as possible. Few amateur performers had the ability to appear more than once or twice without becoming stale.

If it weren't for people like Wendell Hall who were not afraid of going into radio, radio's development into a renowned entertainment medium might possibly have been delayed; if these pioneer performers had not demonstrated that radio could enhance an artist's position both in the eyes of listeners and within the entertainment industry, the "name" performers most likely would not have given their time and talent to broadcasting when they did. Wendell Hall and others, by experience, helped to make radio a legitimate and respectable entertainment medium, and thus assured big-time professional artists a public that was ready and willing to accept them without their losing stature.

Advertising-Promotion

The promotional value of radio was quickly grasp by Mr. Hall who was the first person to use the medium as a means of publicizing his music. Mr. Hall and others showed that radio contributed substantially to the sale of phonograph records, sheet music, batteries and other products, thus demonstrating to potential and hesitant advertisers the commerical value of broadcasting.

Popularity and Decline

Mr. Hall and others were typical of the instant success radio could create. This first came to light when listeners began dialing to hear Mr. Hall and other performers rather than dialing for distant stations. It was due to radio that Mr. Hall became one of the most popular, well-known and successful of all the early broadcast performers. Mr. Hall was one of the first entertainers to show that broadcasting was not something to be feared; that performing before the microphone was a pleasant, rather than a frightful experience. This in turn paved the way for many professional entertainers who subsequently entered radio, and also influenced many "name" artists who were reluctant and/or afraid to broadcast.

The reasons for Mr. Hall's decline were typical of what happened to other pioneer radio entertainers, and why they dropped out of broadcasting once the bigger stars of the entertainment world entered broadcasting. Mr. Hall was first, last and always the vaudeville performer in radio. Up until the very end his appeal was to a

vaudeville audience that no longer existed. He lacked the smooth sophistication, subtle humor and discriminating viewpoint which other performers either possessed or acquired and that listeners later sought. Unable to shed the vaudeville image and unwilling to adapt to the requirements of radio's new demands, Mr. Hall left broadcasting. He never returned, but while he was there he contributed to the development of radio as a medium of mass communication.

Suggestions For Further Study

This paper has focused on the career of one man whom the author feels was representative of many early professional entertainers who went into radio. For the most part broadcast historians have neglected to emphasize the role and importance of many early professional artists who entered radio, concentrating instead on the later, more successful performers. Much of what's been written concerning broadcasting, especially the historical aspect relating to entertainers, had been written mainly from the New York point of view, and has, in large measure, excluded or glossed over other sections of the country which have contributed significantly to the development of the industry in general and to radio entertainment specifically. There are several reasons for this, three of which seem to be outstanding: first, the majority of books about broadcasting have been written and/or financed under the auspices of and about those corporations and individuals located in New York; second, it has always been more profitable to emphasize and acknowledge the later,

more popular entertainers of the medium than to devote space to the pioneer luminaries whose importance, while of more historical value, was of less commercial value; third, and by no means least, the fact that New York became the entertainment capital of the world has tended to diminish the contributions and importance of other areas of the country once recognized as the talent centers of the industry. As the radio industry grew and became financially more successful, it also became more centralized. As soon as advertising became the major support of the radio industry, it was natural that control would be primarily in New York.

There needs to be further research into the contributions and impact on broadcast entertainment made by other, now forgotten performers regarding the role each played in the development of that art.

The history of broadcasting is in danger of becoming little more than a superficial, skeletal figure unless it is recognized that many people, the near great and not so great as well as the great leaders of the industry, played a part and that each has a story to tell. In order that the history of broadcasting be meaningful and relevant, we must obtain the stories of as many people as possible and evaluate them against the information already accumulated.

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