

NNRCTWO DECADES OF SERVICE TO DX-ERSNNRCBy Carleton Lord

On the eighth of December, the Newark News Radio Club will complete 20 years of service to the DX fraternity. A birthday just one year shy of a full majority offers older members a chance to draw on memories of "the good old days," while newer members can pause to review the history of the oldest organization of its kind.

Like many potentially great projects, the NNRC had a very modest beginning. Back in the middle twenties, virtually every owner of a radio receiver was a DXer at heart. Receivers were rated by their ability to pick up Schenectady, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Kansas City, Havana and -- for a fortunate few -- Los Angeles. Eastern stations signed off in the middle of certain evenings to permit listeners to dial for distance, and the international tests in 1924 and 1926 showed that it was possible even to span the Atlantic.

In 1927, one of the features on the radio page of the Newark Evening News was the column "Broadcasts Winnowed" by Charlotte Geer, known to thousands of North Jersey residents as "The Dialist." Each week several paragraphs in her column were devoted to air rambles about the country. Other listeners began to write in and describe their DX journeys. Radio enthusiasts liked the idea of swapping varns about reception and suggested that The News form a club. The editors agreed to give it a trial, and a notice in the paper advised interested readers that a meeting would be held in the editorial rooms for the purpose of organizing a radio club. The date was December 8, 1927.

Fifty-five dial twisters turned out, and before two hours had passed, the Newark News Radio Club was launched. Olin Potter Geer, husband of Charlotte Geer and known to column readers as "The Wiser Half," drew up the first draft of the constitution. L. S. J. Cranse was elected to the presidency, and the other officers included Frank Scott and William C. Soutar, vice presidents; Hubert R. Ede, Radio Editor of the Newark Evening News, treasurer; and Irving R. Potts, executive secretary. Douglas P. Laidlaw, Jack Connelly, John W. Reichert and Lester W. Kraemer were the first directors.

On that memorable first evening, Irv Potts showed some of the vision with which he has guided the club during most of its life. "This group," he predicted, "is going to grow beyond New Jersey. Why, it may be an international organization one of these days!"

"Irv's got some imagination," observed a few of the charter members. But the dream wasn't so wild and its fulfillment not so long in coming.

A broadcast over WJZ in February 1928, describing the aims and activities of the new organization, brought a mail response of more than 1500 cards and letters. Programs over other stations spread the NNRC gospel across the country, and enrollments poured in from distant cities. Donald Hill, Broken Bow, Neb., was the first out-of-state member to enroll. On its second birthday, the club could count more than 500 members, and in years to come, the total approached the 2000 mark. All of the states have been represented, as has every province in Canada and the territories of Hawaii, Alaska and Puerto Rico. Membership cards have gone forth to DXers in Cuba, Bermuda, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand, as well as to the continents of Europe and South America, Asia and Africa.

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Courtesy Programs

From the beginning, one of the principal aims of the NNRC has been to assist members in logging stations which, for one reason or another, were difficult to hear during their regular daily broadcasts. The principal targets of listeners were the hundreds of stations on crowded channels, many of which operated only during the daytime. The club persuaded a large number of these stations to transmit special dedicatory programs during the early-morning hours, when interference from other stations on the same frequencies would be at a minimum. This new idea in broadcasting became known as a Courtesy Program, and the NNRC organized a Courtesy Programs Committee to arrange such broadcasts from stations across the country and in foreign lands.

Under the chairmanship of Roland Trenchard, the CPC scheduled many notable broadcasts between 1929 and 1931, and it is needless to note that the work of this committee became increasingly popular with members. Louis Hahn, now a vice president, was chairman from 1931 to 1946, and under his direction the CPC chalked up several winter seasons during which the special programs dedicated to the NNRC passed the 500 mark.

A list of stations which have broadcast programs for the club would comprise a substantial cross section of transmitters in the United States and Canada. While it would be impossible to make even a partial listing of memorable dedicatory programs, older members will not soon forget the first overseas special from Cologne, Germany, arranged by Louis Hahn in 1930, nor the broadcast from HHK, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, which drew over 500 reports. In 1931, Station TJW, a little 5-watter at Hamilton, Bermuda, received 348 reports from an NNRC special. In December 1933, the first Courtesy Program from LR5, Buenos Aires, boomed into the United States with a signal that amazed DXers. KSL, Salt Lake City, Utah, transmitted a special program in 1935 which was re-broadcast over KGMB, Honolulu, and received reports from China and Japan.

One of the most elaborate programs was a five-hour broadcast from WFMD, Frederick, Md., arranged by NNRCers in Baltimore in celebration of the club's 10th Anniversary in 1937. A full ten months went into plans for this program, and every station in the world on 890, 900 and 910 kcvs was asked to stand by to prevent interference on WFMD's 900 channel. A surprising number of stations not only agreed to remain silent, but promised to publicize the program. A feature of the broadcast was a pre-arranged telephone call from Vice President Dora Newcomb at Hueneme, Calif., which was piped over the air. A total of 387 reports was received after that broadcast, including 26 from Australia and New Zealand.

Although DXers have asked much of the stations with their requests for special programs and verification of reception, the hobby has not been entirely one-sided. Early in the game, NNRC officials realized that accurate reports were helpful to station engineers in gauging the efficiency of their transmitters. Members were taught to report incidental tests as well as dedicatory programs and to give details of comparative signal strength, severity and duration of fading, prevalence of interference from other stations on the same and nearby

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frequencies, intensity of static, local weather conditions, modulation, transmitter hum, and any other bits of information in which a station operator might be interested.

Letters from hundreds of station engineers through the years attest to the value of such reports from DXers in all sections of the country, who, in the pursuit of their hobby, act as a voluntary monitoring service.

Other Activities

As the NNRC continued to grow and thrive, additional committees began to function, and a more ambitious program of service was inaugurated. A Technical Advisory Committee, under the direction of a competent radio engineer, became available to suggest means to improve reception by members and to solve receiver and accessory problems. The DX Qualifications Committee established progressive ratings, based upon the number and type of stations heard, for which members might qualify as they increased their proficiency in the art of dial twisting. By no means least in importance is the Good and Welfare Committee which remembers NNRCers who are ill and arranges for visits, flowers and cheery cards and letters.

Club news originally was disseminated through a section of the radio page of the Newark Evening News every Wednesday, and a copy of this edition was sent to every member. Here were published the lists of forthcoming NNRC specials, news about the stations, and reports from the members. On October 1, 1934, the club issued the first copy of its Bulletin, which is now in its 14th year as the official publication. As the Bulletin offered more space than the club's former section of the newspaper, coverage of the radio field was increased. The Amateur and Short Wave sections were introduced under the direction of capable editors. The Broadcast Band section was enlarged, and recently a Special Features section was incorporated.

In September 1947 the NNRC released two new radio logs, one listing stations on the Broadcast Band and the other covering the Short Wave transmitters of the world. Supplements will be released at regular intervals to keep both logs abreast of the changing picture in broadcasting.

Many radio stations and newspapers have been unusually cooperative in publicizing NNRC news and tips for the benefit of listeners in all sections of the country. At one time, 35 stations and 10 newspapers provided this service every week.

Personal Contacts

The question has often been asked how a scattered group of members has been held together for a period of 20 years. One principal tie undoubtedly has been the high quality of information distributed to the members, originally through the Newark Evening News and for the past 13 years by the club Bulletin. No listener could hope to find success in his DX hobby without the type of news published by the NNRC. This has been particularly true since 1941, when the demise of Radex left listeners without an accurate commercial listing of stations.

Another powerful attraction has been the club's sponsorship of personal contact between members. For years, NNRCers in North Jersey

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flocked to the News Auditorium in Newark for the regular monthly meeting, where they had an evening to discuss mutual problems, compare their records and get to know each other. In some of the larger cities, members banded together to form local chapters. The Baltimore Chapter, formed in 1933, was the first local group outside of Newark, and at one time it boasted of nearly 40 members. NNRCers in Chicago, Indianapolis, Brooklyn, Hartford, Toronto and Montreal further enhanced their DXing pleasure through mutual contacts.

Prior to the war and again in 1947, the club sponsored a summer convention at the farm of Director and Mrs. Harold Robinson at Lansdale, Pa. In 1937, Mrs. Dora Newcomb, then a vice president, came all the way from California to meet delegations from Indianapolis, Baltimore and Hartford as well as many other Eastern cities.

Dear to the hearts of members in and around Newark were the annual entertainments in the News Auditorium, first arranged in 1929 and continued until the late thirties. Probably the most elaborate was the one presented on May 5, 1934, which included a three-hour show headlined by Rudy Vallee, Lanny Ross, Arthur Allen, Morton Downey, Rosemary Lane and a host of others. Among the 1000 members and guests who jammed the auditorium were groups of 20 from Baltimore and five from Illinois, together with NNRCers from Connecticut, Massachusetts, upper New York state, Pennsylvania and all sections of the Newark and New York metropolitan areas. Police reserves had to be called to handle a disappointed crowd of more than 1000 which had to be turned away.

Other entertainments have featured such stars as Kate Smith, Phil Cook, Roxy and his Gang, the Landt Trio and White, Vincent Lopez, the Goldbergs, May Singhi Breen and Peter de Rose, Stoopnagle and Budd, Reis and Dunn, and many lesser lights.

Backbone of the NNRC

No report on the club's 20th Anniversary would be complete without a nod to the officers, directors, editors and committeemen who have handled its affairs so successfully during a fifth of a century of activity. Serving long hours every month, they receive no compensation other than the personal satisfaction of making worthwhile contributions to the welfare of the NNRC.

The club has been unusually fortunate in having as its greatest booster and most loyal worker Irving R. Potts, who, after a few months of service as Executive Secretary at the start of the NNRC life span, was elevated to the office of President in 1928 and has served in this capacity for over 19 years. Gifted with unusual foresight and energy, he guided the club through its initial period of growth and administered its affairs with rare wisdom during the years of prosperity. His personal drive carried the organization over the rough spots in its darkest years, and he has been the principal reason for the success of the NNRC during the first 20 years of its life.

Faithful supporters and hard workers have been legion through the years, and it would be impossible to list all of those who have made major contributions. CPCmen spend long hours and write countless letters to establish friendly relations with stations and to arrange the hundreds of dedicatory programs broadcast for the club. Editors

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of the Bulletin devote substantial portions of their leisure hours compiling copy for their sections and typing up their stencils. Twice a month a small group of officers and directors gather to publish the Bulletin. This involves the typing of more stencils, running 500-odd copies of 30 to 40 pages through the duplicating machine, collating the pages by sections, folding the complete Bulletin, stuffing and stamping the envelopes, and finally the long trek down to the post office in the early hours of the morning. The Secretary handles a voluminous correspondence, sends out sample Bulletins and applications to prospective members, and keeps the minutes up to date. The Treasurer receives dues from members, pays bills, and balances a set of books.

No club can prosper without an active membership, and in this respect the NNRC has been fortunate. Officers and directors have received loyal support from members who spread the NNRC gospel among friends, submit accurate reports to stations broadcasting for the club, and send in reports and tips for inclusion in the Bulletin.

The Present and the Future

It was natural that World War II would have its effect on DXing and the NNRC. Several score of members saw service on all of the fronts, and the supreme sacrifice was made by Director Herbert Sager, Irvington, N.J., and Donald Brewster, Toronto, Ont. Other members, not in service, found more important matters to occupy their time and attention. The club's activities were at a low ebb, and the membership list dropped down near the 200 mark.

During these trying times, a determined handful of officers and directors fought a winning battle to keep the club going. Bulletins were released on schedule. Deficits were overcome by digging deep into the pockets of a few who had faith in the future.

The confidence of this group has been more than justified since the end of the war. Members back from service, and those who were inactive during war years, once again tried their hands at the dials, found the same old thrill, and hurried back into harness. To the surprise of many and the delight of all, DXing in general and the NNRC in particular staged a revival which exceeded the fondest hopes of its officers, directors and members.

With its membership again approaching the 500 figure, the NNRC is taking its 20th Birthday in stride and is looking forward to an even more attractive future.

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THE SPIRIT OF DX-INGBy Charlotte Geer

There's a hint of winter in the air, the keen winds blow,
The smell of burning leaves abounds, the smoke hangs low,
But soon the air grows crystal-clear and you and I
Can sit before the hearth and reach the far and nigh,
We'll hear the soft-voiced Southerner, Atlanta's voice,
We'll hear the folks of Texas speak and we'll rejoice
Because, though we must stay and tread the old home ways,
Our hearts will go a-travelling these winter days.