

A HISTORY OF THE NEWARK NEWS RADIO CLUB, PUBLISHED ON ITS FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY.

By Harold S. Williams, Vice President

Back in the late nineteen-twenties, when radio was still in its swaddling clothes, Charlotte Geer, a Newark Evening News feature writer, now deceased, conducted a radio column titled "Broadcasts Winnowed". Once a week, and on occasions more frequently, her column was devoted to the letters and dialing experiences of listeners interested in reception of stations at distant points.

In those early days before the advent of multiple-tube communications receivers and super power, radio stations, as compared with the large number operating today, were few and far between. Then every listener was a potential DXer. The logging of a station on the Pacific Coast was considered an outstanding dialing achievement and was certain to be a topic of conversation in the office next morning.

The mounting popularity and rapid growth of radio were accompanied by a constant increase in the ranks of DXers and, as might be expected, there was soon an insistent demand for an organization to represent them.

Notice in "Broadcast Winnowed" of a meeting to be held in the editorial rooms of the News at 215 Market Street in Newark on December 8, 1927 to consider ways and means to organize an association of DXers resulted in an attendance of fifty-five men, women and teen-agers. Under the supervision of Mrs. Geer and Hubert R. Ede, the News' Radio Editor, the Newark News Radio Club came into being under its original name of "Newark News DX Club", a title changed to the present one several years later.

Officers were duly elected, committees appointed, and a constitution and by-laws adopted. Requirements for membership were minimal - "anyone with a sincere interest in radio" was eligible. A Board of Directors was appointed by the President to meet monthly in the homes of the various officers and directors comprising the Board, and regular membership meetings were held in the auditorium of the Newark Evening News on the second Thursday of every month, July and August excepted.

Interest in the new DX club - which was, incidentally, the first of its kind - was manifest from the outset and membership increased rapidly, reaching a new high as the result of a broadcast by the president over station WOR in February, 1928. That the subject matter was of interest to the listening public was attested to by the hundreds of letters and cards which poured in from all parts of this country and Canada.

The broadcast over WOR marked the beginning of a large membership and expansion of activity. Before long, the club had graduated from the local category and assumed its present international character. Nearly every walk of life was - and is - represented. Age was no barrier, and students in their teens exchanged DXing experiences with other members three and four times their senior.

Throughout the early nineteen-thirties, the facilities of station WOR were made available once each year to the club for DX programs which ran from midnight until, usually, five o'clock in the morning. Members who were present in the studios often participated and, in the interim, were served with coffee, cake, and sandwiches through the courtesy of WOR and L. Bamberger & Company, then owners of the station. Under the supervision of Jack R. Poppele, WOR's chief engineer, these broadcasts were heard by listeners who lived as far away as Australia and New Zealand.

One such affair featured the rebroadcast of a Newark News Radio Club program being transmitted by station LR5 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The South American's signals, originating more than five thousand miles away, were so strong and clear as to readily lend themselves to rebroadcasting purposes.

The club's own column was started in the Newark Evening News early in 1928 as the initial medium for the dissemination of news and information pertaining to DXing and allied activities and for publication of the members' letters and reception reports. The Wednesday issue of the paper was mailed to out-of-town members every week by the News' circulation department.

As the club continued to grow and expand, its officers saw the need of an official publication and accordingly, in 1934, the first NNRC Bulletin appeared, featuring the latest DX tips, special program listings, station schedules, data on new broadcasting stations and changes in frequency or power, and members' reports and comments. The Bulletin was a success right from the start and, as the years went by, expanded its scope to cover other phases of radio such as shortwave, amateur, FM/TV and utilities.

The first banquet of the new organization was held in the Newark News Auditorium in February, 1931. Giuseppe de Benedetto, operatic tenor, Amy Goldsmith, soprano and winner of the 1928 Atwater Kent National Radio Audition for New York State, the Landt Trio and White, Swanee Taylor of the Main Street Sketches and other radio luminaries of the day entertained the two hundred and fifty members and friends who were present.

Norman Sweetster of NBC was master of ceremonies at the February, 1930 dinner, and presented Countess Olga Albani, Bob McGimsey, Caroline Grey, Robert Simmons, Phil Cook, and Macy and Smalle.

Curt Peterson, supervisor of NBC announcers, was in charge of the 1932 party. He was accompanied by the popular Moonbeams Trio, Pianist Kathelle Stewart, Mrs. Oakley W. Cooke, director of WOR's Newark studios and George Shackley, WOR's musical director.

Subsequent affairs of this nature were held in the spring and were highlighted by the appearance of such radio personalities as Kate Smith, the Pickens Sisters, Morton Downey, Rudy Vallee, Fred Waring and Rosemary Lane, Roxy and some of his Gang, Norman Brokenshire and Phillips Carlin, announcers, Vincent Lopez and several members of his orchestra, Colonel Stoopnagel and Budd, May Singhi Breen and Peter de Rose, the Silver Sea Islanders, the Lonesome Cowboy, the Gloomchasers, the Silver Masked Tenor, Henry Burbig, district artist, Ward Wilson, impersonator of radio celebrities, Reis and Dunne, the Neapolitan Nights Trio, the Telephone Troubadors, the Florentine Trio and many others.

The May 5, 1934 entertainment and dance saw the News Auditorium jammed to capacity when more than a thousand members and friends attended and another thousand interested persons had to be turned away because of fire regulations. The crush became so great that it was necessary to call police reserves to handle the crowd which milled about in front of the News Building on Market Street. Augmenting the presence of several hundred members from the metropolitan area were others from upstate New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland. Five NNRC members journeyed from Illinois, too, to attend this greatest of all Newark News Radio Club affairs.

The first of the club's annual summer conventions was held in 1935 at Mapine Farm, Lansdale, Pa., home of Vice President and Mrs. Harold Robinson. This event, as have the succeeding ones down through the years, attracted members from far and wide. They have come from New England, from the South, from the Middle West, from Canada, and, on a few occasions, even from the Pacific Coast. Year after year, contingents from New York City, Baltimore, and Brooklyn vied with one another for the honor of having the largest out-of-town representation.

Excluding the years of the second World War, when the conventions were temporarily suspended, all were held at the original location until 1952 when the Robinsons sold Mapine Farm and purchased a home, built in colonial days, in Green Lane, Pa. From 1952 through 1954 the conventions were held at the Montgomery County Sportsmen's Club, also in Green Lane.

Subsequent summer conventions, starting in 1955, were held at the Shady Rest Inn, near Freehold, N.J. The site was moved to the Oak Tree Tavern, Wall Township, N.J., a few miles west of Asbury Park, in 1958.

In 1952, a dinner was arranged by the Special Events Committee to commemorate the club's twenty-fifth anniversary. Succeeding anniversary dinners were held annually through 1962.

In 1955, following the passing of Executive Secretary Peter J. McKenna, a Memorial Plaque was instituted in his memory. The subsequent passing of Vice President Jacob C. Goldstein, Treasurer Walter L. Townley and Vice President Adolph J. Koempel, all of whom were very active in club affairs, prompted the Board to authorize similar plaques in their honor. The Memorial Plaques were presented at our anniversary dinners.

The "Plaque Fund", to which members of the Board make small but regular anonymous donations at their monthly meetings, was instituted in 1955. Later, after a number of members had written headquarters to ask how they might have a share in the project, the Board authorized publication of a letter from the Awards Committee Chairman to the membership in the Bulletin. This resulted in member contributions from far and wide. To date, a total of thirty-five plaques have been awarded to members in seven states and Canada - three of them to members of the fair sex - at a cost of \$827, solely the result of voluntary contributions received from the membership and the Board. Not a single penny has ever been diverted for this purpose from the club's general fund.

Since 1962 when, at the joint suggestion of the president and the chairman of the awards committee the Man of the Year Plaques were discontinued, only Memorial Plaques have been awarded. Little did they realize when proposing the change that the name on the next plaque would be that of the president himself.

Irving R. Potts, a charter member who served the club faithfully as its president from 1928 until his death, passed away on November 16, 1962. The Board ordered that a suitably engraved Memorial Gavel be purchased from the plaque fund to perpetuate his memory and, so those who follow will be aware of his labors in behalf of the club, the inscription, "Irving R. Potts, President, 1928-1962", is now an integral part of the NNRC Bulletin's masthead.

President Potts was a natural leader, beloved by all who knew him. Guided by his capable hand, the club weathered the depression years and emerged stronger than ever. His business talent kept the club on a sound financial footing for thirty-four years and was matched only by his outgoing personality which kept everyone happily content when he presided as master of ceremonies at our dinner and convention gatherings. His loss was a severe blow, both to the hobby and the organization to which he had devoted so many years of his life. He had taken the club very far from its extremely humble beginnings, however, and the Board felt that his work should be carried on.

Consequently, at its January, 1963 meeting, the Board appointed Competition Editor William Schultz to fill the unexpired term of the late President Potts. In 1964 he was elected by the membership to a full two year term, and reelected in 1966. With the co-operation of its officers, its headquarters staff, its editorial staff, its committees and the membership, the NNRC has continued to prosper under his leadership.

Since the combined and concentrated efforts of so many provide the organization with its main source of strength, no Newark News Radio Club history would be complete if it failed to include some mention of the Executive Board and at least a summary of the numerous duties which its members perform.

The Executive Board consists of all the club's officers and its entire editorial staff. Each and every member of the Board is welcome at any Board meeting which he is physically able to attend and, when present, is privileged to express his opinion on

any matter which may be under discussion. With the single exception of the president, who may vote only to resolve a tie, each Board member present may cast his one vote for or against any motion before the assembly.

The offices of President, Treasurer, Executive Secretary, Membership Secretary and Corresponding Secretary are elective ones. The titles explain the duties of those who hold them. Also elected by the membership are the club's thirteenth Vice Presidents; in addition to any committee assignments which they may accept, they act as a screening committee for all proposals to amend the constitution, whether such proposals are made by the club's newest recruit or by the Board itself. The Honorary Vice Presidents are appointed by the Board, as often for past contributions to the welfare of the club as in recognition of their present activities on its behalf. Directors are appointed by the president to, as stated by the constitution, "perform the functions of the various committees" although, as full members of the Board, they perform many other functions outside of the limited field covered by this description as well.

The Newark News Radio Club relies, as must any organization whose main purpose is the dissemination of information concerning a specific hobby, very heavily upon the capability and experience of its Editorial Staff, each member of which has voluntarily taken on the backbreaking chore of distilling hundreds of members reports each year down to twelve issues of readable and informative Bulletin copy. Our staff, we feel, is one of the very best. It should be; its members have been editing their sections of the NNRC Bulletin for a combined total of very close to one hundred years!

The NNRC's Committees, vital to its successful progress, can be roughly classified into two groups - those directly concerned with the operation of the organization and those whose activities are oriented in the direction of service to our membership. Among the former, there are the Membership, Bulletin, By-Laws, Elections, Publicity, Finance, and ANARC Representation Committees; among the latter, our committees for Good and Welfare, Awards, Countries Lists, Courtesy Programs, DX Qualifications and Special Events. Each has its purpose, and each has contributed abundantly toward the success of the club. The Chairmen of our committees are all members of the Board as, with few exceptions, are their committeemen.

Last, but not least, to take this story of the Newark News Radio Club full circle on its fortieth anniversary, it is necessary to refer back to those fifty-five hardy pioneers who were mentioned on the first page of this history. A small number of them eventually lost interest in the hobby of radio listening and allowed their memberships to lapse and many have passed on to those greener fields where there is no static, but one of the club's proudest and happiest boasts is that four Honorary Vice Presidents - Eugene Bataille, Fred Hiering, Mrs. Helen Potts, and John Reichert - not only belonged to that small, enthusiastic group of Charter Members, but have maintained membership in the Newark News Radio Club for forty consecutive years. In this they form one of the most exclusive quartets in the world since no other DX listener anywhere can make this statement.

Note: Much of the information covering the club's first twenty-five years was drawn from "A History of the Newark News Radio Club", written by the late President Irving R. Potts to commemorate the club's twenty-fifth anniversary.