Highlights of the Jack Poppele Collection Recently Donated to the AWA Museum

© 2019 Mike Molnar

The history of the 20th century includes many landmarks in electronic communications. The time to hear this history directly from the people who lived it has passed. When the rare chance is presented to gain new insights on this history, it is necessary to seize the opportunity. Jacob "Jack" R. Poppele is one of those people who contributed greatly to the history of radio and television but can no longer tell us his story directly. Jack's career in radio began as a shipboard wireless operator through World War I. After the war, he was the chief engineer founding WOR radio in 1922. He remained chief engineer until 1952 leading an engineering staff of 400. Then he was appointed chief engineer of the Voice of America and later remained in electronics for the rest of his life. It is our good fortune that Jack documented much of the story of his career and the developments of electronic communication in his papers and scrapbooks. This history is now archived for all to see at the AWA Museum. This paper provides reproductions of selected papers from his scrapbooks and a few photographs of other memorabilia from his collection.

A number of AWA Museum directors recently become members of the Radio Club of America (RCA). At the RCA meetings they became acquainted with June and Ginny (Virginia) Poppele, two daughters of Jack Poppele. They informed the AWA directors that they were in possession of a large collection of papers and artifacts their father had accumulated and saved after his long career in radio and television. When the Poppele sisters decided the time had come to donate the collection to an institution to preserve the legacy of Jack Poppele, they made arrangements with the directors of the AWA Museum to transfer the Poppele Collection of memorabilia that documents Jack Poppele's

contributions to the development of radio and television.

When AWA members travelled to New Jersey to pick up the collection, they found a treasure trove of books, papers, diaries, radios, televisions, and other artifacts. Two items immediately stood out from the others. The first was a collection of approximately twenty large scrapbooks maintained by Jack Poppele covering his activities and contributions in radio and television beginning in the 1930s. Labels on the scrapbooks such as "television 1937" and "FM" just hint at the contents. Unfortunately, time has taken a toll on these scrapbooks. Glues have dried and acids in paper have discolored newspaper clippings, brochures and the like. So, care must to be taken when turning each page. This article focuses on selected highlights from these scrapbooks.

The second item is a Jenkins Model 201 mechanical television, which was one of Jack's prized possessions. The Poppele family's generosity ensures that this rare item will be shared with future generations. This particular TV set was featured in a TV guide article in 1971. A plaque on the front of the television states that it is the first television receiver, it dates from 1926, and was presented to Jack Poppele by Allen B. DuMont, the famous television pioneer. In 1928 DuMont was chief engineer for De Forest Radio Company. At that time they owned the Jenkins Company. Although the historical accuracy of the information on the plaque can be questioned, the "Televisor" is a significant artifact from the early days of television.

As a mechanical television, before the TV picture tube, it used a neon lamp to convert the picture signal into flickering light. That light is then scanned through a spiral of 48 holes in a perforated drum. As the drum rotates, the light passing through the holes is magnified for the



Fig. 1. This Jenkins Model 201 "Televisor" television receiver, which appeared in a *TV Guide* article in 1971, was owned by Jack Poppele and is now on display in the AWA Museum.

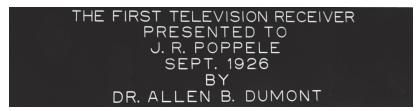


Fig. 2. The plaque on the Jenkins Model 201 television receiver indicated that Allen DuMont gave Poppele the set in September of 1926. Although the date and claim of being the first television are historically inaccurate, the televisor and plaque were in Jack's collection as far back as anyone in the family could recall.

viewer, who will see a flickering orange picture of 48 lines and 15 images per second. Jenkins produced a few similar models, but the technology was not ready to replace radio. The company soon went bankrupt and surviving sets are extremely rare.

The following images are a small

sample of the historical treasures left to us by Jack Poppele and his family. The order of presentation is the mechanical television given Poppele by DuMont, followed by samples of the newspaper clippings and other artifacts that Jack Poppele selected to include in his scrapbooks.

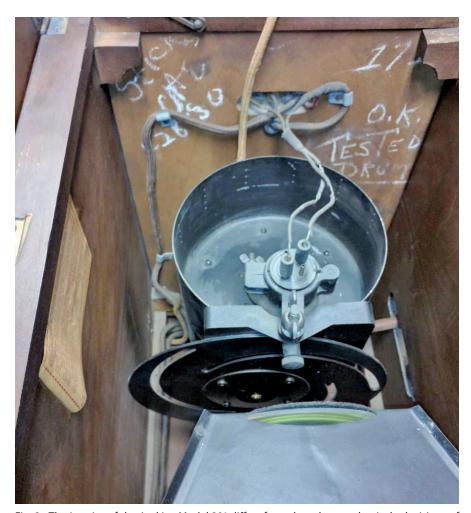


Fig. 3. The interior of the Jenkins Model 201 differs from the other mechanical televisions of its day. The use of a perforated drum to scan the neon tube removed keystone distortion and permitted a narrower cabinet.

THEY CALLED IT RADIOMOVIES It was 1928, and among the stars were Jacqueline and Master Fremont, Miss Constance and 'Dainty Little Jane Marie' By David Lachenbruch Although American televiboomlet of "mechanical" sion generally reckons its television. But the furor birth from the post-World War over primitive "radiovision" Il period of the late 1940s. spurred a major industrythe first wave of TV excitewide crash program which ment actually swept the counresulted in the development try when Sid Caesar was 6 of television as we know it years old, Jackie Gleason today. was 12, Johnny Carson and The name of Charles Merv Griffin were 3-and Francis Jenkins (Charles eight years before the blessed Francis who?) has not gone event in the Cavett houseringing down the corridors hold. It's been all but forgotof scientific history. Yet he ten, but from 1928 through occupied a unique posi-1932, thousands of adventurous radio tion as the first real television broadamateurs huddled in darkened rooms caster. to squint at dim black objects cavort-"We began broadcasting radiomovies ing across tiny pink screens. July 2, 1928, on a regular schedule," Jenkins wrote in 1929, "In August, one The Depression and advancing technology combined to kill off the early hundred or more had finished their -> TV GUIDE JULY 3, 1971 5

Fig. 4. The *TV Guide* article of July 3, 1971, contains a picture of the very first Jenkins 201 television set that was owned by Jack Poppele and recently donated to the AWA Museum by his family. Jack is pictured later in the article.



Fig. 5. Jack Poppele assembled approximately 20 scrapbooks over his lifetime that memorialized his contribution to the history of radio and television. His family recently donated these scrapbooks to the AWA Museum library located in Bloomfield, NY.

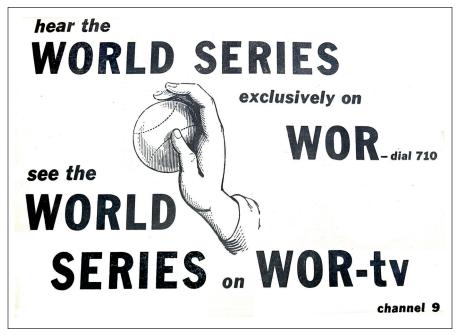


Fig. 6. Many ads for WOR appear in the scrapbooks. When WOR received the contract to broadcast the World Series, the station placed newspaper ads to promote the broadcast.



Fig. 7. As a method of testing their broadcast range, WOR offered to send these QSL card from 1937 to all the listeners around the country that sent in a reception report.

Industry Leaders to Address Television Institute, February 6-8 at Hotel New Yorker on TV Problems MONDAY, FEB. 6 REGISTRATION, 9-10 A.M. In A.M. to Noon 10 A.M. to Noon 1. PROGRAMS, BUDGETS & TALENT (Grand Ballroom)— He try White, World Video, Chairman 1. WHY PRC GRAMS FAIL TO CLICK—Horace Schwerin, Schwerin Research Corp. 2. NEED AM PROGRAMS BE TV DUDS?—Mark Goodson, CBS-TV 3. THE PACKAGE PRODUCER SPEAKS—Henry White, World Video 4. SMALL STATION PROGRAMMING—Bert Gold, WKTV, Utica 5. WHAT PRICE PROGRAMS—Wallace Ross, Ross Reports II. STATION PROBLEMS (Rooms F & G)-A. N. GOLDSMITH J. R. POPPELE President, TBA Dr. Alfred N. Goldsmith, Chairman NEWEST DEVELOPMENTS IN STUDIO LIGHTING— Stanley McCandless; Century Lighting Co.; Geo. Gill, Kliegl; W. D. Buchingham, Western Union 2. OPERATING IN THE BLACK-Ted Streibert, Pres., WOR-TV AUDIENTS WRONG WITH YOUR RATE CARD—Chas. Batson, Broadcast Advertising Bureau 5. DAYTIME SCHEDULING-Chris J. Wittig, DuMont Network III. LUNCHEON (Grand Ballroom)-Dr. Alfred N. Goldsmith, Toastmaster "GUESTS OF HONOR" Dr. Vladimir Zworykin Dr. Lee de Forest Dr. Allee B. DuMont Dr. Millard Faught Dr. Millard Faught J. R. Popple NILES TRAMMELL DR. ALLEN B. DuMONT Pres., Allen B. DuMont Labs 2 to 4:30 P.M. IV. SPONSORS & TIME BUYERS' PANEL (Grand Ballroom) 4. FACTS & FIGURES FOR SPONSORS & TIME BUYERS— John Boyle, Starch & Associates V. NETWORK AFFILIATES (Rooms F & G) ARE THE NETWORKS DELIVERING THE GOODS— Paul Adanti, WHEN-TV, Syracuse, N. Y. NETWORK vs. LOCAL PROGRAMMING—(To be announced) 3. POOLING NETWORK BROADCASTS—(To be announced) WORTHINGTON MINER DR. V. ZWORYKIN RCA Labs, Princeton, N. 4. NETWORK PROGRESS—(To be announced) Hollywood, California President, WOR-TV MYRON C. KIRK V.P., Kudner Advertisi

Fig. 8. Poppele was listed as a speaker at the Television Institute. Jack's perspectives on broadcasting, as an executive in management and engineering, were highly regarded.

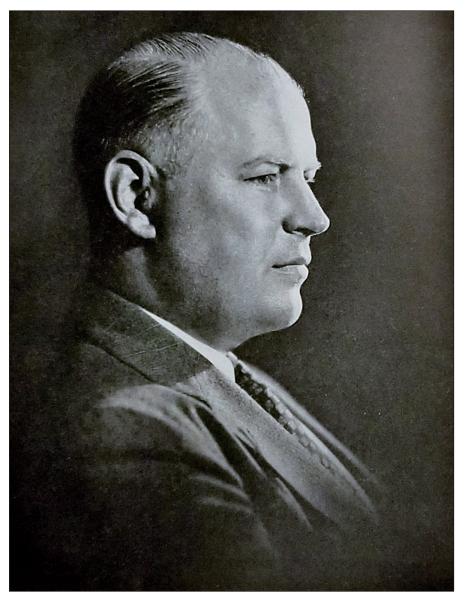


Fig. 9a. Allen DuMont made the statement on the opposite page that recommending delaying the decision on setting the standards for color television.

In a recent advertisement I said:

"Clever propaganda has spread the notion that there are two television camps: One for and one against color. This is deliberate misrepresentation. No one is opposed to color. For many years the majority of the industry has been deep in television color research.

"But after fifteen years of concentrated effort in this field, to which I have dedicated my life. I must state reluctantly, but unequivocally. that practical commercial color television for the home is, in my opinion, still in the far distant future."

The technical reasons for this stand and the numerous technical difficulties that must be overcome before color television can be ready for the public are fully set forth in the following text by Dr. Thomas T. Goldsmith, Jr., Director of Research of our Company.

allen Bow mont

President,

Allen B. Du Mont Laboratories, Inc.

 $Fig.\,9b.\,As\,RCA\,and\,CBS\,battled\,over\,their\,competing\,color\,television\,systems, DuMont\,reminded\,the\,industry\,that\,much\,work\,was\,still\,needed\,to\,standardize\,and\,perfect\,black\,\&\,white\,television.$



CBS COLOR TELEVISION FAILS IN SEVEN OUT OF EIGHT TESTS,
PHILCO EXPERT TESTIFIES BEFORE FCC

Washington D. C., February 12, 1947 - Mechanical color television sent out by the Columbia system is so deficient at the present time that it could not even be seen in seven out of eight test locations within 25 miles of New York City in the course of field tests made by CBS itself last week, and the picture quality at the eighth location was only marginal, it was testified today by F. J. Bingley, chief television engineer of Philoo Corporation, in the hearings on proposed mechanical color television standards before the Federal Communications Commission.

"The test of any television system is how well it works in people's homes, and a field test made last week raised serious questions as to the workability of the proposed mechanical color system," Mr. Bingley told the Commission. "In seven out of eight test locations within 25 miles of the transmitter in New York, a color picture could not be seen even when elaborate antenna installation far too costly for the average home owner were resorted to. Columbia engineers themselves conceded that it was useless even to try to pick up the color signals any more than 25 miles away. The present limitations of color service are obvious when it is realized that dependable black, and white television pictures of high quality are enjoyed regularly by an audience that extends about 40 miles from New York City in all directions.

"Present power of the CBS color system will have to be increased at least 100-fold to approach the broadcast service now being provided by black-and-white television transmitters," Mr. Bingley pointed out.

Fig. 10. Philco Corporation, an early TV manufacturer, also proposed that the FCC delay a decision on color TV. Philco published this statement on color TV that was distributed in the industry.



Fig. 11. As president of the Television Broadcasters Association, Poppele presents a scroll to Lee De Forest on the 40th anniversary of the patent on the Audion tube.

Highlights of the Jack Poppele Collection Recently Donated to the AWA Museum

- 6 -

In order both to protect the public and to develop Frequency Modulation on a sound basis, I most earnestly urge you to point out to the purchaser what is required in a receiving set to get good FM performance. If you do this. the blame which will come with the disillusionment of the purchaser of misrepresented FM sets will not rest upon you.

The following is a list of those companies which have been licensed by me under my patents to build Frequency Modulation receivers:

Broadcast receivers:

Ansley Radio Corporation Espey Manufacturing Company Fada Radio & Electric Company, Inc.

Freed Radio Corporation

General Electric Company Howard Radio Company

The Magnavox Company, Incorporated

Meissner Mfg. Co. Philharmonic Radio Company

Pilot Radio Corporation E. H. Scott Radio Laboratories, Inc.

Stewart-Warner Corporation Stromberg-Carlson Telephone Mfg. Company

Zenith Radio Corporation

Amateur and experimental receivers:

Hallicrafters, Inc.

The Hammarlund Manufacturing Co., Inc.

National Company, Inc.

Special receivers for broadcasting companies:

Radio Engineering Laboratories, Inc. Western Electric Company

Very sincerely yours,

Fig. 12. This is the last page of a letter from Major Armstrong to Poppele and other industry leaders. Armstrong wanted licensees to advise the listening public that the only full quality FM equipment is that equipment licensed by Armstrong.

delever National Broadcasting Company, Inc. S BANTO FURNISHAPING BP AMBRICA MERTICA

R C A BUILDING . BADIO CITY NEW YORK, N. Y.

SMOINEERING THE

OCT 26 1940

October 25 1940

Mr. J. R. Poppele, Chf. Engr.. Bemberger Broadcasting Service, New York City

Dear Mr. Poppele:

It looks now as though we may be "seeing things" before very long. The new equipment and circuits have been connected and we plan to transmit a test pattern, Saturday, October 26th, between 2 and 9:30 PM. This will permit us to make the first of a series of necessary corrections and adjustments and will give you an opportunity to tune up your receiver.

On Sunday night, October 27th, we will transmit a film at 8:30 PM, enabling still further adjustments to be made to the system. The work of rebuilding the mobile units has also been going forward. If it is finished, we will try it out at Madison Square Carden, Monday night, October 28th - picking up the Democratic rally for President Roosevelt.

As you can well imagine, a television transmitting system is a highly complicated and delicate combination of apparatus and circuits. It will require considerable gentling and coddling before it performs to our complete satisfaction. The test programs will necessarily be irregular, as there will be periods between when modifications will have to be made. We will try to tell you at the end of each transmission when the next one will take place and what the nature of the pickup will be.

I deeply appreciate your understanding and patience with the problems involved and hope you will once again be glad that you are a television pioneer. Just as a reminder - W2XBS' new frequency is 50,000-56,000 kc, which on most sets can be found on either Channel No. 2 or 4 on your station selector.

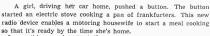
Sincerely

of Television

Fig. 13. Before WOR would invest in a television station, they would need to know that the technology was ready. This letter to Poppele from RCA informs him that NBC in New York was resuming test TV broadcasts.

RADIO and TELEVISION

Latest of Rudia Gadgers: Push Button, Meal Cooks-WOR's Start 25 Years Ago



so that it's ready by the time she's home.

I saw this experiment at the Newark Museum, during the current WOR 25th Anniversary Exhibit.

rent WOR 25th Anniversary Exhibit.

I ate one of the electronically cooked franks. It tasted fine. Yes, radio will continue to do much to make your life comfortable. For instance, facsimile radio—which turns out printed sheets in your home—will soon be available at modest price of the continuation of the



ago. WOR, for POPPELE in stance, was started in Bamberger's Dept. Storm, New 12, 29 years ago to be seen to be

Jimmle Fidder is worried about the Greer Garson-Richard Ney marriage. "Open the door to Richard," he pleaded, again as-suming the robes of a Hollywood domestic relations judge. Then, quickly changing to the garb of a business counsellor, he urged Cumbis Pictures to release Counsils Pictures to release do do movies and give some of the proceeds to a

Today's radio program and highlights are on Page 26.

music scholarship fund. (WJZ, Sun., 9:30 p.m.)

Faye and Elliott Roosevelt told Hildegarde they've become farmers (WCBS, Sun, 9 p.m.). "Yes," bragged Elliott, "we're installing the latest equipment." Hildegarde: "And I suppose that pays?" Elliott: "Definitely, We've got it down to a point where our pays to the sun by \$1.37 each." Faye. "Sun by \$1.37 each." Faye. "An and the sun by \$1.37 each." The sun by \$1.37 each. The sun by \$1.3

"If the 15 per cent rent rise is not granted, bankruptcy and socolor granted, bankruptcy and socolor granted, bankruptcy and socolor granted, bankruptcy and socolor granted g

"The labor movement may have more interest in developing our economy to meet the needs of the people than business, whose interest is investment and profit," the property of the property of

"I know a theatre in Maine that "Roow a theatre in Maine that is so far out in the woods," re-called Fred Allen, "that when Dr. I. Q. played, his assistant called out, 'I have a Moose in the ballow." WhORC, Sun. 8:30 p. m.) Fred Lahr told Allen that he was playing a benefit at the Met for Melchior's big toe. "We're collecting money for band-aids."

Fig. 14. Poppele was often interviewed regarding radio and television. In this interview he tells of new developments in electronics, including home facsimile. He also describes eating a hot dog cooked by an electric stove started by a radio signal.



Fig. 15. Jack Poppele's card shown here entitled him to attend the Radio Engineering Show and the IRE National Convention held in 1949. The Radio Engineering Show of the IRE was similar to the Consumer Electronics Show of today.

W E N F R M TI O



RADIO CORPORATION OF AMERICA RCA BUILDING 30 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA NEW YORK, 20, N. Y.

June 12, 1947 after 8 p.m., C.S.T.

SARNOFF SEES THREE GREAT NEW FIELDS OF RADIO WITH UNLIMITED OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPANSION

Television, FM Broadcasting, Industrial Electronics on Verge of Broad Advances, RCA President Tells Radio Manufacturers -- He Says Economic Readjustment Now Underway Will Result in A Stronger, Healthier Industry

CHICAGO, June 12 -- Pointing to unlimited opportunities for expansion of the radio industry, Brigadier General David Sarnoff, President of the Radio Corporation of America, in an address at the annual convention of the Radio Manufacturers Association here tonight, said that the future of the industry is to be found not only in standard broadcasting, but also in television, FM (frequency modulation), industrial electronics and foreign trade.

Television alone with its vast possibilities for home, theater and industrial use represents opportunities, he said, that will enable the radio industry to achieve new records on an unending road of progress. He added that he foresees the ultimate fusion of sound broadcasting with television, and that the 36,000,000 homes now equipped with radio will find new pleasures in sightseeing and attending events by television.

Fig. 16. David Sarnoff distributed this letter to industry leaders. Sarnoff's letter predicted a strong future for all types of electronics manufacturing.



Flanked by color and black and white receivers, FCC opens Round 2 of its public hearings looking to establishment of standards for color transmission, with Commissioners Hyde, Walker, Chairman Denny, Wakefield and Chief Engineer Jett on the bench

Color TV Demonstrations Reveal Engineering Progress

CBS sequential and RCA simultaneous color reception before FCC hearings indicate need for further development work before standards can be set up

• The first round before the FCC in Washington concluded with CBS placing in the record, in a masterly. fashion, all evidence available that would support their claim that the standards they propose for commercial color TV should be adopted. At the same time, the majority of the industry, both individually and collectively, gave reasons why these same recommended standards should not be approved. The CBS system produces a tri-color sequential, 48 frame per second, 525-line, interlaced television picture. This would be radiated, together with the sound, in a 16 mc channel in the uhf band, 480 to 920 mc. At Columbia, a technical staff of over 100 headed by Dr. P. C. Goldmark, have developed such a system. This excellent piece of work, done under high-pressure, is lauded as an outstanding achievement by all in the engineering world who realize

the planning, inventing and developing necessary to produce an operating system that shows pictures of the quality exhibited by CBS.

The Score at the End of Round 1. CBS had testified that their system would produce pictures 71/2 x 10 in, of good color fidelity. Using their transmitter in NYC on 490 mc, they had made reception tests at 188 locations and were satisfied that suitable broadcast coverage could be obtained. This experimental system embodied all of their proposed standards. Although lacking in camera equipment for certain uses they said they could put on commercial programs in a matter of weeks if so authorized by the FCC. Supporting the CBS petition were Westinghouse, Bendix, Cowles Broadcasting Co., Zenith and Federal.

On the other side appeared RCA, Emerson, Farnsworth, TBA, Philco and others. DuMont's appearance was made later. The industry committee of RTPB-RMA reported that by majority vote, it was decided that more experimental work was necessary before color TV standards could be adopted.

The opposition attacked the CBS proposal from two angles; first, the system proposed was fundamentally so limited as to preclude future development; second, a better system not so limited, using simultaneous instead of sequential scanning, was in the early stages of development in the RCA laboratories. Specifically it was claimed that the CBS system was lacking in brilliance; in picture size; in freedom from flicker and color breakup: uneconomical of light because of necessary filters; not thoroughly tested as to propagation on the

TELE-TECH • March, 1947

86

68

Fig. 17. Poppele was invited to several demonstrations of the two proposed color TV systems. He saved a copy of this TELE-TECH publication dated March 1947 reporting on the FCC-sponsored color TV demonstrations. The FCC concluded that further development work was needed before setting color television standards.

---TP195

WASHINGTON -- CHAIRMAN FLY OF THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION DECLARED TODAY THAT THE ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT OF TELEVISION HAD BEEN IMPERILED BY WHAT HE CALLED "A BLITZKRIEG" OF TELEVISION SALES CAMPAIGNS. FLY TOLD THE SENATE INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE THAT THE F.C.C. IS CONSIDERING HOLDING UP THE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF TELEVISION FOR A FEW MONTHS UNTIL TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT OF COMPETING COMPANIES IS STANDARDIZED. HE PREDICTED THAT WITHIN A YEAR UNRESTRICTED DEVELOPMENT COULD GO FORWARD, WITH THE SALE OF STANDARD RECEIVING SETS WHICH WOULD RECEIVE TELECASTS FROM SEVERAL COMPETING TELECASTING SYSTEMS. HE EXPRESSED FEAR THAT A SALES PROMOTION CAMPAIGN AT THIS TIME WOULD FREEZE THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY TO ONE SYSTEM AND WOULD HAMPER FUTURE COMPETITION AND DEVELOPMENT. 4-10PV415P

Fig. 18. This FCC press release from the WOR news teletype states that commercial TV was not ready for the public. The FCC believes that standards must be set to protect the consumer from products that may quickly become obsolete.

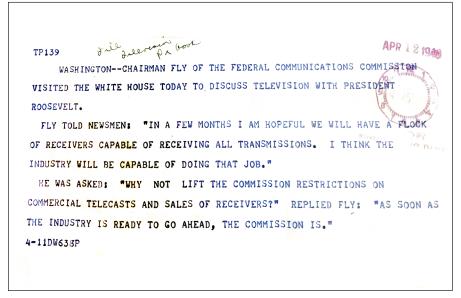


Fig. 19. After some time passed, WOR received another FCC press release stating commercial TV is now ready for the public.