

A HISTORY OF THE NEWARK NEWS RADIO CLUBby Irving R. Potts, President

Back in the late nineteen-twenties when radio was still in 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, the column was devoted to the letters and dialing experiences of listeners interested in reception of radio stations at distant points.

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

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

Notice in "Broadcasts Winnowed" of a meeting to be held in the editorial rooms of The News, 215 Market Street, 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, News radio editor, the Newark News DX Club came into being. Several years later the name was changed to The Newark News Radio Club.

Officers were duly elected, committees appointed and a constitution and by-laws adopted. Requirements for membership were simple-"anyone with a sincere interest in radio" was eligible.

Meetings were held the second Thursday of every month, July and August excepted. A board of directors was appointed by the president to meet monthly in the homes of the various officers and directors comprising the board.

Interest in the new club which, incidentally was the first of its kind, was manifest from the outset and the membership increased rapidly. Enrollment of members reached a high peak 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 from all sections of this country and Canada.

The WOR broadcast marked the beginning of a large membership and expansion of activity. Before long the club graduated from the "local" category to become international in character. Nearly every walk of life was and still is represented. Age was no barrier and schoolboys of sixteen exchanged DXing experiences with fellow members three and four times their senior.

As is the case with many other organizations, the growth and success of the Newark News Radio Club can, to a great degree, be attributed to the work of its various committees. One of these, the Courtesy Programs Committee, has arranged more than 5,000 special broadcasts for

the club during its quarter century of existence. These programs are primarily for the purpose of helping members and other DXers to log and verify hitherto unheard stations.

Each committeeman is assigned a certain number of frequencies. He then contacts the stations which operate on the frequencies assigned to him, in an endeavor to arrange a dedicatory or DX program. Very often these programs are transmitted by low power stations which share their wavelengths with others. And unless they go on at a time when the other stations on the same frequency are silent, the listeners' efforts to log them are usually wasted.

A novel way to overcome this difficulty was devised. Special programs were arranged with all the stations on a given frequency at a certain time. The first station commenced broadcasting on the hour and operated for fifteen minutes with the others following at fifteen minute intervals. In this manner, all participating stations were free of interference and barring unfavorable atmospheric conditions, the chances of logging them were excellent.

This plan worked so efficiently that the radio supervisor in the Baltimore zone employed it in checking frequencies of the broadcasting stations in that area.

Once a year and for several years in succession, the facilities of station WOR were made available to the Club for programs that began at midnight and usually lasted until 5 a.m. These broadcasts, which were under the supervision of Jack R. Poppele, WOR's chief engineer, were heard in many sections of the world including Australia and New Zealand.

One featured the re-broadcast of a Newark News Radio Club program being transmitted simultaneously by station LR5 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The South American's signals originating more than 5,000 miles distant, were so strong and clear as to readily lend themselves to re-broadcast purposes. During the course of these annual WOR programs, members present in the studios often participated and in the interim were served with coffee, sandwiches, and cake through the courtesy of WOR and L. Bamberger and Company of Newark.

The committee on DX Qualifications is charged with the task of classifying members according to their DXing achievements. Attractive certificates are issued upon application, certifying to the number of stations and countries verified. Covering the broadcast band and shortwave spectra, the certificates are a popular phase of the Club's activities and invariably will be found occupying the place of honor in the recipient's "shack" or radio room.

The good and welfare committee maintains contact with shut-in members, those who are ill and records important events in members' lives such as births, birthdays, wedding anniversaries, marriages and deaths. Other committees that have contributed to the club's success in no small measure are the membership committee, bulletin committee, convention, awards, by-laws, finance and special committees appointed by the president from time to time.

The first banquet of the new organization was held in the auditorium of the News building 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; Swanee Taylor of Main Street Sketches; the Landt Trio and White and several other radio luminaries of that day entertained the 250 members and friends who were present.

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

Curt Peterson, supervisor of NBC announcers, was in charge of the February, 1931 party. He was accompanied by George Shackley, musical director of WOR, the popular Moonbeams Trio, Kathleen Stewart, pianist and Mrs. Oakley W. Cooke, director of WOR's Newark studios.

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

The May 5, 1934 entertainment and dance saw the News auditorium jammed to capacity when more than 1,000 members and friends attended and when, because of fire department regulations, another 1,000 persons were turned away. It became necessary to call police reserves to handle the crowd that milled about in Market Street in front of the News building. Augmenting the presence of several hundred members in the metropolitan area were others from upper New York State, Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland. Five members journeyed from Illinois to attend this greatest of all Newark News Radio Club affairs.

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

As the club continued to grow and expand, its officials saw the need of an official publication and accordingly, in 1933 the first NNRC bulletin appeared. It was to feature the latest DX tips and special program listings; stations' schedules, new broadcasting stations, changes in frequency and power and members' reports and comment. The bulletin was a success right from the beginning and as the years went by its scope was extended to include all phases of radio including the shortwave and ham or amateur spectra.

The first of the Club's annual summer conventions was held in August, 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, the South, the Middle West, and on one occasion, even from California. Year after year, contingents of members from Baltimore, New York and Brooklyn vied with one another for the honor of having the largest out-of-town representation.

Excluding the years during World War II 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. The 1952 gathering was held at the Montgomery County Sportsmen's Club, also in Green Lane.

It was at the 1950 convention that the first "Man-of-the-Year" award was made. These awards include the presentation of an attractive, engraved plaque and are possible through the generosity of our convention hosts. The plaque is inscribed "To the Man of the Year, Newark News Radio Club, For Outstanding Services Rendered", together with the name of the recipient and the year of the award.

Any history of the Newark News Radio Club would be incomplete if it failed to mention the constructive work of its officers, editors, and directors, all of whom have contributed to the fullest extent of their time and effort which have made it possible for the Club to progress and to serve the DXing fraternity for the past quarter of a century.

And so this pioneer of radio and DX organizations celebrated its 25th anniversary on December 8, 1952. Little did its founders anticipate that the small, local association they helped to form would eventually result in a congress of radio listeners whose activities today are world wide in scope.

THE NEWARK NEWS RADIO CLUB

215 Market Street

Newark, New Jersey