



So You Want a Radio Job!

As An Announcer

NBC's chief announcer, Everett Mitchell, has been in the game since radio was in swaddling clothes, trains page boys to be announcers.

Harold Safford believes friendliness and sincerity are more necessary than careful diction, picks announcers for their human traits.

most of its music, he will have occasion almost every day to announce musical numbers with foreign titles, written by foreign composers.

A knowledge of music of all types is important, in order that the announcer may be able to introduce a musical selection and give his listeners more than the mere name of the number to be played or sung. Studying the famous operas and becoming familiar with the arias from them will enable the announcer to discuss them with intelligence and understanding. Listeners who are unfamiliar with the selections will appreciate this addition to their fund of information; on the other hand those who do know the operas will be inclined to discount any remarks of the announcer who shows himself ignorant of his subject.

Rhythm in Speech

Along with the study of music should go a study of the pronunciation of composers' names. Musical dictionaries and reference books are indispensable in this line of education. The competent announcer has a rhythm to his speech which is pleasant to the ear, and which carries the listener's thoughts along with his words. This can be developed in only one way—by reading aloud. Most radio programs are read from manuscript, and so it is necessary for the announcer to develop the ability to read aloud and make it sound as free, natural, and convincing as though he were talking.

The smoothness of an announcer's speech and the quality of his voice can be improved greatly by proper breathing. Many announcers have entered radio as singers, and their vocal training, including the development of proper breathing, has been a factor in their success. The announcer who learns to breathe from the depths of his lungs can control his breath so that his speech comes smoothly and without effort.

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by JOHN BAKER

"SO you're a radio announcer. Isn't that wonderful!" Well, it is, in a way, but it's hard work, too.

In the radio business, the announcer is the "front" man, the one who is in the public eye, the one whose words start the performance, connect its different parts, and wind it up with a gracious farewell. His words also convey the sponsor's sales message to the listeners, a necessary part of most programs if radio is to survive.

In the minds of most people, a person in radio is an announcer. As a matter of fact, writers, actors, musicians and executives greatly outnumber the announcers, but the fact remains that each of the more than 600 radio stations in the country must have at least one announcer or someone who can combine announcing with other duties. And the average young man who is interested in radio as a career thinks first of announcing as his opportunity, and asks "What do I need to do to be a good radio announcer?"

Everett Mitchell, chief announcer of the central division of the National Broadcasting company, an announcer since radio wore swaddling clothes, outlines some of the qualifications for radio announcers as measured by NBC standards.



The first thing an announcer needs in his training is an intensive course in English. Anyone who has listened to auditions of prospective announcers at a radio station knows how many candidates are awkward in the handling of their principal tool, the English language. Correct pronunciation, good grammar, use of the correct words; those are primary requirements, but many would-be announcers fail to meet them.

Then, an announcer should be conversant with at least three foreign languages, preferably French, Italian and German, according to Mitchell. Even though the announcer is on a small station which plays records for

A Radio Job

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The voice itself should be easy to listen to. The good announcing voice has a certain something which Mitchell calls "sparkle"; some voices have it naturally; others can be trained to develop it; while still other voices seem destined to remain forever outside the class of pleasant speaking voices. In his announcers' school for page boys at NBC headquarters in Chicago, Mitchell has helped the prospective announcers to find the best range for each voice.



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In some cases, the voice needed to be lowered from the usual speaking range; in others it needed to be raised.

Budding announcers are taught that every syllable of a word deserves the honor of pronunciation. "National" is not "nash-nul"; our nation has a "pres-i-dent", rather than a "pres-dent".

Some persons talk in their throats and consequently muffle their words. This can be corrected by "thinking" each word up to the front part of the mouth, where the tongue, palate and teeth may enunciate it distinctly.

Several of Mitchell's proteges among the NBC page boys have overcome flaws in speech which would have prevented their becoming satisfactory announcers, simply by recognizing those weaknesses and working to overcome them.

And finally, Everett Mitchell stresses the fact that announcers need brains. "I'd rather have a boy with brains and a high school education than one with a college degree and a sluggish mind, to train in the field of announcing," he says.

The field of announcing is becoming more competitive every year. Alert, keen young announcers are coming up to the networks from smaller stations. "The only way to get ahead and keep ahead," Mitchell says, "is to study constantly. Listen to radio programs with a critical ear, read good books and good magazines of all kinds; keep up with world events by reading the newspapers and news magazines. This will help to keep the mind active and make words come more easily, if there are two things which an announcer needs they are an active mind and a ready command of words."

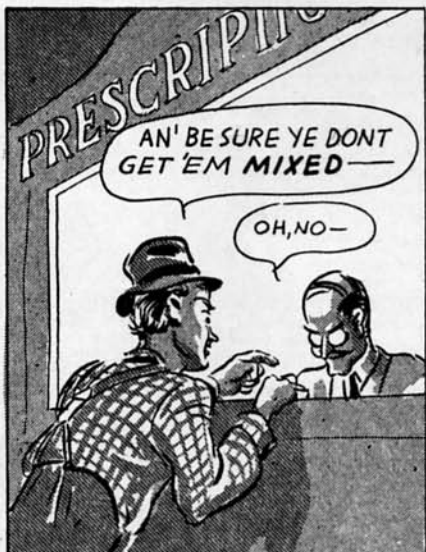
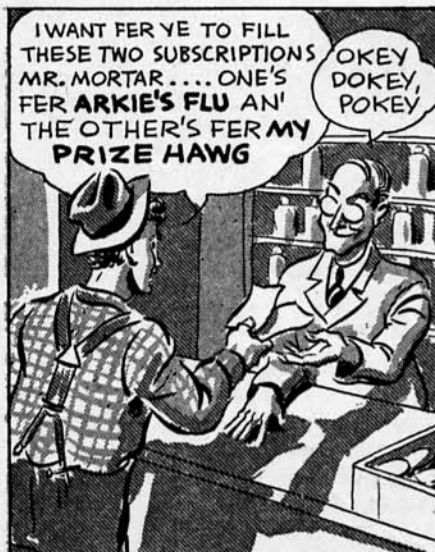
Mitchell's experience with announcers and listeners from all parts

of the country convinces him that the Middle West produces the best announcers, because Middle Western speech has less trace of accent than that of any other part of the country. The Southerner may have a mellowness to his drawl, and the Easterner may have sophistication in his broad A's and dropped R's, but the Middle Westerner is more likely to give full value to each syllable of a word and will be more easily understood over the country as a whole. And on a network, being understood everywhere is important.

Harold Safford, program director of WLS and once chief announcer of the station, emphasizes friendliness and sincerity as necessary characteristics of an announcer. In his opinion, careful diction is desirable, but is not so necessary as those human traits which will enable an announcer to "sell" himself to an audience made up of common, everyday folks.

Announcing is essentially a young man's game. There are a few announcers who have been in the game as long as 15 years. Some of the "free lance" announcers, who are good enough to have commercial sponsors demanding their talents, are able to make handsome salaries from announcing alone. Announcing on NBC, Columbia, or Mutual networks either as a free lance or staff announcer represents probably the pinnacle of achievement in the announcing field, and it is toward that goal that many announcers on independent stations are working. In the network announcing staffs themselves, most of the announcers have their goals established at some point outside the announcing field; perhaps as advertising men, program directors, or as owners and managers of smaller stations.

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