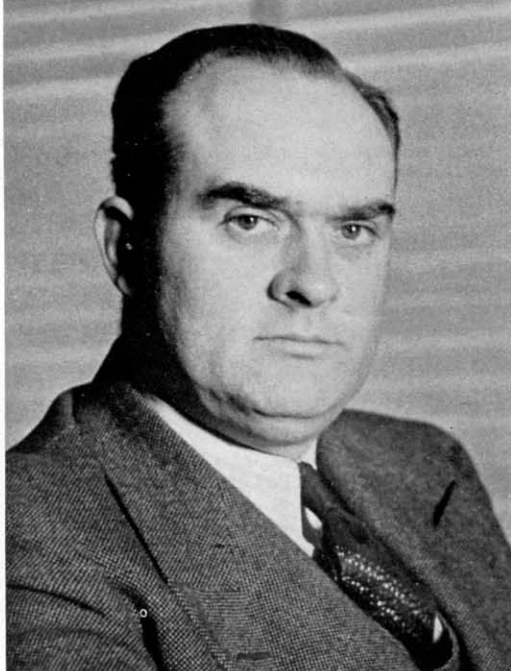




Ward and F. C. Sowell,
General Manager, confer.



J. Truman Ward



Work moves fast but smoothly
across Ward's desk.

"The Public Is the Broadcaster's Governor," Says Truman Ward, WLAC

By WILL WHITMORE

A giant plane glides gracefully to a landing at Nashville Municipal Airport. As the first passenger alights a man with a microphone walks up to him. In a moment an interview with the passenger is being broadcast over Station WLAC, Nashville, Tennessee.

Tim Sanders, Production Manager for the station, is the interviewer. Out to the airport he goes three times each week to interview passengers flying from Coast to Coast on American Airlines crack transcontinental planes. Tim never knows whom he will interview. He just takes a chance, but one thing he is sure of—the people he interviews will make interesting "copy," for they are of every type. They represent slices of life from all corners of the world.

The day I saw him conduct his broadcast, the first person out of the plane was Randolph Scott, movie star. The second was an Atlanta business man, and the third a California housewife. Famous people, unknown people, politicians, movie stars, the private pilot of a maharajah, a French cotton broker on a tour of the South, a world-renowned banker, a polo star—all step out of the plane into the range of Tim's microphone and, what is more important, into the homes of WLAC's listeners. They bring news of the whole wide world, fresh viewpoints, more understanding, a wider life horizon to people who have to live and work in one place.

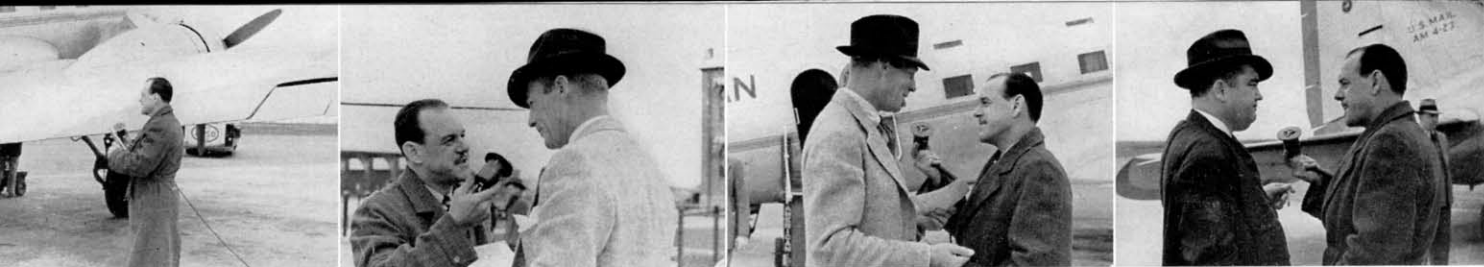
That is the sort of program WLAC strives to get and does. It is the type of program

every energetic, modern radio station is getting. It is one picture of what radio is doing for the public. Radio has accepted the responsibility of presenting, picturing, and interpreting life in all its amazing facets to the American public. WLAC is doing a particularly good job.

Here's another WLAC program, a sharp contrast to the one just related, but just as interesting, and every bit as fascinating in its revelation of human behavior. Once each week F. C. Sowell takes a microphone into the State Penitentiary and interviews a prisoner whose life is circumscribed by gray walls rather than the limitless horizon afforded an air traveler. This program has become extremely popular, not because of any morbid curiosity on the part of the public, but because of its sociological purpose of revealing the causes of crime, and its inevitable futility.

Sowell, formerly a newspaperman, entered radio in Detroit with station WMBC. He became connected with WLAC in 1929 serving first on the sales staff, then as announcer, later as production manager, and today holds the position of vice president and general manager. In addition to his duties as an official of the company, he continues to do some microphone work.

WLAC, a five kilowatt station, makes its primary appeal to the Nashville territory, and effective
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Tim Sanders Interviews Transcontinental Air Passengers—A WLAC Feature

Tim Sanders, WLAC Production Manager, waits for the passengers to alight. Ah, the first man off is a movie star, Randolph Scott. "Won't you say a few words, Randolph?" Scott gives a good interview, and next comes an Atlanta business man. Sanders never fails to get the interview, and he meets the planes three times a week, rain or shine.

Public Is Broadcaster's Governor, Says Ward

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tively uses such programs as just described to give local color, interest and balance to other programs fed to it by Columbia. Six times a week Sanders conducts a "Man on the Street" broadcast from a downtown street corner. It is a particularly popular program, and Sanders has acquired an amazing fund of random facts. He should. He spends two hours nightly in research work compiling questions and answers to pop to Nashville's secretaries, bankers, and laborers as they pass before his microphone.

Early risers who like friendly philosophy interspersed with transcribed music swear by Charles S. Roberts and his "Favorites of the Air," which he gives them from 7:15 to 8:25 six times a week. A WLAC statistician has figured that his fan mail would cover a goodly portion of Nashville's streets. Broadcast from the municipal traffic court is another popular feature, and you can be sure that there is a WLAC microphone present at most civic enterprises which may be of interest to the public.

There are 23 men and women in the WLAC organization. They are a hard hitting, hard working, fast moving crew. They tell you with pride that they do more work per man than people in any other station in the country. For instance, there's Edwin S. Glease, merchandise-publicity director, who knows each of the 90 druggists in the city by his first name, and can call on every one of them in three days in the interest of a sponsor's product. He doubles in brass by going on the air several times a day with newscasts.

Then there is Herman Grizzard who last year was rated by a national sponsor of baseball broadcasts as one of the five top baseball announcers in the country. Herman has been associated with the station since 1926, first as entertainer, charming the audience with his fine tenor voice. For a short period he worked in the bookkeeping department, but he soon returned to the microphone winning acclaim as the station's ace sports announcer.

The WLAC studios are located about two miles from downtown Nashville in an old Southern residence. It is a friendly, informal, energetic atmosphere in which this broadcasting crew operates.

No one is hampered by the red tape which so often clutters and impedes the operations of larger organizations. "If you want to do something, if you have an idea for a new program, you simply take it to the Boss and get a quick decision," they tell you.

Perhaps this accounts for the small turnover at WLAC. Most of the personnel has been with the station for years. Each has contributed to the success of the station and each is proud of his part. When you talk to these men, you often hear them mention the Boss. He is J. Truman Ward, owner and President of WLAC, Inc.

Radio has grown so fast it has almost hoisted itself by its own bootstraps. Developing from nothing to a leading industry in a few years, it has carried men along with it; made them big, important. It has also attracted men who would have grown important and influential in any industry. Ward is distinctly of the latter type.

After graduating from David Lipscomb school and with one year at Vanderbilt, Ward became a life insurance agent for the Nashville Life and Casualty



F. C. Sowell, Vice-President, and General Manager, WLAC.



Edwin S. Glease, merchandise-publicity director, and Helen Whitmore discuss promotion plans for a sponsor.

Insurance Company in 1921. Promotions came fast. Before the end of the first year he was made manager of a district office. After six months he was put in charge of sales promotion in the field, covering 13 states and the District of Columbia. In 1924 he was brought back to the home office and made assistant secretary of the company working in the Industrial Division. Two years later he became a vice president in charge of the Ordinary Life Department.

By 1926 radio had boomed ahead and was ringing up sales for many firms. The company bought a half interest in a little 100 watt local station, and before the end of the year installed a new 1,000 watt transmitter. Ward was placed in charge of all radio activities. Power was increased again in 1928, the new transmitter being a Western Electric 5 KW.

By 1934 Ward had seen radio grow to amazing proportions. He realized the opportunities it offered, and so, forsaking the insurance business, bought the station, taking over the ownership and full operation on January 1, 1935. That he had become an influence in broadcasting was shown by the fact that the National Association of Broadcasters made him its president for 1934 and 1935.

It is a refreshing experience to talk to him. He is a business man and a realist. He is as aware and conscious of the "public interest" clause in his license as any broadcaster, yet he says: "Let's not kid ourselves. I am in business to make money and so is every other commercial broadcaster. That does not mean, however, that any of us disregards the public interest."

"It happens that by serving ourselves best we also serve our listeners best. We must strive constantly to develop interesting, worthwhile programs to hold our listeners, and as long as we are successful in doing this stations will be successful financially. Sponsors have come to realize this rather elementary fact of broadcasting and the very evident improvement in commercial programs is a direct result."

"One of the easiest things in the world to do is to tune out a station, and the public will do

just that to any station or any program which does not fulfill the requirements of 'public interest.' This check that the public has over broadcasting is the industry's greatest governor. As long as it operates, no one should have much fear of the control of broadcasting passing into other hands."

"It is this check of public approval or disapproval which has accounted for the vast improvement in programs and station personnel. The men who did not have the vision to give the public what it wanted and needed have passed out of the picture. Today most announcers are college graduates, and the entire personnels of broadcasting stations are of the same calibre that you find in any industry."

Ward, a successful business man, a successful broadcaster, and a keen student of the industry, sees no menacing clouds on radio's horizon. Through the natural business law of the survival of the fittest those men who had no place in broadcasting have dropped out, and the industry is in the hands of men who have the vision, ability, resources and courage to continue the rapid development of broadcasting in the "public interest."

Although he looks upon television and facsimile broadcasting as tremendous future factors in the business, he sees no threat in them. "They will never replace sound broadcasting," he says. And Ward is backing his optimistic view of broadcasting by a large expansion program for WLAC. Early in 1938 he is taking over an entire floor of a large downtown office building for new studios. An application is now on file for a 50 KW license, and tests are under way for a new transmitter location.

Radio's Proving Grounds

(Continued from Page 6)

may transmit the same amount of power as that of 1927 but, like today's car, for that same amount of output power an enormously decreased amount of input energy is required. The 1937 transmitter has advanced in outward appearance as much as this year's streamlined car has advanced over its predecessors. And in its interior, as in the modern car, is incorporated every improvement that research engineers have developed in the past ten years.

To the proving grounds of the automobile manufacturer, with its trials and tests under all possible conditions, is attributed much of the efficiency of the modern car. The Laboratories, too, has its proving grounds—Whippany. Here must be tested every radio development of Bell Telephone Laboratories. Here must every sample of equipment prove its worth. Every engineer in the radio industry knows that after the words, "Developed by Bell Telephone Laboratories," there follows the unwritten assurance, "Tested and approved at Whippany." Whippany, the proving grounds of radio!