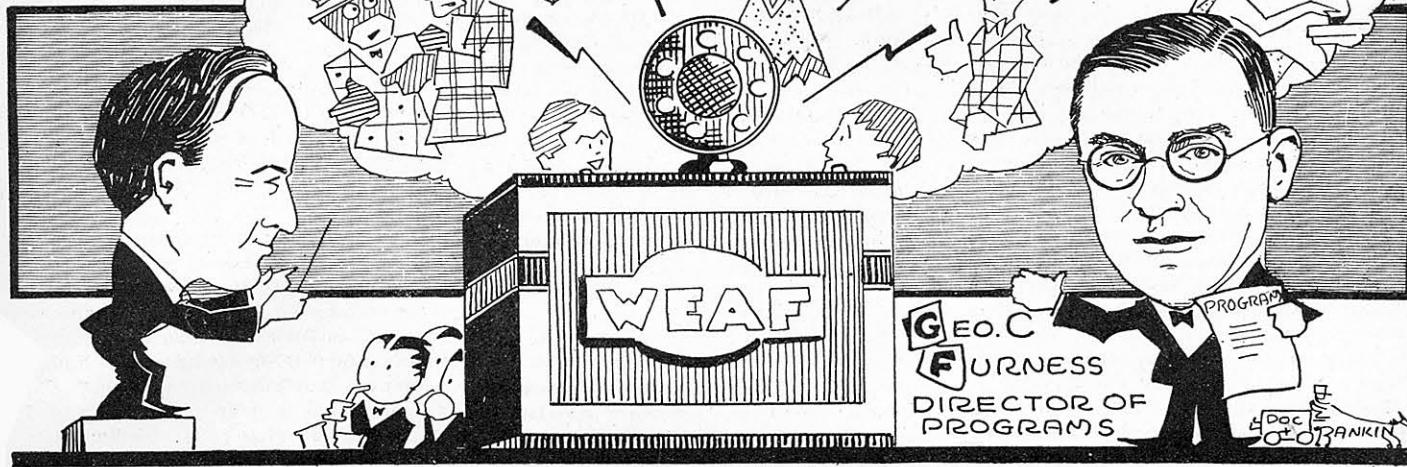


EVEREADY HOUR

NATHAN SHILKRET
MUSICAL
DIRECTOR



By Julia V. Shawell

RADIO entertainers have come and gone. Waves of popularity have raised artists and features to celebrity, and receded again. There have been many ups and downs in an industry yet so young. Whole organized periods have disappeared and new modes of entertainment have followed them. But the oldest commercial broadcaster on the air is still holding its place, and is sold more than ever on the value of radio as a medium of exploiting public favor.

Of all the toll-time periods now sent out on the ether, the Eveready Hour is pioneer. Back in December of 1923—and that is a long way back in broadcast annals—the National Carbon Company first engaged the facilities of WEAF for its Eveready period and, since that time, the public has been confident in turning, with the assurance of a worthy entertainment, to whatever this organization has offered on its program.

There is no place where American broadcast stations are received, no matter how remote, where the Eveready Hour is not known as one of the finest of all air features. It revealed an early high standard of performance in its infancy, and has maintained that standard ever since. It has changed its form of program, it has taken advantage of new possibilities in holding its hearers and gaining further attention but, in more ways than one, the Evereadytes have been leaders of broadcasting ideas.

That this hour has been commercially a successful one for the National Carbon Company, in building up its battery business, is only part of the story. At least, it emphasizes what one company has been able to do with a consistent policy of air exploitation, backed by an even more systematic campaign of following up its radio programs with the printed word.

INTRODUCING A NEW IDEA

The "continuity" idea was first tried out by Eveready, and some of the finest pro-

grams ever broadcast may be credited to this hour. In every new season its executives have carefully worked out plans for entertainment. They have sought novelty, promoted new ideas and at the same time carefully avoided any repetition that would reach the tiresome stage.

Since the inaugural program on December 4, 1923, G. C. Furness has been Eveready's air pilot. As manager of the radio division of the National Carbon Company, he has been directly and finally responsible for every weekly feature that has gone out. Paul Stacey, then director of the entertainment, evolved the plan for writing a continuity plot around musical broadcasts; just how generally this method has been adapted may be realized by tuning in on any hour now. Last year, Mr. Stacey took up other work and Douglas Coulter has been arranging the Eveready presentations since that time.

It was also Eveready which first sent out a radio entertainer to make personal appearances. Their ambassador was Wendell Hall, one of the most popular of the early artists on this hour, who went out on a regular barnstorming tour of the country in the fall of 1924; but more of that later.

Nathaniel Shilkret first gained a radio following through his orchestral direction in these programs and the Eveready Revellers now have an international reputation. Some of the names best known in other fields which have been recruited for various Eveready hours include: Eddie Cantor, John Drew, Ignaz Friedman, Julia Marlowe, Lionel Atwill, George Palmer Putnam, D. W. Griffith, Beatrice Herford, George Gershwin, Francis Wilson, Van and Schenck, Belle Baker, Laurette Taylor, Richard Dix, Elsie Janis, the Flonzaley String Quartette, Ernest Hutcheson, Weber and Fields, "Bugs" Baer, Pablo Casals and a host of others.

From little incidents in the busy lives of individuals, important events develop; and the Eveready Hour, while it was bound to materialize in an organization with the foresight and wide scope to be found in that company, was hastened by a Sunday afternoon radio program sent out from Newark, N. J.

RADIO SELLS ITSELF

On a hot-summer Sunday afternoon in 1923, Mr. Furness tuned his crude little set to WJZ's program from the old Newark station. He heard Edgar White Burrill broadcasting a dramatic presentation based on Ida Tarbell's "He Knew Lincoln." Mr. Furness was what his family called a "radio nut" even in those days, but this particular program held him spellbound, and he pondered on how much influence this sort of thing could have on countless people who might be made to listen in. He then conceived the idea of his own company's radio activities and, on every Lincoln's Birthday since, the Eveready Hour has been built around Mr. Burrill's offering of that same selection.

The month of December, that same year, found the Eveready period, at irregular intervals on the air, devoted to a minstrel show, to poems by Edwin Markham, or to a sketch, "The Governor's Lady," with Emma Dunn. Throughout the early part of 1924 the company was expanding its business, while the Eveready entertainers kept their places before the ever-growing radio public. But there was no definite time for them. Occasionally they went on the air three times a week. Sometimes they appeared only once a week. But even through this irregular stretch, they presented imposing programs offered by Cissie Loftus, May Irwin, Yap's Hawaiian Ensemble, Ernest Thompson Seton, etc. Then, in September of that year, arrangements were made to engage an hour a week on

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WEAF with a consistent, comprehensive schedule mapped out.

How much their broadcast activities have grown since then may be realized by a comparison of the first year's radio costs, which totalled \$3,850, although the original appropriation had been \$500, while this year's appropriation which is \$400,000. Then there was but one station and a small listening public; now there are thirty-one stations and uncounted thousands tuned in.

It is true that from the start the National Carbon Company was fundamentally interested in selling batteries, and its success in that respect is contemporary business history.

With this commercial purpose of exploiting its own product in a legitimate manner, the Eveready makers wanted their radio activities to reflect that imaginative quality which, they believe, marks the successful business man or company. The Eveready Hour has been their expression of this quality, of an imaginative and mysterious character which distinguishes radio. Its purpose has been to provide the most enjoyable entertainment to the greatest number of listeners. The policy of the backers of the Eveready Hour has been: "That it may always be entertainment of the highest type, irrespective of the key or mood in which it happens to be given." So that all classes and types of listeners might be pleased, and realizing that it is an impossibility to please all the audience all the time, Eveready has presented diversified programs, has experimented in various fields and, because of the thoroughness and care with which these experimentations were made, they have many, many times been taken as a criterion by other broadcasters.