

# WNAD, the Voice of Soonerland

1010 Kilocycles — 1000 Watts

By J. BRUCE WILEY, '35

**F**OURTEEN years ago, in the basement of a house at 426 West Eu-  
faula in Norman, WNAD was born.

In reality the station was then W5XW, and was owned by M. L. Prescott. It continued as a ten watt station until in 1923, when the school of electrical engineering bought it from Prescott and increased its power to fifty, then to five hundred watts. At this time the name was changed by the Federal Radio commission to WNAD. No one seems to know exactly why.

The school of electrical engineering was the sole support of WNAD for many years, there being no funds allowed by the University for that specific purpose. For that reason the station was necessarily small, although since it was built by students in the school the cost was only about one-tenth as much as the same size station would have cost a commercial organization.

The first studio worthy of the name was actually the studio of Professor C. F. Giard, head of the department of piano in the college of fine arts. Both lectures and music were broadcast from this studio until in 1926 when a studio was constructed in the Engineering Laboratory building. When this second studio was completed it was one of the most modern in the country. The walls and ceiling were draped with a heavy velvet, cut and fitted by members of the home economics faculty. For several weeks this \$350 studio was the talk of the campus and of Norman. When the present studio was built in the

Student Union building at a cost of \$4,500, it excited only the mildest comment and rated three or four inches in the local papers—even though it was and still is one of the most modern and efficient studios in the entire United States. And the transmitting equipment itself has grown. A most like little Topsy. Something added here, or something changed there continuously. The students who have worked on the equipment should be given a great big hand for their efforts in making ten dollars worth of equipment do the work of fifty dollars worth. Until very recently those in high places were very wary of this new fangled contraption called radio. Money was doled out rather slowly and it looked more than once as though the "Voice of Soonerland" would be stilled. Only about five years ago an offer was made, and very nearly accepted, to do away with WNAD and do all the University's broadcasting by remote control from outside Norman.

And then came the new deal for WNAD.

It was taken out of the now old-fashioned studio in the Engineering Laboratory and given its new studios. Its transmitter was revamped. New type tubes were added, the circuits were revised, more floor space was given to the use of the radio station. And a 1000 watt license was applied for and not four months ago it was granted.

Along with the new deal in the material things of the station came a revision of

the type of programs offered the listener. For the first time drama was broadcast over WNAD by the WNAD Players, directed by Homer Heck. The celebrated band of the University of Oklahoma was given a chance to be heard outside of Norman. Lectures over the station were pepped up. Timing of programs was done to the second, a radical movement for educational stations. Many a faculty member talked the last few minutes of his overly long speech into a dead microphone while the original program went serenely along through other channels. This had the effect of securing more accurately timed musical programs as well as lectures. Can someone now suggest how to keep them from being too short?

The total weekly broadcasting time for WNAD has been lengthened six hours a week within the current school year. This gives afternoon time to the station and reaches an audience which would not be reached otherwise.

The station serves not only as a means of widening the field for education throughout the state, but gives the students in communications engineering a laboratory in which to put into practice their theory. The engineers are not the sole users of WNAD as a laboratory, for this year saw the first accredited course in radio technique given by the school of dramatic art. The students of this course are permitted to plan, direct and announce programs over the air. As time goes on, other uses will be made of the station. In fact, the program director, H. R. Heck, is always in a receptive mood for new ideas to try out over WNAD. Perhaps, that is why WNAD is known nationally as the premier university of the air.

In this group of engineers, left to right, are James Cowels, Ralph Wolverton, Mayo Parks, Harold Frye, George Taggart, Claude Kirkman, Lawrence Brock, Adrian Fuller and William McCullar.

