

Radio--A Heck of A Business

BY JANE COCKRELL, '47JOURN, CHICAGO
and

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Not too long ago—1942, to be exact—Homer R. Heck's office was located in the O.U. Union Tower, where he managed radio station WNAD. Today his plush office is high in Chicago's fabulous Merchandise Mart, where he recently was named manager of the Production Department for the Central Division of the National Broadcasting Company.

Between his arrival on the Norman campus in 1926 and his departure in 1942, Homer attended the University, acquired a family and was a chief factor in building WNAD into the world's leading educational station.

Born in Oklahoma City, Homer moved with his family to the oil fields when he was six years old. He attended high school at Kiefer, Oklahoma, where the principal—who was on a special leave of absence from his University position—was one Ted Beaird, '21ba. In addition to his duties as principal of the high school, Mr. Beaird also was debate and speech coach—and in that "back-yonder-quarter-of-a-century-ago" period was already doing a lot of Riding of the Sooner Range!

The field of oratory attracted Homer, who entered everything—debate, speech and oratory contests, high school plays and anything else that came his way. His great interest in the field, plus well-above-aver-

age ability, won him numerous awards.

In the spring of 1926 Homer moved to Norman, where Mr. Beaird already was opening trails in O.U. alumni circles. It was through Beaird that Homer received his first job on the campus. In that year, when Heck entered O.U. as an English major, WNAD was broadcasting all of five hours a week.

Two years later, in 1928, Heck's high school sweetheart—Mildred DeBaun—became Mrs. Heck, and she began taking a general course of study at the University. In 1932 Beverly, now a student at Evans-ton High School, entered the picture.

The year 1931 saw Heck well started on radio work, directing a series of WNAD dramatic shows and generally learning what makes radio run.

One side excursion took Heck away from the campus for approximately 18 months—that came in 1935, when Homer moved up to Oklahoma City to become state director of the Professional and Services Project for WPA. During his leave of absence for work on this project, he directed the establishment of statewide libraries where before there had been none, small museums and art galleries throughout the state, and symphony orchestras in Tulsa and Oklahoma City. An example of the museum work done under this project is the one now located in the basement of the law barn on O.U.'s central campus.

Manager of WNAD and assistant man-

ager of the Oklahoma Memorial Union were the titles Heck held when he returned to the campus in 1936. From 1936 until 1940, WNAD could be heard by listeners who happened to tune in during the five daily broadcast hours. Before long the Memorial Union Tower came into being, and in the winter of 1940 WNAD moved into it, broadcasting on a full daytime schedule.

Managing a radio station includes a great deal of administrative work, a fact which kept Heck from concentrating on production and direction. So in August 1942 he took his vacation to visit Chicago, where he left an application blank for an N.B.C. staff production job. He returned to Norman with no thought of landing the spot in Chicago.

"My mind went blank when that call came through from Chicago," Heck relates. "I was in the midst of a dress rehearsal of "WNAD Players" dramatic play. Someone told me there was a long distance call for me from Chicago, somehow I managed to answer the phone and they told me to "Come NOW"—the rest of the day I more or less floated! The Range Rider (my boss—Ted Beaird) had only a few hours before he left for active duty in the U.S. Army and there were added responsibilities for me to meet during his absence. But he soon wired from his army station in Florida, 'Get going—it is your opportunity of a lifetime!'"

A quick shift of scenery with Chicago the background, and we find Heck ending three months of training with a position as one of eleven staff production directors of N.B.C. shows. His first major show was "Vic and Sade" which he took over in January, 1943. This was a "from the script on" job, as is handled by staff production directors, with Homer casting, arranging for musical background, conducting rehearsals, regulating time and pace—and in general assuming responsibility for transforming a radio script into a radio program.

The Central Division of N.B.C., with headquarters in Chicago, roughly covers the area between the Mississippi and the Rockies. Anytime an N.B.C. radio show originates anywhere in this region, a staff production director from the Chicago headquarters must be present to cover that show, checking for conformance with policy and aiding in the production of the program. Heck's first job involved covering many shows in the division, but now most of his time is spent in Chicago.

As manager of the production department for the division, Heck has charge of all arrangements and studio scheduling and production of local shows. His staff services WMAQ studio-wise, and Heck is first as-



Hospitable Homer Heck "tells all" during a recent interview in his N.B.C. office in Chicago's Merchandise Mart. Listening on the left is Jane Anne Cockrell, '47ba in journalism, who is editor of the house organ at a naval ordnance plant in Chicago, while Pat Saunders, '46ba in journalism, takes notes on the right. Pat is assistant editor of *Min & Chem*, house organ of International Minerals and Chemical Corporation in Chicago. While in school Tri Delt Pat's activities included editorship of the *Oklahoma Daily* and assistant editorship of the *Covered Wagon*. Jane, who edited the *Covered Wagon* for two terms, was named to *Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges* and *Who's Who in O.U.*



A sequence in the production of a "World's Great Novels" show in 1948 occupies Homer Heck here. With him is N.B.C. Engineer Fred Shidel. The production director's responsibilities include making all arrangements for a radio show "from the script on," taking care of casting, music, rehearsals, time and pace and actual presentation of the program.

sistant to the program director of the powerful N.B.C. Chicago station.

Heck himself is production director of two current shows—Carson Pirie Scott's "The Hobby Horse Presents" and a sustaining dramatic show dealing with race relations, "Destination Freedom." His background for such work includes production of national shows ranging from "Authors' Playhouse" and "World's Great Novels" to "Hymns of All Churches" and Betty Crocker's cookery.

Back in the days when he was at O.U., Heck worked with and aided many Sooners who have made Big Names for themselves in radio and dramatic fields. Among them are Jack Swineford, '33-'38, A.B.C. announcer and star of the radio show "Sky King"; Muriel Monsell Bremner, '32fa, Sand Springs, now a top-notch free lance actress; Amzie Strickland, '40ba, New York free lancer; Gar Moore, '43, formerly an announcer, then star in Italian films, now under contract to Selznick studios; Irene Shaul Henry, '33fa, '36ed, star of the "I Remember Mama" production in Omaha; and numerous other established or up-and-coming dramatists.

His first crack at teaching—an O.U. course in 1934 on "Announcing in Drama"

—is being followed by a class he offers during the Northwestern University-N.B.C. Summer Radio Institute, when Heck teaches a short course in advanced production.

His daughter Beverly is making a splash as a prep school leader—she is interested in drama, and was selected to be student director of the all-school Evanston high production of "MacBeth."

When asked whether or not he is influencing Beverly toward or away from a career as a producer, Homer replies "It's hard to be neutral on that subject—that's the Heck of it!"

Lynn K. Lee Is Promoted

Lynn K. Lee, '25geol, formerly assistant manager of the Pure Oil Company, in Fort Worth, was recently promoted to the position of manager of exploration, and is now located at the company's headquarters in Chicago. He has succeeded Mr. Ira H. Cram in this post.

Lee received his degree in geology from the University of Oklahoma in 1925, and became connected with the Pure Oil Company in that same year in Tulsa. While at the University he was a member of the Alpha chapter of the Phi Psi Fraternity. In 1931 he was transferred to the Chicago office, and four years later became Division Geologist for the Michigan Division.

In 1937 Lynn shifted to the Illinois Division in the same capacity. He returned to his native state of Texas in 1940, as Division Geologist, and was later advanced to assistant manager of exploration of the Texas Producing Division, which position he held until his recent promotion.

Lee's memberships in the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, The American Institute of Mining & Metallurgy Engineers, and the Society of Exploration Geophysicists have always been active ones. He has served two terms as chairman of the publication committee for the A.A.P.G. and has been district representative to the business committee of that organization since 1945.

While born in Texas, Lynn's loyalty to Oklahoma is undisputed. Even under the severest tests at the annual gridiron classic at Dallas during the past many years his spirit and voice have always been firmly behind the "Big Red" team.

Civic Honor Awarded Fellers

"The Outstanding Young Man of 1948 in Oklahoma City!" That's James D. Fellers, '36ba, '36 Law, who was selected from a list of 22 candidates by a panel of nine judges on January 10. The contest is sponsored each year by the Junior Chamber of Commerce there.

Fellers has been a leader in Oklahoma City civic affairs for most of the past 12 years, and in the words of one of the judges, "was chosen because of his all-around record of civic activity in 1948."

A native of Oklahoma City, Fellers attended Classen and Central high schools, and then was graduated from Central High School in Tulsa. He attended Oklahoma City University for a year before transferring to O.U.

In 1939 he married the former Margaret Ellen Randerson, '36ba. They have three children, Kay Lynn, 8; Lou Ann, 6; and James, Jr., 5 months.

During World War II, Fellers served through eight European and Mediterranean theater campaigns as an airforce intelligence officer. He left the service in 1945 with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Since 1945 he has been a partner in the law firm of Suits and Fellers in Oklahoma City.



JAMES D. FELLERS, '36BA, '36LAW