
"Adding Picture to Sound"

Early Television in North Dakota

by Bill Snyder

I had served in the Pacific Theater during World War II, I had shot movie film in Africa, I had worked in Hollywood, but one of the most interesting periods of my life was the time I helped put a brand new television station on the air in Fargo, North Dakota. Looking back forty years, I realize now that I hadn't just taken a job when I started work at WDAY-AM Radio on June 1, 1952—it was an adventure into the unknown.

I had been working for Arch Oboler Productions in Hollywood in the late 1940s. We had spent eight months "on safari" in Africa and had shot some of the background film for the first three-dimensional feature movie ever made, Oboler's *Bwana Devil*. When we returned to the United States, I worked for Oboler's company in Hollywood until my mother asked me to come home to Fargo and help care for my terminally ill father. After my father's death in 1949, I needed active duty credit in order to keep my reserve commission in the Army Signal Corps, so I volunteered for a short tour during the Korean War.

When Oboler phoned and asked me to be his production assistant on *Bwana Devil*, I was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, with almost three months left to serve. "I've found the cameras for 3-D," said Arch, "and I'd like you with me. I'll guarantee you fifteen weeks of work. When are you getting out?"

"Twelve weeks," I said.

"I can't wait; we're starting in three," he said.

"I'd like to be there, Arch," I said. "After all, I talked you into shooting the film in 3-D." Oboler laughed and acknowledged the fact. "However," I continued, "I've taken a steady job with a radio station in Fargo. They're going into television, and I'll be the film and photo director. And it's permanent."

"Sorry to hear you can't, but if you can't, you can't," he said. And that conversation ended my Hollywood career.

In 1951, the management of WDAY, like all broadcasting station operators, could see the handwriting on the wall: television would soon sweep the country while radio would take a back seat. They had applied to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for a tele-



Publicity shot of William D. "Bill" Snyder taken in 1952 at the time of his employment as film and photo director at WDAY-TV. Although Snyder did little on-the-air work for radio and television, it was standard operating procedure for everyone who worked at WDAY to have their picture taken with a microphone. Courtesy of WDAY, Inc.

vision station license, but the FCC had "frozen" all TV applications while their staff worked out plans for an orderly issuance of the licenses. The applications were piling up fast in the Washington office, since the TV channels were up for grabs and would be a saleable item worth millions of dollars in the future. While they waited for approval, WDAY management began looking for someone to head their photography and film departments.

Because people with film, photo, and/or TV production experience were rare birds, television stations began hiring anyone they could find with any smattering of TV education at all. Julius Hetland, the director of engineering for WDAY, offered me the job as a combination film director, photo director, and part-time newsfilm cameraman just before I left for active army duty at Fort Hood. At that time I held a broadcast radio license, so Julius suggested that I start in June when my brief tour of duty was over and relieve his engineers for vacations. He anticipated that by fall they would have their TV permit to build.

About the same time I was offered the WDAY job, the FCC announced they would start with the largest city in the U. S. and issue licenses down the list by population. Fargo was number 114. That fact meant that Fargo had to wait until 113 larger markets were issued construction permits to build stations.

In those days AM radio was the only instant access to current news and weather information in the Red River Valley of the North. An FM station had been started in Fargo, but the reluctance of the audience to purchase sets for the new method of radio distribution caused the fledgling corporation to file bankruptcy shortly after it went on the air. Their 350-foot transmitting antenna tower and vacant transmitter building were located about two miles south of the city on Highway 81.

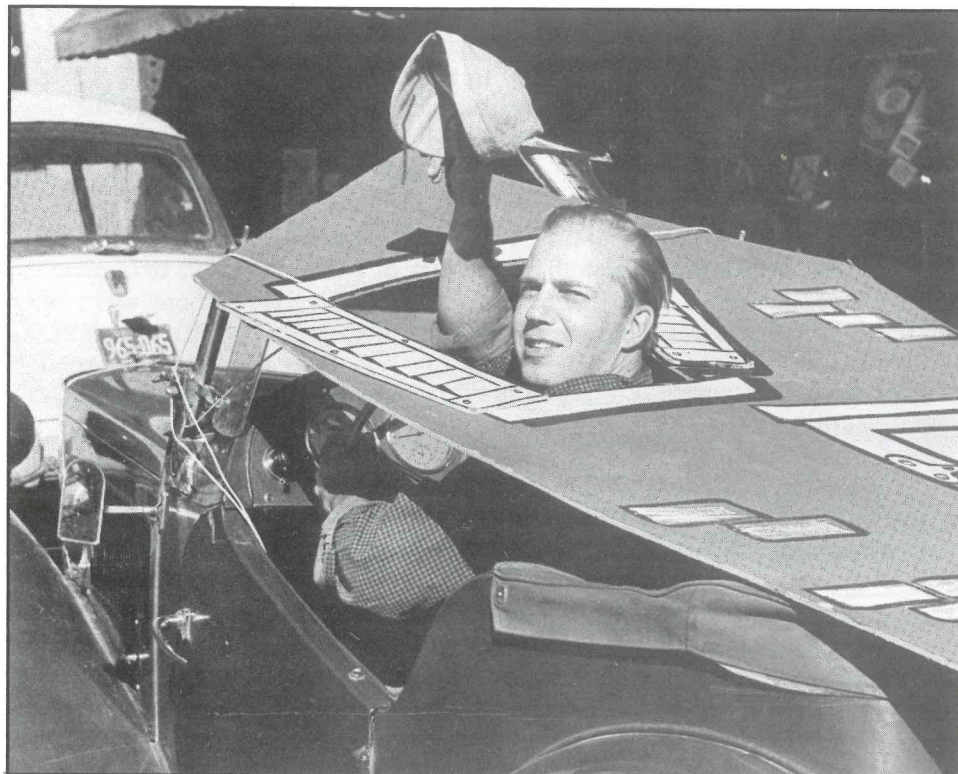
There were only three AM stations in Fargo and Moorhead: KVOX, a low-powered 250-watt station with the Mutual Network; KFGO, a 5,000-watt AM station with ABC; and 5,000-watt WDAY with NBC. The CBS network area outlet was KSJB, a 5,000-watt station in Jamestown, North Dakota.

Besides the news and weather, most valley homes also depended on AM radio for entertainment. Fifteen-minute soap operas were wall-to-wall programming



The front window of the WDAY Film Center at 303 Roberts Street in Fargo was painted with a caricature montage of singers Lee Stewart, Patty Clark, the Texas Ranger, and announcer Bill Moher. Those entertainers were all featured on WDAY Radio at the time. "You'll be seeing us soon!" was a warning to the public that television was coming to the Fargo-Moorhead area. The Film Center housed the television sales, continuity, film, and photography departments. All still photographs enlarged from a 16mm movie frame and used in this article are from the Newsfilm Collections in the State Archives and Historical Research Library.

WDAY-TV Art Director Norman Selberg hauls a piece of scenery on top of his MG sports car from the downtown film center shop to the transmitter/studio building south of town for a live show broadcast, 1953. Selberg designed and built all the scenery for WDAY-TV, and created the on-the-air artwork for the station. He drew all of the cartoons appearing in this article, featuring a character the staff called "the bottle man." Photo and cartoons courtesy of WDAY, Inc.



during the daytime hours, while big-name comedians like Jack Benny, Fred Allen, and Bob Hope drew audiences of thousands during the evenings.

Founded by Earl Reineke in 1922 in Fargo, WDAY Radio was the number one station. It had the highest audience ratings, and it featured a troupe of two dozen staff musicians and singers who produced live shows for broadcast. Two of the live shows were regularly broadcast from nearby local communities on a weekly basis. One was the "WDAY Barn Dance," a hillbilly-country western road show that played on the stage of the Fargo Theatre when not out on the road. Famous singer Peggy Lee received her start singing with the "Barn Dance" show. The other road company was the "Phillips 66 Talent Parade." The "Talent Parade" was an amateur show that picked talent from the local communities where it played. Both shows were popular throughout the broadcast area.

The WDAY weekday schedule featured the long-running "Co-op Shoppers," a fifteen-minute noon-hour daily strip. Sponsored by Farmers Union Central Exchange, the show featured a western band led by accordionist Don Wardwell and a girl singer, Linda Lou (Dorothy Fandrich), who charmed the country audience for many years. At that time the WDAY studios occupied most of the eighth floor of the Black Building in downtown Fargo. By air time each day, radio fans would crowd into Studio A and watch Linda Lou sing her locally famous "If you want to cooperate..." theme song.

The "Tello Test" hour, emceed by Ken Kennedy, was

a popular telephone quiz show broadcast each weekday morning. The big draw was the cash prize offered for the correct answer to quiz questions, but the show also featured the WDAY-staff musicians and singers. In 1952, the maestro of the group was Frank "Babe" Scott who went on to be featured on the Lawrence Welk network TV show for his piano artistry and arrangements. The studio band also played during the noon hour in what was called "Dinner Bell Time." Announcer Ernie Brevik rang the dinner bell and various singers were featured soloists. Sponsors practically fought for time in that program; it was very popular.

When I returned to Fargo after my army tour, Earl Reineke, WDAY's president, welcomed me with open arms. "Bill," Earl said, "as long as I own this station, you've got a job." I felt a little embarrassed as Earl hardly knew me from a load of wood, so I just smiled. He looked at me straight and said, "Dammit, I mean it." With a welcome like that, I felt quite wanted by the staff.

So, I began work on June 1, 1952, exactly one year to the day before we hit the TV airwaves on the most desirable Fargo channel in the low-band TV portion of the electromagnetic spectrum: channel six. Actually I was a television neophyte, but I had had four years experience as a free-lance industrial motion picture



cameraman, and, at that time, film was the backbone of local TV programming.

I spent the summer working in radio and in September attended a TV technician's school sponsored by RCA in Camden, New Jersey. It was fun, and I learned a lot of useful technical information. I remember one statement made by an instructor who said, "In television you have to get used to lousy audio." I soon found he was right.

WDAY was not alone in bidding for channel six in Fargo. John Boler, owner of KSJB Radio in Jamestown, had also applied. Boler's filing meant the FCC had to hold a hearing before it could grant one of the applicants the coveted license. Low-band channels were considered the most desirable from a technical point of view, so both applicants wanted channel six. No one filed for the less-desirable high-band channels. Boler had purchased the defunct FM-station antenna and transmitter building south of Fargo. Whether this would give him an edge in the hearing was questionable, but it gave the WDAY management a scare. Unbeknownst to me, Reineke bought the defunct FM-station tower and transmitter building from Boler. The cagey Mr. Boler then withdrew his application for the Fargo station and applied for the Valley City low-band channel (with studios in Fargo). The amount of the Fargo property transaction was not disclosed, but it was probably a hefty pile of money.

When I returned from the RCA training session in Camden, Hetland put me to work on the actual plans for the TV setup. WDAY had purchased land in downtown Fargo and hired the W.F. Kurke architectural firm to design a combination radio and TV studio building. I spent many hours at the drawing board, laying out ideas for a photo department, a film department, and the basic TV studio design. It was fun dreaming, and I thoroughly enjoyed the activity.

We still didn't have a construction permit when we purchased an Auricon Cine-Voice sound camera for the news department to use. It held two-and-three-quarters minutes of 16mm film and could record the soundtrack at the same time as the picture. To hone my skills, I shot 16mm black-and-white film of a few local news events, but most of the time the camera stayed in its case.

I was on another three-week active duty army tour at Fort Eustice, Virginia, when the construction permit was granted. When I returned home in January 1953, my first job was to measure the newly purchased transmitter building and plan what modifications had to be made to install the TV transmitting equipment. The antenna and supporting tower measured 451 feet high, adequate for basic metropolitan coverage, but really not high enough to cover the adjacent cities with a marketable signal. Management felt, however, that the need at that moment was to get on the air and start telecasting,

so the small tower was considered only a stopgap measure.¹

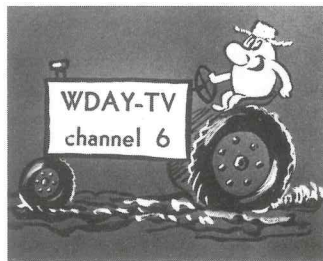
To telecast live pictures from the transmitter site, we erected a two-car garage for a "temporary" studio, with another single car garage attached to the two-car job as a prop storage place. It was a bizarre-looking arrangement, but it got us ready to go on the air. The garage building had a low ceiling, barely high enough to hang the heavy lighting equipment necessary to televise with image orthicon camera pickup tubes. The heat of the lights brought the studio temperature up quickly, and the installed room-sized air conditioner couldn't handle the load adequately. Besides that, the air conditioner couldn't be run during a broadcast because it was too noisy. The studio acoustics were poor but passable, so close microphone placement was necessary for all broadcasting.

In those days anyone with more than two weeks experience in show business was a candidate for a TV job so about as fast as the résumés arrived at the station, people were being hired for the TV staff. We also moved some of the radio staff over to television. For example, I hired Harry Jennings, a guitar player for the "Co-op Shoppers" radio program, as a photographer. Harry was a member of the Fargo Moorhead Camera Club and one of its leading picture makers. I put him in charge of the photo darkroom and hired a young high school student, Mike Lien, to assist Harry with developing and printing chores on weekends. Mike, an extremely talented photographer, later became the White House news photographer for the *New York Times*, but, unfortunately, he was killed in an auto accident early in his career.

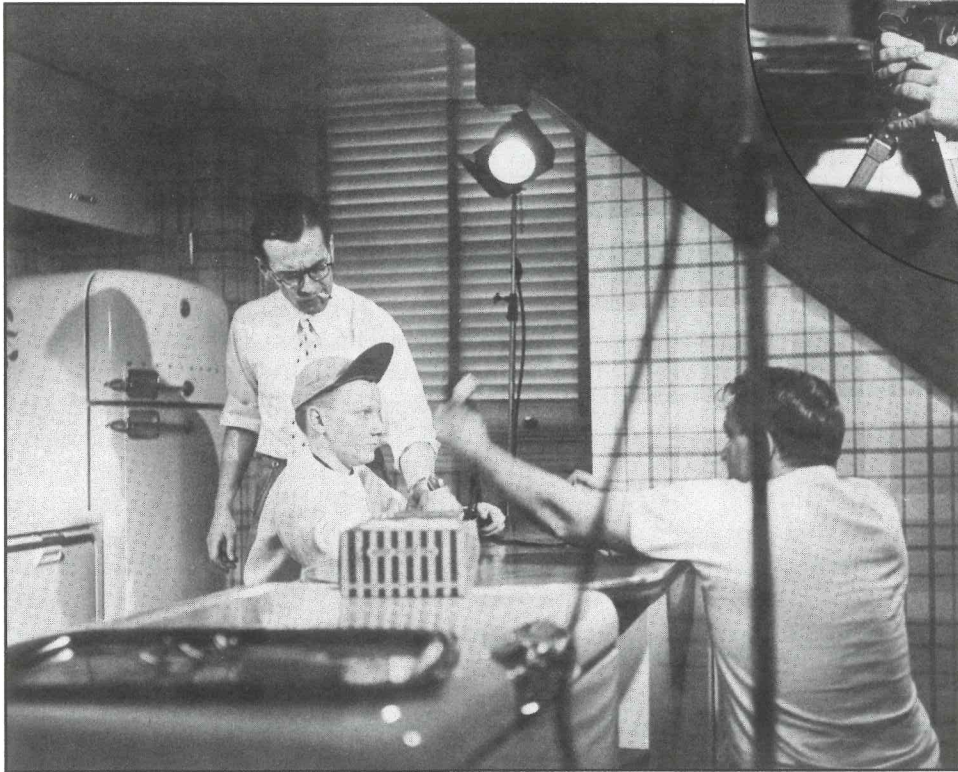
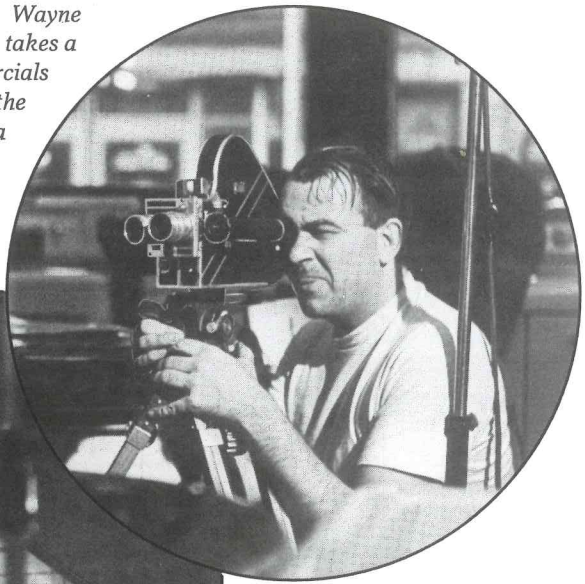
Engineering chief Hetland was busy wiring up the temporary studio and transmitter building with the help of Sumner Rasmussen, Bill Stadler, and a crew of radio technicians. TV schools were cranking out technicians as fast as they could, but jobs were plentiful so there was a scramble to hire competent employees. Frank Cook from the radio side and newcomer Ed Junkert were put in charge of the projection room.

Ed Conrad came to the station with real honest-to-God experience in TV broadcasting, so he was named production director. To assist him, management hired Jim Landis. Jim had hands-on TV-directing experience in Cincinnati, New York, and Portland. A TV director calls the shots to the cameramen and switches the program sources to the transmitter. Because of his experience, the station gave Jim the job of actually directing the first live show to be telecast during the opening night on the air.

With the transmitter installed and operating with test patterns only, TV fever was beginning to sweep over the valley. Every television set dealer was doing a fairly brisk business, but there were many consumers who



Director Ed Conrad adjusts the ice cream in front of the young model, Wayne Jennings, whose dad worked for WDAY, while photographer Bill Snyder takes a hurried light meter reading during the shooting of the first television commercials for Cass Clay Creamery of Fargo (bottom). Bill Snyder, in action during the shooting of the same commercial (top). Because WDAY did not have a studio, these commercials were photographed in Northern States Power Company's home economics demonstration department. This filming occurred in April 1953, nearly three months prior to going on the air. Courtesy of WDAY, Inc.



had the "wait-and-see" attitude. If the system proved to be good, then they would buy a set.

Tom Barnstuble, AKA Tom Barnes, the sales and general manager of the TV side of the operation, was a clever salesperson. One of his accomplishments was "selling" advertising on the video test pattern that we transmitted for a number of weeks prior to going on the air with programming. The test pattern was necessary for dealers and technicians to line up antennas and sets. There were no other stations in the area, although a number of area set owners put up tall towers, rotors, and beam antennas to "DX" (radio jargon for getting long-distance reception) Minneapolis and Winnipeg. Tom sold ads to RCA and other TV receiver manufacturers for all the time the test pattern was on air.

Because the two-car garage was so small and the aural and visual transmitters took up most of the room in the transmitter building, we rented an empty building in Fargo and dubbed it the "Film Center." It was located at 303 Roberts Street, handy to the Black Building where the bulk of the WDAY employees worked and to the Flame Bar, our local hangout. Our new combination

radio and television studio building (today housing Prairie Public Television in Fargo) was still on the architect's drawing board, so we set up the film center building as another stopgap measure. When the downtown studio building actually went into construction, a basement wall gave way in a rain storm and that brought a halt to the building until it could be corrected (and blame for the problem assigned).

The film center housed the photo lab, the program film-editing area, the sales office, a preview theater seating four people, and a makeshift sound stage for shooting film inserts. The art department, featuring artist Norman Selberg, was also in the building. Norm was a speedy sign painter, animator, and all-around genius, so his talents were in demand.

Jack Lester and his salesmen canvassed the town for sponsors. One of the first to sign up was the Cass Clay Creamery, and I made their first commercials on film. We borrowed the demonstration kitchen at Northern States Power Company's downtown office and shot movies of mothers and children happily eating ice cream and other dairy products. Norm Selberg and I

spent three days making an animated Cass Clay signature to be used on all the commercials. It featured a "bandwagon" made out of ice cream boxes, tubs, and covers. We fabricated, from ping-pong balls and pipe cleaners, a little man that we placed on top the bandwagon. Then we animated the bandwagon rolling into the scene with the little pipe cleaner man sitting on top waving a flag to the audience. It was done by shooting a frame, moving the little man and the bandwagon a bit, and then shooting the next picture frame. It was slow work. Right away the accounting department wondered if every TV spot was going to take so much time and cost so much. We assured them it wouldn't happen often. I also made a series of commercials for Crescent Jewelers of Fargo. Norm and I spent quite a bit of time getting tiny diamond rings to look like the Hope Diamond flashing in the spotlight when enlarged on the TV screen.

Little by little we got ready for the opening air date. At the transmitter studio, we hung drapes that could be pulled around the studio walls as backgrounds. Because it was black-and-white TV, we only used grey and black drapes, no colors. Norm painted sets made out of bed sheeting, cardboard, refrigerator boxes, and other junk. The accounting department had us scared, so we improvised. It was fun putting all the stuff together that would appear on the tube. As start-up day approached, we began rehearsals for the technical staff. We wanted everyone to feel reasonably secure about our television debut; after all, many were newcomers to TV like me.

On June 1, 1953, at 6:45 p.m., the fun began with real live programming at WDAY-TV. Due to a lack of available programs from the network, we originally planned to transmit video signals from 5:00 p.m. until midnight daily, but on the first night we scheduled our grand inaugural program to avoid conflict with the supper hour. We wanted a big audience for the beginning of the TV era.

The whole technical crew, musical talent, and announcers were all on tap when we finally hit the air. I had put the first fifteen-minute program on film because management brass wanted to sit at home and watch themselves.

When the Western Union clock hit the mark, we rolled the first film to crank through the Eastman

projectors and the RCA film chain. It featured WDAY President Earl Reineke who said that all the members of the staff looked forward to television as a "great challenge which all of us at WDAY-TV are determined to meet." Others on the inaugural film included governors, senators, congressmen, and mayors.² Senator Milton Young commented on WDAY's radio pioneering and added, "TV will be particularly nice on the long winter nights on the farm when the roads are blocked."

Tom Barnes made the final speech of the 16mm presentation. He pledged "improvement from day to day, week to week and month to month." The only thing he forgot was year to year. Tom, known for his simplification of any complex fact, ended his address with something like this: "WDAY radio has been serving the Red River Valley of the North since 1922. We were the first radio station in the area, and we're proud of it. Now, friends, television means we are merely adding picture to sound. . ."

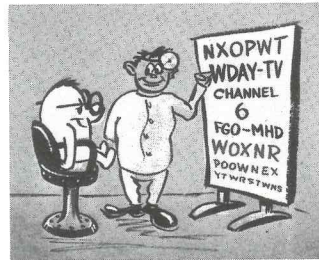
Little did Tom realize what a big task we had undertaken, for the picture part was a thousand times more complex than the sound portion. I think Barnes found out a few days later that we had created a monster. The bookkeeping department and Reineke went into shock

when the costs of "adding picture to sound" were calculated.

When the first film show finished its historic run, the live cameras located in the two-car garage began to transmit the RCA-sponsored "First Nighter Re-

view." It was a musical variety show produced by Ken Kennedy, the WDAY program director, and directed by Jim Landis. I stood by, biting my fingernails and hoping the slides and Telops, the two methods we had of putting still pictures on the air, would all be put in "right side up," since making both the slides and the Telops for presentation was my responsibility.³

For years, WDAY radio had featured live musicians and singers as regular program sources. Frank Scott, a very talented member of the WDAY staff and director of music for the corporation, directed the studio orchestra and did most of the arranging. With lots of live talent to draw from, it was only natural that all the artists that



1. According to a report in the *Fargo Forum*, June 2, 1953, p. 7, a 50-60 mile radius from the antenna was considered to be the best reception zone. The night of the first broadcast, communities up to 150 miles away from Fargo reported good, clear reception.

2. *Ibid.* Present were Senators Milton Young of North Dakota, Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, and Karl Mundt of South Dakota; Governors Norman Brunsdale of North Dakota and C. Elmer Anderson of Minnesota, and Fargo Mayor Murray A. Baldwin.

3. "Telop" was a proprietary word coined for a machine used to

project small still pictures, four-by-five-inches, into the television image orthicon tube chain in a television station. It was based on the fact that by putting enough light on a still photo, it was possible to project a dim image on a screen through a lens. A popular toy in the 1920s was a "postcard projector" that sold for less than ten dollars. The only problem with the cheap toy was that the projected image was reversed on the screen. This caused all writing to read backwards. The more sophisticated and pricey models had a front-surfaced mirror in the lens system to invert the image.



Thomas Barnstuble, generally known as "Tom Barnes," the general manager of WDAY-TV, talking to the camera in the inaugural film presentation on June 1, 1953. The actual clip of Barnes saying, "After all, friends, we're merely adding picture to sound," was destroyed in a fire which gutted the Film Center in 1954. The short piece of film had been taken out of the inaugural film for use in the "WDAY Jolly Reel," a burlesque movie of station personnel and operations, shown at the annual Christmas party. The "Jolly Reel" was being updated when the blaze occurred, and the entire film melted on the editing bench. Enlarged from a 16mm movie frame.

had been heard on "D-A-Y" radio for many years would be a welcome sight on television. So Kennedy scheduled a show that featured the entire stable of talent.

Vocalists Lee Stewart, Ginny Gordon, Patty Clark, Linda Lou, and the Texas Ranger all made appearances on the first show. Pianist Pat Kelly, accordionist Don Wardwell, and the husband-and-wife team of Hank and Thelma Holland, who were country western singers, also had spots on the program.

Wally Lindell, a hunting partner of mine and staff reporter for the *Fargo Forum*, wrote a review of the opening show. Lindell reported that since he didn't have a TV set, he watched the show in the lounge of the VFW club and developed a sort of "cash register" system of rating the performers. The more the cash register rang, the less interest the patrons were taking in the television screen. By this method, Hank and Thelma emerged as the top performers. They won in a dead silence except for laughter when the camera swung to Hank's foot tapping out the rhythm of a song called "Rubber Dollie."⁴

Lindell found fault with several minor things about our first broadcast. For example, in describing Tom Barnes's opening remarks, he made note of the fact that

his "lips lagged behind the sound track." He also took a couple of verbal whacks at the black-and-white rendition of the live studio pictures. He wrote, "Shadows had most of the studio performers looking as if they needed a shave, and there was an uncommon amount of white teeth flashing from shaded faces, but veterans of the medium say this a common trouble early in the game."⁵ According to the paper, Lindell stayed in the VFW for the entire evening. I've always wondered if he saw the final Telop picture that Norm had painted. It showed a cartoon character wearing a nightshirt and cap, carrying a candle, and climbing the stairs to bed.

As the master of ceremonies for the "First Nighter" show, Ken Kennedy introduced the talent and did most of the commercials. The cramped two-car garage studio soon heated up and everyone began to sweat, but the adrenaline was flowing and the musical numbers sounded great. When time came for the first commercial announcement, Kennedy merely stood in front of the camera, pulled the script out of his pocket, and began to read from it like he had done during his many years on radio. There were no cutaways, no product pictures, just a single shot of Ken reading from the paper. I don't think it occurred to him that television, unlike radio, was a visual medium.

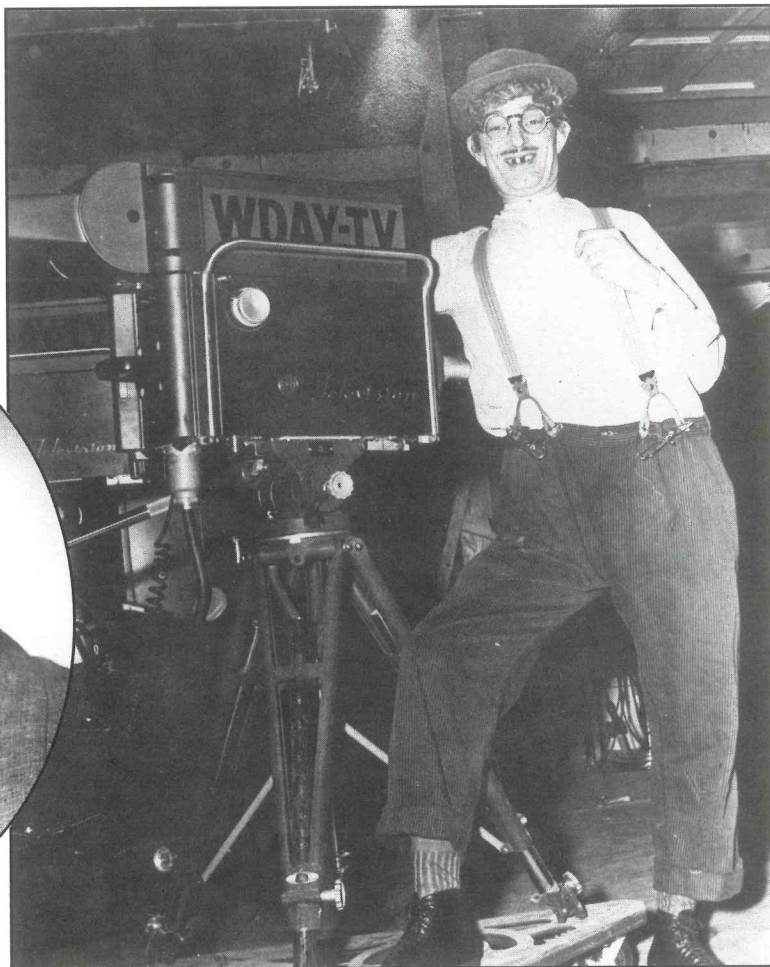


Hank and Thelma Holland, entertainers on WDAY Radio, appeared on the inaugural TV show. Courtesy of WDAY, Inc.

4. *Fargo Forum*, June 2, 1953, p. 7.

5. *Ibid.*

Program director for WDAY radio and television, Ken Sydness, known professionally as Ken Kennedy, had an alter ego in this character, Ole Anderson. Ken loved to perform as Ole in the WDAY Barn Dance road show during radio days and in some of the live shows produced in the early days of WDAY television. This picture was taken in 1954 in the two-car garage studio used for the first few years of the station. The overhead door can be seen to the right of Ken's head. A studio shot of Ken Kennedy (inset). Courtesy of WDAY, Inc.



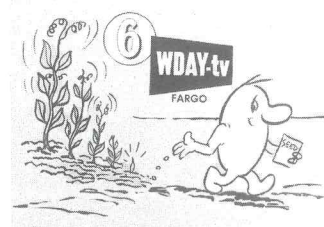
With two cameras covering the scene, and the tiny studio restricting everyone's movement, Kennedy decided to take a short cut when he had to cross to the other side of the room while the musicians were playing on camera. Instead of walking in back of the cameras, Ken crawled across the stage on his hands and knees. Camera director Landis, unable to look into the studio from the control room, blindly punched the camera switcher and caught Ken's crawling action with the on-the-air camera. There was much hollering and screaming in the control room, but the boo-boo was evident to all the viewers in the valley. Norm Selberg also managed to get caught while moving a piece of his cardboard scenery. He suddenly discovered he was on camera, grinned sheepishly into the lens, and pulled the flat he was moving in front of him.

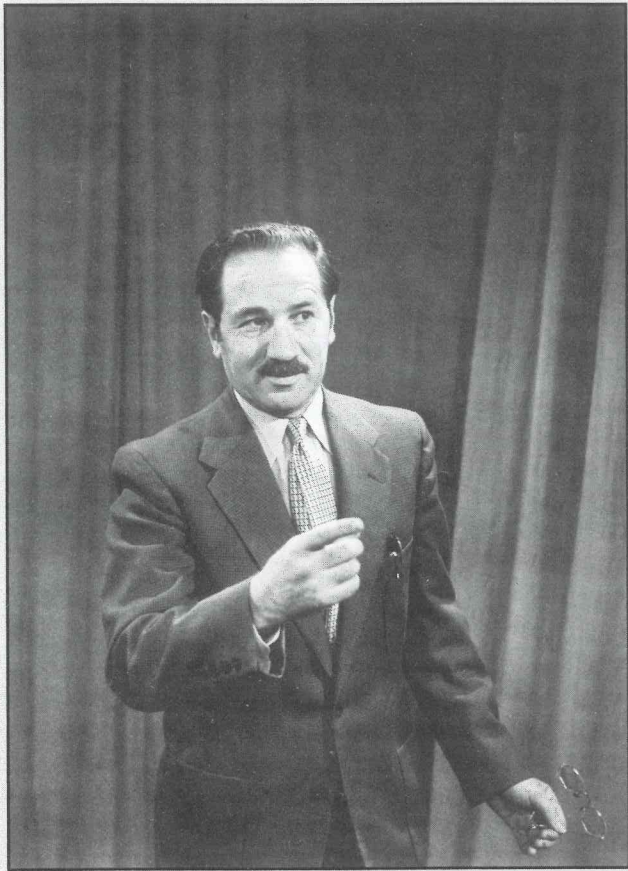
The Crescent Jewelers commercial ran through without a hitch, but the 8:00 p.m. commercial break became a nightmare for the video crew. The sponsor, Nels Vogel Music, with great faith in our ability to photograph anything, had hauled a large collection of trombones, trumpets, tubas, and French horns into the studio. There, Vogel's representative created an artistic display of shiny brass for the TV camera to capture. Because of the space limitation, this commercial had not been

rehearsed. It went on the air "cold," or perhaps it would be better to say "hot." Here's why. The image orthicon cameras of 1953 had one big problem; they reacted to specular highlights by "blooming." Blooming was jargon for the huge black ring that formed around each separate "hot" highlight reflection. The black ring would obliterate everything behind it. You can imagine the jillions of specular glints coming from twenty bright spotlights being reflected hundreds of times in all the bends and turns of the shiny brass instruments. The TV picture became a sea of black "blooms" punctuated by hundreds of white glints. The picture of band instruments was completely obliterated, and the control room was chaos again.

"Do something to the video," screamed the director in the control room. "Turn 'em down! God, do something quick!" Nothing changed. Even prayer didn't help!

The poor video operator twiddled the knobs on the video console, but the picture remained nothing but black blobs textured with specks of white. On the soundtrack, the booth an-





Weatherman Daniel Q. Posin, a physics professor at North Dakota Agricultural College, was known as "Dr. Dan, the Weather Man." On the third night of live telecast, Dr. Dan scared the daylights out of his audience with a tornado warning, a forecasting tool that the Weather Service had only been using for a year. Because citizens weren't used to hearing the warnings and nobody really knew the power of the boob tube, when Posin casually announced that the weather conditions were ripe for a tornado and warned everyone to take cover in the basement, and to provide food, water, and blankets for all inhabitants in the cellar, the WDAY switchboard lit up like a Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center. What really sent the audience into panic was when Dr. Dan, smiling into the camera, said, "Good night . . . and good luck!"

Wally Lindell, in his column in the Fargo Forum (June 7, 1953), noted:

The forecasts were merely warnings that isolated tornadoes could—not would—develop in parts of an area of about 10,000 or more square miles, but they brought scores of calls to the Weather Bureau, press and radio here. Frantic people wanted to know when "the tornado" was going to strike Fargo. Nervous women wept and strong men dragged bedding into the basement to spend the night underground.

When Roy Pederson, the WDAY promotion director, went home after the broadcast, he found his wife and daughter huddled in the basement waiting for the end of the world. The response to Posin's weather forecast proved to everyone that TV had great power to communicate. Courtesy of WDAY, Inc.

nouncer droned on about the great assortment of instruments available from the music store while the clock ticked on and the Nels Vogel commercial became the longest minute spot of "blooms" ever produced in television. It seemed to the technical staff that the commercial would never end.

After the live show had finished its time slot, the network film shows began. At that time WDAY had four networks: CBS, NBC, Dumont, and ABC. All of the shows were transmitted from film or from "kinescope" recordings, as films taken of a TV monitor picture tube were known.

The Air Express division of the Railway Express company did a land-office business, shipping films from the network offices to the studio. Every day the express delivery man would wheel in a big cart of film boxes, and every day he would wheel out a pile of returns. To make sure we had the right film, and to find the places for cues and commercial insertion, we would preview every inch of film that went on the air. Dorothy Volman handled the job with a great deal of enthusiasm.

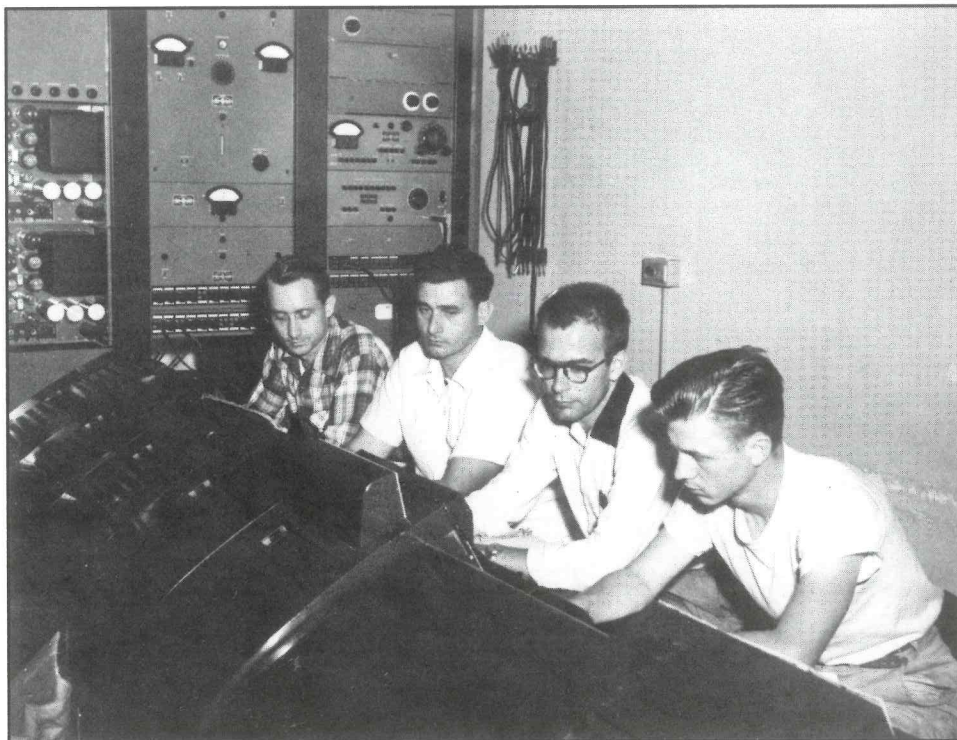
Dorothy once called me over to see a scene in a western picture we were going to program. It showed two cowboys riding up on a ridge and stopping to talk. One cowboy said to the other, "Where were you born?" The second cowboy answered, "I was born out of Wedlock," to which the first cowboy said, "Mighty pretty country up thar!" Dorothy must have been worried because she asked me, "Is it all right to telecast that dialogue?"

The first film show of the evening was "I Love Lucy," the classic series starring Lucille Ball and her husband Desi Arnez. We couldn't have had a better opening program. This was followed by a comedy show featuring Charlie Ruggles, a kid show with Mr. Wizard, a wrestling show starring Gorgeous George, and a smash finish with comedian Jack Benny.

At the very beginning of WDAY-TV broadcasting, the news, weather, and sports block at 10:00 p.m. started with the sports show instead of the news, like TV stations do today. This schedule arrangement was a decision of Tom Barnes, our bottom-line-minded sales manager. His reason was that for years, deLendrecie's Department Store, then a home-owned operation, sponsored a fifteen-minute news show at ten o'clock in the evening on the radio. Because it had the highest audience rating in the Red River Valley, it was a good moneymaker for the radio operation. "We don't want the TV news to compete with the radio news," said salesman Barnes, "so we'll start with the sports show."

Bill Weaver, who had been the former sports announcer on WDAY radio and had come back from California to take over the TV sports-announcing chores, complained that night baseball games were still in progress at ten o'clock, and the wire services scores would arrive after he had been on the air. Barnes

The first control room at WDAY-TV was operated by Gordon Nelson, audio, Bill Stadler, video, Ed Conrad, production director, and Jim Landis, show director (left to right). Courtesy of WDAY, Inc.



listened carefully, but held his ground.

So, at 10:00 p.m., the live cameras returned to the studio and the first of a long series of Bill Weaver sport shows began. Weaver's show, sponsored by Hamm's Beer, featured the baseball scores. In order to visually show the scores, Weaver had a pylon constructed that could be rotated to reveal the hits, runs, and errors of the major league teams. Newspaperman Wally Lindell had this comment on the scoreboard: "Weaver used a rotating scoreboard to present the baseball scores of the day, but actually the board served little purpose except to give Weaver a chance to stretch his legs and do something with his hands."⁶

The weather program was sandwiched between the sports and the news, and it featured a North Dakota Agriculture College (NDAC, renamed North Dakota State University) physics professor, Daniel Q. Posin, as the guest comic weatherman. Arm-waving and flamboyant, Posin presided over the chalkboard weather map where he expounded on the lows and highs that regulate the local weather. The local Fairmont Creamery was the weather sponsor on opening night. Everyone, including the sponsor, agreed Posin was a wacky character, but the audience liked his antics.

After the weather show, the local news program, sponsored by the area Ford Motor Company dealers, took to the screen. Jack Dunn, a pioneer at radio newscasting, was the anchorman. He read the news which was illustrated with still pictures and film clips

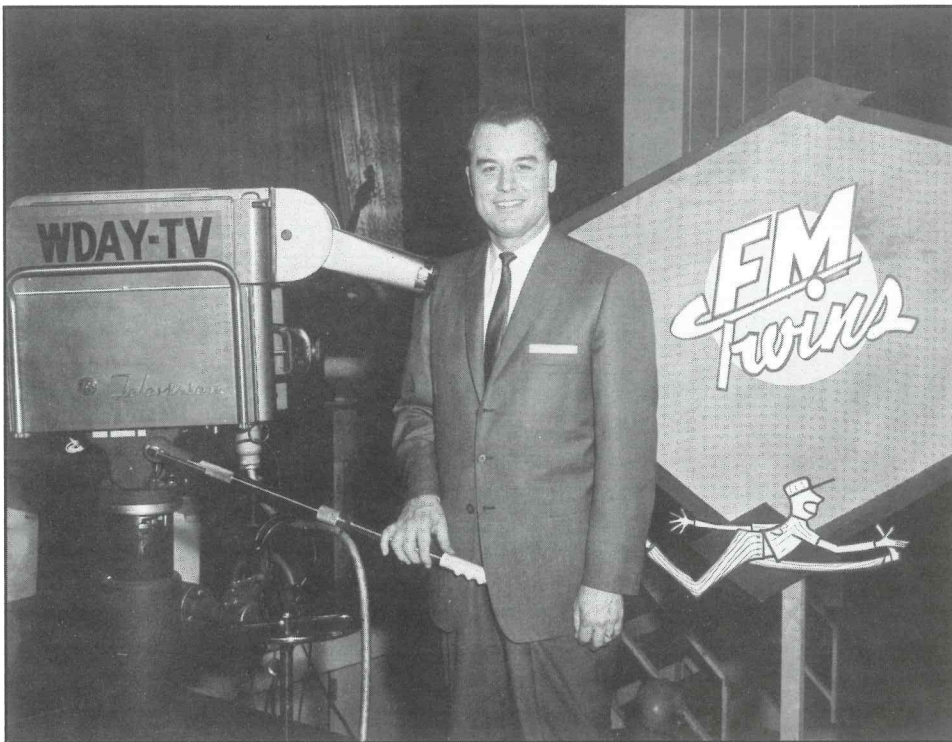
from a syndicated newsreel source. Dunn had been a long-time newsman on WDAY radio, so it was old home week for the audience who could finally see the face belonging to the voice they had been hearing for years. To picture the local news, we put Polaroid snapshots and Wirephotos up on easels and rephotographed them with a studio camera.

At 10:30 p.m., we telecast "Armchair Theater," the show place for old movies. The first film was *Foreign Correspondent* starring Joel McCrea. It was the best feature in a package of 150 old movies we had leased for telecast.

I am reasonably certain that every TV set in the area was tuned to the first broadcast. The *Fargo Forum* had issued a special Sunday insert telling of the grand opening of TV on Monday. Many set owners sponsored TV parties to show off TV to their non-owner friends, and the liquor dealers reported a record for Monday night sales. Many prospective set owners were actually standing in the downtown streets watching the TV window displays in the radio and furniture shops. The more enterprising TV merchants put loudspeakers on the street so the potential customers could hear the show as well as watch it.

I personally turned down three invitations from friends to view the evening's entertainment. For me, the real show had been behind the cameras in that two-car garage located out in the country along the Red River Valley of the North. WDAY-TV had succeeded in bringing Tom Barnes's words to life by "merely adding pictures to sound." The television adventure was under way, and the excitement was just beginning.

6. *Ibid.*



Sportscaster Bill Weaver, a native of Webster, North Dakota, poses with a WDAY-TV camera on this backstage view. Weaver had been a sports announcer at WDAY Radio, moved to California, and was brought back to start the sports department for the television station. Courtesy of WDAY, Inc.

All the WDAY-TV people were elated with the first night's program. It wasn't long, however, until everyone realized that we had created a monster with a voracious appetite. Although we were only on the air from 5:00 p.m. until about midnight, feeding the one-eyed monster would take work, a bunch of it!

New people were being hired almost daily. For the summer period, both college students and professors came aboard. Dr. Fred Walsh, head of the speech and drama department at NDAC, and Professor Ernest Anderson of NDAC's electrical engineering department were among the new hires. Walsh worked on writing and producing new home-talent shows, Anderson with the day-to-day engineering problems. The sales department, the commercial writing and producing group, and the engineering staff all were augmented with new talent. The monster had to be fed!

The radio news crew hunkered down to the task of adding picture to sound on a continuing basis. For them it was a new experience. Where radio news copy came in great gobs from the wire service Teletype machines, the local news had to be photographed and processed to tell the story best. And that chore added problems to the newsperson's daily routine.

The WDAY radio and television newsrooms were one and the same. Presided over by News Director Glenn Flint, who also played the trumpet in the staff radio band (he dropped his musical role abruptly at the start of TV), the regular staff was composed of full-timers Normand Schrader, Max Guttman, Blanche Wicks, plus announcer Bill Burn as a part-time weekender. The news office was a small three-room suite on the top floor

of the Black Building in downtown Fargo.

The world news came in twenty-four hours a day through two Teletype machines: one from the Associated Press and the other from the competing United Press International. A bank of loudspeakers filled the air with the chitchat on the police and fire department radio nets in both Fargo and nearby Moorhead, the sheriff's channels in both Cass and Clay counties, the highway patrol nets for North Dakota and Minnesota, and the ambulance and hospital emergency services. Now and then the chatter would be hard to decipher because all the channels would buzz with excitement. Radio was a great source of local news, so the newsman on duty was charged with monitoring all the radio channels and taking action when a "stem-winder" story would break. At that point the duty newsman would call for a photographer and/or another reporter to cover the story. The news director also did this type of work along with the staff. He covered stories, took pictures, and wrote a lot of the newscasts.

"Adding picture to sound," as General Manager Barnes had flippantly said on the initial TV broadcast, wasn't easy. The WDAY-TV film editing center was two blocks from the Black Building. To view or edit newsfilm, the TV newsroom people had to walk those two blocks at least twice a day. The first trip was to view the daily package of newsreel film which arrived by Air Express from Chicago and/or New York. At this point in the history of television there were no video recorders, no satellites, and no microwave networks, so WDAY subscribed to a daily newsfilm service which gave us

16mm-picture stories of national importance. Of course the news pictures were at least a day or more old, but it was the best anyone could do at the time.

At the film center, the TV newswriters would have the film department "put up" selected 16mm news clips from the network service. The editor would assemble the film stories on a reel ready for projection at the transmitter site. The writers would also oversee the editing of any local newfilm and then write voice-over copy to go with the pictures. Just before air time, the anchor person would rush to the film center, rehearse the news with projected pictures, and then drive like crazy the six miles to the transmitter building studio for the newscast show.

The film center building, located at 303 Roberts Street in Fargo, was the former home of Dakota Photoengraving Company, the people who made halftone cuts for use in the *Fargo Forum*. We took over their darkroom for our photo department. It was not state-of-the-art at the time, but it served as a temporary laboratory for film processing.

During our first three months of operation, the WDAY news department covered most of the local news scene by using Polaroid still pictures or photo enlargements made from four-by-five-inch black-and-white press camera negatives. The routine use of 16mm reversal motion picture film, the standard of the industry, was delayed because we had to wait for delivery of a continuous film processor from the Houston-Fearless Company, the

only supplier of such equipment.

During World War II, Houston-Fearless had manufactured 16mm V-Mail film processors for the armed services. The V-mail machine was easily converted for TV newfilm use, so the company was swamped with purchase orders from all the new TV stations. Delivery of our \$6,000 processor, about the size of a spinet piano, had been promised for late August. The company kept their promise, and we installed it just in time for the football season.

With a continuous film processor we would be able to develop newfilm at twenty feet per minute, slightly over half the rate it was projected in the TV system. By elevating the chemical solution temperatures it was possible to develop at thirty-six feet per minute, the projection rate.

A week after the TV inaugural broadcast, Glenn Flint phoned with my first national "newfilm" shooting assignment. I will always remember it as my introduction to the "big-time" television news coverage game. It was where I first learned the "push, shove, and elbow" method of getting the picture!

Flint sounded blue when he called. "I wish we had that movie processor," he moaned. "Can't we find some way to develop movie film?"

"Why?" I asked.

"President Eisenhower is flying to Minot on Thursday, and if there is any way we could do it, I'd like to get



Millar Dunkirk, known as Jack Dunn professionally, the veteran radio newscaster, takes his place in the austere television set during a rehearsal for the first news broadcast at WDAY-TV. Jack Gauvitte is operating the camera on the left and Bill Snyder is on the right. Courtesy of WDAY, Inc.

some movies of him tossing the first shovel full of dirt that will symbolically close the Garrison Dam. It'll be historical stuff."

"I'll think about it," I said, and then I had a flash.

John McDonough, a young movie buff friend, owned a small reel-and-trough 16mm movie film processor manufactured by the Superior Bulk Film Company. The primitive developing machine worked by winding a hundred feet of 16mm film on a wooden reel about three feet in diameter. The first part of the operation had to be in total darkness. The operator slowly turned the reel of undeveloped film which dipped into a shallow tank of photo developer. The image on the film reached full development in about six to eight minutes. At that point the chemicals in the tank were quickly changed to hypo in order to fix the developed image. Fixing the photo image took another five minutes and then the film was washed for about ten minutes in running water. The film was finally transferred to a drying reel and dried by turning that reel under infrared heat lamps.

Although it was possible to develop reversal film with a multi-bath process using McDonough's rack-and-tank method, simple negative developing was much faster. The negative process took about half an hour to complete one hundred feet, so it was not a real production machine. One or two rolls was about all we could safely accommodate for a rush newscast story.

"Maybe we can borrow McDonough's reel-and-tank developer," I offered. I explained its operation, al-

though I had no experience with the method.

"Let's try it. We need real movies." Flint was enthusiastic about the prospect.

I called McDonough and he agreed to loan his developer. We set it up in our dark room and tested the process. I shot a roll of film at Hector Airport showing one of the National Guard pilots flying a P-51 fighter. Harry Jennings, my assistant, and I stumbled around in total darkness threading the hundred feet of film onto the reel.

We cranked the reel around in the developer while watching the radium dial on a timer clock. At the end of the required time, we spilled most of the developer while hurrying to change to the hypo bath. After five minutes of fixing we turned on the lights. There was a perfect negative image of the fighter plane taxiing and taking off. When the film was dry, we headed for the projection room out at the TV transmitter building.

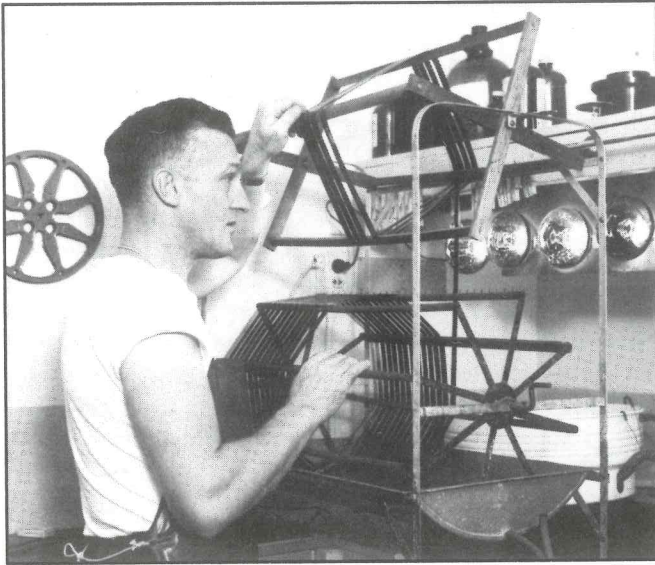
Frank Cook, the projectionist, threaded the film into the projector, snapped the positive/negative image switch to negative and we had the first homespun film running in the film chain. The picture quality was excellent; we were ready for President Ike and the closure of the Garrison Dam.

Flint was elated when he viewed the test. "Bill, you drive up to Minot Wednesday," he said. "Get pictures of Eisenhower's airport arrival about six in the evening. Then ship the film to Fargo."

"How'll we do that?"



Newsman Normand Schrader and Buddy Nulph, staff musician and part-time photographer, working with the Wire Photo machine on which pictures were received for the news. Courtesy of WDAY, Inc.



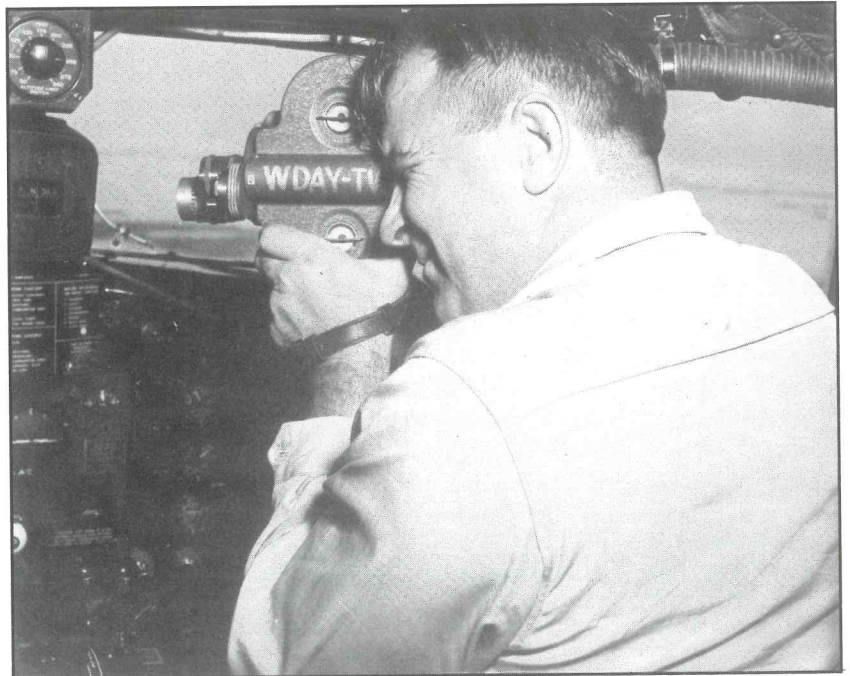
WDAY-TV staff photographer and part-time staff musician Harry Jennings transfers developed film to the drying rack on WDAY-TV's first film-developing machine, on loan to the television station for three months prior to the arrival of its continuous processing machine. Thousands of feet of movie film were processed as negatives in this primitive developer. Courtesy of WDAY, Inc.

"We'll figure something out. I'd like it for the ten o'clock show," said Flint.

I was worried. "I don't think there'll be enough time to develop movies, Glenn."

"Then shoot stills—four-by-fives. Jennings can slop them out fast. On Thursday morning I'll get Julius Hetland to fly me up to Riverdale in his little plane.

Inside the cockpit, Bill Snyder aims one of WDAY-TV's Bell and Howell 16mm cameras at the pilot of a North Dakota Air Guard's C-47 airplane as it inaugurates the newly lengthened runway at Fargo's Hector Airport. The plane, named the "Minnie H" for the Devils Lake steamship and now preserved at Bonanzaville in West Fargo, carried governors and other dignitaries throughout its career with the Fargo guard unit. Photo by Master Sergeant Everett Brust, courtesy of the author.



We'll meet you at the airstrip and together we'll cover the closing ceremony at the dam with real honest-to-God movies. Then Julius and I'll fly down to Bismarck where Ike is going to board his plane for South Dakota. I'll get pictures of that and then we'll fly home. Harry can develop the film while you're driving back to Fargo."

Early Wednesday morning, June 10, 1953, I headed my car for Minot and arrived about noon. My first task was to obtain "press" credentials to work inside the barriers reserved for newsmen. According to Flint, my necessary badges would be waiting for me at the Associated Press office in the *Minot Daily News* building.

I was unsure of myself because this was my maiden solo flight into TV news gathering. Flint had explained that all accredited news photographers could use the press truck which would travel immediately ahead of the president's convertible in the parade from the Minot airport to the downtown Clarence Parker Hotel. By riding in the truck, it would be possible to film Ike riding in the parade. The truck was also available for the trip to the airport, but it would be filled with both the local cameramen and the traveling news photographers on the return trip.

I debated where I should leave my automobile while I made the truck trip to the airport. I finally decided to park it on a side street by the hotel. I put a hastily made "NEWS CREW" sign on a turned-down sun visor with the hope that the Minot police might not give me an overtime parking ticket. I wasn't sure it would work, but after all, I was now a "professional" journalist, so I took a chance.

I grabbed the four-by-five Speed Graphic Press cam-



WDAY's Chief Engineer Julius Hetland and News Director Glenn Flint, planning their flight in Hetland's light aircraft to cover the closure ceremony of the Garrison Dam in 1953. Portable tape recorders and microphones were the radio newsman's tools; television added the motion picture and still camera to his pack. Courtesy of WDAY, Inc.

era and a gadget bag full of film holders and began walking to the *Minot Daily News* building. Just as I crossed the street near the hotel, a car full of *Fargo Forum* reporters pulled up beside me. I knew them all.

"Where in hell do you think you're going with that press camera?" asked Gifford Herron, the *Forum's* number one reporter/photographer of political events. He pointed to my Speed Graphic.

"*Daily News*," I answered.

"Jump in, we'll give you a ride." Herron was smiling as I accepted his offer.

"What are you going to photograph?" Cal Olson, the head photographer for the newspaper asked. He, too, was smiling.

"Ike's arrival. Same as you."

Reporter Lloyd Sveen asked, "When'll you air the pictures?"

"Oh, I don't really know," I lied. "Probably some Thursday."

I changed the subject. "Where's your wirephoto machine?"

"In the trunk," Cal said, pointing to the rear of the car.

We pulled up in front of the *News* office and the *Forum* group began to haul in the wirephoto machinery. By the number of cases they dragged in, it would seem they were loaded for bear as well as one president.

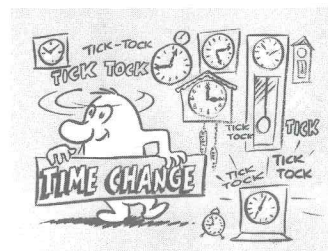
In the Associated Press office, I pinned on my credential badge and loafed around the area until the press truck departed for the airport about 5:30 p.m. By that time there were a number of local picture shooters

ready to document the arrival of President Eisenhower. The weekly newspapers from the small towns around Minot were well represented, and two girls from the Minot State College paper were also toting small cameras. It isn't often a president of the United States visits a town in North Dakota, so no dedicated newsperson would let it go by without snapping a few for the files.

At the airport, a crowd of about three hundred had gathered. The politicians, both state and local, were assembling the automobile caravan for the parade into town. The welcoming committee members were all spruced up for the big happening. It was a big-time news event, and I felt important to be included inside the barriers.

I kept looking at my watch—Ike's plane was late. The ten o'clock news was only three-and-half-hours away. A rumor circulated through the waiting group that the press plane carrying all the newsreel and White House press corps was approaching Minot. It would be followed by the president's ship. I felt a shot of adrenaline with the news.

The chartered press plane arrived, and as soon as the stairway was in place, a flock of thirty-five reporters and cameramen emerged and scurried for the roped-off news section. The local photographers seemed unprepared for the blitz by the traveling



troupe of newspeople. The newsreel types began to set up tripods and cameras. The pushing and shoving for position was under way.

Another rumor, and every eye began scanning the skies looking for Ike's plane. *Air Force One*, a C-54 nicknamed "The Columbine," had been outfitted with state-of-the-art electronics that could communicate with almost any place in the world in a matter of seconds.

The big, silver, four-engine prop bird touched down on the longest airport runway and taxied up to our roped-off area. The rolling stairway was moved up to the door of the president's aircraft. Ike stepped out of the cabin door and posed at the top of the stairway. He was dressed in a light tan suit and a beige hat. He smiled broadly and began to wave to the crowd while the Minot State Teachers College band played "Hail to the Chief."

I snapped my first picture of President Eisenhower. Then the still-smiling president descended the stairs and began to shake hands with the dignitaries. I snapped again, carefully conserving my sheet film supply. The adrenaline kept pumping. A few years earlier, I had shot pictures of President Harry Truman on the back of a train during a whistle stop in Fargo, but only for the fun

of it. Now I was working for money!

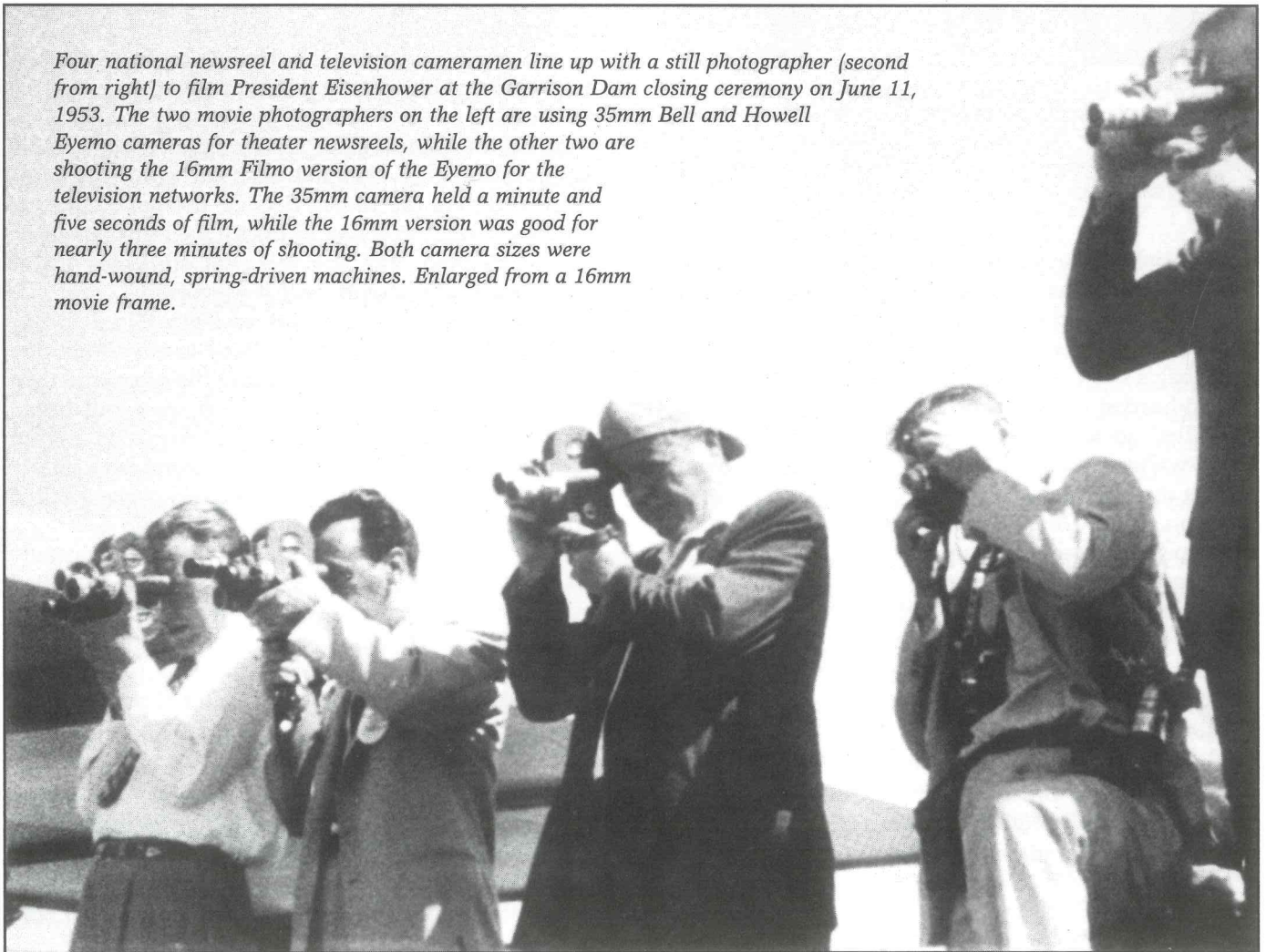
Governor Norman Brundsdale was the first to greet Ike. He then shepherded the president through the receiving line and into the top-down convertible. I chose my shots with care—I was stingy with my film.

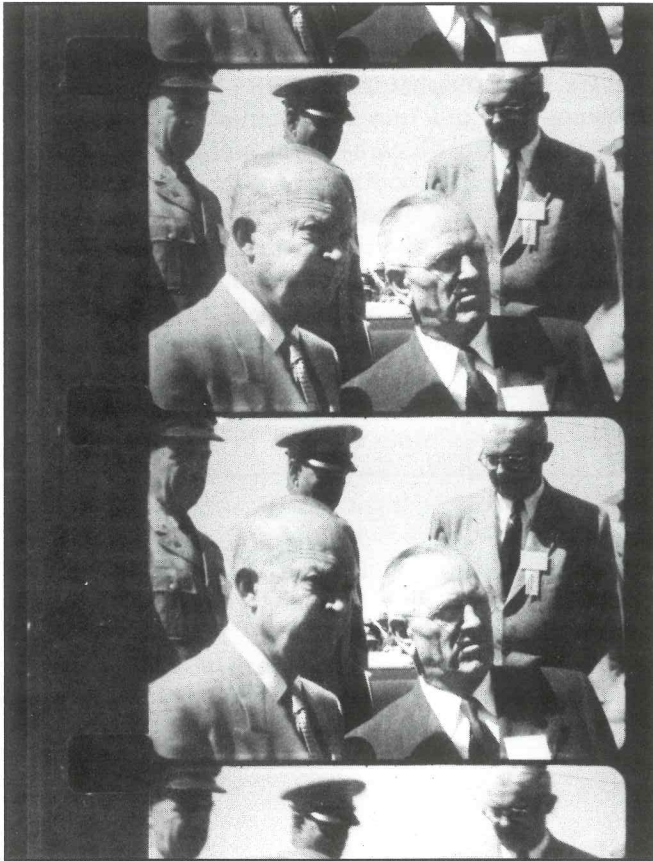
The caravan was about ready to move, so I dashed for the press truck and scrambled aboard. The old-timers from the networks and the theatrical newsreels (Paramount, News of the Day, Twentieth Century Fox, and Universal) were already in the truck box. One of them sensed my excitement and said casually, "Take it easy, sonny, there'll be a lot of good shots available."

The truck ride to the hotel was nonstop. Hundreds of citizens lined the route through town with everyone waving a greeting to the popular general from World War II. When the press truck stopped at the hotel, I jumped off, snapped a shot of Ike walking into the hotel, and pulled the changing slide on my last six-shot magazine type film holder. It jammed; I couldn't get it to work. Terror hit me. "God," I prayed, "I hope I haven't lost all six shots in this magazine!"

But time was fleeting, no minutes to waste by worrying. I ran around the corner to my automobile. No

Four national newsreel and television cameramen line up with a still photographer (second from right) to film President Eisenhower at the Garrison Dam closing ceremony on June 11, 1953. The two movie photographers on the left are using 35mm Bell and Howell Eyemo cameras for theater newsreels, while the other two are shooting the 16mm Filmo version of the Eyemo for the television networks. The 35mm camera held a minute and five seconds of film, while the 16mm version was good for nearly three minutes of shooting. Both camera sizes were hand-wound, spring-driven machines. Enlarged from a 16mm movie frame.





President Dwight Eisenhower and North Dakota Governor Norman Brunsdale pose for the camera at the Garrison Dam closing ceremony. This photograph is from footage shot by Bill Snyder on June 11, 1953. Enlarged from a 16mm movie frame.

parking ticket! The sign must have worked. I unfolded the light-proof changing bag, spread it out on the auto seat, and tried to clear the jam. No luck. I left the film magazine inside the light-proof bag, pulled my arms out of the bag's sleeves, folded it so no stray light could get in, and headed for the airport.

I pulled up to the airport ramp and found a Fargo friend waiting in a P-51 National Guard fighter plane. What a miracle! A fast airplane just about to leave for Fargo on an Air Guard routine training flight.

"Keep this bag wrapped up like it is. The film might get exposed to light if you don't," I said to the pilot as he climbed into the cockpit of the fighter. "And have a good training flight!" In about two minutes the engine was running and the plane was taxiing for takeoff.

Photographer Harry Jennings met the plane at Hector Field and, holding the changing bag and film in one hand, buzzed through traffic on his Vespa motor scooter to the Film Center. There he cleared the jam, developed the precious negatives, and enlarged all the pictures to eight-by-tens.

It was just after ten o'clock when Harry and his Vespa arrived at the country TV studio, and he slapped the pictures on an easel in front of a broadcast camera.

Thus, at 10:20 p.m., a little more than three hours after Ike's arrival in Minot, the first TV pictures of President Eisenhower in North Dakota were on the air in Fargo.

The following morning I drove to Riverdale where the closure ceremony for the half-finished Garrison Dam was to take place. Thousands of people were already gathering for the festivities. At the airstrip, I met Flint and Hetland on schedule. Glenn was smiling as he climbed out of the Swift low-wing plane. "The stills from last night were great! Perfect! 'Happy' Paulson called and wanted to know how we got them so quick." Flint was referring to the editor of the *Fargo Forum* who also was a minor stockholder in WDAY.

From the airport the three of us drove to the Garrison Dam site and set up the Auricon Cine-Voice sound camera in the photographers' area. We held a hasty conference and decided which shots would be essential to the story. We were unsure if the soundtrack would work as a negative, but we allocated one hundred feet for the sound camera and one hundred for silent coverage. If we cranked too much film, McDonough's processor would not be able to develop it by news time, so we planned each shot carefully.

Ike's motor caravan arrived and the closure ceremonies began. The thousands of visitors were gathered on the banks of the massive earthen structure to witness the historic event. It was a natural amphitheater for the audience.

Ike and the other dignitaries were seated on a temporary platform well shielded from the sun's rays. We skipped filming the Indian dances, the band concerts and most of the speeches, although we did snap a few stills. I cranked only the essential stuff, for I was guarding my film supply as if it were gold.

Air Force One had been ferried from Minot to Bismarck while the president motored to Riverdale. Ike tossed the first shovelful of dirt into the river, and then the big earth-moving machines took over and began closing the two-mile-long, earth-filled dam blocking the Missouri River. The \$305 million project was nearly complete, and many North Dakotans were excited about the water project's future.

When the ceremony concluded, we piled into my auto and hurried to the Riverdale airport. I handed the Bell and Howell hand camera with a few feet of unexposed film left in it to Glenn as he climbed into the aircraft. Julius started the engine, and the two took off for Bismarck. When the highway traffic thinned out, I started home in my car.

There were no freeways in 1953. U.S. Highway 10 from Bismarck to Fargo was a two-lane road filled with trucks going in both directions. Every little town was a slow to twenty-five miles per hour area. The many arterial stop signs added more minutes to the trip. Just going through Jamestown was a half-hour stop-and-go junket.

By 6:00 p.m. I had only made it to Tower City, forty miles from Fargo. I really wanted to see the our first film story on the air, so I looked for the local barroom. There I found a TV set hanging from the ceiling and WDAY-TV filling the screen with glorious black-and-white pictures. Bill Weaver, the sports announcer, was holding up a bottle of Hamm's beer and telling how good it tasted. I was hot and thirsty and was tempted to order one, but because I was driving, I asked for a soft drink instead. The anxiety of wondering if the newsfilm was usable was tearing at my insides. Time slowed down while I gulped my drink and watched the screen.

Theme music from the station record library ushered in the Standard Oil News program. The anchorman was Jack Dunn, and, naturally, his lead story was President Eisenhower's closing the Garrison Dam. When the film rolled, it was perfect. The pictures were clear and sharp and the grey scale was just what I had imagined it should be. I watched the show while sitting alongside half a dozen farmer-types who were shaking dice for beers.

"What do you think of television?" I asked my elbow neighbor.

"Don't have one yet," he answered, "but the wife wants one for the farm. She don't get in here too often to see it. I'd probably have one if they had the baseball games on it here."

"They'll get that in a couple years," I said. "Soon as they get the network piped in."

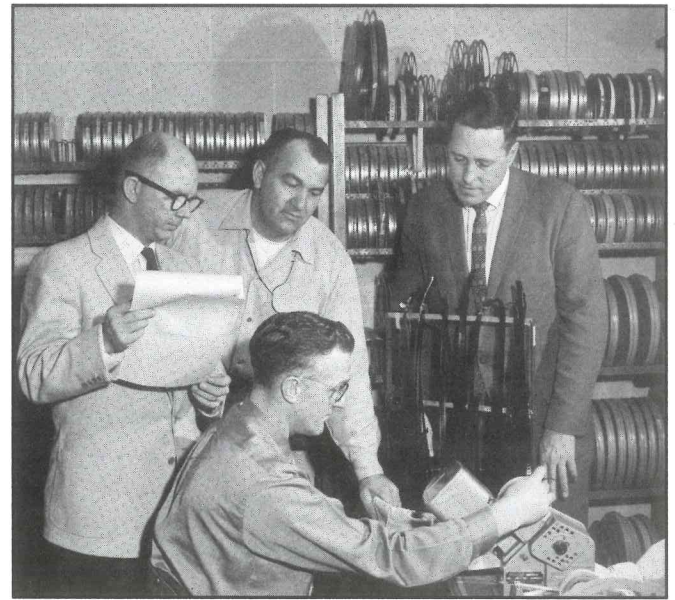
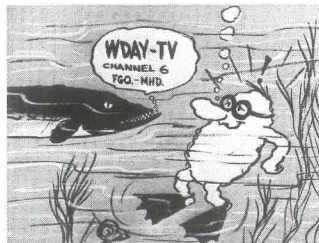
"Maybe we'll buy a set sooner than that," my neighbor said quietly. He didn't seem too enthused about anything.

"What do you think of television news?" I asked.

"Interesting, but it'll never take the place of the newspaper," he grunted and promptly ordered another Hamm's beer.

As the summer progressed, I was sent to cover local celebrations of all kinds and colors. Every town and village seemed to have either an ethnic gathering or a "diamond jubilee" that year. We wanted to show our presence in the surrounding communities, so I would take my 16mm camera, shoot pictures of the main celebration events, then race back to the studio, develop the film, cut it to the script and put it on the ten o'clock news. As a result, I learned to "cut the story in the camera." That way I didn't have to do much editing with a short deadline.

In 1953, many towns were celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the railroad branch arrival, hence the "diamond jubilee" term. Each celebration included a grand parade with nearly everyone in the area taking part. To cover such a festive occasion, I would arrive in the town prior to the parade, find the city officials, and roll a few feet of film of them for "openers." (Yes, that always "opened" the way,



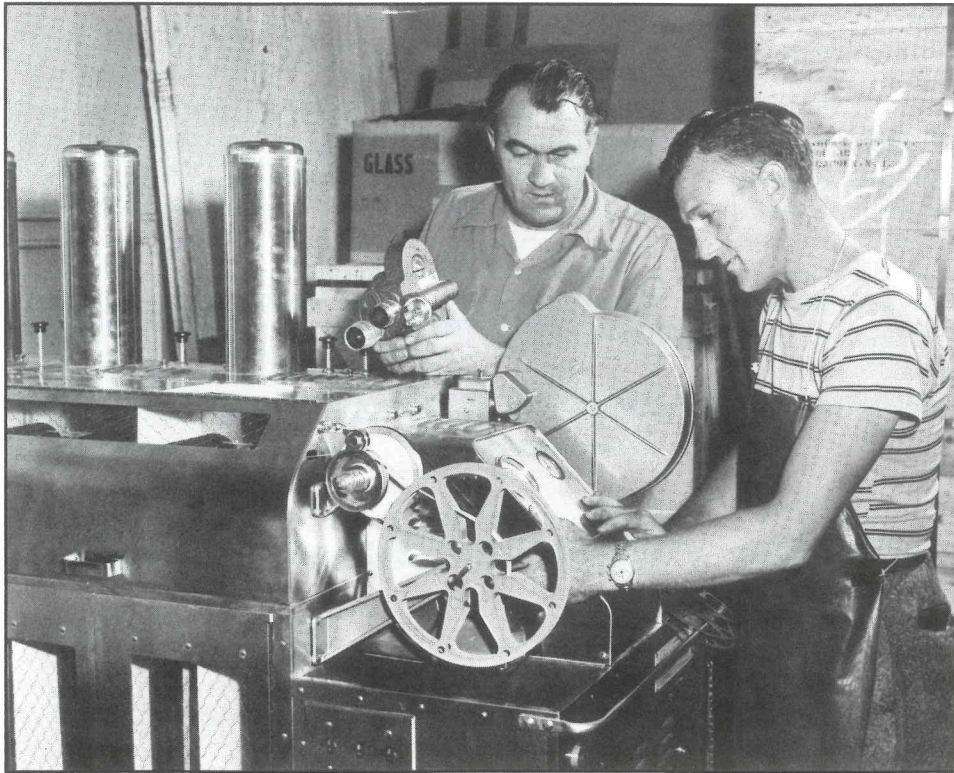
News Director Normand Schrader, Photo Director Bill Snyder, and the Eastman Kodak Motion Picture Division area representative watch photographer Harry Jennings edit a news clip in the Moviola, about 1956. In the background are the growing newsfilm archives, now in the State Archives and Historical Research Library. Courtesy of the author.

believe me!) Then I would station myself where I could photograph the parade and the parade watchers. People were in awe of the introduction of "television" into their lives, so much so that I once had the parade route reversed simply by asking the town's mayor. I wanted the sun on the best side for pictures.

Most of the parades featured home-built floats sponsored by the local merchants and/or clubs. The 4-H kids usually had a float featuring the Heart, Hand, Health, and Home theme. The local volunteer fire department men would parade all available apparatus and toss candy to the kids. The local farmers would show off their antique tractors and horsedrawn buggies. Most everyone would dress up in old-time clothing to add color to the scene. For me, the standard noon barbecue was an excellent opportunity to film close-ups of the local citizens enjoying themselves. These celebrations were warm and wonderful affairs, always worthy of a minute or two on the ten o'clock news.

I had Norm Selberg, the station artist, paint our call letters on our cameras. I wanted everyone to know who was taking the pictures. We were still building a TV audience from scratch, and we wanted to get as many TV sets sold in the area as possible. Since our rates for advertising were based on numbers, we tried everything we could to increase the audience rapidly.

There was one little trick I enjoyed at these community gatherings. I would always have someone page me



Bill Snyder and Harry Jennings finally getting the shiny stainless steel Houston-Fearless 16mm motion picture film processor ready for daily use. The undeveloped film entered the machine from the magazine on Harry's right and wound up on the reel ready for projection on the left. The shiny tubes on top were the replenisher bottles which added chemicals to the processing tanks during each run. Snyder is holding a Bell and Howell 16mm movie camera used for nonsound stories. Courtesy of WDAY, Inc.

by asking the committee to announce over the public address system: "Would the WDAY-TV news cameraman please report to the reviewing stand?" It worked; everyone knew we were there!

When we were done transmitting the newsfilm story on the air, we carefully filed the film for posterity. Before WDAY went on the air, I hired a pretty girl named Evelette Auman to be secretary of the film department. Her primary job was to catalog and file all newsfilm so we could find it later. News Director Glenn Flint and I spent quite a bit of time discussing the methods we were to use in storing and logging the newsfilm clips. So I had "Evie" start a card file which documented each story and then physically file the film in library cans.

Most small-market TV stations were simply tossing their newsfilm either in a wastebasket or an old cardboard box; very few cataloged the stories at all. Flint and I were in agreement that we were recording contemporary history and we didn't want to blow it. We also didn't want management to veto the idea if the company got into financial trouble like many beginning small-market TV broadcasters.

So, Evie cataloged from day one. The catalog and file system made it possible to dig out old film references to update news stories, make obituary film clips on the death of local personalities, and, in general, record history. As for good-looking Evie, I married her later that year, and then she promptly quit her job; however, the system was established and operating.

The summer rolled by with McDonough's hand-cranked film processor doing yeoman work. Harry Jennings became really proficient at cranking it at top speed. Right on schedule, and just before the first football game of the season, our Houston-Fearless film processor arrived at the Roberts Street film center. The sales department, based on the delivery estimate date, had sold a half-hour film show featuring the North Dakota Agricultural College Bison's game films. The program was scheduled for Sunday night broadcast, so the continuous processor was a requisite.

The processor was hooked to the electricity, water, and sewage systems and stood ready for chemicals. I had ordered most of the chemicals from Eastman Kodak with the exception of acid called for in the bleach formula; I purchased that from a local supplier. Now we were to switch from negative processing to reversal so the camera film was a projection positive and could be viewed in a projector. The developing process required seven chemical baths or washes, and it also needed a reexposure to a small light in the middle. With the machine we could continually develop film at twenty feet per minute for hours; no longer would we be limited to one or two hundred feet of film for a story.

We had to scratch mix the chemicals for the processor in a big stainless steel vat because there were no premixed solutions on the market at that point. The first developer, for example, required seven-and-a-half gallons of solution, plus a special drip replenishment mix that was continually added as the machine ran.

We had the solutions all mixed by the time the

processor was hooked up, so we dumped them in and ran a test roll. It came out a mess! The pictures were useless. Instead of black and white, the pictures were a graying combination of negative, positive, and nothing!

"What in hell is the matter?" we asked each other. It was obvious that we had the wrong chemicals in the machine. Which ones were wrong was the question. Did we get them in the wrong tanks? The film traveled from tank to tank with air squeegees blowing the solution carry-over chemicals back. We drained the whole machine and carefully refilled every tank with double-checked materials.

Again it came out a mess. None of us had ever done reversal developing before, so we were stumped. The first football game date was rapidly approaching, and we had to get the thing working quickly.

I decided to start over and mix another whole new batch of chemicals, so I asked Harry and Mike Lien, his assistant, to do just that. "Let me see the formulas," I said. I was studying the instruction booklet from Eastman Kodak when Mike was about to pour nearly glacial sulfuric acid into the mixing vat. When I saw the lettering on the crate from which he had lifted the acid bottle, I jumped off my chair, "What the hell did they give us for sulfuric acid? There's our trouble." We had been given a weak solution of hydrochloric acid instead of the more potent chemical.

I called the local supplier, a drug company. The salesman said defensively, "Sulfuric acid is awful powerful stuff, I thought you'd better have a weak hydrochloric solution for cleaning."

"F-f-for cleaning?" I sputtered into the phone. "The formula for the photo bleach requires straight sulfuric acid, not some damn cleaning compound."

"Sorry," he said quietly, "I thought it was for cleaning something, so that's what I sent you." Needless to say, we switched suppliers.

Mixing with strong sulfuric acid fixed our problem. The first production motion pictures developed in the new continuous processor, other than tests, were from the season-opener NDAC football game. We were in the 16mm newsfilm business from then on.

The motion picture assignments came thick and fast. Harry Jennings worked the evening shift, I took care of the daytime shoots. The newswriters from radio learned to read a light meter and crank a camera. We did feature stories like kids collecting a million pennies, car acci-

dents from fender-benders to fatal catastrophes, politics of all persuasions, you name it.

I usually took the out-of-town assignments, since Harry was still playing guitar on the Co-op Shopper's show. I was sent to Bismarck to film a hundred-dollar-a-plate dinner for Senator Bill Langer. The banquet was held in the Patterson Hotel Ballroom. It was there I met for the first time Bill Leingang, my KFYZ counterpart. We both filmed Bill Langer singing in his throaty croaking voice, "The NPL Ain't What She Used to Be," to the tune of the "Old Gray Mare." I was using the hundred-foot Cine Voice camera and the song ran so long I ran out of film before Langer and the audience finished the second verse.

Another well-remembered assignment was the dedication of the jewel bearing plant in Rolla, North Dakota.⁷ The plant, producing tiny bearings for clocks and aircraft instruments, was operated by the Bulova Watch Company, one of the top companies in the United States. Among the dignitaries who came for the dedication ceremonies was the chairman of the board of the Bulova Research and Development Laboratories, Inc.,

who happened to be General Omar Bradley, the famous army commander of World War II. I arrived in Rolla just in time for the first evening of festivities, November 4, 1953.

General Bradley was about to arrive, so I grabbed the silent camera, rigged up a couple of lights as it was growing dark, and filmed the famous warrior. Then we all

moved to the Rolla ball park and, with the aid of two little lights and very fast film, I managed to film an Indian powwow with live sound. After that program finished we went back to the hotel, and I spent a wonderful evening talking about "our" big war with Bradley. When he found out I was a reserve Army officer and a veteran of the Pacific wars, he opened up and we talked far into the night. It was one of the celebrity highlights of my photo career.

During that same night, a farmhouse near the city of Rolla burned to the ground killing four children.⁸ At first light I went out to the scene and photographed volunteer firemen probing the debris for the remains of the kids. It was a very touching scene and the first of many such events of that kind that I focused my cameras on. I still remember that pitiful sight, and I'll never forget the emotion that swept over me.

When I returned from the fire scene, I photographed inside the jewel-bearing plant. The factory, which hired



7. *Fargo Forum*, November 5, 1953, p. 6. Also attending the dedication was Arde Bulova, the chairman of the board of Bulova Watch Company, who was adopted into the Turtle Mountain band of the Chippewa Indian tribe following the buffalo dinner. The jewel-bearing plant is a cooperative venture of the Bulova Watch Company,

the U. S. Department of Defense, the city of Rolla, and the Chippewa Indians of the Turtle Mountain Reservation.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 1. Four children, ages three to eight, died in the fire at their family home. Four other children and their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Gross, escaped the 3:00 a.m. blaze.

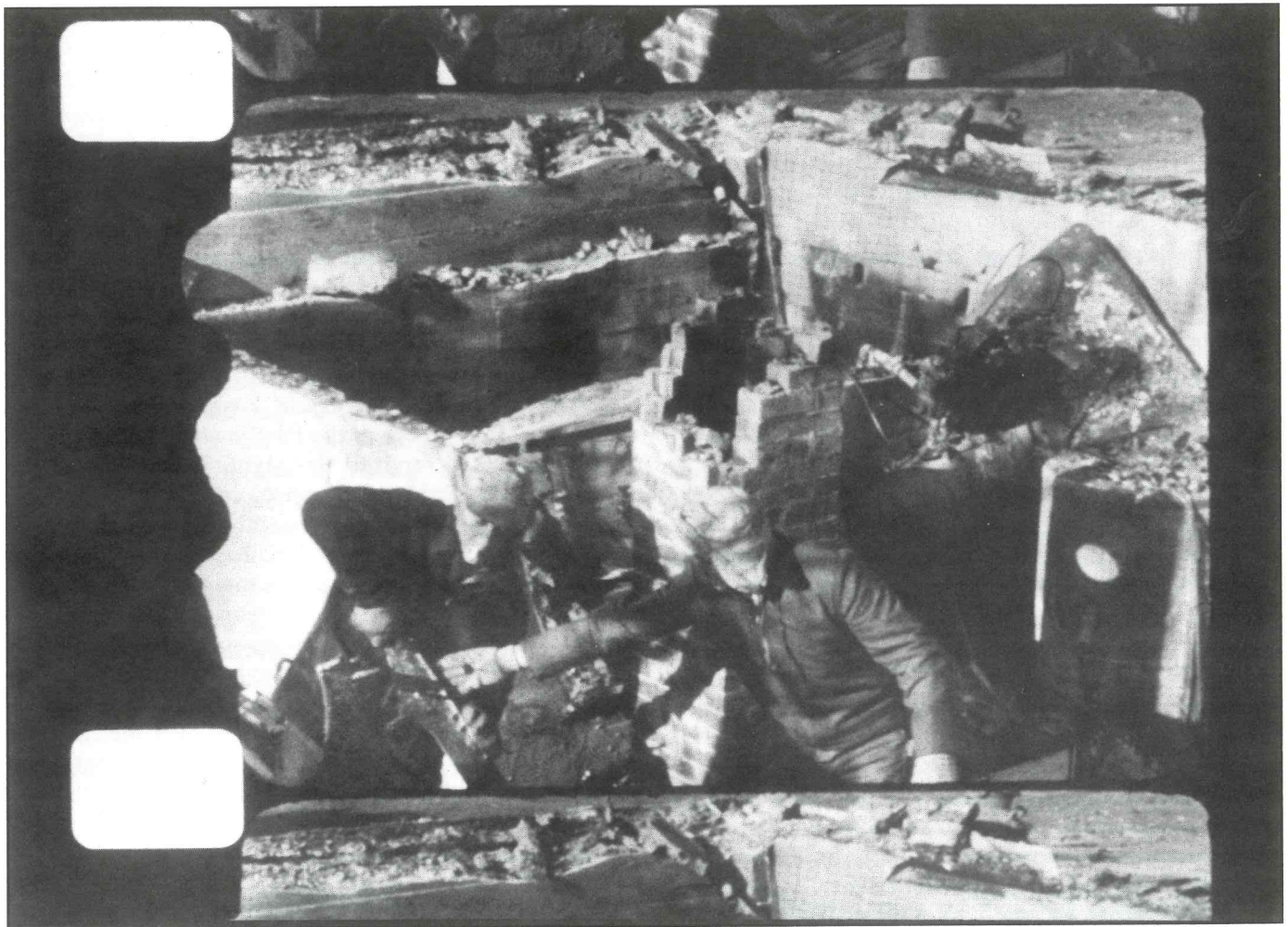
many Indians from the nearby reservation, could put the entire year's output of the plant in a small suitcase. The bearings were needed by the military for flight instruments and chronometers, so all the output went to the defense group. When I completed the Rolla shoot, I drove hurriedly back to Fargo and aired my two stories, one happy and one tragic.

And so television came to the Red River Valley of the North. It didn't take long before the count of television sets in the valley zoomed upwards, and watching the "boob tube" became an integral part of the lifestyle of every American. As I look back on more than forty years of television progress, I still marvel at the technology that transmits motion pictures from anywhere in the world into our living rooms, instantaneously, and in color and stereo sound, too. It was a great time to be in the "adding picture to sound" business, and I'm glad I made the trip.

And I'm particularly happy to say that the WDAY-TV newsfilm collection that Glenn Flint, Evie, and I started

in 1953 is now securely housed in the State Archives and Historical Research Library at the State Historical Society of North Dakota in Bismarck. A few years ago, I planted the seed for its acquisition with WDAY's News Director Normand Schrader and Frank Vyzralek, who was the State Archivist at the time. Those two people arranged with the WDAY'S current chairman, William Marcil, for the donation.

Schrader and his news staff had diligently kept up the cataloging and filing throughout the years, so today the WDAY collection is a valuable asset for historical research. In 1992, the State Historical Society received a grant to put the entire collection on videotape which will make for easy access to those wonderful years of early North Dakota TV history.⁹ Bill Leingang, my friend and colleague at KFYZ in Bismarck during those early years, is working on the video transfer project and has the expertise and desire to do it well, so I'm doubly pleased. The Society is saving a capsule look at yesterday for posterity, and it's neatly stored in those pictures we "merely added" to Mr. Barnes's radio sound! ND



Bill Snyder shot this footage of Rolla, North Dakota, volunteer firemen sifting through the rubble of a farmhouse destroyed by a fire that killed four children, November 4, 1953. Enlarged from a 16mm movie frame.



Bill Snyder, pictured in 1956, on a shoot in the southwest corner of North Dakota with a rancher from the area. His camera assignments took him all over the area for WDAY and all over the country and Europe for Bill Snyder Films, Inc., the firm he founded after leaving WDAY in 1958. Courtesy of the author.

William D. "Bill" Snyder was born in Dickinson, North Dakota, on October 5, 1916, to Joseph W. and Mary (Mozley) Snyder. Bill's father was a night wire chief for the Northern Pacific Railway, and his mother was a former teacher in the one-room country schoolhouse, which is now in the Dickinson Museum park.

The Snyder family moved to Fargo in 1918. Bill graduated from Central High School and received a B.S. degree in Business Administration from the North Dakota Agricultural College in 1942. Between his high school and college years, Snyder worked for the Technicolor Corporation in Hollywood, California. He served in the United States Naval Reserve as a Radioman, and was later commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserve in 1941. He served during World War II in the Southwest Pacific Theater in the Amphibi-

ous Engineers and the Signal Corps. He retired as a major from the Signal Corps Reserve after twenty years of active and reserve service.

Snyder returned to active military duty during the Korean War, and then joined WDAY, Inc., as the first person hired for a pending television station. After six years with WDAY, Snyder resigned to found Bill Snyder Films, Inc., an industrial motion picture production company. Bill Snyder Films, Inc., produced more than eight hundred industrial, medical, sales, safety, fundraising and educational films, plus many television commercials. Snyder's films won many awards in national and international film festivals, and in 1977, Bill was awarded an Alumni Achievement Award by North Dakota State University. He is a life member of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers.

Since his retirement in 1982, Snyder has been active in the establishment of the Fargo Central High School Alumni Association. He has served as the editor of *The Cynosure*, a quarterly newsletter published by the Association. In high school, Snyder became interested in amateur radio as a hobby and has remained active ever since. For the past eleven years, he has been a columnist for *Worldradio*, an amateur radio publication, and writes for another amateur radio magazine, *QST*. Bill is also an instrument-rated airplane pilot and has had articles published in *Air Facts*, and the Northern Pacific Railway Historical Society journal, *Mainstreeter*.

During the past three years, Snyder has been a member of the board of directors for the Cass County Historical Society, which operates historic Bonanzaville, and served as the organization's president this past year. He is married to Evelette (Mattson) Snyder and they have two children, Thomas and Maryliz (Snyder) Espeseth, and four grandchildren.



9. The North Dakota Television Newfilm Preservation Project is supported by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission with partial matching funds from the North Dakota Heritage Foundation. The television newfilm holdings in-

clude approximately 2.5 million feet of 16mm newfilm from WDAY/WDAZ-TV, Meyer Broadcasting Company, KXJB-TV, and the North Dakota Farmers Union program "Focus On the News."