1946

Professional Standards Guide Radio Workshop Broadcasts

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EVERYTHING from a marching army to a fire burning merrily in a fireplace can be found in the "files" of the WOI Radio Workshop.

The Workshop group is composed of students interested in the mechanics of putting on a radio show. Actual air time has given members the incentive to work on a professional level. With all of the acting, producing, sound effects and original writing, and adapting in the hands of Workshoppers, the group turns out complete productions.

The sound effects experts can create anything the adaptors call for. An elevator crashing to the ground from the top floor of a building is simulated by hastily pulling a metal file drawer from its case. The effect is life-like to the listening audience.

A marching army consists of a board framework with pegs hanging from cross-hatched strings. The operator picks it up and sets it down, and radio listeners visualize an army going by in perfect cadence. A crackling, roaring fire is produced in sound by crushing cellophane close to a microphone.

"You name it, we got it," is the motto the sound crew claims.

Ed Wegener, production manager of WOI, advises the group. He supervises the casting and directing with student directors' assistance.

The acting is done exclusively by non-professionals. With Wegener as coach, the microphone has become something more than a piece of steel, something more to be challenged by than to be afraid of, and it has become a symbol of achievement as well.

Radio Players is a group composed of Workshoppers who have had a definite amount of radio experience and who have proved themselves capable of the extremes which radio productions call for. The miniature silver microphones identify them as members of this organization.

"Acting requires a great deal of ego" is an axiom on which Wegener stands firm. Radio acting has especially proved this to be true, he says. However, you don't need a beautiful face, handsome figure or the skin you love to touch, to become a radio success. The two prerequisites for radio acting are imagination and a voice.

The voice must be one which the radio audience will listen to, and this is something which can be achieved. At the Thursday evening meetings of the Workshop Wegener helps members to attain this. Once voice control, phrasing, pitch variation and other essentials are achieved, the Workshopper is well on his way.

"Children's Playhouse," the favorite prodigy of the Workshop, is silent at present, but will be heard again during spring quarter. Its air time is cut out during winter months due to the shortened number of broadcast hours which WOI is allowed. Because WOI operates on the same wave-length as the clear channel station KFI, Los Angeles, the Iowa State station must leave the air at sun-down each day. During spring quarter, with the return of longer days, the Children's Playhouse will be heard again.

This program is one which resulted from listener demand for a children's show which would omit the usual blood and thunder. The Workshoppers must be on their toes because it is a live-a-week show. With the adaptor working feverishly to keep a few shows ahead of the action, with groups of Workshoppers forever rehearsing lines, with sound effects persons constantly working out new ideas, WOI becomes involved in a hubbub which lasts all week long.

On Saturday afternoons Workshop and Players combine their efforts and put a half-hour show. Sometimes it's comedy, sometimes tragedy; once in a while it's a mystery show. Whatever it is, it is rehearsed until it comes close to professional standards.

It takes time and effort to put a show on the air with all the wrinkles ironed smooth. It takes patience on the part of the director, Ed Wegener, and it takes ambition, drive and the desire to do the job right on the part of Workshop. But a professional level is being attained and when spring rolls around and the Workshop again has a daily spot on the WOI calendar, the quality of the show presented will be high.