

Asheville Radio Broadcasting Text Of Elias Speech

Here is the text of the speech delivered by Don S. Elias last night in connection with the dedication of the new studios and offices of Radio Station WWNC:

It was less than six years from the time KDKA first crackled and sputtered into the air, broadcasting the Harding-Cox presidential election results on November 2, 1920, that a few of our public-spirited citizens, with more foresight and vision than most of us, undertook and successfully completed a campaign to erect a radio station in Asheville.

Was A Novelty

Radio was then something of a novelty and its mysteriousness made it fascinating. When we pause and reflect, it seems incredible that it was only eighteen years ago that radio became a reality. It was twelve years ago, while radio was still very much in the experimental stage, and before the Columbia Broadcasting System was even organized, that these civic-minded citizens of Asheville launched a movement for the acquisition of this additional community asset.

I am sure they never visualized in their liveliest imaginings or daydreams radio as it is today—for radio today spans the continents and oceans and brings the far corners of the world into our homes, subject to our very finger tips. We have become so accustomed to its entertainment and instruction that these marvels are taken for granted by the listening public. Certainly today the audience gets "the greatest show on earth" every 24 hours and it doesn't even cost that thin dime.

The original chamber of commerce committee which succeeded in establishing Station WWNC was composed of Frank A. Barber, Carl R. Bamford and E. A. Jackson, Jr., with Mr. Barber as chairman. They directed the campaign which extended over a period of months. In December 1926 the Asheville chamber of commerce received a license to construct a radio station. The license was signed by Herbert Hoover, who was then secretary of commerce of the United States. On February 21, 1927, the first broadcast was made from Station WWNC. The call letters were adopted with a translated meaning of "Wonderful Western North Carolina."

Operated Station At Loss

The chamber of commerce operated the station for eighteen months at an estimated monthly loss of \$1,500. This was too much of a financial burden for the chamber to carry. The owners of the Asheville Citizen were approached and urged to buy the station. With the fine community

spirit which has characterized the history of the Asheville Citizen, and believing that the station's continuance would mean a vast deal to the people of Western North Carolina, the newspaper purchased and took over the operation of WWNC. In view of the city's experience in operating the station, certainly no one would have asserted that a selfish commercial spirit prompted the owners to assume this additional community service. Frankness impels me to say that the station's operation has not been a particularly successful financial venture, but the continuance of its facilities has been a source of great satisfaction to the owners of Asheville's two newspapers.

We have believed that a radio station was of great cultural and entertainment benefit to its thousands of listeners. We know that daily it relieves the monotony of rural life, that it comforts the shut-ins and stimulates a greater interest in the activities of this busy old world in which we are living.

The Asheville Citizen-Times company began one year ago the building of the South's most modern newspaper plant and radio studios comparable with the finest yet constructed in the United States. The studios are not necessarily the largest, but are considered the equal of the best by the radio and acoustic engineers who designed them. We were assured that the specifications were exactly the same as used in the construction of the studios in Radio City New York, only with a few recent improvements.

Vibration Eliminated

Unimaginable precautions were taken to isolate vibration. Partition walls twenty-four inches thick, acoustically treated, separate the four studios. One master control room handles the programs from all the studios, which is an innovation in radio station planning, making for efficiency and economy of operation. The technical equipment for the new studios includes one control console desk containing seven panels, through which all programs are terminated and monitored for high fidelity distribution to the transmitter, whether these programs originate from a remote control point, the network, or any of our four studios. This control desk was custom-built by RCA to specifications written by our own chief engineer, Cecil B. Hoskins. It was the first model of this type ever built. RCA has since adopted its principal features and built four others of the same design—two of which are being displayed at the San Francisco Exposition, one is to be exhibited at the New York World's Fair and the other was built for a Baltimore station.

In the planning of our new building for our newspapers and radio station truly our aspirations, like the lofty peaks which surround us, have touched the sky.

Tonight's program is for us a three-way celebration: In the first place, it is the twelfth anniversary of the establishment of Radio Station WWNC, whose history has been one of continuously expanding improvements. From time to time the owners of the station have pledged the public that it would always be their purpose to make the station more useful, render a larger community service and make the programs the ultimate in radio entertainment. We reaffirm tonight this assurance and hope we shall always justify the confidence which our listeners have so graciously reposed in us.

Another Milestone

Secondly, we announce another milestone in our policy of progressive development in the public interest of Asheville's radio facilities. Effective this date we have affiliated Station WWNC with the Columbia Broadcasting System, the world's largest network.

In entering into this arrangement we felt we were rendering an important service to our listeners. After twelve years experience in broadcasting and carefully watching the programming methods of the several networks, we felt we were serving the public interest when we accepted the invitation of the Columbia Broadcasting System to join its network.

The Columbia Broadcasting system has attained its high position and pre-eminence in the field of radio entertainment by reason of its unique production methods and its balanced program policy. We are happy indeed to make this announcement.

While our schedules will not reflect immediately all of the Columbia programs, as the months go by we will be constantly adding the most entertaining and the most outstanding radio programs on the air today.

Our new affiliation was consummated after the most thorough investigation, and in the conviction that the change would provide programs of a type and quality surpassing those available on any other network.

And finally speaking for all the officers of the Asheville Citizen-Times Company, owner and operator of Station WWNC, we are grateful to the many distinguished friends who have honored us with their participation in tonight's celebration—a gala event for us—and for the next two weeks, between the hours of two-thirty and five p.m., daily and Sunday, we cordially invite our listeners who care to do so, to visit our new radio station, finer than was ever dreamed possible for Asheville. It is with prideful pleasures that we present and formally dedicate it to the public service.

On with the show, Mr. McIntosh