

The Enemies of Sleep at

# WDAF

the Kansas City *Star's*  
Nighthawks

By John Patt

(Radio Dept., Kansas City *Star*)

**"T**UNE in for WDAF, The Kansas City *Star's* Nighthawks, the Enemies of Sleep."

That is the announcement eagerly awaited by thousands of radio fans each evening. It is the voice of the "Merry Old Chief," Leo Fitzpatrick, chief nighthawk of the flock whose radio sets are their wings.

Of all the 500-odd broadcasters in the country, the Kansas City *Star* claims to be second in installing one of the well-known 500-watt transmitters, and the first of them to begin broadcasting on a regular schedule. Trial experiments were made early in February of 1922 through the makeshift apparatus of the Western Radio Company of Kansas City. Common telephone transmitters were used, the sound currents being sent over special telephone cables to WOQ, and thence to the then thinly-scattered audience.

Realizing the vast field before it, the *Star* applied for and secured a land commercial radio license. Plans were drawn up for a new radio studio, operating and motor generating rooms, and reception facilities. Work was carried on rapidly and the call letters, WDAF, granted.

After several tests, WDAF was ready, and the *Star* officially took the



Oh! Here we are—The Nighthawks in full session. The Merry Old Chief (left) is seen at the microphone with the Professor, Carlton Coon of the Coon-Sanders orchestra (right) initiating the new members

air on June 5, 1922, with a dedication to the people of the Middle West. Regular concerts were given on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights, and it was a source of pride to note that the programs were arranged and presented almost entirely by the people of Kansas City. In addition to local talent, news bulletins were put on the air. From its news services, the *Star* was able to broadcast the baseball scores in the major leagues and the American Association each afternoon during the entire 1922 baseball season, at intervals of one-half hour. The world's series was broadcast, play by play.

Also, many celebrities, some of international renown, have appeared. Among them are William Jennings Bryan, who spoke twice from WDAF, Mme. Schumann-Heink, Cecil Arden,

Jack Dempsey, Ed "Strangler" Lewis, Yvon D'Arle, Titta Ruffo, Governor Henry J. Allen, and many others. Monday evening has been set aside for popular music, Wednesday for classical, and Friday for novelties.

Situated in Kansas City, Mo., in the heart of America, at about the center of the continent, WDAF has enjoyed every physical advantage that location could offer, and has made the most of it, as is proved by the reports of reception at great distances. WDAF is the only station so far inland that thus far has been heard in England, as reported by J. H. D. Ridley of London, in *THE WIRELESS AGE*. Also, A. E. Berlyn heard WDAF on January 11th in Birmingham, England.

Hawaii, Cuba and Porto Rico are nightly represented in radio audience. There have been over two hundred letters from these dependencies alone. In Hawaii there have been any number of favorable reports, among them A. F. Costa, postmaster of Wailuku, who rates the station among the California stations in respect to clearness. Two letters report that Alaska has heard WDAF many times. Every province of Canada, every state in the United States, every part of Mexico, every country of Central America, all are represented in WDAF's records of its invisible audience, in the form of telegram, letter, post card, or personal call.

There is nothing unusual in the transmitter. It is a standard Western-Electric 500-watt installation, whose main claim to fame is its radiation. It puts from 9 to 11 amperes into the antenna.

Probably the most interesting thing about WDAF is its practice of broadcasting from all over town. In all the large places of entertainment in Kansas City microphones have been in-



Leo J. Fitzpatrick, radio editor of the Kansas City "Star," snapped in action. He is more familiarly known as the Merry Old Chief of the Nighthawks. Here he is caught singing—one of his many accomplishments

**WDAF**  
**THE KANSAS CITY STAR'S**  
**NIGHTHAWKS**  
 "The Enemies of Sleep"  
*This is to certify that*  
 is a member of The Kansas City Star's  
 NIGHTHAWKS and has been granted an official  
 charter from WDAF.  
 Signed *Leo Fitzpatrick*  
 Chief Nighthawk - The Kansas City Star

This is what  
 happens  
 when a fan  
 writes WDAF  
 that he has heard  
 the Nighthawks—  
 He gets  
 a card  
 like this

stalled for special programs. There are three microphones in the Newman Theatre, one each for the pipe organ, the concert orchestra, and the stage. Any one of these three can be cut in, depending on which form of theatre entertainment is in progress. At the Muehlebach Hotel are four microphones, two in the Plantation Grill Room (one for the "Merry Old Chief" and one for the Coon-Sanders Nighthawk orchestra); one in the Trianon room for Fritz Hanlein's Trianon Ensemble, whose music is broadcast on the School of the Air program; and one in the ballroom for special occasions. There is also a microphone in the Pompeian Terrace room of the Baltimore Hotel, one in Convention Hall, and one in the Grand Avenue Temple.

On special occasions the *Star* has also broadcast from the Kansas State penitentiary at Lansing, the University of Kansas at Lawrence, the new half-million-dollar speedway at Dodson, the American Royal building, the new K. C. A. C. building, and many other places.

These remote-control events are all handled through a single board, centrally located, in a corner of the Grill Room of the Hotel Muehlebach. Here there is a small operating room, where an assistant operator is stationed. In this room has been placed an amplifying panel, to which run all the microphone lines throughout town. Any one of these may be cut in. The sound currents are here amplified and then sent by special telephone cables to the WDAF operating room on the third floor of the *Star* building. Here they are again amplified before going to the transmitter.

But, the Nighthawks. Who are they? What are they? Where? It was about them I first wrote. They are an organization of the listeners everywhere, and a direct result of transmission late at night. The radio editor of the *Star* had decided that best radio reception of distant stations was possible toward the midnight hour because there are few stations in the air at that time. For his midnight

programs he chose the Hotel Muehlebach and the Coon-Sanders orchestra because they are the criterion of popular entertainment in Kansas City. He chose the name, "Nighthawks," and

The schedule of W D A F is as follows:  
**DAILY.**

3:30 to 4:30 p. m. (Musical Matinee), concert by popular orchestra.

6 to 7 p. m. (School of the Air), Educational features.

8 to 9:30 p. m. (Evening concerts); Monday, popular; Wednesday, classical; Friday, novel.

11:45 p. m. to 1 a. m. (Nighthawk Frolic), Coon-Sanders orchestra at the Hotel Muehlebach.

**SUNDAY.**

4 to 5 p. m.—Band concert or religious program.

The radio staff and department of The Star:

Leo Fitzpatrick, editor and the "Merry Old Chief."

Robert M. Reed, ass't editor, program director, and reporter.

Don D. Johnson, chief engineer, operator, and expert.

John F. Patt, secretary, ass't announcer, and reporter.

Ernest R. Moorefield, announcer and reporter.

Don J. Phelps, ass't operator and announcer.

(Of course that isn't all they do—but that's enough.)

the unique style of initiation by banging a bell, because—well, that's where the people come in—the listeners themselves suggested name and all. Leo Fitzpatrick is a genial soul, and telegrams became so numerous and so humorous that they formed a basis for the merry old patter by the Merry Old Chief, as he was named.

And now that we have told you the story of WDAF, it would not be fair if we didn't let you in on a big secret. Plans have been made and work is well under way on a big addition to the *Star* building which will house a modern radio department. A big, spacious studio, modern in every way, large reception facilities, and operating and laboratory rooms, will be located on the third floor. Rising from the roof

for 200 feet will be immense towers for a big antenna. The new facilities will make the station better than ever.

Regularly at a little after one in the morning, the Merry Old Chief says, "Well, well, well, well, well, brother and sister Nighthawks, that will complete our session for tonight. Tune in at 11:45 tomorrow night for our regular Nighthawk frolic. This is WDAF (chimes), the Kansas City *Star's* Nighthawks, the Enemies of Sleep, signing off. Mr. Phelps, call a taxi and Mr. Johnson, shut off the juice, and let's all go home. Nighty-night."

## French Night at WBZ

STATION WBZ, Springfield, Mass., gave a French night on April 11th, when the staff of CKAC, the broadcasting station of *La Presse* of Montreal, and a number of French artists visited Springfield. The station was turned over to the French and Canadian visitors for the evening under the management of J. M. Cartier, the CKAC manager, who made all the announcements in both French and English. The artists included H. Maurice Jacquet, pianist, a composer of note and director of the Opera Comique of Paris; his wife Andrée-Amalou Jacquet, who is considered the best harpist of France, having won the Grand Prize, a very beautiful harp which she brought with her to Springfield. Other artists in the concert group were: Albert C. Chamberland, violin; Yvette Lamontagne, 'cello; Blanche Gonthier, coloratura soprano; Marie Anne Asseling, mezzo soprano; Jose Delaquerriere, tenor; Aldea Lusier, accompanist; J. M. Cartier and George Wendt. This program created unusual interest throughout New England, especially among the French Canadians, of whom numbers live in the territory served by WBZ.

## Ford Has Four Radio Stations

ONE of the most extensive American industrial companies making use of radio, both telegraph and telephone, for private communication among its plants is the Ford Motor Co. It has four transmitting stations at as many of its plants. KDEN is the Dearborn plant, WNA that at Springfield, O. WFD is Flat Rock, Mich., and KDEP is Northville, Mich. The Dearborn station also is licensed as WWI for broadcasting, and as an experimental station as 8XD. The Ford company has been employing radio for inter-plant messages since 1920. At first voice was used exclusively, and subsequently code was added. The stations are in continuous operation from 7:45 A. M. to 5:15 P. M. Comparatively little broadcasting has been done.