

KFWB Spreads Net That Captures Fox

Two Oregon Deputies Recognize Fugitive Killer by Description Broadcast from Hollywood by King and Ray

By Harold P. Brown

IT was Radio Station KFWB whom the mayor and the chief of detectives of Los Angeles thanked for the capture of the bloody Fox, Edward Hickman.

Written tributes to that fact will be forever treasured among the mementoes of the Warner Brothers studio in Hollywood. The episode stands now as the most amazing story of Radio service in appeal and response on record.

Through the brilliant team work of Station Manager Gerald King and Announcer Bill Ray in less than a day a reward fund of \$50,000 was pledged by listeners, a posse of automobiles and horse riders numbering thousands was organized, and the direct information furnished that resulted in the capture of the fugitive.

Tom Gurdane and Buck Lilevalton told that part of the story themselves as they later came to see the men who had broadcast bulletins and made appeals throughout that terrible Saturday night and Sunday.

Air Description Traps Fox

The two Oregon constables had little expectation that the wily Fox would cross their trail as they rambled out along the highway from Pendleton. But they carried a scrap of paper on which they had scribbled the words of Bill Ray who had warned all citizens, and especially peace officers, to be on the alert. They had heard Bill tell just how the man looked, the kind of a car he had and the numbers that were on the new \$20 bills extorted from the distracted father of the murdered child.

So Tom and Buck were looking sharp at everybody and checking up on the scrap of paper when the car that came their way seemed to tally.

"Looks like the car," said Tom as Hickman's car drew near.

"And it looks like the man," answered Buck with one last quick glance at the notations.

As for the Fox those infinite invisible ether waves turned out to be the fine wires of a steel net that probably will end in a hempen loop about the neck.

He was trapped, just as the Gorilla strangler had been trapped by the same means through CKY in Manitoba a few months ago, and who paid the death penalty January 13th, as told in the last Radio Digest.

Cline Pays Tribute

"You can say for me," said Chief Cline after the Fox had been securely caged at Los Angeles, "that this has turned out to be the most remarkable achievement of instantaneous organization and coordination between the citizens of a city and the officers of the law that I, in all my thirty years of service as a police official, have ever seen."

Chief Cline said all that could be said by anybody. It was the most remarkable mobilization of an untrained army ever known. Radio broadcasting had been put to an unusual test and made good. It made good not only for the police but for the listeners who had been aroused as never before by any broadcast. They concentrated on the little point on Sunset boulevard from seven states as bees swarm to the branch of a tree. It was a terrific strain, but the morale stood true and triumphant.

All broadcasting stations in the area were of course entitled to a share of Chief Cline's praise. They all helped. The big thing about KFWB was that it dropped everything at once and gave undivided attention to the chase. During those hours of unaccustomed broadcasting the outraged citizens knew that they could tune in KFWB at any moment and hear the latest information about the developments of the chase.

Readers will recall the dreadful tragedy on that December day when little Marion Parker was decoyed away from her schoolmates because she thought her father was hurt and was calling for her, how she found herself in the hands of a merciless fiend, and how her mutilated body was dumped by the roadside after her father had paid a ransom of \$1,500 to the masked kidnaper.

Police Ask Radio Aid

Hardly had the speeding Fox disappeared from sight before Chief Cline heard the news. He immediately electrified the whole department. Telephone bells jangled from one end of the town to the other. Off-duty men hustled into their clothes, bolting to lay hands on the red-handed slayer. Airplanes zoomed over highways and motor squads criss-crossed every street but the Fox seemed to have been swallowed up. The chief became desperate. He called all the broadcasting stations.

Now a broadcasting station performs with a certain amount of routine. It operates strictly according to schedule. And the holiest thing about a broadcasting station is the sponsored program. Program



Three Tired Boys—They spent 18 hours at KFWB microphone chasing Hickman and raising reward fund in greatest Radio man hunt in history. Left to right: Gerald King, manager; Frank Murphy, chief engineer and Bill Ray, announcer.

THAT there is no escaping Detective Radio was again demonstrated within the past few days with the capture of Michigan's child butcher, Adolph Hotelling. A farmer residing near the scene of the crime described a blue sedan and its driver he had helped from a mudhole shortly after the murder. The description was broadcast by the police. Hotelling was recognized by a fellow worker from this description. Subsequent remarks caused him to be reported to the police and sent to prison for life.

sponsors are the ones who put up the gold to give the listener free entertainment. The sponsor does not do it because he so loves the listener but because it is business. It is a very profitable form of advertising. He generally pays well for the privilege of sponsoring a program, and he signs articles of agreement, commonly known as contracts.

Just forty-five minutes after the mutilated body of little Marion Parker had been gathered into the arms of her broken hearted father Gerald King, manager of KFWB, was in the midst of a sponsored program. He was keenly watching that the sponsored program was being broadcast according to contract—and then he answered a telephone call from Chief Cline. As he listened his face paled and his hand clinched. He sat down and made notes. It was like old reporter days on the daily. He shot sharp inquiring questions into the phone and jotted down the answers.

"Count on us, Chief," he concluded. "KFWB is yours until you say when. And every man here is at your service. We drop everything else to chase this fiend."

Sponsored Program Chucked

The sponsored program for KFWB went bloney. In five minutes the station was in a drastic process of reorganization. Bill Ray, announcer and assistant manager, sat down to the microphone not to leave it again for a full thirteen hours. The greatest man hunt California has ever known was on.

King has long bushy hair. Ordinarily it is carefully combed and is the envy of all the Hollywood baldheads. But in a few minutes from this telephone conversation that hair was standing on end like the mane of an infuriated lion. Bulletins began coming from the police station, were put into broadcast language by King and relayed to the listeners by Ray. The other stations were continuing with their sponsored programs. Soon the telephone calls clogged the wires and it was necessary to hold one line constantly in touch with Chief Cline's office.

"Tell us what this guy looks like?" "What kind of a car did he have?" "Which way did you say he was going?" Thousands of questions came to the studio.

At 10 o'clock the whole area was up in arms. The police bulletins continued to flow from KFWB. At 11 o'clock the first of the other stations went on the air. Soon all the Los Angeles broadcasting stations were baying and trailing after the Fox like a pack of excited bloodhounds.

Start of Reward Fund

Then King decided it was time to inaugurate some more effective effort on the part of the public. Everybody was anxious to help, but how could they put their energies into action? This was a job for experts—scouts who knew how to detect and track criminals—not for amateurs. Sleuthing is a profession.

Persons who follow a profession depend upon it for their bread and butter. All this time the Fox was getting farther and farther away.

"Get out every man Jack who knows how to chase a crook," said King to Bill Ray.

"Well, these fellows can't give up their time for nothing," Ray rejoined.

"Then let's get the money to make it worth while."

"Great idea," answered Ray.

So King drafted the first appeal for a mammoth reward fund. Bill snatched the paper and commenced to put it on the air with amplifications of his own conception. Before the last words of the first announcement were uttered a dry crackling voice rasped over the phone.

"Now you're talkin', put me down for the first \$25 and I wish to God I could make it more. I'm sending a boy over with the money right now."

"Got the first \$25 . . ." Bill shouted to the Radio audience.

"Say you," another voice answered back over the phone. "Make it \$500 for me. And I'm going to see some friends who'll raise that ante. My check's coming right over." And sure enough, along came a check signed by Jack Gilbert, the moving picture star, for \$500. Then came a flow of more money.

Calls Out 40,000 Autos

The names came so fast that Bill didn't get a minute's rest. A string of names, a bulletin, names, more news and names—on through the night until daylight began to streak the eastern sky.

"Chief Cline wants everybody to get out and patrol. This fellow seems to have slipped through," said Bill about the time folks were getting ready for church. "We've got to hunt through the country and those who have automobiles can be of great service by covering the roads that lead out to Beverly Hills."

That second call to arms brought out forty thousand automobiles bristling with shotguns, rifles and revolvers. They patrolled every road over a fifty mile front.

"Take every horse we have—there are forty of them if you can get men to ride them," came the offer from a riding academy. Bill read that message to the listeners. It brought a whoop from Harry Carey's ranch and a hundred cowboys came by motor coach from the studios to fight for the forty horses to patrol through areas not accessible to automobiles.

"I'm going to read the numbers on those \$20 bills again," said Bill. "The police want every store keeper to paste that list up beside the cash register. If any of you folks think your corner merchant might miss this you had better take the numbers down for him."

Monday morning found a flood of number lists ready for service for every person who might possibly have occasion to

change a \$20 bill. This occurred not only throughout California, but down into Mexico and north over the Canadian border toward which the Fox was making his way. As far east as Denver merchants were watching for new \$20 bills.

All this time contributions were pouring in to raise the reward fund. The big switchboard of the Warner Brothers studios was thrown open to full capacity and manned by volunteer operators. In fifteen minutes after it had been opened it was overfilled. Then a newspaper opened its board to take the calls, then a great department store with sixty trunk lines, and the Western Electric company. As fast as new posts for handling calls were announced they were promptly swamped with more calls than they could handle.

Bill did not give up his seat at the microphone until Sunday noon. By that time the commercial superintendent of the telephone company called at the studio to inform the management that if they handled nothing but long distance calls the board would be unable to take care of them; that the big Hollywood exchange had booked the station solid for ten hours. There had never been such a test of Los Angeles telephone equipment. The effect was felt even in San Diego and San Francisco where it seemed all the people in California were trying to reach one small spot in Hollywood.

Contributors Block Streets

People formed in line outside of the studio in order to bring their contributions to the reward fund. The street became so choked with citizens anxious to help that the bus lines passing the corner on Sunset boulevard had to be detoured and volunteer traffic officers attempted to straighten out the jam.

An author, his name known the world over, marveled at Bill's eloquence. Said he had never heard anything like it—wanted to see the man himself. He left a check for \$250. Many simply emptied their pockets on the table for the six tellers who had come from one of the leading Los Angeles banks to handle the money. People without cash offered property. One offered a house and lot to be sold at auction. A woman offered a prize bulldog to be auctioned. The 110 piece Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestra offered its services to the station. An offer came from the musicians' union submitting the services of every member of its organization.

Mothers, fathers and children struggled for a position within the KFWB studio to see Bill Ray at the microphone. Many were shaken with emotion—some with grief, others with anger that seethed for revenge against the monster who had committed the horrible crime.

A red eyed man put down a one dollar bill and said he was the milkman who delivered milk to the Parker home. The dollar was all he had with him, but he wanted to give that if it would help capture the Fox. Listeners heard his sobs over the microphone.

Eddie Baker of the Christie Comedies looked in at the all but swamped Warner staff and volunteered such services as might be desired. The Christie folks handled the crowds within the studio and tried to make it possible for everyone to get to the front with contributions and also to get a glimpse of the announcer who had stirred the whole Pacific coast over the tragedy.

Sign Off at Five

It was five o'clock Sunday evening when reports came back from all sections of the seven surrounding states that the law forces and citizens were alert and on the lookout for the fugitive that King decided to call it a "day." The reports of the bank tellers indicated that KFWB listeners had pledged or already contributed to the sum of \$50,000 as a reward for the capture of the Fox. Had operations continued until midnight the bank tellers estimated that at least \$100,000 would have been contributed through this one source. But already everything had been done that could be done. Others had taken up the cause and KFWB signed off for the night.

Out through the hills and mountains, up and down the coast, the net had been spread. Again and again the numbers of the \$20 bills had been read over the microphone. The fugitive could scarcely hope to turn in any direction without being recognized. Cities, towns and farmhouses in every direction were on edge, observing every stranger—and especially ones who had new \$20 bills to spend. The result was inevitable.

Radio is proving its worth every day as an entertainer but as an instrument for reaching and putting on guard the great masses of the people it has proved on three recent occasions to be unsurpassed, and the opinion of Chief of Detectives Herman Cline is doubtless now the opinion of millions of others.