

Extract from Radio Story

The following extract from the story of *Rising Wolf*, produced by Empire Builders last spring, will serve as an example of way radio playettes are written:

(INTERIOR TRAIN EFFECTS. MILDLY EXCITED VOICES IN BACKGROUND: "See? The mountains!" . . . "They look like clouds." . . . Etc.)

PIONEER: ((CHUCKLES) I never saw it fail yet!

WOMAN: What's that?

PIONEER: Well, ma'm, I've rode through Montana here more times than you could shake a stick at—either on this identical Empire Builder, or on the Oriental Limited—and every time just as soon as we pull in sight of the mountains, people act just like school kids!

WOMAN: Well, you're an Old Timer out here but it's a new experience to most of us on this train.

PIONEER: Oh, I reckon we all get the same sort of kick out of our first sight of the mountains. Sort of the feeling old Christopher Columbus got when somebody yelled "Land."

WOMAN: Oh, look at that huge mountain over there to the right—it has a name, I suppose?

PIONEER: You bet it has. That one's *Rising Wolf Mountain*.

WOMAN: *Rising Wolf*. After some Indian, I suppose?

PIONEER: Not quite. . . . That mountain was named after a white man with an Indian name.

WOMAN: Well! And who was this man?

PIONEER: Hugh Monroe was his name—the first white man ever to set foot in this *Glacier Park* country.

WOMAN: Hugh Monroe. . . . What all did he do?

PIONEER: Well, his father was an English Army officer, and his mother, she was a French duchess or something. He was born in *Montreal*, I believe, and 'long about 1815, Hugh went to *Mountain Fort*—that's up north of here—to work for the *Hudson Bay Company*. He was scarcely 18 years old then. Well, the *Company* was just startin' to develop a fur trade with the *Blackfeet Indians*, and when Monroe got to *Mountain Fort*, the factor had a job already for him. . . .

(TRAIN EFFECTS OUT. TRANSITIONAL MUSIC. FADES TO FIDDLE PLAYING OLD FRENCH-CANADIAN SONG).

FACTOR: Pierre! Stop making those scraping noises! (FIDDLE STOPS)

PIERRE: Yes, sir! You bet!

FACTOR: Get on over to the bunkhouse with that squeal-box. This office is reserved for business.

PIERRE: (OFF) You bet.

FACTOR: Wait a minute. Where's this Monroe youngster?

PIERRE: (OFF) All the time he is over where the Indians make camp. (LAUGHS) He even tries to speak their crazy langauge.

FACTOR: Call him in. I want to see him!

Announcing ¹¹⁹⁵
the KHQ

EMPIRE BUILDERS

Radio Story Contest

Sponsored by

KHQ

Spokane, Washington

Grand Prize
\$250.00

Second Prize
\$150.00

Third Prize
\$100.00

For Broadcasting Over the Coast-to-Coast Network
of The National Broadcasting Co.

*This pamphlet should be read carefully.
It will avoid unnecessary correspondence.*

Radio Story Contest

The Great Northern Railway, sponsors of the Empire Builders radio programs, has asked KHQ, Spokane, Wash., to assist in obtaining stories for a new series of programs to be broadcast over the coast-to-coast network of the National Broadcasting Company, Monday evenings, beginning September 29, 1930.

A radio story contest will be conducted by KHQ, with prizes aggregating \$500. The first prize will be \$250; second prize, \$150; third prize, \$100.

The purpose of the Empire Builders programs, aside from entertainment, is to advertise the Pacific Northwest—to direct the attention of radio listeners throughout the country to its advantages as a vacation land, its magnificent scenery and recreational opportunities; to suggest the industrial and agricultural opportunities to be found here, and the advantages of this region as a place to live, work and play.

The stories submitted to KHQ should feature Spokane, or any section of the Inland Empire that is served by the Great Northern Railway.

In addition to the \$500 in cash prizes, other stories which can be successfully adapted for Empire Builders will be purchased on terms arranged directly with the authors.

Contest Rules

The KHQ-Empire Builders radio story contest is open to everyone. The amateur writer has the same opportunity as the professional. Every manuscript will be judged on its merits. To assure this, the judges will not be given the names of the authors.

Authors should print their names and addresses on separate slips of paper and attach them to their manuscripts. All manuscripts will be numbered as they are received. Corresponding numbers will be placed on the name slips, which will be kept under lock and key until the judges have made their selections.

Two judges will be named by KHQ and one by the Great Northern Railway. The names of the judges will be announced later.

There is no restriction on the number of stories that may be submitted by any writer.

Stories should be approximately 3000 words in length.

They may be wholly fiction or based on fact.

The customary rules for submitting manuscripts will apply. Only one side of the paper should be used, and if possible the story should be typewritten, although legible handwriting will not be barred.

The story that wins first prize will be presented by Empire Builders sometime during the 1930-31 series, the date being optional with the sponsors of the program. While it is probable that the other prize-winning stories will be used similarly, this is optional.

The contest closes October 15, 1930. Checks will be mailed the authors of the prize-winning stories promptly on decision of the judges.

All rights in the stories that are awarded the prizes and such other stories as may be purchased on terms arranged with the authors shall become the property of the Great Northern Railway. The Great Northern will gladly reassign publication, picture and dramatic rights to authors under arrangements that afford due protection for prior use on the Empire Builders programs.

All manuscripts are sent at the owner's risk. Authors wanting rejected manuscripts returned should enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope—not merely stamps.

Neither KHQ or the Great Northern Railway will undertake to enter into correspondence regarding rejected stories.

Manuscripts should be addressed as follows:

The KHQ-Empire Builders Radio Story
Contest, c/o KHQ,
Spokane, Wash.

Type of Stories Desired

1. The prizes will be awarded to those stories which, in the opinion of the judges, will make the best radio entertainment and at the same time portray in the most effective way something of the romantic lure of the territory served by the Great Northern Railway, the wonderful growth of that territory, its spirit of progress and its opportunities for investment and **real living**.

Stories that are out-and-out propaganda are not wanted. They will not hold the interest of the national radio audience which Empire Builders reaches. Entertainment value is paramount, and stories will be judged on the basis of 80 points for maximum entertainment value and 20 points for publicity value.

There are many ways by which publicity for the Pacific Northwest can be incorporated in these stories. Subjects can be chosen that are inseparably a part of the Pacific Northwest; for example: stories that have to do with the Spokane House, Sportsmen's Show, an Idaho or Washington football game, the apple country, lumber mills, the Hillyard Shops, Spokane Falls, mining, the lake region of the Inland Empire, etc. The characters in the stories can be made to refer briefly to things about the Inland Empire that will serve to interest radio listeners in this region, instilling the desire to visit the Inland Empire, to live here, or to investigate the opportunities afforded by a relatively new country that is rich in undeveloped resources.

Publicity of this character should be brief, interesting, and brought in naturally. It should contribute to the story rather than detract from it.

2. Any type of story will be considered. It may be drama, melodrama, romance, adventure, comedy or a combination of any of these. The mixed character of the radio audience should be kept in mind—it includes persons of all ages, nationalities and occupations. Stories likely to give offense cannot, of course, be considered. The so-called "Westerns," railway stories, historical dramas, stories of the pioneers, business stories, romances, stories of adventure, mystery, etc., sports and comedies are particularly desired.

The kind of story that would make an entertaining short "talkie" is likely to be the type of story wanted for Empire Builders, provided the action and plot development can be carried for-

ward and kept clear by means of dialogue and sound effects. The characters must be interesting people. They must be doing things that are interesting. The attention and interest of the listener must be intrigued from the beginning—if it isn't, the listener turns the dial to another program. Action, romance, suspense, pathos and humor are wanted. There must be a satisfying plot that moves swiftly towards a strong climax. The story must have some "high spots" or sub-climaxes as it develops, in order to maintain the interest of the listener until the climax is reached. Stories with clever and original plots, unusual situations, unexpected twists and endings and real "human interest" are particularly desired.

3. All stories must provide a prominent role for that lovable character, the Old Timer, who is always the personification of the true hospitality and helpful spirit of the Northwest.

In most of the Empire Builders stories the Old Timer is one of the characters in the story itself, at other times he is the narrator of the story—meeting interesting people, and responding to their requests for stories of the West. Again, the Old Timer is both the narrator and a participant, telling a story in which he himself has a part.

The Writing of a Radio Story

Good story material will be considered regardless of the form in which it is submitted. Writing for the radio is a new profession, involving a technique quite different from other forms of writing, and it is not expected that participants in this contest shall be familiar with the rather exacting requirements of radio continuities. Stories will be judged on their worth as radio material, and all continuities are submitted with the understanding that they are subject to such revision and adaptation as may be desirable in the judgment of the sponsors of the Empire Builders programs. An understanding, however, of some of the requirements of radio writing will be of help, particularly in estimating the possibilities, as radio entertainment, of any story which one contemplates submitting.

Suggestions

I

Write Stories in Dialogue

Radio stories are conceived and developed from

a different viewpoint than stories for magazines, the stage or screen. The stage, the screen of today and the radio have, in common, the spoken word. This is supplemented on the stage and screen by the action of the actors and the scenery. In magazine stories, action and scenes are described by the authors. In radio playlettes as presented by Empire Builders, the action and the setting of the scenes must be indicated by what the characters say, augmented where it is practicable by sound effects. In other words, the characters must be made to say things, at the beginning of each scene, that disclose where the scene is located and who the characters are. For example, a scene opens:

BOB: If I could only get Dorothy to come out here, Old Timer, and see for herself what an attractive city Spokane really is, I'm sure she'd look at things differently.

OLD TIMER: Well, now, Bob, let's see. Maybe we can rig up a little scheme that'll bring her here. You just hand me some telegraph blanks from the writing desk there, and call a bell boy while I do some thinking.

The first two speeches identify the characters as Bob and the Old Timer, and the scene as being in a hotel room, in Spokane.

Action is indicated similarly—the characters are made to say things that disclose what is happening. For example:

(SOUND OF STORM. TELEGRAPH KEYS)

SALLY: Gracious, it's turning into a nasty night! I'll have to shut that window. And it was so nice this afternoon too!

(SOUND OF WINDOW BEING CLOSED, SHUTTING OUT STORM NOISE. SOUND OF SLEET AGAINST WINDOW.)

These examples show how dialogue and sound effects are used to identify characters, establish scenes and disclose what the characters are doing, seeing and thinking. By putting manuscripts entirely in dialogue form, writers will be able to judge more accurately the entertainment and dramatic value of their continuities.

II Scenes

The number of scenes may vary from three to ten, or even more. The greater the number of scenes, the more complicated the story becomes and the more likely the listener is to "get lost." In short action-scenes, sound effects and distinctive background music often help to keep the story clear. Music is used to separate the scenes or to denote the lapse of time in the same way that the drop curtain is employed on the stage. Developments which are taking place more or less simultaneously can be portrayed in a radio play the same as on the screen.

III Characters

There are no restrictions as to the number of characters. The only thing to bear in mind is the danger of causing confusion. The listener must identify the characters largely by their distinctive voice qualities, and this becomes increasingly difficult as the number of characters, particularly principals, is increased.

IV Miscellaneous

Long speeches are wearisome. They should be avoided.

No effort or expense is spared in producing the Empire Builders playlettes. The actors and actresses are carefully selected, clever and talented. This should be kept in mind in writing the dialogue. It is not necessary to use a lot of words to put an idea across. It is more effective if something is left for the cast to do besides merely reading lines. A few words properly interpreted, with appropriate voice inflections, etc., are often more effective than long, explanatory speeches.

If it is desired to have one or more of the scenes located on Great Northern trains, or to have the story reflect the type of passenger service exemplified in the Oriental Limited and the Empire Builder, it is suggested that specific information be obtained from literature that will be mailed upon request addressed to The Great Northern Railway, Davenport Hotel, Spokane, Wash.

A story of the Empire Builders radio programs, explaining how they are written and produced, also will be mailed upon request.