

CHAPTER TEN

"A Girdle round about the Earth"

It had long been my ambition to travel the world. By the end of World War II I had had the opportunity to visit all the Australian capital cities and seen much of our wonderful country, but I yearned to see other lands. 1951 was the beginning of a new era for me.

As I sat in the cabin of the British Canadian Pacific Airline DC6, appropriately named "RMA Adventure" on the tarmac at Mascot Airport, Sydney, with Charles Moses and Jack Donovan on Saturday 17th February I thought of Tennyson's Ulysses -

"Come, my friends
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die."

We took off at 11am in beautiful weather, with slight cloud. Soon the Australian coast was fading from view, a delicate study in blue and white. A carpet of white cloud below with the blue sea showing through here and there. Near the horizon a white strip of beach, a blue line of hills, white clouds above and the open blue sky. Goodbye Australia!

We touched down for evening dinner at Fiji. White clothed tables in the semi-open airport lounge and an atmosphere like a turkish bath. Quiet-footed native

waiters with shocks of frizzy hair and multi-coloured shirts. Just time to eat and send a postcard home.

Travelling first-class, after take-off our bunks were made up in the aircraft. Seats flattened out to form double lower bunks and single bunks hinged cunningly down from the ceiling. Both were well closed in with hanging canvas covers, and had ample storage for clothes.

Having crossed the international dateline overnight, the next day was still Saturday 17th February. We refuelled at Canton Island but I slept through it all and we landed at Honolulu at 1.25pm local time. Each passenger received the Captain's Certificate by which King Neptune conferred the freedom of the Royal Demesne (Sky Section) on the recipient by virtue of "crossing the line".

Honolulu

Honolulu was our first taste of American customs and packaging. Such practices were then unknown in Australia. A reservoir of paper seat-covers in the wall of each toilet, a powdered soap ejector above each wash-basin, coffee self-service in the Customs House, twin cubes of sugar tightly wrapped in paper - and excellent coffee.

We were driven to Niualu Hotel "on the wrong side" of perfect roads past vacant allotments full of beautiful

second hand cars at a few hundred dollars each. Never had we seen so many dazzling cars before. Our rooms were in isolated bungalows of about eight rooms each, set beneath coconut palms and connected by cement pathways lit at night by quaint lanterns at ground level.

The dining room in the main building had very solid bamboo furniture and served American, Hawaiian or Chinese food. At one end was a self-service salad bar with 22 varieties of green, red, yellow and orange salad foods arranged in contrast in polished metal bowls on a bed of crushed ice. This brightly-lit display was reflected in an overhead inclined mirror, to be seen from every table in the room. Plates were stacked beside, with five varieties of sauces and dressings. This was my first encounter with a smorgasbord. They were then unknown in Australia.

The American currency took getting used to, in those days of our pounds, shilling and pence. We soon found that a hotel desk is not the most economical place to change currency. The Australian pound was then worth \$US2.23, but the hotel changed it for only \$2.00! To post a letter home, I put a 25 cent piece in a slot machine and received eleven neatly packaged stamps of various denominations. Stuck to an envelope they left little room for the address!

While Charles looked up some friends, Jack and I strolled along Waikiki beach, past clean looking pink, blue and cream hotel facades. The stars and stripes flying blatantly in the breeze beyond the stretch of silver sand, with beach umbrellas, supine sunbathers and colourful outrigger canoes. We sat beneath a huge banyan tree before the Moana Hotel and sipped Budweiser Beer, only a few yards from the lapping water. Behind us was a semi-circular polished green cement dance floor with couples languidly circling to the music and voices of a Hawaiian quartet. The men wore highly coloured "Aloha" shirts outside their trousers, with all manner of motifs, and the girls wore orchids or hibiscus in their hair. The bookstall attendant told us that "Aloha" means not only "goodbye", but also "hello" and even "I love you", depending on the circumstances and environment. A highly dangerous word!

When the bus drove us away, a Hawaiian group on the hotel steps played and sang us farewell, and many travellers had leis of carnations or frangipani round their necks. Nine hours in carefree, happy-go-lucky, expensive Honolulu is not enough!

We found Charles at the airport complete with Aloha shirt and carnation lei. In 1951 there was no television in Honolulu.

San Francisco

Sleeping again on the aircraft, we circled the beautiful San Francisco harbour and landed at 9.45am on Sunday. Mr Lynch, the Australian High Commissioner drove us to the Sir Francis Drake Hotel, through wide open spaces with the mountains in the background. He took us to the 18th floor of the Mark Hopkins Hotel - "The Top of the Mark" as they call it - to view the harbour with its two famous bridges, the Oakland Bay Bridge and the red Golden Gate Bridge standing out against the blue mountains beyond. Those were the days before excessive smog, and a group of islands stood out on the horizon of sea. Jack left us for mass, and Charles and I went with Mr Lynch to his apartment to meet his family. Then drove through the Golden Gate Park with its Sunday crowd of carefree picnickers.

That afternoon we slept. We needed it!

In the evening we visited our first TV station, KPIX, walking the one-in-five grade streets with sidewalks grooved to guard against slipping. Moving down such slopes required a peculiar gait. Charles was interviewed in the News telecast by William Winter. We had a drink at "Lefty's" on the way back to the 'Drake - a typical American cocktail lounge with a barman who had been in Australia during World War II. Although bars were open nightly until 2am, apart from one deadbeat on the footpath in the negro quarter we saw no "drunks" in

San Francisco. In contrast to the Australian "6 o'clock swill" of 1951, American drinking seemed orderly and civilised, and the beer was very light.

We found San Francisco and its people very like Sydney, with its harbour and sloping streets, which were very clean, and many white buildings. Most noticeable was the American habit of saying "Y'r welcome", in return for a "thank-you", and everyone was most friendly and helpful.

We inspected TV stations KRON-TV, KGO-TV and KPIX, and their transmitters at Twin Peaks and San Bruno Mountain - then established for only one or two years. In four days our only taste of night life was dinner at "Venitos", followed by a floor show at "The Driftin" where we had our first experience of a mimed comedy performance by "Doodles and Spider". It was some time before we realised that they were not singing, and that the voices were pre-recorded.

One day we wandered into the underground car park below Union Square, near our hotel, with its four-level parking for 2000 cars. There was a hole in the floor around a polished steel pole. A white overalled mechanic walked smartly towards it, threw one arm around the pole and disappeared from view! Then we saw another mechanic rise slowly through another hole in the floor - standing motionless against a vertical conveyer belt. A most

efficient means of human transportation between floors, but I shuddered to think what our lifts and scaffolding department would have to say about it! As we came out into the daylight one of the famous cable cars clanked noisily up the steep slope of Powell Street. In 1951 we had no underground car parks and no cable cars in Melbourne!

Jack and I left for Chicago by United Airlines skymaster at 11am on Thursday. On the way to the airport with us Charles announced "Oh Lordy! I've lost my ticket!" We helped him search his baggage in the airport lounge, and he phoned the 'Drake and asked them to search his room, but to no avail. So we took off without him, touching down at Salt Lake City, Denver and Omaha and landing at Chicago at 11pm, where we booked in at the Hotel Stevens. Next morning we had a telegram from Charles - "Ticket unfound expect arrive Chicago 7.30am Saturday". We had a strong suspicion that this hiatus was the result of a friendship he had struck up with an attractive personality he had met at KGO studios. Charles had great charm. He swept people off their feet - a law unto himself.

Chicago

We had a room on the 24th floor of the "Stevens" (now renamed the "Conrad Hilton") facing Lake Michigan across an expanse of park. I had never slept on such a

high floor before, and after looking down on the ant-like human objects in Michigan Avenue I placed a heavy lounge chair in front of my window in case I walked in my sleep.

The atmosphere was very different from San Francisco. The streets were flat, the buildings dingy, the air smoky. Trains thundered down a main street on the overhead railroad.

Chicago had become one of the centres for network live TV production, with programmes relayed both to the east and the west. We spent three days inspecting WGN-TV and WNBC studios and observing network production and outside broadcast operations. Charles joined us at a TV outside-broadcast from the Lincoln Park Zoo on Sunday. Jack and I had one night out on Saturday at the Blackstone Theatre where we saw a musical revue in which all the men in the cast were paraplegics, performing in wheelchairs - veterans from the US forces.

We were finding an enormous amount of information to absorb, and had had only two nights free of TV or flying, since leaving home. I sat up till 3.45am writing notes in our hotel room on our last night in Chicago, and my first proper letter home - postcards were quicker!

Toronto

Jack and I left Chicago at midday on Monday 26th February, by a Trans Canada DC3 with very noisy Rolls Royce engines, once again without Charles. A notice in the plane said "NO SMOKING - DEFENSE DE FUMER"

Now the accent of the hostess was softer than American, and she talked to some passengers in French.

When we landed at Toronto there were no hire cars to drive us to the city from the airport and we had to wait. The Canadians were not very helpful with our baggage. When we entered the Royal York Hotel - "largest in the British Empire" - with both arms laden, our hats blew off in the cold north wind and no-one helped to retrieve them.

We were dog tired and retired early, sleeping till 10am on Sunday. Charles arrived just before midnight.

Toronto on Sunday was dead - the snow-lined streets deserted, the shop windows un-lit. Melbourne Sunday was lively by comparison. Our first impression was of a cold, inhospitable city. Meals were much cheaper than in USA but clothing seemed expensive. Bars closed from 6.30 to 8.30pm and shut down at 11pm for the night. The maximum temperature was around 29oF, but the snow began to thaw during the day, making the streets horribly

slushy and slippery to walk on. Postage to Australia was double the USA rate.

Canada had not yet commenced a TV service, but planning and construction was well under way and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation expected to begin services in Toronto and Montreal in 1952. However, more than 40,000 TV receivers were in use in areas covered by US television stations across the border - and this was of some concern to the Canadian Government who feared the population would become "Americanised". We spent a week at Toronto, having detailed discussions with their key TV personnel and examining their plans. The Toronto TV studios were at the foundation stage, with a great hole in the ground matching the open canyon down Yonge Street, excavated for a future underground railway.

Toronto was to become the centre for production of English language programmes, and Montreal the centre for the French counterpart.

On two evenings we all visited Mr E.L. Bushnell (CBC Director General of Programmes) and his wife at their home in Forest Hill, a suburb of Toronto, to watch TV reception from the Buffalo station across the border - 68 miles across Lake Ontario - and reception was remarkably good. This was our first opportunity to watch a TV programme as domestic viewers - because at San Francisco and Chicago we had seen TV only from the production and

technical side. At the Bushnells we saw a live variety show, Helen Hayes acting in a play "Mary of Scotland", a detective film, and a news session. We succumbed to the hypnotic fascination of the 17" screen, but we were able to identify technical problems in horizontal streaking of highlights and halo around marked contrasts in the monochrome picture. The newsreader illustrated the difficulty of satisfactory presentation of news on TV.

Mr Hilliard, the CBC Toronto Supervising Engineer, was very helpful. We attended a cocktail party at the University Club, and on the Saturday were driven by Harry Boyle of the CBC to Buffalo via Niagara Falls.

Unfortunately the day was overcast and wet and the visibility poor. The famous Horseshoe Falls were green, and the spray arose like a cloud of dense white mist. The noise, like thunder, gives Niagara Falls its name - American Indian for "great thundering waters".

At Buffalo we were entertained to dinner at the Statler Hotel by Mr Steinberg, conductor of the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra, and returning to Toronto we went to the Stadium and watched the last 20 minutes of an ice hockey match - beautifully graceful and incredibly fast - on a pure white rink with red and blue playing lines. We were told that the ice could be melted in the morning to prepare the rink for a circus a few hours later. Sunday

was fully occupied catching up on notes and correspondence.

Ottawa

We flew the short distance to Ottawa by Trans Canada on Monday 5th March at 7am, again without Charles, to stay at the Chateau Laurier - a delightfully French chateau-like building with thick snow covering the roof and banked-up in the corners and crevices of the walls.

Jack and I visited the Australian High Commissioner, Mr Frank Ford, to collect a further very necessary dollar advance and inspected the plant of the Canadian National Film Board which was to be used extensively in TV film operations. Charles arrived about midnight.

On Tuesday, after further discussions on film operations, we all were driven round the city in the High Commissioner's car, had drinks at his home and then dinner with him at the Rideau Club - a typically English environment. We liked Ottawa very much - a great improvement on terse Toronto - but we learned how treacherous thick snow can be when it begins to thaw. I sank down to my knees and had to empty ice-cold water from my shoes. Ottawa women wore fur-topped boots over their shoes and looked like puss-in-boots on the snow-covered pavement. Snow ploughs were busy all day in the street.

Montreal

Trans Canada took us to Montreal on Wednesday 7th March, this time with Charles. We booked in at the Windsor Hotel and immediately attended a CBC conference which was surveying their plans for TV and which continued on the following day.

Our five days in Montreal were noteworthy for the discussions we had with Mr Alphonse Duimet, Chief Engineer and Coordinator of Television in the CBC. I well remember when, during the first few minutes of our discussions with him, he opened the drawer of his desk, took out a bottle of milk, poured himself a drink and said "Don't let this happen to you!" He reminded us that television had become known as "the ulcer game". He was a philosopher and a fine engineer, most constructive and down-to-earth with his advice, and his analysis of the characteristics required in individual members of a television crew left a lasting impression.

Alphonse Duimet subsequently visited Australia in December 1954 at the invitation of Charles Moses "to tell the ABC how TV was working in Canada". He was then General Manager of CBC.

All CBC personnel in Montreal were extremely helpful, friendly and considerate. They took us to dinner several times and we responded by having Dr Frigon

(CBC General Manager), Mr Duimet and Mr Olive (CBC Director General of Engineering) to dinner at the Windsor.

We had many interesting discussions about the language problem in Canada, and the perennial conflict between French and English speaking Canadians. Many of the Montreal personnel were bi-lingual but Montreal was more French, just as Toronto was more English. The traditional rivalry between these two cities was in some ways like that between Sydney and Melbourne. Montreal was more like Sydney - Toronto more like Melbourne. Ottawa, like Canberra, was the meat in the sandwich. The atmosphere in Montreal was carefree - Sunday was as lively as any day in the week - and the bi-lingual street signs gave it a cosmopolitan air. We loved Montreal, and the CBC personnel were particularly helpful because they gave us the results of their own investigations into the best way to plan for TV.

On the Saturday Mr Olive drove us all to St Adele, a skiing resort in the Laurentian Mountains. As we entered the heavier snow, Olive had to put chains on his car wheels. It was a beautifully sunny day and we sat and sipped beer in front of the Chantier - very French looking with its turrets, and built of a grey stone not unlike our Melbourne bluestone - as we watched the skiers glide silently down the snow covered slopes to the frozen lake. The houses scattered on the distant mountain

* slopes were brightly painted in reds and yellows with red, blue and green shingle roofs - a delightful contrast to the pure white background of snow.

That evening we went to see the Ice Hockey at the Montreal Forum, where the Canadians beat the Chicago Black Hawks to the delight of the spectators, then supper at the Chicken Barbeque on Mount Royal with Messrs. Odette and Valiquette of the CBC and their French-speaking wives.

On the Sunday I went for a walk to McGill University where the late Stephen Leacock, my favourite humourist, was professor of political science. I marvelled at the plaque set in the wall in memory of Lord Rutherford, professor of Physics 1898-1909, then climbed up the snow covered slope and 216 steps to the top of Mount Royal - where squirrels scampered up and down the trunks of the leafless silver birch and elm trees, frisking across the snow with their grey tails plumed out behind them. The squirrels were a delight, quite tame. They came to me when I made a clicking noise and sat up, holding nuts in their little front paws, black shining eyes in brown faces with the speckly grey tail curling right up over their grey backs.

* I drank in the wonderful view of the city below and the St Laurence River in the distance. The lights were beginning to come on as the mist rose from the river, and

the thump, thump of horses' hooves in the snow accompanied the jingling of bells on tourist sleighs coming up the mountain road which is banned to motor traffic. This beautiful spot was to be the site of their television transmitter.

New York

We booked in at the New Weston Hotel at the corner of Madison Avenue and E50th Street, on the 14th floor. The three of us had a suite of rooms. We had been met at La Guardia Airport by Nell Fleming, an ageing but vivacious and charming former soubrette of the Australian musical comedy stage who was the very efficient ABC representative in New York. She proved to be a wonderful help in establishing contacts for us in this great city.

On the following day we called on the Australian Consul General, General Smart, and made contacts in the CBS and NBS television networks. That evening I went with Charles to Carnegie Hall to hear the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy, with the pianist Solomon playing the 2nd Brahms concerto. Charles took me backstage afterwards and we met Ormandy, Solomon, William Schuman (whose 3rd symphony had been played) and Benny Goodman. The orchestra had to return to Philadelphia that night, and we walked to the railway station with them and had supper at the station restaurant with Ormandy and his wife. This was the first of my several

free musical experiences on this world trip, made possible by the multitude of contacts Charles had in the music world. With my consuming love of music they left impressions I have never forgotten.

We spent three weeks in New York, the most hectic part of our trip. There was so much to do and see, with six major television stations, live network productions, equipment manufacturers and the most experienced TV personnel in the world. We saw many productions at WNBT, WCBS-TV and WJZ-TV of the three major networks and at the independents WOR-TV, WPIX and WABD. We visited Kliegl Bros. to discuss lighting equipment and the Johns Manville Sales Corporation to discuss air conditioning for studios. We saw demonstrations of field-sequential colour TV at CBS Studios and dot-sequential compatible colour TV at the Hazeltine Laboratories at Little Neck. I attended a colour TV symposium at the Convention of the Institute of Radio Engineers. During our stay in New York we saw TV coverage of the Costello court enquiry in what was known as the Kefauver Hearing - a foretaste of the power of television in relation to judicial enquiries. I had accumulated 70 pages of notes in New York alone.

Jack and I spent most of our spare time together - Charles usually had other commitments. We spent our first free night exploring Broadway - the "Great White Way" which runs the length of Manhattan Island from north

to south - and Times Square. Here was surely the most wonderful collection of electric signs in the world, and all the colours of the rainbow. A man's face in a huge poster, puffing out smoke rings to advertise Camel Cigarettes, Little Lulu in electric lights pulling out Kleenex Tissues, liquid light pouring out of a gigantic beer bottle, a lighted ribbon of news running round the top of the Times Building. In 1951 this was sheer magic! Many shops open 24 hours, and the streets full of people at midnight.

New York was a city with no trains or trams in its streets, only buses, taxis and cars blowing their horns twice. Steam rising in wisps from steel manholes and turncocks in the roadways - visible evidence at night of the steam heating in city buildings. Chicken and ham and blueberry pie and every brand of whisky in the world - but steak grills costing the earth!

We had been given a room to use as an office on the 33rd floor of the International Building in the Rockefeller Centre which comprised a group of 15 buildings on more than 12 acres between Fifth Avenue and Avenue of the Americas and between 48th and 51st Streets - not far from our hotel. We had a marvellous view of this forest of skyscrapers.

At the end of our first week, in the course of a television discussion, J.R. Poppele, Vice President and

Chief Engineer of WOR-TV, said to all three of us "Say, what have you guys seen in New York?" We said we had seen Times Square and a couple of shows on Broadway.

He said "Yes, but why don't you take a look at the place? Go up the Empire State Building. Take a launch trip round Manhattan. You might never come this way again. Relax over weekends and look around!"

We took his advice. Next weekend was Easter weekend, and Jack and I took a pleasure cruise around Manhattan Island, passing under the nineteen bridges which link it to the mainland and Long Island on either side, listening to a three-hour discourse on everything that seemed to be the world's biggest, the world's longest or the world's highest - but never the world's oldest. We marvelled at the Statue of Liberty, the multi-storied skyline and the three levels of roadway that skirt the island on one side like decks on an ocean going liner. On Sunday morning we watched the Easter Parade down Fifth Avenue - a fantasy of fancy dress with women wearing the most outrageous hats and posing for photographs - then gazed fascinated at the skating on the open sunken rink at the Rockefeller Centre.

We took the two-stage elevators to the 86th floor of the Empire State Building and looked down on Manhattan through the afternoon mist.

Shopping at Macey's, which was no better than our Melbourne Myer Emporium, we had difficulty with our accent. Everyone thought you were English, as you didn't have an American or Canadian accent, and shop assistants regard the English as an object of fun.

I bought some dress lengths for Phyll and Chris and a nylon blouse, stockings, shirt and ties. Nylon was unknown then in Melbourne. Folding umbrellas - then a novelty - for Phyll and Marjorie, coloured "Viewmaster" fairytale and travel slides with a stereoscopic viewer for Chris, and LP records for myself - I hadn't yet bought a pick-up to play these, which were something new.

On arriving in New York I was delighted to receive letters from Phyll and Chris, but very concerned to hear that dad had entered hospital in Adelaide on February 23rd with kidney trouble, and subsequently undergone an operation which was hopefully successful.

Jack and I spent the next Sunday afternoon strolling through the two and a half mile long and half mile wide Central Park; and inspecting the Zoo there. It is possible to actually feel you are in the country in Central Park, right in the middle of the biggest city of the western world. We talked to the squirrels and, for the time being, forgot television. Then we visited St Patricks Cathedral and St Thomas' Episcopal Church, both on Fifth Avenue. I had an agreement with Jack - I would

visit Roman Catholic churches with him if he would inspect Anglican churches with me. The Episcopal Church is the American version of the Church of England - without the leadership of the British Sovereign. Jack and I hit it off well together.

We all went to see Don Giovanni at the Metropolitan Opera House and sat in the General Manager's box, with supper afterwards at a bar run by Jack Dempsey, the former world champion heavyweight boxer whom Charles knew personally - and to a recital by Harold Blair the Australian aboriginal tenor at the Town Hall, where Charles was guest of honour.

Charles visited Atlanta over Easter. He returned on Easter Monday on the 2.30am plane with a very bad cold, but insisted on going to the ABC office. Nell Fleming sent him back to the New Weston to go to bed at noon, and Jack and I went out to do some shopping. We returned at 6pm to find Charles looking very sick in bed, with Nell waiting on him. After tea Jack and I took Nell to The Broadway Theatre to see "Green Pastures", a marvellous negro allegory about Heaven, with an all negro cast. We returned to our hotel at midnight, to find Charles' room empty. He had gone out in the snow to a farewell concert by Kirsten Flagstad!! Strangely enough he seemed none the worse for it next morning.

During those three weeks in New York Jack and I saw three other excellent plays on Broadway - "Billy Budd", a brilliant play largely in blank verse, based on the novel by Herman Melville and starring Dennis King with Lee Marvin; "The Happy Time", a play about French Canadians, with Eva Gabor; and "Second Threshold", a play about middle age, with Clive Brook.

"Billy Budd" was adapted from the novel by two young Princeton graduates, but after running at the Biltmore Theatre for only a month it was about to close because of poor box-office, despite support from the critics. The actors accepted drastic salary cuts to keep the show on, and producers succeeded in attracting more backing. Schoolteachers urged their classes to see the play. As a result business perked up and the closing was postponed. The story has since been made into a film and also an opera.

One evening I went to Radio City Music Hall in the Rockefeller Centre to see Fred Astaire and Jane Powell in the film "Royal Wedding", and the elaborate Easter stage presentation with the famous "Rockettes" troupe of precision dancers. This was a cinema par excellence.

On the eve of St Patrick's Day (17th March) the white line down the centre of Fifth Avenue was painted green for five city blocks, a traditional preparation for the annual procession next day. In the early hours of

the morning a group of communists painted it red, and the police had to organise an emergency second coat of green. There are many Irishmen in New York, and they wear green-dyed carnations on St Patrick's Day.

In our second week in New York Jack and I went by train to Washington - a four hour journey - for discussions with the Australian Military Mission on the importance of a television industry to the defence of the country, and for discussions with Federal Communications Commission personnel. We had dinner with Colin Moodie - then a diplomat at the Australian Embassy. I had rung Colin before leaving New York, and I was a guest overnight in his apartment. We thought Washington a beautiful city, with tree-lined roads winding up hill and down dale between lovely Georgian homes. When Jack left for his hotel, snow was falling. This was our first encounter of an actual snow fall on the trip - lovely downy flakes that speckle your clothes - as light as air. We returned to New York next day, dining on the train.

On our last Saturday in New York Jack and I went to see the great Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "South Pacific", starring Mary Martin and Ray Middleton at the Majestic Theatre. Charles had already seen it. This was the current "smash hit" on Broadway, and you heard messenger boys whistling the airs from it all over New York. In later years when I encountered Jack he always greeted me with "There is nothing like a dame," and I

would reply "Nothing in the world" - quotations from one of the hit numbers in the show. It was a wonderful end to three wonderful weeks.

During our stay in New York the Americans were wonderfully helpful and disarmingly informal. It required only a phone call to obtain an invitation to a discussion at very short notice. They were frank and generous with their advice and exceedingly hospitable.

Nell Fleming came to the airport on Monday 2nd April to farewell us when we departed for London on the BOAC double-decker stratocruiser "Monarch" at 4.30pm. We slept in our seats during the 12 hour flight and were met by Bill Bearup the ABC London representative at London Airport at 9.30am Greenwich Time.

London

Driving up to London from the airport gave us the uncanny feeling of coming home. The outer suburban streets were like South Melbourne or Jolimont, with recognizable architecture and people who looked like us! London buildings were exactly as we expected them to be. The bright red double-decker buses were the only splashes of colour in the streets of smoky-grey buildings, but what a thrill it was to pass Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, Trafalgar Square and Piccadilly Circus! We felt that nothing in London failed to come up

to expectations. There was a solidity about it that was missing in the USA. The taxis were certainly a joke after the heated ones in America, but they turned round almost on a sixpence and they were all the same - black, with an open luggage space beside the driver, a deep passenger space with two extra flap-down seats behind the driver's glass-topped partition, and a universal driver's "uniform" - cloth cap pulled well down, thick greatcoat and muffler. They needed this to keep out the winter cold, and they knew London like the back of your hand.

Bill Bearup drove us to our hotel - Grosvenor House in Park Lane. Here we had our first taste of British class distinctions. When we were about to sign the register the rather superior reception clerk called "Page - Take the gentleman's coat!" Bill was a wonderful help in London, as Nell had been in New York.

Hyde Park, opposite Grosvenor House, was fringed with daffodils growing wild, and not a soul would dream of picking them! Daffodils in window boxes - Hanover Square full of golden tulips. We found meat was scarce and expensive in 1951. Venison was sold in most restaurants.

On our first day we lunched with Bill Bearup and R.V. McKay (well settled in London) at "Simpsons on the Strand" - renowned restaurant for business lunches. In the evening Charles took us to hear "Tosca" at the Covent

Garden Opera House and introduced us to the star, Hilda Zadek, in her dressing room afterwards.

Although there was then only one television service in England - the BBC transmitting the same programme in London and Birmingham - we found it necessary to spend three weeks there in order to cover the ground laid down in our terms of reference, and this necessitated obtaining approval from the Director General for an extension to our itinerary. This was given readily.

The main reason for this requirement for more time was the difference in tempo between the American and British methods of providing information. Whereas the Americans had been frank and informal and ready to arrange discussions at the drop of a hat, we found their British counterparts rather guarded, very formal and meticulous about arranging business discussions with due notice and doing everything "in the right way". Although they were anxious to be helpful, we found this adherence to formalities sometimes exasperating. It was the difference between the new world and the old, between the "go-getting" approach of the Americans and the conservatism of the British.

The best of the American live TV programmes - such as high-budget drama and variety - were as good as the British, but the American staff involved was considerably less and the time allotted to preparation and rehearsal

considerably shorter than in corresponding BBC productions. Undoubtedly the low-budget American programmes compared unfavourably with the simplest BBC programmes, but the BBC tended to use far more staff and time in producing these than would have been considered economically justifiable in the USA. However, it must be said that the technical quality of the BBC 405 line TV pictures compared favourably with that of the 525 line pictures in the USA. The BBC engineers were extracting the last ounce of performance from their limited system, but flicker was noticeable if the picture brightness was increased to the level we had become accustomed to for daylight viewing in America. We had a TV set in our room at Grosvenor House.

We inspected the BBC studios at Alexandra Palace on the outskirts of London and at Lime Grove in Shepherd's Bush. Also their London Transmitter at Alexandra Palace and their Birmingham Transmitter at Sutton Coldfield. Alexandra Palace was where the BBC began the world's first public television broadcasting service in 1937, and was quite unsuitable for large scale production and very cramped, the two studios being only 30ft wide.

It had begun as temporary accommodation for the experimental service in 1936, and was retained when programmes resumed at relatively short notice in 1946 after the close-down during World War II. Lime Grove, previously the J. Arthur Rank Film Studios, had two

studios converted to television use in 1951 and these were two to three times as big as the Alexandra Palace studios. Three others were about to be converted for TV. Mr H.W. Baker, Assistant Superintendant Engineer, Television, was particularly helpful in showing us the Lime Grove facilities and discussing requirements. I maintained a correspondence with him for some years afterwards.

We had a most interesting discussion with the BBC civil engineer rejoicing in the intriguing name of Marmaduke Tudsbery Tudsbery, about their plans for new studio buildings on 13 acres of the White City site at Shepherds Bush where mother attended the Franco-British Exhibition in 1908. The plan for the studio building, shaped like a question mark, evolved from thoughtful doodling on a plan of the site sketched on an envelope by Mr Graham Dawbarn (the architect appointed by the BBC), in a 1949 discussion he had with Mr Tudsbery. In the circular part of the plan there were to be seven large studios with associated control rooms. The scenery facilities were to be in a separate block which would be constructed first to serve the existing Alexandra Palace and Lime Grove studios.

We saw many live programmes of all types in rehearsal and production at Alexandra Palace and Lime Grove, and outside TV broadcasts at Regent's Park Zoo and the Wembley Soccer Stadium.

A week after arriving in London I received letters from mother, Phyll and Chris. Dad had now been in hospital for six weeks, but mother sounded hopeful for his recovery. Next morning Kelvin Smith rang from Roy McKay's office to give me the sad news that dad had passed away overnight on April 11th. Phyll rang me on the overseas phone, and I rang mother as soon as I was able to get through. I said if she needed me urgently I would come home at once in response to a cable. Mother sounded shocked but composed, and she had Marjorie with her. I wrote her a long letter which she replied to on the 19th. My uncle Jack, dad's youngest brother, helped mother with the necessary arrangements. Dad's old firm were very considerate and Mr Mitchell went to Adelaide for the funeral. I promised mother I would join her immediately I returned on May 2nd, but as she was being well cared for I felt I should discharge my responsibilities to the Department first as there was still much to be done.

We visited the factories of Pye at Cambridge, EMI at Hayes and Marconi at Chelmsford - the three major English manufacturers of TV equipment - and Strand Electric in Covent Garden, suppliers of lighting equipment. EMI demonstrated a 625 line flying spot scanner for 35mm film but not for 16mm.

After our visit to the Pye factory at Cambridge, Jack and I wandered round the quadrangles of King's

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College and Trinity before catching the train back to London. When we visited the EMI factory at Hayes with Charles we had lunch with Sir Ernest Risk (then Managing Director), Elisabeth Schwarzkopf the famous Viennese soprano and her husband Walter Legge who was in charge of EMI recording. So we were often able to combine business with pleasure.

To a large extent our BBC discussions and inspections were governed by detailed itineraries prepared by senior BBC personnel, a form of regimentation which was rather irksome after the informality of our American movements.

We had discussions in Broadcasting House (the BBC headquarters and sound studios in the heart of London) with Sir Noel Ashbridge, Director of Technical Services, George Barnes, Director of Television and many senior members of their staff. They seemed to regard this invasion from "down under" as an interesting novelty. I remember George Barnes, when he first met us outside the building, saying jovially "Do I see some broad-brimmed hats?" In those days hats were still fashionable, and the brims of the Australian variety were probably wider than worn in England. The English image of the average Australian was associated with sheep-stations and stockwhips.

However, the staffs of the BBC, the ABC London Office and Australia House were all most hospitable and we were entertained to lunch and attended cocktail parties on several occasions. It sometimes became difficult to complete our essential investigations in the presence of such hospitality.

Charles took us to a performance of "Take it from us" at the Adelphi Theatre, a stage version of the popular radio show "Take it from Here" starring Jimmy Edwards and the Australians Joy Nichols and Dick Bentley. Also to a performance by the London Symphony Orchestra at the Albert Hall, with Walter Gieseking playing the Beethoven "Emperor" piano concerto. During the first half of this programme we sat in a celebrity box with Gieseking.

With Jack I went to see the Folies Begere Revue at the Hippodrome, in which Tommy Cooper and Joe Latona were starred, and two plays - a comedy "Blue for a Boy" starring Richard ("Mr Pastry") Hearne and the Jean Anouilh charade with music "Ring Round the Moon", starring Margaret Rutherford and a very youthful Claire Bloom.

On our second Friday in England, after visiting the Sutton Coldfield TV transmitter with Roy McKay, the three of us parted company for the weekend - Charles went to North Wales, Jack to Dublin and I caught the train from

Birmingham to Stratford-upon-Avon and booked in at the "Swans Nest" Hotel overlooking the placid Avon River, with its white swans gliding majestically.

That Friday night I went to the Memorial Theatre, just across the river, and saw a magnificent performance of Shakespeare's "Henry IV, Part I", starring Richard Burton as Prince Henry with Anthony Quayle as Falstaff and Michael Redgrave, Raymond Westwell, Rosalind Atkinson and Barbara Jefford. In 1951 those names meant little and were virtually unknown in Australia. Next day I explored the Guild Chapel, Shakespeare's house and Ann Hathaway's cottage, but concluded that Stratford was far too commercialised.

I caught a bus to Chipping Campden and spent a delightful and peaceful afternoon wandering round this charming unspoiled Cotswold village with its warm honey-coloured stone buildings and thatched cottage roofs. I had just taken a photo, and asked an elderly local strolling past "What street is this?" He scratched his head and said "I don't rightly know. I think it must be 'igh Street!"

In a little village like this, almost unchanged since the 14th century, you don't need street names. Everyone knows everyone, and that's all that matters. I climbed the hills on either side and looked down on this handful of humanity nestling in a vale of the Cotswold

hills, with its thatched roofs and smoke rising from chimneys as it has for 600 years. A study in the beauty of simplicity. This was my most memorable day in Britain.

It was eight miles to Moreton-in-Marsh railway station on the main line to London via Oxford. I asked where I could get a taxi and was told "At the Lig'n Arms". I went searching the main street for an inn displaying a leg and arms sign, only to find that it was "The Lygon Arms" they referred me to. In Melbourne we pronounce Lygon Street as "Lie-gon Street". The historical origin has been lost in colonial history.

Reaching Oxford by the evening train, I booked in at the Randolph Hotel. Oxford streets were deserted on Saturday night, and next morning when I came down to breakfast the dining room was deserted too. A waitress gave me an unwelcome stare - I was told breakfast was off! Not having kept up with the local news I had not realised that daylight saving had begun at midnight, and my watch was now an hour slow. I had to be content with tea and marmalade on toast.

Oxford I found completely different from anything I had imagined - a town within a university - shops and business houses intermingled with college architecture of unparalleled beauty. Oxford has been called the city of dreaming spires. It is more than that. It nourishes the

roots of the nation. I wandered around no less than 16 colleges. At 6 o'clock on that Sunday evening all the bells in Heaven seemed to give voice at once in a score of different tones. A place for meditation. The true university atmosphere, and the townspeople are part of it - and know it.

I had dinner at "the Trout", a charming old 12th century inn at Godstow on the banks of the Thames, 3 miles from the centre of Oxford. Catching the late train back to London I reached Paddington Station at midnight, after an eventful weekend.

I looked up our old friend of the family, Kath Skinner, who was working in London and living in a Belgrave flat with some other Australian girls, half a mile from Buckingham Palace. Jack and I took Kath to lunch and dinner during our stay and we had tea with the girls at their flat. Kath accompanied us to the Tower of London and to see "Blue for a Boy". It was good to have a friend of my own age who "knew the ropes" in this great city.

One night Grenville Williams of the BBC Colonial Service took Jack and me on a "pub crawl" to five of London's classic English pubs - all different and each with a character of its own. We had become used to England's relatively warm beer, but it's the company and the atmosphere that counts. One weekend we were driven

through beautiful Surrey by Beresford Clark of the BBC to see their Receiving Station at Tatsfield, and on the way back we visited Hampton Court and inspected the gigantic 182 years old Great Vine, which grows under a canopy of glass with its roots fertilized in a large empty plot outside.

We managed to find time to visit the new Festival Hall, then nearing completion for the Festival of Britain later in 1951 on the south bank of the Thames; and shopped in Oxford Street. I bought a Decca three speed turntable and microgroove pick-up (with interchangeable heads for 78rpm) for the LP records purchased in New York.

The winter had been Britain's wettest for 80 years, but our last Sunday in London was a beautiful day. We had been invited to lunch with Mr and Mrs Beresford Clark in Kensington, and on the way passed a troupe of Life Guards riding towards Buckingham palace on their black horses, their white-plumed helmets nodding as the horses marched in time and their scarlet cloaks looking very smart in the bright sunlight. Fathers and sons were sailing model yachts on the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens. After lunch we visited Kensington Palace and walked down the stairs which the young Victoria descended to learn she was Queen that morning a hundred years before.

On our last evening in London Jack and I went to St Paul's Cathedral to listen to Evensong before attending a farewell cocktail party. We left London airport by the 3pm BEA flight to Paris on Tuesday 24th April, having left some excess baggage with Bill Bearup for return to Australia by sea.

Paris

Reaching Paris airport at 4.40 we booked in at Hotel Lotti in Rue de Castiglione, just around the corner from the Garden of the Tuileries. We were very amused by the formalities of this Parisian Hotel. Ushered into the office of the manager, we sat in front of his desk while he took down the details of our stay, which was to be for three nights only. The same formalities were observed in presenting our account when we left.

That night Jack and I went to the Casino de Paris to see a revue, "Gay Paris", starring the American Mary Meade. We arrived after the first two numbers, but the staging was magnificent and the show very much along the lines of the Folies Bergere Revue we had seen at the London Hippodrome. We had some difficulty in finding our way back to our hotel, and had our tourist map of Paris spread out on a stonework balustrade when a well-dressed gentleman stopped and asked if he could help. After struggling for some minutes with my limited French, he said "Do you speak English?", and explained that he was

American. We obtained the necessary directions with less difficulty in our mother tongue.

Next day we had an interview with M. Porche, the Director General of Radio Diffusion et Television Francaises, and arranged to see the Paris TV studios. With the rest of the day free, Jack and I visited the Arc de Triomphe in the Place de l'Etoile. We decided to take advantage of the BBC offer of assistance from their Paris office, so I left Jack sitting in the sun in the Place de l'Etoile and descended into the entrance of the Etoile station of the Metropolitan underground railway. There was a queue of people in front of a telephone booth, so I joined the queue to call the BBC office. When I reached the booth I found the telephone had a coin attachment with three slots - one marked 1F, one 2F, and one T-shaped.

Not knowing how much a phone call would cost, I left the booth and sought information at a nearby newspaper kiosk. The attendant told me I needed a "token" to fit the T slot. This I purchased, and rejoined the queue. I thought it best to enlist the help of a local, so I said to the man next to me "Pardonnez-moi, monsieur, je suis Australien. Je desire essayer un coup de telefon, parlez-vous Anglais?" He shrugged his shoulders and with a raise of his hands replied "Non- seulement "I love you"."

Evidently this phrase would be the most useful to a Parisian, and possibly he had acquired it as a prelude to international relations. However, he was very helpful. He inserted my token in the T slot and dialled the BBC number (which I showed him on a piece of paper) only to gain no response. By this time the BBC staff had gone to lunch!

I climbed up the stairs to find Jack still sitting in the sunshine, but somewhat fidgety. He said he had been accosted three times!

We were rather taken-aback to find we had to pay to take the lift to the top of the Arc de Triomphe, but once there we understood how the Place gained its name. The Arc was at the centre of a gigantic red star, formed in the pavement below - a star with 12 points, each pointing to one of the tree-lined avenues which stretch out like the spokes of a gigantic wheel. The most beautiful was the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, with its four rows of trees, wide pavements and cafe tables set out before the striped awnings of shops. The traffic below gyrated furiously around the Arc. The Place of the Star!

Jack didn't believe in carefully composed pictures, and cheerfully snapped views of the Avenues while I was studiously setting up my camera on the parapet of the Arc - blissfully unaware that I was being watched by a uniformed attendant. The attendant waited till I pressed

the trigger, then advanced and told me that would be 12 francs! Jack thought it was a great joke. He had taken several snaps for nothing, but my one of the Avenue d'Iena with the Eiffel Tower in the distance cost 12 francs. I decided one was enough!

After lunch we went to the BBC office in Avenue Hoche, met Charles and all strolled down the Champs-Elysees, enjoying its atmosphere of leisurely well-being. The BBC staff had arranged seats for us at l'Opera, which we were to collect there that evening. I had been told to announce myself as "Je suis le Director General de la Radio Australienne" at the box office. This I did, with some trepidation, and was handed two excellent tickets for Jack and myself. It was a ballet programme, including "Scheherazade", with Serge Lifar dancing in his own ballet "Suite en Blanc".

Next day, Thursday 26th April, was a day packed with impressions. In the morning we all visited the Louvre, set in gardens with magnificent formal beds of flowers, and marvelled at the original statue of the Venus de Milo, Leonardo's Mona Lisa and paintings by Boticelli and Titian. Jack and I took Miss Hall of the BBC office (who had organised the Ballet tickets for us) to lunch at Chez Mercier in Rue Lincoln just off the Champs-Elysees, after which she helped me choose a frock for Phyll at "Marlene" in that famous Avenue. The madame in charge asked me which one of her assistants had a figure nearest to that

of my wife, and then had that girl parade the frock for me to see. Phyll was delighted with this purchase when I returned home. Jack bought a coat for his wife.

At 3.45pm we visited the Paris TV studios in Rue Cognacq-Jay with Charles. There were three indoor studios and one "en plein air" on the roof. Two of the indoor studios had permanently equipped control rooms, each with two cameras operating on 441 line standards and two on 819 line standards, with duplicate control room equipment for the two standards. Production took place on the two standards simultaneously, with a separate producer for each. Picture monitors in the control rooms were in two rows, one above the other, over the window surveying the studio - 819 line definition in the upper row and 441 line definition below.

We saw a ballet programme in rehearsal, and the 441 line monitor pictures were actually better than those on the 819 lines. A technician raised his hands, shrugged his shoulders and said "Today she is not so good. Maybe better tomorrow!"

We also saw a children's programme in rehearsal in the third indoor studio, using an O.B. van in the street outside as a control room. This used 819 line standards and the pictures were excellent. The impression gained was that the 819 line equipment was capable of excellent performance but was poorly maintained.

Then we all visited the Eiffel Tower. A lift took us to the top of this 986ft steel structure - the world's tallest when it was built in 1889 - where the Paris TV transmitters were installed. We were escorted by a charming "speakerine" from the TV studios, and when we reached the top Charles clung to her protectively, explaining that he suffered from vertigo. We purchased the conventional miniature replicas of the tower from the tourist shop and I took a colour photo of the wonderful panorama of the city - the Seine stretching out in a winding vista of sparkling water between tree-lined boulevards with a score of bridges linking the two halves of the city. Near the horizon the cathedral of Sacre Coeur rose white and glistening in the late afternoon sunlight.

Three days in Paris - a fragment of time but what a wonderful impression - surely one of the world's most beautiful cities.

Charles was to remain in Paris for a few days, but Jack and I were due to move on to Rome to connect with our return flight to Australia. Our train was scheduled to leave the Gare de Lyon at 7.50pm. We had packed and checked-out of our hotel that morning.

. We found our carriage and installed our baggage, but I discovered I was nearly out of pipe tobacco and I needed toothpaste. Jack said there wasn't time, but I

wandered back along the platform to buy some from a newspaper kiosk. The attendant spoke no English and I had to make do with sign language to explain what I required.

Eventually I succeeded, and as I walked back to our carriage along the crowded platform the train began to move. I hurriedly boarded the nearest carriage and laboriously made my way forward along the passenger-cluttered corridor as the train gathered speed. At last I reached our compartment to find Jack looking very despondent, convinced that this crazy engineer had missed his train.

Rome and Homeward Bound

We had dinner in the dining car and the first stop was at Dijon, early on Friday morning. Then a stop at Modane and, after crossing the Italian border, at Torino, Alessandria, Genova, Spezia, Pisa and Grosseto, arriving in Rome at 6.20pm. This long railway journey gave me a chance to catch up on my technical notes, amplifying the jottings of the past several days. We had dining car meals and I was intrigued with a lever-type corkscrew which the Italian steward was using. He offered to get me one, so later I made my way back to the dining car to collect it.

When I went to return to our compartment I found that a door separating first and second class carriages was locked. The glass top of the door had a poster stuck over it and the only clear glass left was a narrow strip at about waist level. I had to crouch down on the floor to peer through this, and when I saw a conductor walking down the corridor on the other side I tapped sharply on the glass to attract his attention. Other passengers on my side were probably mystified at this peculiar behaviour, and when eventually I caught his attention I had great difficulty in convincing him that I was a first class passenger trapped in a second class carriage, because I did not have my ticket with me. Once more Jack thought he had lost me.

We booked in at the Grande Hotel and then walked around Rome in the rain. A strange Italian with an umbrella persistently offered us shelter, which Jack pointedly refused. I learned later that this fellow was probably touting for a house of ill-repute!

Next morning we packed and, taking a taxi, left our main baggage at the BOAC office and went on to the Basilica of St Peter. The sweeping curve of the colonnade of Bernini which embraces the piazza before the Basilica was awe-inspiring, and the nave of the church so enormous that it left us breathless. We were attracted by what looked like 20ft high paintings of incomparable brilliance and beauty on the walls, but closer inspection

showed these to be mosaics, made of pieces of coloured stone no more than quarter inch square.

We climbed up the spiral of stairs to the top of the cupola and gazed over this city of age and dignity, with the seven hills of Rome in the distance. The atmosphere of peace and tranquility was broken by Jack exclaiming that we would have to leave at once, or miss the plane. We took a taxi back to the hotel to collect our hand baggage, took a snap of the magnificent multi-jet fountain in the Piazza dell'Esedra, and caught the airport bus.

Jack heaved a sigh of relief when we reached the airport on time, but the plane departure was delayed by two and a quarter hours because an oil-indicating instrument had to be changed, and we eventually took off in the BOAC Constellation "Banbury" at 5.30pm, reaching Cairo at 11.30pm. Here we spent the night at the Heliopolis Palace Hotel and in the morning were dismayed to find that no soap was provided, despite the majestic appearance of the building. After breakfast, a brief walk down the dusty crowded main street and an hour's delay at the airport, our plane took off at 9.45am and landed at Karachi at 9.35pm where we had lunch at the "Speedbird Club". A native magician entertained passengers on the verandah. His magic phrase was "One, two three, half past three."

Leaving Karachi at 11.45pm we arrived at Calcutta at 5am, dozing fitfully on the plane. After breakfast we took off as a huge pink sun arose in the east. We reached Singapore at 3.45pm. Following a bus ride round the town, dinner and some very expensive drinks at Raffles Hotel, we walked round the crowded shops and market, purchasing tobacco at less than half the London price.

Next morning we woke at Raffles at 5.30am, had breakfast at the rather primitive airport during a heavy tropical thunderstorm and took off at 7.30am, stopping at Djakarta and reaching Darwin at 8.30pm. We were very glad to have a shower before dinner at the Berrimah airways quarters. There was a gecko on the lounge room floor. We were back home!

I sent telegrams to Phyll and the Director General. Mission completed! Flying south from Darwin over a low field of cloud, the dawn in the clear sky above was a thing of sombre beauty. All the shades of the rainbow were there, but not banded - the red and orange were compressed into a fiery line at the horizon with the green and blue stretching upwards from the yellow into the deeper violet of the heavens. Mascot airport was fogbound and after two hours of fruitless circling we were diverted to Dubbo. Landing at 10.45am we threw the local caterers into confusion with an unexpected demand for passengers' lunch. Eventually we reached Mascot at

2.45pm, on Wednesday 2nd May - 4 days from Rome and ten and a half weeks since leaving Australia. Jules Verne wrote "Around the World in Eighty Days" - Jack and I had done it in 74! I thought of Keat's sonnet -

"Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen -"

It had been a wonderful trip. We had covered all the ground we set out to cover, we had seen the world and accumulated an enormous amount of valuable and constructive information. Jack and I had got along famously together. We laughed at the same jokes, we understood each other. Charles was a charming enigma.

Because he was one of the delegation, we had met many notable people and enjoyed much wonderful music that we would not otherwise have met and enjoyed; but he lived in a different world and less than half our experiences were shared with him. He returned to Sydney about five days later.

Jack and I were met at Mascot by Mr Freeman of the PMG Superintending Engineers office, and driven to the Radio Section in Sydney where I met Reg Boyle, Jack Tuite and Ted Sim. Then we had a drink with Huck Finlay at the ABC offices. I rang Mother in Adelaide and Phyll in Melbourne. Booking in at the Wentworth for the night I was delighted to meet Hilda and Ned Newell, who were visiting Sydney. I had tea with them and their daughter Helen and talked about the trip.

First impressions are the most lasting. That trip has lived with me ever since. I had seen television services in operation, and found out what made them tick. I had accumulated over 270 pages of detailed manuscript notes. I had been blessed with good health to last the distance, met many interesting people and seen many wonderful sights which I was able to share with an agreeable companion. I learned how important that is when I made subsequent visits overseas, sometimes by myself. A man away from home in a strange country can become very lonely without a friend who speaks the same language and has similar reactions to his surroundings.

And, like Puck, I had girdled the earth!

Bringing the World Back Home

On Thursday May 3rd I was met at the Adelaide Airport at Parafield by Nurse Smith - our next door neighbour in the suburb of Glenunga and Mother's long-time friend - who drove me to our old family home at 122 Le Strange Street. Mother was well, and by now had recovered from the initial shock of dad's passing three weeks ago. I had a long talk with her about her future. For the time being she wished to remain in the family home. I examined her finances and made arrangements to augment her income to keep her living in comfort. Then I rang my uncle Jack Fisher - who had been a tower of

strength in mother's misfortune - and Phyll's family, the Williams, who still lived in Glenunga.

Next day I saw uncle Jack in his office, interviewed dad's solicitor, Marcus Badger, and dad's doctor John Frayne, who was an old school colleague of mine. I looked up my old cadet friends, Don Burnard, George McKinnon and Malcolm Rogers and rang Ted Stewart. Then I saw Marjorie and George at mother's home and called on the Williams family.

I flew home to Melbourne by the morning plane on Saturday 5th May after saying a very sad farewell to Mother. Phyll and our daughter Chris, then 9 years old, met me at Essendon airport with my faithful friend Bob Moodie, who drove us home to Burwood. It was great to be back and wonderful to see my family again - I had missed them very much. They were both very well and there was great excitement as I told them some of my adventures and they opened some gifts I had been able to bring back for them.

Back to work on the Monday I had discussions about my trip with Ted Stewart, Mr Chipindall and Mr Vanthoff. In the following week Ted told me he was recommending that my tentative classification as Supervising Engineer should be extended to cover the period required to prepare the Delegation Report. This was obviously going to be a lengthy job, and on Tuesday 22nd May I moved to

the ABCB offices in the Rialto Building, Collins Street, to commence the report with Jack Donovan. We had preliminary discussions on the desirable format of the report with Ray Allsop and Bruce Mair of the ABCB.

The Rialto Building was constructed in 1890-91 and is quite unique. The facade is very ornate, in what was known as a "free Italian Gothic" style, with gothic-arched windows and a turret on the north-east corner. The building stretched from Collins Street southwards to Flinders Lane, which was at a considerably lower level than Collins Street. It was separated from the adjacent building in Collins Street, the Winfield Building, by a narrow lane on the eastern side. This lane was at the same level as Flinders Lane, so that just south of the side entrance to the Rialto from Collins Street there was a sheer drop down to the laneway. This was known as Winfield Square. Anything less like a square than this long narrow cul-de-sac would be hard to imagine.

Every floor of the Rialto and the Winfield Buildings had side balconies overlooking the laneway and stretching right back to Flinders Lane, with iron railings which gave the two buildings the appearance of parallel ocean-going liners when viewed looking south from the Collins Street end. It seemed appropriate that the rear portion of the Rialto was occupied by the Marine Department. The front of the Rialto was occupied by a post office, and the ABCB had offices on two of the upper floors,

accessible by a hand-operated hydraulic lift. The lift attendant, after closing the door, had to haul smartly on a rope passing through the top and bottom of the lift. To stop at the required floor he had to apply judicious braking to the rope. Sometimes he was in a merry mood, the result of injudicious imbibing, and the movements of the lift were correspondingly erratic. I understand Dame Nellie Melba once had a music studio in this building.

The Rialto was placed under the control of the National Trust, and when a new 66 storey building was constructed in 1982-86 at the rear, the original facade of the Rialto was preserved and rejuvenated, and the laneway with its overlooking balconies was glassed over and transformed into an Atrium Restaurant which is part of the "Menzies at Rialto" Hotel now incorporated in the site.

The Minister had stated that "the whole question of television had to be approached for the time being on an experimental basis in view of the novel problems which would be encountered and the great expense which had to be incurred" and it must be remembered that the primary purpose of the overseas mission had been -

"to obtain information on matters relating to the establishment of the proposed national television station in Sydney and its operations during the experimental period."

As it was obvious that the Delegation Report would take a considerable time to complete, I first wrote an interim five page report entitled -

"Suggested Programme for the Establishment of the Proposed Television Service in Sydney"

The time factor was unknown. The purpose of the interim report was to suggest a possible approach in the event of early action being required at short notice. The suggested programme was based on advice obtained from television authorities in the USA, being the result of long experience in operations in which the emphasis was on economy in manpower and material. The suggestions were confined to the necessary functional steps to be taken and made no reference to the nature of the administration which might be given the responsibility of establishing the television service. However, the interim report did suggest that the PMG's Department should be responsible for the initial installation of the studio and transmitter equipment, either directly or by arrangement with the equipment contractor, because "it would be impracticable to do this with the small nucleus of staff with which it is proposed to commence television operations".

I discussed this interim report with Mr Vanthoff on 24th May.

The Delegation Report

The many documents and relevant printed data collected overseas, which had been dispatched to Australia by surface mail because of their bulk, began to arrive in Melbourne in mid-May. Jack Donovan spent the greater part of his time reading and analysing this material while I prepared the draft of the report.

My first task was to prepare an alphabetical index to the 273 pages of notes I had taken during the trip. The index ran to 16 pages and was very necessary because the same subjects appeared in many discussions throughout the notes which covered interviews with 56 personnel vitally involved in television manufacture, planning and operations in 27 organisations in 12 cities, with visits to 14 television studio buildings and five transmitters in actual operation in the USA, Britain and Paris - and the observation of many live television shows in rehearsal or production.

My four months of concentrated writing at the ABCB offices were memorable for three particular reasons. On the last day of June, 1951, I took delivery of my first motor car - a demonstration blue Vanguard - and on 9th August snow fell in the city of Melbourne and the suburbs. Snowflakes could be seen passing the upper floor balconies of the Rialto Building although they melted on reaching the ground, and on returning home that evening I was delighted to see a white layer of snow

along the rails of our back garden fence. I cannot recall any other occasion in which snow has fallen so close to the city of Melbourne, although it frequently falls in the Dandenong Ranges 20 miles away during the winter. The third memorable event was my introduction to microgroove music. I installed my new Decca pick-up and turntable in the radiogram which I had assembled when I first came to Melbourne in 1936, with a necessary preamplifier. I began to revel in noise-free reproduction of classical music such as I had never hoped to enjoy.

The Delegation Report was prepared in three parts -

- Part I - General
- Part II - Sites, Buildings and Equipment
- Part III - Programmes and Operation

Part I of the Report was a combination of drafts prepared by all three members of the Delegation sent overseas. Part II, being wholly technical, was prepared by myself. Jack Donovan and I collaborated in preparing Part III. We visited Sydney to discuss our drafts with Charles Moses and to obtain his contribution to the Report, including information about TV operations in Hamburg and Turin which he visited after we had begun our homeward journey. I had prepared about 70% of the Report but Jack was responsible for welding together the several drafts and editing the text to ensure unanimity of opinions expressed therein.

The completed draft was approved by all three members of the Delegation on 8th September, and after duplication and assembly copies were submitted to the Television Advisory Committee on 10th October 1951. The Report was titled -

"Television Investigations in Overseas Countries.
February-April 1951",

and comprised 175 pages of typed foolscap including appendices and diagrams. It was treated as confidential, all copies being numbered and a record kept of their distribution.

Our task was complete. On the basis of our observation and the information and advice given to us so freely overseas by those with years of television experience behind them, we had produced what was virtually a text book on how to establish a television service in Australia.

With the Director-General's permission I took my three weeks annual leave from 9th September, while the Report was being typed in its final form, and drove Phyll and Chris to Adelaide for a fortnight in our new family car - its first long journey. I was very satisfied with the average petrol consumption of 26.5 miles per gallon. When we returned home I began to paint the bathroom. The holiday break had restored my vigor!

Tenders for the supply of television equipment for the proposed Sydney TV station under Schedule C.6423 (see Chapter 9) had closed early in 1951 and a Technical Report had been prepared on the examination of these tenders by the Radio Section at Jolimont.

When I returned to work with Ted Stewart on 2nd October, he asked me to examine this report and prepare comments on it. The Technical Report recommended the acceptance of a certain tender for all the scheduled equipment, and on reading it I disagreed strongly with some of the assumptions made and conclusions reached, because they were in conflict with technical information I had received from television operating authorities during my overseas visit. In submitting my written comments to Ted I stated:-

"From the investigations made overseas, it is considered that before any commitments are entered into for the purchase of television equipment for Australia -

- (i) the tenders should be re-examined in the light of the overseas experience now obtained;
- (ii) the functional requirements for an Australian station should be reviewed in the light of current overseas practice as seen during the investigations in USA and Great Britain, especially in relation to video facilities and studio lighting equipment;
- (iii) certain additional enquiries should be addressed to overseas manufacturers, particularly in relation to camera tubes, studio lighting equipment, 16mm film transmitting equipment, film recording equipment and transmitters. The PMG resident engineering representative in London may be of some assistance in following up developments subsequent to our investigations in the BBC and in factories."

I do not know what impact these comments had on the authors of the Technical Report, but no orders were placed in response to the tenders received under Schedule C.6423.

The Report on our overseas investigations was submitted by the Television Advisory Committee to the Minister on 1st November, 1951. "In view of the economic situation which had arisen in the Commonwealth, the question of the introduction of television was reconsidered by the Government, which, on 12th March 1952, decided to hold the matter in abeyance for the time being" - as stated in the ABCB fourth annual report.

There had been a very drastic change in the Australian economy as a result primarily of alterations in the balance of overseas payments. Import restrictions were introduced. The establishment of television stations would require the importation of most of the equipment required from overseas, which would be in conflict with these restrictions. Also, Defence had a higher priority than television, and in 1951 the defence of Australia was a very live political issue.

The Government made the decision, with considerable reluctance, stating that "the time was inopportune to embark upon the introduction of television". It said that "the question would be kept under review, as it was the desire of the Government that the services should be

commenced as soon as circumstances permitted" - as reported by the ABCB.

Once again the will-o-the-wisp vision of television services in Australia had eluded me, just when I thought it was about to materialise.

Thus ended the second abortive attempt to introduce a television service in Australia.

Ted Stewart knew that, in the absence of opportunities for television work, I desired to obtain experience in the field of radio broadcasting, and he made arrangements for me to take up the position of Divisional Engineer, Studios, in the Radio Section of Central Office - to which I had been transferred (on paper!) on 20 September 1950.

I was sorry to be leaving Ted. He had been my boss, my guide and mentor, for the greater part of the last 12 years and I could not wish for a more capable and understanding boss. I consider that whatever I may have achieved in my long engineering career has been the result of the grounding in the application of engineering principles which I received first under the supervision of Frank O'Grady in Adelaide and then under the watchful eye of Ted Stewart in the Melbourne Central Office of the PMG's Department. I owe them both a great debt of gratitude - as I do to the early guidance of my dad!

Ted and I shared a common sense of logic and humour, and our association was a highlight of my years in the Department.

I reported to Horrie Hyett, Supervising Engineer, Radio, at his Jolimont office on 5th November 1951, returning to my appointed status of Divisional Engineer. I was content to mark time and rest on my oars, endeavouring to do justice to this new job and profit from whatever experience it might give me with an eye to my goal of television in the future. My only regret was that I had to displace Jack Tomlinson who had been acting in the position. A young engineer recently recruited from England, he remained on my staff and we became good friends. At last I was in a created position!

Mr R.M. Osborne, who had been acting Chairman of the ABCB for three months during Mr Fanning's absence with ill health, was appointed Chairman in March 1952, and Bruce Mair was appointed a member of the Board for three years. In the same month Don McDonald was appointed Director of the Technical Service Division in place of Bruce Mair.

Marjorie and George's second son, Brenton, was born on September 25th, 1951. I was delighted to be his godfather.