

CHAPTER 17

TV Labour Pains and Countdown

At the beginning of March 1956, we faced what appeared to be a superhuman task. HSV-7 was committed to begin test transmissions from Mount Dandenong on July 16th - only four and a half months away - and if possible the commencement of regular programmes before the Olympic Games opened in Melbourne on November 22nd. The Mount Dandenong and studio towers were nearing completion, but most of the building construction had still to be done and no equipment had yet been delivered.

The immediate requirement was to feed all necessary information to the architects and to air conditioning and electrical contractors, to recruit technicians and to design various fittings required for the installation of equipment.

On March 14th Ted Allen and I had a detailed discussion with Max Shaw and Ake Jodell of Tompkins and Shaw, dealing with studio floors, sound isolation, acoustic treatment, the supporting of studio lighting grids and the location of air conditioning ducts.

Ted's wife Marjorie had been a good friend to Phyll during my absence overseas. With both of them we celebrated my return by seeing the stage production of "Kismet" at the Princess Theatre - a wonderful night of

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~~eastern~~ fantasy with Hayes Gordon in a memorable performance as Hajj and Madge Stephens as Marsinah, to the tuneful themes of Borodin.

This month the team of installation engineers began to arrive in Australia from Marconis. Whatever complaints I had about the parent company, there was nothing wrong with the calibre of these men sent out to install their equipment. They were intelligent, resourceful, experienced and a pleasure to work with, and the birth of TV in Australia owed much to their dedicated hardworking labour. Dr. E.D. (Derek) Griess was the supervising engineer responsible for all the Australian Marconi installations, which included HSV-7 and ABV-2 in Melbourne and ATN-7 and ABN-2 in Sydney. Through AWA, Marconi had contracted to supply and install the bulk of the technical equipment for these four initial TV stations. Of the other two being constructed, Pye were equipping GTV-9 in Melbourne and Fernseh were equipping TCN-9 in Sydney. AWA had a financial interest in ATN-7.

Derek spent most of his time at the HSV and ABV transmitters on Mount Dandenong. He brought his wife Yvonne out to stay with him at a quiet and comfortable house in Olinda, within easy striking distance of the Mount, where he was assisted by engineer Rod Marsden and rigger Arthur Pitches from Marconis and by Alec Stewart and Jack Walsh from AWA. At our studios, AWA provided

Peter Twomey and Marconis provided Ken Frank^A and Eric Hitchen who spent most of his time at the ABV studios.

In Sydney the Marconi engineers were Bob Franks at the ATN and ABN transmitters and Peter Naish at the studios. Arthur Pitches worked as a rigger at the Sydney transmitters as well as at Melbourne.

As the tempo of the work increased, Derek arranged for another senior Marconi engineer, Fred Kenyon, to come to Australia to accept responsibility for the Melbourne and Sydney studio installations. We provided technician staff to assist the Marconi engineers. Jack Davis of AWA was the product manager responsible for coordinating supplies of equipment to all four TV projects.

In April I began to recruit technician staff. The first five were Ted Gray and Robin Greig from radio 3DB, and Russell Bourne, Malcolm Titchener and Euan Downing from RMTC - who had worked with me in the production of "Window on the World". All had acquired the TVOCP. Then in July we added Max Everett from 3DB, Max Manning, Jim Reilly and Bert King from radio 3KZ and Dick Jones from the New Zealand Broadcasting Service. August brought three more - Dave Perry from RMTC, Lindsay Renshaw from 3DB and Roly Lau from the Defence Department. This brought our technician total to 13, all with the TVOCP: and young - with ages rising from 18. The only other technician recruited before we began programming was John

Garry, who had special qualifications for film projector operation.

When I interviewed prospective staff I always asked why they wanted to work in television, and probed their outside interests besides their technical background. I wanted to find out what made them "tick". I remembered the favourite saying of S.H.Witt at the PMG Research Laboratories -

"There is no substitute for enthusiasm."

And I made a point of telling them that if they found they liked television work they would never want to do anything else - but if they found they didn't like it they wouldn't be able to get out of it quickly enough, because television is a hard taskmaster (as I knew from my own experience).

Thirty years later, six of those first 14 were still at HSV, and three were working at other TV stations. They were well chosen.

The two young engineers, Ron Place and Steve Walkowicz who had been appointed in the previous December, were used on technician work during these early months to gain experience.

I had a considerable amount of continuing technical correspondence to deal with in connection with our equipment orders, and this was handled very competently

by Jan Salmond, Keith Cairn's secretary, but the volume became too great for her to handle with Keith's work, so in July I was given my first private secretary, Helen Hopkins - an old school friend of Jan's. Colin Fraser, the Programme Manager who occupied an office next to mine, had Judy McLeod as secretary - the daughter of Len McLeod who took my place as General President of the POA in 1954. Helen stayed with me for four years. As well as being a competent secretary she was an excellent coffee maker, and made sure that I had that welcome break each morning and afternoon.

The studio tower was completed in April and the transmitter tower in May. I made frequent visits to the Mount to check progress on the tower and building, sometimes taking Phyll and Chris over weekends. On Good Friday, March 30th, we paid a joint visit with Keith and Ede Cairns - followed by a picnic lunch and tea in the Dandenongs. The view of Melbourne from the transmitter site was quite spectacular, now that the obstructing trees were removed.

At the beginning of June Phyll had to have a prolapse operation, which kept her in the Mercy Hospital for three weeks, and it was some time before she was able to lead a normal life again. In August she was well enough to go to the theatre, and we saw performances of The Gondoliers and Guys and Dolls.

During all this time I was frantically busy designing lighting grids for the studios and mountings for picture monitors and operating desks in the control rooms and announce booths. The architects had designed the studio ceilings as double membrane shock-mounted structures faced above and below with plaster board, and with rock-wool secured underneath with chicken wire - to give good sound isolation and minimise acoustic reflection. These ceilings would not support the weight of a lighting grid and studio lights, so the grid had to be hung by steel rods passing through the ceiling and anchored to the steel roof truss above by rubber shock mounts to prevent transmission of noise from the roof into the studio. The grid was to be hung 14ft above the floor in the smaller Studio 2, but in Studio 1 the corresponding fixed grid was to be omitted in a 9ft space adjacent to the east wall and in a 21^{ft} space at the north end. In these spaces flying battens were to be provided, clear of the air conditioning ducts - some to be used for lights and some to fly scenery.

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The HWT engineering shop undertook to manufacture and install the necessary overhead pulleys, and guided counterweights for these flying battens on the adjacent walls of the studio. They were needed to permit quick changes of scenery or drapes in the production of variety shows. The available flying height was just over 23ft, and Ian Kerr of the HWT Engineering Department undertook this design work.

We had ordered a Strand lighting control and patch panel, with limited dimming facilities, for Studio 2, but we desired a more flexible and sophisticated arrangement for Studio 1. I therefore designed a lighting control system similar in principle to the one I had seen at KGMB-TV in Honolulu. This provided for 156 power outlet pigtailed for studio lights on the fixed grid and the lighting battens in Studio 1. Each was energised through the contacts of a 24V relay above the Studio 1 ceiling, and these relays were controlled by toggle switches on a panel on the studio wall - laid out in a diagrammatic plan of the studio floor, and numbered correspondingly. A tally lamp beside each switch showed when it was operated. However the relays each had four windings, associated respectively with toggle switches on four such diagrammatic plans. The switches in each of these plans were governed by a master switch, with dimming facilities. This arrangement allowed four different lighting schemes to be pre-set for a show, and any one could be re-set while another was in use.

Deliveries of Marconi equipment began to arrive in April, but they were very erratic and well behind schedule. This made installation very difficult for the Marconi engineers.

In order to commence installation of equipment in the rack room as early as possible it was decided to begin this as soon as the ceiling and internal finishes

permitted, with the studio tower construction still in progress. As the rack room was close to the southern legs of the tower, from which heavy objects might be dropped during construction, the surface above the concrete ceiling was covered with boards and several inches of bricklayer's sand. The boards were necessary to cover holes left in the ceiling for the passage of cables between the rack room and the future control rooms above it.

One day, when equipment had been placed in position in rows of cabinet racks in the rack room, Ken Frank came to me wringing his hands and almost in tears. A builder walking over the ceiling had dislodged one of the boards, allowing sand to pour through one of the holes into a monoscope unit mounted below. The monoscope was a unit to ^{produce} ~~product~~ a still test-pattern for transmission. I think Ken ^{thought} ~~through~~ the monoscope was still-born! We took steps to prevent a recurrence of this accident, but I don't think Ken would ever forget it.

With completion of the studio tower, the sand was removed and the brick walls of the control rooms, dish room and announce booths were constructed and the roof installed over these areas, and over Studio 1 between the legs of the tower. The dish room, above the small clients room, was reached by a short steel ladder and gave access to the roof through a door in its south wall.

When access was permitted by the builders, I went up one fine day with Keith Cairns to inspect progress. There was the wire-enclosed ladder rising up the west side of the tower. I looked at Keith, challengingly, and asked "Are you game?" He nodded, and we commenced the 200ft climb from the studio roof. What a view there was from the platform at the top!

It was like standing on a 10x12ft magic carpet with a railing all round. To the east was the green expanse of the Domain beyond St Kilda Road, with the Shrine of Remembrance glistening in the sunlight and the blue Dandenong mountains on the distant horizon. To the north was the city of Melbourne, to the ^{west} ~~east~~ the wide sweep of Port Phillip Bay beyond the buildings of South Melbourne, and to the south the green of Albert Park with its shining stretch of man-made lake. The absence of tall buildings in our immediate vicinity in 1956 gave one a feeling of omnipotence. We took a deep breath and thought with Cowper -

"I am monarch of all I survey
My right there is none to dispute
From the centre all round to the sea
I am lord of the fowl and the brute."

It was intoxicating. My thoughts went back to that childhood illustration by Jessie Wilcox Smith, of the boy in the fork of the cherry tree gazing on the world around him. I had indulged my love of heights around the world - San Francisco from the Top of the Mark, New York from

the Empire State Building, Paris from the Eiffel Tower and Rome from the dome of St Peter's - but this was really something! This was Melbourne, my adopted city, from the top of my own studio tower!

It was a sobering thought. We climbed down to earth and reality.

At the age of 75, mother's health was deteriorating and she suffered a series of blackouts, which disturbed Marjorie and me greatly. In mid April I flew to Adelaide for a weekend to survey the situation. We decided that mother should have a companion living with her to give her some care, and help with the meals. A plump white-haired Irishwoman took the job, and mother's health improved considerably - but at the end of four months the Irishwoman had become an encumbrance, and mother was actually looking after her!

For a time they could not get rid of this "help", until she found another job and left suddenly. I had a reassuring letter from mother, who was glad to be on her own again.

Marjorie and George were having a sleep-out built on to the rear of their home, to accommodate their two growing boys, now 9 and 5 years old. It was good to know that they were available for mother to call upon if she

should need assistance urgently - and her great next-door friend Nurse Smith was an ever-present standby.

This concern, added to Phyll's long spell in hospital in June, proved a strain during the most hectic period of my busy career.

In May the HWT arbitrarily fixed the starting date for HSV daily programming at November 4th. This increased our work pressure, with most of our equipment still to be delivered. We had to estimate the power consumption of all equipment to be installed and calculate the heat dissipation in the studios for lighting and operating personnel, so that electrical contractors could design the power boards and so that air conditioning contractors could make adequate provision for studios and equipment rooms. For reasons of economy, the HWT Board decided that we should have only two air conditioning systems for the studio building - a new system for Studio 1 and the old existing system modified for Studio 2 and all technical areas. Offices were not to be air conditioned.

At Mount Dandenong Derek Griess and his assistants installed the 2kW basic vision transmitter and its sound counterpart, with half the 16 stack radiator, by early July. The Styroflex cable presented a problem. As one cable had to feed the top half of the radiator while the other fed the bottom half - and as both cables had to be

of the same length - it was necessary to devise a means of accommodating about 32 feet of the lower cable on the ground beside the top cable which ran direct to the transmitter building. We solved this problem by sweeping the bottom cable in a wide curve within the space between the tower legs, but running both cables as a parallel pair from the tower base to the transmitter building, under a protective steel cover to insure against possible damage from any articles dropped from the 324ft tower.

To haul the cables up the tower, the F&G manufacturers provided a "sock" - a woven sleeve of steel wire with two hauling loops. When placed over the end of the cable, a pull on the loops caused the sock to contract and grip the cable firmly all round without damaging it. This was used to haul each cable to the top of the tower and support it there. The first cable was hauled up and secured without mishap.

Rain interrupted the hauling of the second cable, just as it was about to leave the next layer on its wooden drum. When work resumed next day, as the 3.125" cable unwound from this layer it developed a slight kink. It appeared that rain soaking into the drum had caused the wooden ^{cheeks} ~~cheeks~~ to swell and tightly jam the cable. With the resultant increased resistance to unwinding, the pull on the cable produced this slight kink. We expected to find it necessary to cut the kink out of the cable and rejoin it - but subsequent tests showed that the effect

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of the kink was negligible and probably less than would be produced by a repair joint.

Somebody remarked that the hauling of the cables up the tower went very smoothly. I replied that this was probably because Marconis had provided "derrick grease" for the job. I climbed to the 324ft level to check the cable terminations. The view of the mountain range and the city from there was magnificent.

In accordance with recommendations obtained overseas and from consultation with the SEC and the PMG's Department, we provided lightning protection by bonding heavy copper cables, brought down each leg of the transmitter tower, to a network of buried copper wire and metal stakes radiating out from the tower base.

The diesel-alternator from the old studio building was installed in a separate building at Mount Dandenong, close to Eyre Road for delivery of fuel, to serve as a source of emergency power. Power ^{outages} ~~outages~~ due to storms were frequent in the Dandenongs.

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Installation of the Styroflex feeders, the lower half of the radiator, and the 2kW section of the vision transmitter with its sound counterpart, was completed in time for commencement of test transmissions (with a monoscope test pattern) on July 16th. We still awaited the 10kW power amplifier.

At the studios my most complex task was the alignment of the microwave dishes and the passive reflector to send programme up to Mount Dandenong. The 12x8ft perforated aluminium passive reflector, with its triangulated tubular bracing and rear supports, was hauled to the top of the 225ft studio tower by Johns and Waygood in July, and fixed in position with the tilt and orientation previously determined by my calculations. Wooden angular templates were used to adjust it approximately. Ted Allen and I climbed to the top to inspect the final adjustments. We were not satisfied with the ^{attitude} ~~axtitude~~ of the U-bolts securing one of the tension stays at the top. When we pointed this out to the Johns and Waygood rigger, he stepped over the platform railing, walked across the 2" tubular bracing, bent down and adjusted the U-bolt - all this at 225 ft above ground with no safety net! Ted covered his eyes. He couldn't bear to look!

When the 7x12ft dish room at the top of the studio building was ready, we secured Dexion rails (like part of a giant Meccano set) to the east and west inside walls just above head-height, inclined so that they were approximately at right angles to the line of sight to the passive reflector above. Between these rails we supported a Dexion framework, designed to carry microwave dishes, that could be slid back and forth on the rails in a north-south direction. The microwave dishes were

mounted on this framework by steel plates with provision for rotational and tilt adjustment.

These steel plates could be slid back and forth on the Dexion framework in an east-west direction. Thus a microwave dish could be moved to any position within the confines of the dish room, and tilted or rotated as desired.

At Mount Dandenong the receiving dishes were mounted behind a perspex window in the room above the transmitter building, facing the South Melbourne studios with their waveguides set for reception of horizontally polarized signals. Telephone communication was established with the South Melbourne dish room.

Alignment of the 4ft dishes and the passive reflector was of the greatest importance, as this was our life-line to the broadcasting transmitters. It demanded an analytical approach. There were six variables to be adjusted -

The attitude of the transmitting microwave dishes at South Melbourne.

The attitude of the passive reflector.

The plane of polarization of the transmitted microwave signal.

The disposition of the transmitting dishes to ensure accommodation of their images within the area of the passive reflector.

The corresponding disposition of the receiving dishes at Mount Dandenong. and

The attitude of the receiving dishes at Mount Dandenong.

It was necessary for the adjustments to be carried out on a fine day, with no prospect of rain - as we had to remove temporarily the corrugated fibreglass roof of the dish room, so we could see the passive reflector from below. This done, we removed the waveguide from the main microwave transmitting dish, and replaced it with a metal sighting tube - rather like the stamen on a giant 4ft diameter flower. Mounting this dish on its Dexion framework at the centre of the dish room, we adjusted its tilt so that we could see the centre of the passive reflector through the sighting tube. This set the attitude of the transmitting dish.

Then we replaced the waveguide and microwave head on the dish, turned on the microwave transmitter and receiver, and lo and behold - a signal was received at Mount Dandenong! The passive reflector was doing its job. Now for the fine adjustments to maximise the signal.

The next step was to determine the accuracy of adjustment of the passive reflector attitude. We disabled the automatic gain control of the receiving head at Mount Dandenong, to allow signal variations to be observed.

Then we traversed the transmitting dish across the length and breadth of the dish room in 6" steps, sliding the Dexion framework but keeping the tilt and orientation

constant. For each position of the dish, we recorded its location in the room and the strength of the signal received at Mount Dandenong (as read on the indicating meter in the receiving circuit, and telephoned back). On a rectangular graph, representing the dish room floor plan, we plotted these positions, marking each with the corresponding signal strength. Then, by interpolation, we determined positions on the graph for several given values of received signal, and joined positions of equal signal strength to give a family of concentric curves, rather like the isobars round a HIGH on a weather map.

The centre of this family of curves was near the north-west corner of the dish room plan, indicating the need for some trimming of the passive reflector attitude.

Accordingly the passive reflector tilt and orientation was adjusted very slightly to bring the centre of the family of curves to the centre point of the dish room plan. A series of check measurements confirmed that this adjustment was achieved. The microwave path was then properly established.

Next we rotated the transmitting dish on its axis to the position giving the maximum received signal. This meant that the plane of polarization of the reflected wave reaching Mount Dandenong was horizontal.

We had to operate two microwave links to the Mount in parallel - a main and a standby link, for safety reasons. So two dishes had to be accommodated. The passive reflector had been marked with two black spots on one of its diagonals - corresponding to the desired centres of the images of two 4ft diameter transmitting dishes. The two dishes in the dish room were both temporarily fitted with sighting tubes as before, and placed so that each was aimed at one of these black spots. The receiving dishes at Mount Dandenong were then positioned correspondingly in a vertical plane. This achieved the required disposition of the two sets of dishes in relation to the area of the passive reflector.

Finally, we replaced the waveguides and microwave heads on the dish room dishes, switched on transmitters and receivers, adjusted the standby polarization and finely adjusted the tilt and orientation of the dishes at Mount Dandenong for maximum signal strength. This fixed the attitude of the receiving dishes, and the two microwave links were operating as required over parallel paths to the Mount.

X We replaced the fibreglass roof on the dish room at the studios and re-activated the ^{automatic} ~~automatic~~ gain controls at Mount Dandenong. The Studio-to-Transmitter links were ready for service and performed reliably for many years. Our technicians were able to carry out maintenance work

on the equipment under cover, and without having to climb towers to service the studio-to-transmitter links.

Initially we used a Raytheon IW microwave system for the main S-T link, and the Marconi 100m W system for the standby, as we had only two Raytheon systems and the other was required for outside broadcast work. The Marconi system used a separate small transmitter and receiver for sound, for which a smaller dish had to be mounted beside the 4ft dish for vision. Subsequently, when we were able to purchase additional Raytheon systems we substituted one for the Marconi equipment, combining both sound and vision signals.

That's a case of an error!!!

There was a great deal of design work to be done in the routing and construction of ^{cable} ~~cattle~~ ducts in floors and ceilings, the provision of work benches for maintenance and film cutting, the layout of operating desks in control rooms and announce booths and the mounting of picture monitors there and in the telecine room - with appropriate tally lamps.

The desirable spatial relationship of the operators, the studio window, and the picture monitors in control rooms had to be determined. The picture monitors were to be mounted above the window overlooking the studio below. The Technical Director was positioned at the left hand end of the desk, next to the Programme Director, on whose right there had to be space for an assistant.

The Audio Operator was placed at the right hand end of the room, separated from the others by a plate-glass partition with a sliding door - for sound isolation when required. He was to have a 19" equipment rack on his right, carrying a microphone patching panel and a 0.25" ~~equipment~~ ^{audio} magnetic tape recorder. The recorders we purchased were Byer type 77 - the same that Max Byer developed for the 1954 Royal Tour when I worked at Jolimont. 250 of these recorders were to be used by Australian and overseas broadcasting organizations to record their commentaries at the coming 1956 Olympic Games. Max Byer's dream had finally come home to roost! The Audio Operator had two gramophone turntables at his right for incidental music or sound effects.

All personnel in the control room faced the double-paned studio window, which was angled to avoid objectionable reflections. This arrangement was similar to many we had seen in North America.

I decided to mount the picture monitors on individual wooden flaps, hinged to the wall at the rear, above the studio window. There was a monitor for each studio camera, two preview monitors and a "line" (or output) monitor. With this arrangement any faulty monitor could be swung down out of the row, so that it could be serviced by a maintenance technician without him obstructing the studio crew's view of the other monitors in the row. Monitors were secured to their flaps by

thumb screws, and the same method of mounting was adopted for overhead picture monitors in telecine.

In telecine, the layout of projectors and Vidicon multiplexers was designed to facilitate projector operation by one technician while at the same time allowing him to watch operations in Control Room 2 (serving also as Master Control) through large plate glass windows, across the intervening passageway.

We had to design a system of tally lamps to mount above each picture monitor in the control rooms, to indicate when a camera was being transmitted and what picture source was being displayed on the preview monitors and the line monitor. These tally lamps were operated by contacts in the vision mixer unit, which was controlled by the Technical Director on cues from the Programme Director.

When the Houston Fearless camera pedestals arrived, we fitted these with additional lead counterweights to balance the weight of the Marconi Mk III cameras with lenses and friction heads, which together weighed 208lbs. The cylinder supporting this weight could be locked in the down position, when it was necessary to remove the camera for maintenance attention. It was most important that this locking device be left untouched until the camera was replaced on the mounting, because if released without this load the cylinder would shoot up with great

force, and could seriously injure anyone who might unwittingly be in its way. One technician had a narrow escape from such injury.

While all this design work was in progress, Lyle Lloyd was busy training technicians in the use of cameras and control room equipment, and in their maintenance, using the fully equipped OB van with its three camera chains, which was delivered to Melbourne in April. The used Image Orthicon camera tubes - sent out from WEWS - had blemishes in the picture area, but were quite satisfactory for training purposes and saved money in replacement costs. Lyle organised exercises in setting up, operating and dismantling the OB equipment on "closed circuit" coverage of football at South Melbourne, church service at St. Mary's, Caulfield, cabaret at Chevron night club and a day at the Melbourne Zoo. On August 23rd the OB van was used as a temporary control room for Studio 2, with camera cables passing through a hole in the south wall, when HSV conducted its first auditions for live TV talent.

The most distant OB exercise was at the passing-out parade of the RAAF at Point Cook, and the most extensive was the coverage of arena events at the September Royal Agriculture Show - which attracted great public interest. The OB crew comprised nine men, including three cameramen, and in the initial stages Peter Twomey and Ken Frank assisted as camera control operators to allow the

remainder to concentrate on camera handling, mixing and switching.

Studio picture monitors and off-air receivers were heavy and cumbersome, and their movement from the control room area to the maintenance room below for servicing presented a problem on the stairways. We overcame this by installing a small hand-operated lift, or "dumb-waiter" between the telecine room and the maintenance workshop immediately below. The design for this lift had to be approved by the Department of Machinery and Scaffolding who stressed that the lift should not be used for human transport. Its dimensions were about 30" square and high.

Jan Salmond, Keith Cairns' secretary, was a delightful young madcap in those days. She had climbed the studio and transmitter towers, driven the OB van and was captain of the HWT basketball team. On the day I was demonstrating the completed telecine lift to an inspector who had come to approve it, Jan breezed into the maintenance room just across the passage from her office - and proudly announced -

"I had the first ride in this thing!"

After that I had great difficulty in convincing the inspector that the lift would be used ONLY to transport equipment.

In August Colin Fraser began to recruit the programme side of our staff. Alf Potter, Alf Spargo and Ralph Clarkson came from 3DB to work as programme directors, joined by James Upshaw with years of dancing experience and Ian Jones from the Sun staff. John Maher, Tony Doogood, Allan Bayne and Mike Brayshaw formed the nucleus of the news staff. John Hanson came from 3DB to be floor manager and nine camera/floor men were appointed, some of whom rose to become programme directors -

Graham Barr	Alex Emanuel	John Phillips
Don Bennetts	Peter MacQueen	Howard Scrivener
Anton Bowler	Jim Parker	Bruce Ross Smith

Geoff Wedlock and Peter ~~G~~^{gater}ater came to design and create scenery.

Eric Pearce and Danny Webb, with experience in radio, came to us as newsreaders and announcers and Mary Parker, fresh from duty with the BBC as a TV "presenter", returned to Australia to be our first weather girl and interviewer and to announce her engagement to portrait painter Paul Fitzgerald. Mary had previously acted with the Melbourne Union Theatre Company, and her brother, Commander Michael Parker, was private secretary to the Duke of Edinburgh. We were very proud of her.

Keith Cairns had gathered the necessary business associates around him. Adrian Miller came from 3DB as our accountant and E. Trenchard Smith from the Sun's Sydney office as sales manager, with Des Gardiner.

The Melbourne Herald on May 31st had announced that HSV would commence regular programme transmissions on November 4th, and we were all working flat-out to ensure that our studio and transmitter facilities were ready by that date. HSV-7 had an arrangement with TCN-9 Sydney for the joint purchase of film programmes from overseas - arising from the common interests in newspaper publishing. Frank Packer - head of the Sydney Daily Telegraph - having acquired the licence to operate TCN-9, was determined to be first in the field of Australian television. When he realized that his studios would not be ready before the HSV-7 scheduled opening, he ordered that St David's Church hall in Arthur Street, Surrey Hills, be fitted out as a makeshift studio. This was done. Their OB van, parked behind the hall, served as a control room and with OB cameras on a creaky wooden floor TCN-9 began the first regular TV programmes in Australia on the night of Sunday September 16th, with Bruce Gyngell, their programme manager, making the opening live announcement.

In Melbourne, GTV-9 made a tentative attempt to "beat the gun" by transmitting a programme with "live hosting" from a camera temporarily installed at their transmitter building on Mount Dandenong on September 27th.

But it remained for HSV-7 to be the first TV station in Australia to begin regular programming from a properly

designed and completed live TV studio on November 4th, 1956.

We celebrated Keith Cairns' birthday by driving to Mount Eliza for dinner at "Manyung" with Keith and Ede on Saturday October 16th. Excitement was building up, and our first trial live broadcast was made from Studio 2 on Sunday, October 14th. Mary Parker interviewed Douglas Bader, the famous legless World War II flying ace, with Danny Webb as compere and Alf Potter directing. We broadcasted a similar trial programme a fortnight later, but we conserved our energies for a properly designed and organized opening on November 4th. Alf Potter had originally joined us as a technician, but he elected to move to the programme staff and became our director on all sporting DBs.

The 10kW power amplifier for our transmitter arrived at last, and Derek Griess began installation at the Mount on August 27th. The completion of this and the second half of the 16 stack radiator in time for our scheduled opening was a tribute to his resourcefulness, as the amplifier had never been tested with the basic transmitter before.

Derek never lost his sense of humour. I remember asking him what a certain item was for in a typed list of installation material received from Chelmsford. He said it was "interesting, but archaic". Derek and Yvonne both

loved reading and good music. Phyll and I exchanged visits with them and we write to each other every Christmas. I have fond memories of Derek humming Beethoven as he adjusted the transmitter.

The IRE Victorian Division visited the studios on September 18th, and I gave them an address on "TV Studios and Equipment". The Houston Fearless rotatable mount having been installed on the platform at the top of the studio tower, the 6ft Raytheon disk was hauled up and mounted on it on October 23rd, ready for reception of OB programmes from all points of the compass.

Our biggest problem at this stage was the completion of the floor in Studio 1.

We had desired to lay floors of magnesium oxychloride in both studios on a concrete base, as recommended by overseas authorities. It is readily sanded flat, is patchable, quiet to walk on, somewhat resilient for dancers, uniform in texture and appearance, and able to withstand reasonably hard wear. After the reinforced concrete base had been laid in Studio 2, the building contractors decided to spray the required layer of acoustic plaster on the underside of the ceiling. However, they had no previous experience with the spraying equipment - which wasn't working properly - and the job finished with large quantities of the plaster on the floor. Unfortunately this wasn't removed

immediately, and it set rock hard. They later removed as much as they could, but when the magnesium oxychloride surface was laid and allowed to set, grinding this smooth produced white patches where the plaster had not all been removed. So they had to compromise, and the sanding was not taken down as far as we would have wished. This was not so serious in the smaller studio, with its restrictions on the extent of camera dollying.

In the case of Studio 1, part of the floor foundation was old concrete from the original building, and part new concrete over the tower footings and in the area previously occupied by a cottage. Laying of this had been delayed by completion of the tower, and the architects said that the new concrete would have to cure for three weeks before magnesium oxychloride could be laid over it. This meant that the grinding of the Studio 1 floor would have to be postponed until well after our first week of programming.

The programme departments plans for the opening week included a production by Hector Crawford's organisation, called "Wedding Day". This was to be a quiz and interview programme on Saturday evenings, in which a young couple - married that day - would be brought to the studios, asked questions about their courtship and future hopes, and presented with various gifts from sponsors.

The compere was to be John Stuart, a popular 3DB radio personality. Crawfords insisted that the magnitude of this production demanded the larger space of Studio 1, and the management insisted that Crawfords demands should be met. The architects said that the Studio 1 floor could be completed in time if a granolithic surface was laid instead of magnesium oxychloride. I warned that such a surface would develop cracks, the edges of which would fritter and cause serious irregularities in camera movements - but my warnings went unheeded. The granolithic surface was laid in Studio 1. When it had set, it was due to be sanded smooth on a certain Sunday in October.

I drove into the studios on the morning of that day, to see how the work was progressing. On opening the side door of Studio 1 I was horrified to be confronted with what looked like a pall of thick grey smoke. My immediate thought was "fire!" But it didn't smell like smoke. Walking into the cloud I saw the dim figures of workmen silhouetted against daylight filtering through the large delivery door opening to Wells Lane. It was cement dust!

They had been grinding the floor surface, and had decided that the easy way to remove the dust would be to blow it into the lane through this door, using a large heavy duty fan! The fan had caused the dust to rise up and fill the whole studio - and not only the studio! It

was percolating through the doors to the rack room at ground level and the telecine and control rooms on the first floor. With the support of Fred Kenyon, who had just arrived at the studios, I managed to stop this devastating procedure, much to the disgust of the workmen concerned. It took days to clear the dust from the equipment already installed in the building, especially in telecine.

Notwithstanding the completion of the Studio 1 floor surface, it proved impossible to finish the installation of Control Room 1 equipment by the first week of November. So "Wedding Day" had to be produced in Studio 2 after all. Studio 2 proved to be quite adequate for the show, and this programme remained in Studio 2 throughout its life, even when Studio 1 and its control room were subsequently completed in February.

My predictions about cracks in the granolithic floor of Studio 1 eventually proved to be accurate, and the trouble was overcome by covering it with vinyl tiling after suitable repairs.

The completion of all equipment installation at the studios, with the exception of Control Room 1, in time for the opening on November 4th in Studio 2 was a tribute to the ingenuity and dedication of Ken Frank and Peter Twomey.

Marconis had promised to send cabling drawings for the whole installation. These did not arrive until AFTER November 4th, so that the installation engineers had to work from the vision facilities diagram and video jackfield layout which I had produced in London in the preceding February, and my local audio jackfield layout - using their own expertise and common sense. We had decided to locate all separate power supply units in the back row of cabinet racks in the rack room, and they used their judgement in running power cabling from these. The cabling drawings eventually received from Marconis were quite redundant.

We were fortunate to be able to retain Ted Allen's services throughout this formative period. Ted and I shared the design and coordination work, while Lyle looked after technician training and operations and supervised equipment maintenance. At this stage there was no organisational structure in the technician staff. All were given the same training, with the same status, and were used interchangeably - making the staff very flexible.

As the opening night drew nearer an atmosphere of intense excitement developed at the studios. There were so many things that could go wrong. We had our fingers crossed, and drew comfort from the old theatrical adage "it will be all right on the night". Colin Fraser had plans for a spectacular opening, which involved the

construction of a magna-scale TV receiver - identical in appearance with an AWA Radiola set (of which we had several) but about six times larger. A desk had to be made for a panel discussion show - "I've Got A Secret" - and an OB from the Tivoli Theatre in Bourke Street had to be organised, with microwave relay back to the studios.

One of our technicians climbing on the Tivoli roof to install the microwave cable was surprised to find he could look down through a skylight into the ballet dressing room. This possibly delayed the installation.

The opening, timed for 7pm on Sunday November 4th, was to last three and a half hours, including 105 minutes of live programme, two half-hour film programmes and world news film. There were to be 21 commercials - some live, but mostly film and slides - and several station identification film clips.

TV receivers had been on sale to the public for several months, and many had been installed and adjusted in homes on our test transmissions since mid July - an hour a day, with no commercials permitted! The opening was well publicised in the press and on radio, and created great interest - as the beginning of the long awaited daily TV service in Melbourne. Dealers had TV receivers placed in their open shops and shop windows, hotels and milk bars advertised TV viewing, Town Halls set up multiple receivers for their ratepayers and

private set owners invited friends and neighbours to their homes and even their garages!

My family had become used to watching film documentaries on TV during the test transmissions, but now they were going to see the real thing! Phyll invited Ted's wife Marjorie to tea, and they were joined by Tom and Isobel Brown afterwards. I, of course, had to be at the studios with Ted, while Lyle supervised the OB operations at the Tivoli.

The opening went off ALMOST without a hitch. At 6.57pm a "Welcome" slide was replaced with a live picture from camera one, dollying around Studio 2 - showing the floor crew at their stations (but carefully avoiding the magna TV set) until it came to Eric Pearce standing beside an AWA receiver with a blank screen. Eric said - "Thrilling, isn't it?"

Then, as he spoke, camera one dollied-in till the TV receiver filled the screen - and the control room director, Jim Upshaw, made a matched dissolve change to camera two framed on the magna TV set. Camera two pulled back to a long-shot, and out of the giant TV set stepped the ballet - dressed as "TV sprites", to do a spirited dance before the screen. Then Eric introduced various TV personalities - Danny Webb, Mary Parker, and Jean Moorhead from Hollywood. After a short filmed message from Prime Minister R.G. Menzies, Eric introduced the State Premier, Henry Bolte, who declared the station open

- followed by a filmed message from the State Leader of the Opposition, John Cain senior. Eric interviewed the Lord Mayor, Sir Frank Sellick, and Harold Holt, Federal Minister for Labour and National Service. Having dispensed with these formalities Eric Pearce said -

"We dedicate this station to the full service of the Community. To Australian life - the happy families in the homes. We promise to serve you faithfully and well."

Next a film montage introduced the Tivoli show. Unfortunately the boys in the rack room had omitted to "genlock" the studio synchronizing generator to the incoming OB signal, and for a moment there was chaos, with an apology slide telling viewers that the trouble was not in their receiver. This rectified, the programme continued without further hitches. The star of the 40 minute Tivoli segment was Richard Hearne, popularly known in England as "Mr Pastry", but Gordon Chater and Barry Humphries (then virtually unknown) also appeared as solo artists. The OB programme was directed in the van by Alf Potter.

The first episode of the film series "Robin Hood", starring Richard Greene, was followed by the half-hour live panel show "I've Got A Secret" - compared by Eric Pearce with a panel comprising Olive Wykes, Shirley Cecil, Jack Dyer and John Frith - a combination of brains, beauty, brawn and banter. Their task was to guess the occupation of a guest ^{announced} ~~announced~~ (off camera) to

the viewers but unknown to them. This was directed by Ian Jones.

Another film "Our Miss Brooks", starring Eve Arden, preceded a live weather report by Mary Parker, directed by Ralph Clarkson. Then 30 minutes of "World News Round-Up" on film directed by Ian Jones with live commentaries by Eric Pearce and Danny Webb.

After 15 minutes of film promotions of coming shows, hosted live by Mary Parker and Danny Webb, the transmission finished with a 15 minute News Service read by Eric Pearce and directed by Allan Bayne and Jim Upshaw. The National Anthem was played at 10.30pm, with a portrait of the Queen.

That, then, was the beginning of television services in Melbourne. The dreams of my youth had been realised. I was tired, but very happy. Tomorrow - was another day!

Newspapers next day were full of photos of crowds watching the opening telecast. Reception 120 miles away was reported from Maryborough. Wired congratulations came from contacts we had made all over the world, including James Hanrahan of WEWS. I was particularly touched by two personal wires I received -

"Congratulations - Biddle" and

"Congratulations. Proud of you. Jeffries also POA"

It was great to hear from my now-rival colleague, Rod Biddle at GTV-9, and from my erstwhile PMG and POA mate George Jeffries. I made lasting friends in the Department and I still felt tied to them.

I received also a personal telegram from Lionel Hooke of AWA. He must have forgiven me for my stinker about rotatable mounts!

In the weeks that followed, our programme hours were 6 to 10pm, with a little more on Sundays - a weekly total of 28 and a quarter hours of which 10 and a half hours were live, a much larger proportion than today.

The live shows comprised -

"The Judy Jack Show" for children - 30 minutes,
Monday to Friday.

on Sunday

"Fun with Charades", with Danny Webb and guests -
30 minutes.

"Guest of the Week" with Mary Parker - 15 minutes

"I've Got A Secret" panel quiz - 30 minutes.

on Tuesday

"Isador Goodman" - piano - 15 minutes

on Wednesday

"Eric and Mary" interviews - 15 minutes

"Stop the Music" musical quiz with John Eden -
30 minutes

on Thursday

"Hit Parade" music and dancing - 30 minutes

on Friday

"Stairway to the Stars" talent quest with Eric
Pearce - 30 minutes

"Sports Talk" with Harry Gordon and Bill Collins -
15 minutes

on Saturday

"Peter's Fun Fair" with clowns Zig and Zag - 30
minutes

"Wedding Day" novelty quiz with John Stuart - 30
minutes

Twice daily (7pm and closing)

"News and Weather" with Eric Pearce, Danny Webb, Mary Parker (and Brenda Marshall on Fridays - 15 minutes)

As all these live shows were produced in Studio 2, it required time during intermediate film sessions to strike one show and set up the next one - and floor crews were kept very busy indeed.

On Saturday nights we had a 30 minute programme on film covering sporting highlights of the day. All other film, except local news film, was imported from the USA. It included dramas under the headings of "Whitehall Playhouse", "Kraft Television Theatre", "Celebrity Theatre", "International Theatre", "Four Star Playhouse" and "Chesebrough Ponds Theatre". On our first Monday night, "Whitehall Playhouse" was a half hour story called "Edge of Battle", starring Ronald Reagan.

There were many series of half-hour films, which could be classified as -

Family entertainment (before 7pm)	Annie Oakley Jet Jackson Tales of the Texas Rangers Jungle Jim Hopalong Cassidy
Adventure Stories	The Three Muskateers Rin Tin Tin Robin Hood The Scarlet Pimpernel
Situation Comedies	The Great Gildersleeve Father Knows Best Our Miss Brooks
Detective type Mysteries	Big Town Racket Squad San Francisco Beat

The age of the soap opera had not yet arrived, and science fiction had not yet reared its ugly head.

Zig and Zag (Jack Perry and Doug McKenzie) captured the hearts of adults and children alike, and 35 years later they were still an attraction in parades and carnival gatherings. But "Hit Parade" was our most ambitious production, and continued for many years. Produced and directed by Jim Upshaw, assisted by his wife Phillida Cooper, its players mimed or danced to recordings of the most popular "hit" songs of the day, with settings inspired by the subject ^{matter} ~~matter~~ of the songs. Where ^{miming} ~~mixing~~ was used, a situation appropriate to the song was acted by one or more of the "singers", who were Joan Bilceaux, Bernadette Russell, John Darcy, Don Carter and Don Bennetts. Where dancing was appropriate the "Channel 7 Dancers" appeared - Jack Manuel, Judd Laine, Robin Farquhar and Jennie Alexander, all with ballet experience. The choreography was developed by Phillida Cooper, who with Jim Upshaw had been in Colonel de Basil's Ballet Russe.

Some popular songs were repeated in the "Hit Parade" for several weeks, and it was necessary to develop a fresh scenario for each performance. This called for considerable imagination and ingenuity from the Upshaw pair. They never failed to produce something attractive and entertaining, and each performance required new scenery and "props". Each number lasted 4 or 5 minutes,

and in between numbers John Eden introduced the next with titles on slides from the telecine room and background music "For Dancers Only" from the control room. This meant that the players had very little time to take up their positions and the floor crew had very little time to set up their scenery and props for the next number. However, it didn't matter how much noise and banging was made in the studio by such preparations as no studio microphones were used in the whole show.

Studio 2 was some distance from the dressing rooms, and the ballet often had to make quick changes of costume between numbers - even if they were required in alternate numbers only. They overcame this problem by changing in ^{at the entrance to Studio 2. One evening I was about to enter the studio to investigate some technical problem. I entered the sound-lock} the tiny sound-lock from the passage just as a ballet number ended, and boom! The second door leading to the studio flew open and a pair of ballerinas rushed into the sound lock, ripping off costumes as they came, I completed my entry in some confusion.

2 lines of
manuscript
missing.
See photo copy
of note

The records used for "Hit Parade" were collected, cued and played by Ralph Clarkson in the second announcers booth known as the "Buggery Booth". On one occasion the discs were somehow placed on their pile in the wrong order. When a number finished, Ralph placed the next disc on the turntable ready for playing, as they made ready on the studio floor. When John Eden concluded his introductory remarks, Ralph lowered the pick-up on the rotating disc - and the wrong music issued from the

studio loudspeaker! Jim Upshaw hurriedly fatted back to the introductory slide and urged Ralph to find the right disc. Poor Ralph placed what he thought was the right one on the turntable and faded up the music, but it was wrong again! It took a minute or two to sort things out. Eventually the right disc was found and the programme resumed without further hitches, but Ralph was a nervous wreck when it finished. The records were checked and double-checked after that, and such a mistake was never made again.

The "Hit Parade" formula was fundamentally sound - popular music combined with visual entertainment related to the theme of the lyrics or the name of the song. It succeeded overseas, and it worked here. The modern equivalent is what is now called "music video". It's a wonder they didn't introduce this earlier.

All the live shows we broadcast in November 1956 were reproductions in principle, if not in detail, of TV shows seen in North America. It was logical for a new station gaining experience to follow in the footsteps of success overseas. I suppose the most original talent unearthed was that of Zig and Zag. They owed their success to their natural personalities and their rapport with children.

All these live shows required a minimum technical crew including -

technical director
audio operator
camera control unit operator
telecine operator
microphone boom operator) sometimes
lighting operator) combined
maintenance technician, for unforeseen faults

We had 14 technicians. Of the two young engineers, Steve Walkowicz worked at the transmitter and Ron Place at the studios. Three men were required to staff the transmitter at the Mount, with two per shift (for safety reasons) every day of the week. This left 13 men to cover all the technical work at the studios and on any outside broadcasts - and installation work on control room 1 was still in progress. Equipment had to be checked, microphones and cables set up, studio lights positioned, connected and angled, cameras warmed up - all outside the actual transmission times of the programmes concerned. At the studios we were grossly understaffed. If anyone became sick, Lyle or I had to stand-in for them.

On one occasion the microphone boom operator became sick just before the news service. I volunteered to man the boom. The boom operator, wearing headphones, stands on a mobile platform, about 3x4ft wide, raised about 40" above the floor. He manoeuvres the overhead microphone on the end of a long telescopic pivotted arm, rather like a giant fishing rod, listening to the results of his fishing on his headphones. The microphone has a short piece of string attached to it. When the end of this appears at the top of the TV picture, the operator knows

he is allowing the microphone to come too low. It must not be seen in the picture. Therefore he must watch a picture monitor to see that this does not happen. Eric Pearce was reading the news, and there was Fisher on the boom, fishing for words, as it were. The floor picture monitor was in a position where I found it difficult to see the picture clearly. I took a step backwards on the platform and -

"THUMP!"

I landed firmly on my back on the floor. Eric looked up from his newsheet, raised those heavy eyebrows of his, and continued reading without comment. Rather shaken, I picked myself up, moved the picture monitor to a better position and climbed back on the boom platform. It may have been a boom year for me, but it certainly taught me to watch my step!

Soon after we began daily programming I drove to Geelong to enquire about local reception. TV service organisations there all reported excellent reception of HSV-7. It seemed that our precautions regarding orientation and tilt of our radiator were well worthwhile, providing an optimum signal at this 58 mile distant population centre.

Our programmes were of course liberally peppered with commercials - our life blood! It was ^{interesting} interesting to compare these with those we had seen in the USA. Some

were inspired by their American counterparts. Most were rather naive, and "jingles" were popular. Most people will remember -

"Brylcream - a little dab'll do ya
Brylcream - you look so debonair!"

Advertisers had learned from radio that a catchy jingle with simple words could become engraved on the mind of the potential purchaser. Early use was made of film animation, but it was to be many years before commercials developed the sophisticated psychological approach of today.

The suggestive power of commercials was soon brought home to me forcibly. I often had to work back at the studios to keep pace with design and installation requirements, and usually had tea at a cafe in Toorak Road, South Yarra - rather late to avoid the peak hour rush. This cafe, like many, had installed a TV receiver for the entertainment of customers. The waitress served me, then brought her own meal - a steak - to eat at a table where she could watch the TV. She cut herself a piece of steak and began to raise it to her mouth as a cigarette commercial began. She watched, fascinated, without eating. The commercial finished, she laid down her fork, left the table, returned with a packet of cigarettes, lit one, and resumed her TV watching. Her steak was left to become cold on her plate.

I thanked my lucky stars that I had never become mesmerized to that extent by the screen on "the box", and I realised with Gilbert that -

"It's an instrument rare,
To be handled with care
And ought to be treated as such."

In those early days the radio listener had to pay a licence fee of 40/- p.a. the TV receiving licence was 100/-. It was good value for money!

The Olympic Games were to be held in Melbourne from November 22nd to December 8th. Our greatest wish had been that we would be able to televise the Games. We knew that this would give a terrific boost to TV receiver sales, and instill the habit of TV viewing in the people of Melbourne as no other programming could hope to do. We were not alone in this view. ABV-2 had commenced regular programming from a temporary studio at Ripponlea with a temporary transmitting radiator at Mount Dandenong on November 18th, and they intended to cover the Games. GTV-9 studios were far from complete, but their transmitter was ready and they had their OB van and microwave links. The ABCB gave them permission to televise the Games as a series of test transmissions.

The Olympic Games therefore became a three-station television OB operation. Surveys were made of the possible locations for TV cameras at the several venues for Games events, and practicable microwave relay routes back to the three studio sites were determined. GTV-9

were establishing their studios in the old Heinz factory building in Bendigo Street, Richmond, which had a tall brick chimney that could be used to mount a microwave receiving dish.

Lyle Lloyd and Alf Potter did all the negotiation regarding the location of our OB van, cameras, microphones, cables and links at the Games venues. Approval was obtained for three camera platforms to be constructed at the top of the northern stand at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, and two at lower levels in the same stand. The MCG - with its capacity to seat over 100,000 - was to be the main stadium for all athletics and demonstrations, and was one of the main arguments for holding the Games in Melbourne. Swimming and diving events were to be at the new Olympic Pool built especially for the Games, and cycling was to be at the Velodrome - both in Swan Street on the other side of the eastern suburban railway lines and about a mile and a half from the MCG by road. Basketball was to be in the South Melbourne Glaciarium.

The Duke of Edinburgh declared the Games open at the MCG on Thursday November 22nd before a crowd of 103,000 in perfect weather. Alf Potter directed our TV coverage from the OB van, parked with those of ABV-2 and GTV-9 just outside the arena near the north-west entrance. I vividly remember watching the entrance of Ron Clarke bearing the Olympic torch, mounting the steps to the

shining Olympic cauldron and kindling the Olympic flame to signal commencement of the Games. Alf Potter superimposed a picture of the flame over a shot of the huge crowd. This, we thought, was our finest hour! Commentary on the Games was shared by Danny Webb, Bill Collins and Ron Casey (destined to become our General Manager in later years).

Because of their different studio locations, the three TV stations had mounted their microwave relay dishes at different points on the grandstand, GTV-9 had theirs at the eastern end. ABV-2 and HSV-7 dishes were above the north-west entrance. Ours was at the extreme corner of the flat roof, this being the only point close to the van from which line-of-sight could be obtained back to our studio tower.

Our coverage of the opening and the Friday events at the MCG went well. We returned to our normal studio programme at 6pm, with film of some events included in the news service.

On Saturday the fine weather began to break with a traditional Melbourne hot north wind. Due to our inexperience in such matters the microwave dish had not been adequately anchored down, and in the mid-afternoon the gusting wind caught the 4ft dish, lifting it bodily over the parapet and depositing it on top of a Post Office van parked below. Alf Potter, knowing nothing of

this in the OB van, was horrified to see the off-air picture suddenly disappear from the TV receiver in the van tuned to our transmitter at Mount Dandenong. We were similarly dismayed to see the OB relay picture disappear at our South Melbourne studios.

Panic-stricken Alf was further irritated by a Post Office official knocking at the door of the OB van and asking what we were going to do about the damage to his vehicle.

The cable from the microwave head had been torn out by the roots, the parabolic dish was knocked into the proverbial cocked hat, and the shaft of the cooling fan was bent at a sharp angle.

We continued our audio coverage by standby telephone line to the studios, and ABV-2, 21 miles away, generously arranged - at short notice - a split of their video programme of the Games by running a coaxial cable from their transmitter to our neighbouring one on top of Mount Dandenong.

The damaged microwave dish was handed over to a panel-beater, who placed it in one corner of his workshop and took a running jump at it from the opposite corner. Lyle Lloyd and I took the damaged microwave head back to the studios and worked all night repairing the connections and mounting of the cable connector, and the

damaged cooling fan. By 6am the link was operating again, and we were able to use it that day for an OB of the Sterling Moss Grand Prix motor racing at Albert Park, near our studios. In 1956 this was our only microwave link for OB use. It was what they call baptism by fire.

That 4ft dish, reshaped by the skill of the panel-beater to a profile miraculously close to the original parabola, continued to serve us well for many years. As Shakespeare said -

"There is a destiny that shapes our ends
Rough hew them how we will."

TV coverage of the Olympic Games continued without further mishaps. As well as the MCG stadium we covered events at the Olympic Pool and the Glaciarium. As the OB van had to be moved from the MCG to the other venues at times of peak traffic, crossing two main highways, we were provided with a police motorcycle escort to enable us to move our van quickly to the other sites for evening coverage of swimming, diving, water polo and basketball.

Apart from such coverage of evening Games events, our regular daily programme continued throughout the Games period from 6pm to 10pm or later, with a film record of Games highlights in the news service. This was obtained by direct photography from a picture monitor in the studios with a 16mm Auricon film camera, sending the film out for processing and then editing together

noteworthy segments. The picture quality of this left much to be desired, but the news value made up for that.

It is rather remarkable that all this was accomplished with a studio technical staff of 13 men plus nine cameramen and four programme directors. Alf Potter directed the whole of the Games coverage from the OB van plus the motor racing at Albert Park on two Sundays - a total of 17 long consecutive working days. Alf refused to accept any relief. He made OB direction his career during those Games, and I believe he loved every minute of it.

The Games coverage began at 10am each day, and many hours of overtime were worked, but the enthusiasm of the staff never flagged. However, we heaved a sigh of relief when the Olympic flame finally flickered and went out on the afternoon of Saturday December 8th. Eric and Maxine Cottrell with their three boys and Isobel Brown, Jane and Marjorie Allen joined Phyll to watch it.

The two young engineers appointed in December 1955 departed soon after the Games. Ron Place went to join ABV-2 and Steve Wolkowicz left the television field. This was understandable. We had used them as technicians, rather than engineers, because of the pressure of operations - and the design work we had to do demanded experience at an engineering level which they lacked at that stage. I could understand their becoming

frustrated after 12 months without more responsible engineering work - although the experience they had in working with technicians would do them no harm. I had considerable experience of this type in training as a Cadet Engineer in the PMG's Department, fresh out of school. Such experience develops manipulative skill and gives an understanding of the work which the engineer may subsequently have to direct. My philosophy has been that I would never make any of my staff do anything that I was not prepared to do myself - and that included climbing towers and donning overalls to tackle some essentially unpleasant job.

It has also been my role never to develop strong personal friendships with any members of my subordinate staff - lest any action or instruction of mine be interpreted as the result of favouritism.

At the end of December we persuaded Peter Twomey to join our permanent staff as maintenance engineer, numerically replacing Ron Place. Peter had been a tower of strength during our studio installation and had become thoroughly familiar with the operation of the Marconi equipment. We also obtained approval to appoint another New Zealander, John Pease, as technician responsible for technical rostering, which was to become very complex with the completion of our larger studio.

The first Christmas Eve at the studios was a cause for celebration, and after closedown there was a certain amount of skylarking among the younger staff. Two of them were chasing each other with water pistols from the rack room into Studio 2, through the sound lock and back to the rack room, with most of the lights extinguished. On my way out to go home, I looked into the rack room just as the door of the sound lock burst open, and a dim figure with a water pistol let fly at my equally dim figure. When he realised whom his target was, his face was something to remember. "Oh, Mr Fisher!" he gasped. Neither of us has forgotten that Christmas Eve.

Our Studio 1 and its control room was put into service in February 1957 - but even then some installation work was still incomplete and some equipment ordered from AWA was still not delivered.

ABV-2 commenced daily programming from their Ripponlea studios on November 18th. In Sydney ABN-2 began on November 5th and ATN-7 on December 2nd. Thus the Marconi/AWA installation team had succeeded in bringing all four Marconi-equipped initial TV stations to the stage of regular programming before the end of 1956, and all within the span of one month. GTV-9 Melbourne opened for daily programming on January 19th, 1957.

Referring to the establishment of TV services, the ABCB eighth report stated -

"In its last Report the Board referred to the complex problems, technical, programme, administrative and financial, which must be overcome in this field; the skill and energy which have made possible the early establishment of these services have been noteworthy and inspire confidence in the future of Australian television services."

In the past several mad months there had been little opportunity for family life or outings. I had worked excessively long hours and Phyll had suffered the strain of serving me dinner at unearthly hours or dining without me, and there was little relaxation at weekends. In September we saw the first production at the newly completed Melbourne Little Theatre in Martin Street, South Yarra. This was "Tiger at the Gates" by Jean Giraudoux, translated by Christopher Fry, and the huge cast of 34 included names that have become a legend in Australian theatre. Some of these were -

Pauline Charleston	Keith Macartney	John Proper
Sheila Florance	Penelope Shelton	Pauline Oulton
Joy Mitchell	Peter Aarensen	Judith Jack
Carl Bleazby	Sydney Conabere	Philip Avard

The last two were to become important members of the HSV-7 team. The title, "Tiger at the Gates" was prophetic. With the birth of television in Australia we indeed had a tiger at the gates, and in the months to come I was to feel the lashings of its tail, as I came to grips with the grim realities of this unrelenting new medium.