

CHAPTER 18

Grim Reality

The year 1957 was a period of consolidation for TV services and realization of the magnitude of the continuing task before us. One BBC TV executive had written in 1950 - "Just to keep it going is a headache".

The temporary offices occupied by Keith, Ted, Lyle and myself on the first floor had been demolished, much to our relief. The roof had leaked badly, and buckets had to be placed to catch drips when it rained. Keith, Ted Trenchard Smith and Adrian Miller had all moved down to the ground floor near the Wells Street entrance, with Jan Salmond. Colin Fraser and I, with our secretaries, occupied adjacent offices on the first floor near the stairs - with Ted, Lyle and our draftsman.

An automatic Coca Cola dispenser was provided and placed temporarily in Keith's office until we found another place for it. One day Jan was horrified to see a trickle of red liquid creeping out under the closed door of Keith's office. For a moment she thought the pressure had become too great for him! There was no need for alarm - the Coca Cola machine had sprung a leak!

The ABCB formulated programme standards for television, which were published in their 8th Report, for the year ending June 30th, 1956. These were to serve as

a guideline for all stations. But with the expansion of our activities to two Studios in February 1957 the growth in our live studio production was quite remarkable.

Colin Fraser seemed determined to try out on Melbourne viewers all the categories of TV programme he had seen in the USA. One of the first new shows was the half-hour "Meet the Press" in which people in the public eye were interrogated by a panel of journalists - the first of the many current affairs programmes which became such an important ingredient of television. This went to air on Sunday evenings.

It was learned that GTV-9 were about to commence a week-night variety show called "In Melbourne Tonight" on Monday May 6th. Colin Fraser forestalled this with "The Late Show" commencing on Friday May 3rd at 9.30pm. This was compered by Noel Ferrier, who had many years of stage experience, and included a seven piece band under Lou Toppano. The idea was similar to "San Francisco Tonight" at KGO-TV.

Noel, a brilliant actor in the theatre, was somewhat confused by the medium of television, and at a loss without a script. He had difficulty in mastering microphone technique during interviews, sometimes pointing the hand-held microphone to the interviewee when asking a question and then to himself when receiving the answer. He lasted about two months, and was replaced by Bert Newton, a young hopeful from radio 3XY. Bert

remained for some two years. Both Noel and Bert subsequently did well at GTV-9 in their "IMT" programme, which achieved great popularity through the magnetic personality of Graham Kennedy.

The Late Show was televised from Tuesday to Friday nights.

"Wedding Day" and "Stop the Music" disappeared. In their place we had a new half-hour live show called "Tivoli Party Time" - aired on Sunday nights when the artists were free of their stage commitments - and two short musical programmes, the "Oxford Show" (directed by Alf Potter with live Christy Minstrels) and "Teenage Mailbag" (a live programme of hit songs compered by Ernie Sigley and featuring Gaynor Bunning and Sue Becker). Afternoon programming was introduced, involving film and short live magazine type segments - including cookery ("The Jean Bowring Show" and "The Chef Presents"), shopping ("Window of the Week", "Shopping Guide", "Beauty is My Business", and "Home Decorator") and leisure activities ("Let's Dance", "Green Fingers" and "Animal Orphanage". There were more talks about sport, especially Football on Friday nights.

All these new live shows required sizeable technical crews, placing additional demands on our technical staff, and provision had to be made for annual leave - which until then had not presented a problem. All live shows

were ad lib - scripts were regarded as an unnecessary evil - but several shows varied considerably in composition from week to week, demanding different scenery and "props", different lighting, different microphone arrangements and sometimes quite complex camera movements and mixing. Therefore it was necessary to hold a weekly planning conference. This was so in the case of "Peter's Fun Fair", "Hit Parade", "Swallows Parade" and "The Late Show". Technicians responsible for technical direction, lighting and sometimes audio had to attend these conferences to be aware of the requirements in production.

With the approach of the football season the management negotiated with the Victorian Football League and obtained agreement to the televising of the last quarter of a selected game each Saturday during the season. The VFL was very worried about the possible effect of TV coverage on ground attendance.

Finding a satisfactory parking position for the OB van at matches - accessible to mains power supply and cabling into the ground - was a continuing problem. Our van received so many parking tickets for infringement of regulations that our technicians finally placed a notice on the windscreen stating -

"Please leave parking tickets here".

Eventually the local councils became resigned to the appearance of TV vans at sporting venues, and came to amicable arrangements.

During the season we decided to attempt an OB of a match at Geelong - an airline distance of 58 miles from Mount Dandenong, about two thirds of this being across Port Phillip Bay. The OB van set off early for Geelong on the Saturday morning and installed the microwave link transmitter near the football ground at Kardinia Park. We retuned the Raytheon receiver at Mount Dandenong to the OB microwave frequency and established a working relay path. The football match was covered and broadcast to our satisfaction, with the standby link taking commercials from the studios. However, a mist began to rise at Geelong as the last quarter of the game progressed, making it difficult for the commentator there, and arousing our fears for the transmission.

No sooner had the final siren sounded, than the relay picture suddenly disappeared from our screens. Mother Nature had been kind to us, but 58 miles was stretching things a bit far across so much water and fog.

In the first few months of 1957 we had been allowed to recruit a few more technicians, notably Ken Hancock with lighting experience in BBC television, Graham Foster with good audio experience from New Zealand, and two transmitter technicians - Peter Lavers and Peter

Davenport. It was not easy to find men who would be content to work solely at the Mount. Perc Greiser came to us from electronic instrument work, with the ideal temperament and skill for studio equipment maintenance. Jack Wight joined Ken Hancock on studio lighting. When the "Late Show" began our technician staff had increased to only 23, which was quite inadequate without excessive overtime.

With the prospect of still more live production commitments, including many live commercials, I recommended on May 25th that 12 more technicians be recruited to cope with the expanding operational work, to provide adequate maintenance, to allow installation work to be completed and to cover the coming requirements of annual leave. After 3 weeks delay, approval was given to recruit only six - yet objections were continually being raised to the incidence of overtime.

Recruitment of suitable technician staff was difficult. In 1957 there was no-one available in Australia with TV experience, because the industry had just started, and there was very little unemployment in the country. This meant that potentially suitable recruits were already working in other jobs. Television attracted some because of its "glamour" appeal, but when applicants for jobs had been interviewed and carefully selected they first had to give notice to their existing employer and then, when recruited, they had to be trained

in TV work - usually by working alongside one of our experienced technicians for about 3 weeks. When the delay in obtaining approval to advertise for staff was added to this, it meant that a period of 10 weeks could elapse from the time we sought approval to the time when the new recruit became an effective working unit.

In the meantime, programme activities had expanded still further, creating a demand for even more staff. It was a vicious circle. As a result, a great deal of overtime had to be worked - many men working six days a week and on shifts often extending to 12 hours. Even then, demands for operational work frequently required men to be taken off maintenance or installation work to perform operational duties. Consequently maintenance was neglected, equipment faults became frequent and installation of needed equipment was delayed. Many recruits would stay with us for one or two years, and gradually become disillusioned as they found that behind the glamour of TV lay long hours of hard work - causing a disruption in their home life. The ones that stayed three years or more were genuinely interested in TV, and dedicated. We had two resignations of technicians in the first six months of 1957.

Our management at last admitted that film recording of live TV was necessary for programme exchange between Melbourne and Sydney. TCN-9 had installed Fernseh recording equipment and ATN-7 installed a Marconi rapid

pull-down system. We felt that the considerably greater period of service provided overseas by General Precision Laboratory equipment - and in particular the satisfaction the CBC had found with this system - weighed heavily in its favour. We decided to purchase a GPL kinescope recorder for 16mm film and Stancil Hoffman 16mm magnetic film recorders for sound.

The order was placed through Les Faudell of Television Engineering Pty Ltd who also undertook to arrange for selsyn motors to be fitted to two additional Bell and Howell 614 CBVM film projectors we had purchased. Selsyn motors were also to be coupled to two Stancil Hoffman sound recorders, to be installed for replay in telecine. With picture and sound recorded on separate 16mm film stock, and replayed respectively on a 16mm projector and a sound recorder, it was necessary to ensure that the transmitted picture and sound ran correctly in synchronism - particularly when speech or song was involved. This could be achieved by coupling electrically the selsyn motors on the replaying projector and recorder. And to allow the two to be brought into phase at the beginning, a special phase-shifting transformer had to be connected between the two selsyns. This was adjusted by a handwheel in telecine during a trial run before transmission, until recorded speech was perceived to be in phase with lip movements seen in the picture. Nothing is more irritating than "unmarried"

sound which is not correctly in "lip sync" with the picture.

The selsyns were mounted on an outrigger attached to the base of the film projectors and mechanically coupled to the "inching" shaft of the projector by a toothed driving belt - with a clutch on the selsyn shaft to allow this to be de-coupled when not required. The two projectors, so modified, were successively installed in the telecine room in place of our two original 614 CBVM projectors - which were passed over to the film library for review use. Two Stancil Hoffman magnetic recorders were rack-mounted in telecine, with their selsyns and phase-shifting transformers, for replay of 16mm unmarried magnetic sound recordings either from our own kinescope operations or from other stations.

The GPL kinescope equipment and a third Stancil Hoffman recorder was installed in the second floor above the film library, commencing in March 1957. Television Engineering Pty Ltd was responsible for the installation and commissioning, and we allocated Roly Lau, one of our most capable technicians, to the job of becoming familiar with its operation and maintenance. Max Manning was later trained as a second operator to provide relief. The notes I had prepared in the USA and Canada, after discussion and inspection of the kinescope installations of CBS and NBC in Los Angeles and New York, and of the CBC in Toronto, were very helpful in establishing our own

recording practices. We had discussions with Geoff King of Kinelab in Sydney, who agreed to process our film recordings and to collaborate with us in the very necessary sensitometric control of operations. Film was to be sent to and from Kinelab by air.

The kinescope recording room had to be made light-proof, as all recordings were necessarily made in a darkened environment. A separate darkroom was provided at one end of the area for the loading and unloading of film magazines. It was necessary to tie the rate of operation of the kinescope and sound recorders to the rate of TV picture scanning at the station. To this end, the recorders were driven by a 50 c/s power supply derived from amplifiers, which in turn were driven by 50 c/s derived from the station synchronizing generator.

Roly Lau showed great interest in the recording equipment and we were fortunate in having a technician of his intelligence to begin our kinescope operations. Max Manning proved a worthy associate. The equipment worked well and so did the telecine replay facilities.

At the beginning of July we had our first major interruption in broadcast service. The vision transmitter at Mount Dandenong failed during the evening programme and the technicians on duty were unable to determine the cause. Derek Griess was still living at Olinda, and his assistance was sought. Fortunately he

was at home, and he came to the transmitter post haste. It was about an hour before transmission was resumed. This exposed our vulnerability in the absence of a standby transmitter.

Next morning I was summoned to the office of the Managing Director, Mr John Williams, in the Herald Building in Flinders Street. It was my 46th birthday!

I arrived there on time, but Mr Williams was absent. I sat waiting in his office. There was something familiar about the feeling. It reminded me of the several occasions I had to wait outside my Headmaster's study.

Mr Williams entered with an apology for keeping me waiting. Then he said "We were off the air for a considerable period last night."

I agreed. I said the transmitter had broken down. Mr Williams then said -

"Mr Fisher. The transmitter will NOT break down!"

I said that no-one could guarantee that this would not happen. All electronic equipment was liable to break down at some time or other.

"Then what do other television stations do?" he asked.

I said " They have a standby transmitter."

"Why haven't we one?" he asked.

I explained standby transmitters were very expensive items of equipment, and one had not been included in the original list of equipment from AWA on which we had based our initial order.

"We will see about that!" he said, and that was the end of the rather painful interview.

I learned that day that an instruction had been issued from Flinders Street requiring an engineer to be present during every evening transmission forthwith - pending the installation of a standby transmitter, for which a quotation was being sought from AWA.

The trip to Mount Dandenong from the studios, a road distance of 30 miles, begins with city traffic and ends with a climb up steep mountain roads - taking a minimum of 45 minutes and often longer. It was logical to have an engineer on the premises, if he were capable of providing the necessary assistance in the event of a breakdown. However, the situation was that none of our staff had experience in dealing with faults in a high power TV transmitter. Nevertheless, we had to comply with the instruction and hope for the best.

Ted Allen, Lyle Lloyd and I agreed to share the burden. Accordingly each one of us set out for the Mount every third night, and remained at the transmitter until closedown - come rain, hail or snow. The weather during the late winter and spring can be unpredictable in the

Dandenongs. Sometimes we encountered every form of H2O on our journey - rain, hail, sleet, fog and sometimes even snow! We were very glad of the proximity of Derek Griess who remained at Olinda completing the installation work on the ABV-2 transmitter.

To some extent we made use of these hours at Mount Dandenong to study the transmitter manuals and do some design work - but the travelling time was a dead loss.

The AWA quotation for a 4kW vision and 1kW sound transmitter to serve as a standby was accepted, but delivery was not to be until 1959. AWA agreed to provide a 2kW transmitter, available at short notice, as a temporary standby pending delivery of the 4kW equipment - but delivery and installation of even this temporary unit was going to take several months.

In order to relieve the staffing situation in the meantime, AWA suggested that one of their engineers, Angus Robertson, should join our staff as transmitter engineer. The Herald was prepared to accept this proposal, subject to my concurrence.

Angus came to Melbourne for an interview. He had no experience with TV transmitters, but had been carrying out installation of AWA radio transmitters for several years, including work in India. He was prepared to live in the cottage at our transmitter site, provided his aged

mother could live there with him and provided reasonable improvements to the cottage were made. We had no alternative suggestions. Someone had to be there and learn all there was to learn about the transmitter. Angus seemed to be a competent engineer. We agreed to the arrangement.

In early October Angus moved to Melbourne from Sydney. He arrived in his red MG car, called at the studios and drove me up to the Mount - apologising for the quantity of cat food and cat medicine in the car. He had a pet siamese cat, "Mr King", which required special attention. Angus became ensconced in the transmitter cottage, and his mother joined him when the required improvements had been made. Mrs Robertson was a charming old lady. She cooked and did the housework for Angus, and when I visited the transmitter she always insisted that I lunch with them.

Angus was a strange mixture. Short, with a ruddy complexion, he could talk for hours about things like "Railways of the World" - and he did! Very fond of his mother, he absolutely doted on his siamese cat, whose welfare took precedence over most things. It was difficult to determine just how much knowledge Angus absorbed about the transmitters, but he was very active in advising us about any deficiencies in the transmitter environment. He proposed that a bore should be drilled at the site to obtain water for fire fighting, garden

watering and domestic use. He engaged the services of a local water diviner, and even experimented with a "divining stick" himself. A bore was sunk and a reasonable supply of rather brackish water found. We installed an electrically driven pump and a storage tank.

Angus was a prolific writer of memoranda. We accumulated a bulky file of his reports and requests - largely concerning the water supply and its effect on his laundry. But he was a very likeable fellow and, if you could bear to listen, a very agreeable companion.

The 2kW temporary standby transmitter was installed in the room at the transmitter building which we had provided for possible future telecine equipment. I obtained details from Marconis concerning the coaxial outputs of the 4kW standby equipment on order and the associated sound/vision combining unit, and designed the layout of feeders necessary to connect these to the existing coaxial switches feeding our transmitting antenna system. The permanent standby equipment was not installed until early in 1959 by AWA.

Ted Allen returned to 4BK in the latter part of 1957. He had spent two years working with me and deputising for me during my absence abroad, and we had become great friends. We thought alike on most things and enjoyed the same jokes. I was very sorry to lose him. Before he left Melbourne Ted spent some time with

the Sales Department and the Accounts Office, gaining experience in those fields in anticipation of his future TV responsibilities in Brisbane..

When we began operations in November 1956, the cottage at the corner of Dorcas and Wells Streets - embraced by the L shaped studio building - was occupied by "Curly" Wilson, our cleaner and boiler attendant. Curly had worked in the building when it was occupied by Herald Gravure, and he came back to work at South Melbourne after working two years in their Hawthorn premises. Curly loved a "yarn". When I worked back at night he would stop when he reached my office, lean on his broom and tell me all the latest gossip and news about his family. He had to find other accommodation for his family because the cottage was soon required for use by the salesmen, the OB crews, for band rehearsals and for wardrobe and programme conferences as our operational activities increased.

The six additional technicians approved in June were appointed in July. One of these, selected for the transmitter, was Ray Shortell - who had been chief engineer of a radio station and who had studied for and passed the TVOCP in his mid-50s. I was very diffident about offering him a job as a technician, but he said he would be quite happy working at the transmitter. Ray was a delightful fellow, loved by everyone. He remained with us till he retired. Three others in that group who

stayed many years were Richard McEwen, George Jeffery and Dave Willis.

Among our technicians were some real characters. There was one who said he could not work shifts commencing early in the morning. We found that he was engaged on a milk round. Then there was a young Asian who kept changing his address. We learned that he was an illegal immigrant who had overstayed his permit to study in Australia, and was dodging the migration authorities.

In August we had 23 technicians at the studios and 4 at the transmitter, all on shift work, but the programme hours had increased to over 41 a week, including 19 hours of live production plus many live commercials and a weekly football OB. The comparable technician staff at ATN-7 numbered 65. That we were able to cope with the high proportion of live production was due in no small measure to the method we had adopted in rostering staff and to the design of our building and equipment layout which allowed economy in the use of staff. However, the demands of live production had resulted in a neglect of maintenance and installation work—and excessive overtime.

As my submissions for extra staff in May had been only half successful, I decided a more detailed approach was necessary. Even more live shows were being contemplated.

Accordingly I produced a very comprehensive report on the technical manpower requirements of HSV studio production and on the incidence of overtime. This analysed all phases of technical work on each day of the week and showed that seven more technicians were required to reduce overtime, provide for annual leave, cover outstanding installation work and adequate maintenance, and staff the kinescope operations. I also recommended that a costing system be introduced for all live shows and live commercials, with the allocation of a budget for production.

This report produced no reaction whatever. Perhaps it was too detailed for the powers that be, or perhaps they feared the live shows would fold up, leaving us with excess technical staff. However the additional technicians were recruited one or two at a time over the next ten months, and the live shows continued to flourish.

In September 1957 we recruited Jurgen Davids as OB links engineer - the same engineer who had presented me with the illuminated Fasching address at the Fernseh factory in Darmstadt in 1956. He had been installing Fernseh equipment at TCN-9. He stayed with us only 12 months.

It was interesting that some technicians who left us, after only about two years, subsequently returned to

stay with us for many years more. Such cases were Robin Greig, David Willis, Peter Bramley, Peter Johnston and Geoff Merrill. We must have been doing the right thing to make them want to return!

Although the kinescope equipment came into service in the second half of 1957 it made no difference to our scheduling of live programme rehearsals and production. It was not practicable to stop and start recording as is done today with videotape equipment. Kinescope recordings were made during live productions "to air", and their main purpose was to provide a recording which could be sent to other TV stations for replay, NOT for replay at the originating station. However, it was most necessary for the originating station to check the kinescope recordings after processing - to ensure that the recording and processing procedure was going according to plan, and that the quality control being exercised was producing film recordings of satisfactory quality for replay to air by telecine equipment.

Our most ambitious live programme in 1957 was "The Frigidaire Show" in August, which required the combined facilities of Studios 1 and 2 plus an OB from a city showroom. It was a great success with singing and dancing, marred only by an unexpected wide-angle shot showing a floorman crawling crab-like across the floor, thinking he was below the field of view of a camera going to air in close-up.

Towards the end of 1957 the early evening children's show with Judy Jack gave way to "Young Seven", produced by David Baker - a young man strongly reminiscent of Robert Newton's portrayal of Long John Silver in "Treasure Island". David was very intense - full of the most wonderful ideas, not always appropriate to a children's programme. Into the half-hour show he crammed an amazing number of segments of great variety, but the studio crew frequently approached the session knowing little or nothing about what was going to happen or how it was going to happen.

David directed the show from the control room with a great deal of shouting, arm waving and comments such as "I love you, kids!" and "We're killen 'em!" He complained to me that he was not getting cooperation from the technical crew. My reply was that if he provided a floor plan before the show - showing the grouping of the several acts, the movements required, the number of people involved and the places where they were going to speak, sing or perform - then the crew would be able to cooperate. Floorplans of the studio were available, but they had never been used for "Young Seven".

On one occasion I learned through the grape-vine that David was arranging for the Army to bring a 25 pounder cannon into the studio, to demonstrate its firing. I had to get Keith Cairns to forestall this. The shock would probably have shattered the expensive

camera tubes and the microphone diaphragms. On another day he arranged to use an elephant in the show. I was concerned that the weight of the elephant might damage the studio floor. I obtained an estimate of the strength of the floor from our architect and an estimate of the weight of the elephant and the size of its feet. I was relieved to find that no damage would be sustained unless the elephant stood on one foot!

Perhaps the best remembered story about David was the time when he wished to demonstrate to the children the milking of a cow. The nearest cow he could find was one that grazed in a paddock near the Melbourne University. He arranged for this to be brought to the studios in a motor truck with a hinged tail-board. The truck arrived shortly before programme rehearsal, and was backed against the open door to Studio 1 in Wells Lane. However, we had no suitable ramp, and the cow refused to jump down from the truck.

One of the technicians had a bright idea. "Why don't we take the truck over St Kilda Road into the Domain, and back it up against a grassy bank?" This was done forthwith, but the cow - thoroughly cowed by now - refused to budge. Our resourceful technician gave it a smart blow behind the ears, and the cow wheeled round, charged off the truck and went careering across the Domain lawns into the open gates of Government House.

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Then followed a time-wasting exercise, trying to get a rope around the neck of the cow to lead it back to the studios. At last it was captured, but it was getting dark and far too late for the cow to appear in "Young Seven". They tied the cow to the Government House railings and left it for the night.

Keith Cairns was roused by a telephone call from Government House late that night, complaining that a cow - presumably belonging to HSV-7 - was bellowing in the Government House gardens, and had been trampling all over the flower beds.

In the following day's programme David had planned to show how a carcass was carved up by the butcher. Grim reality indeed!!

In October 1957 the Government announced plans for Stage 2 of the introduction of television in Australia. National TV stations were to be established in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Hobart and commercial licences were to be issued in each of these cities. Tenders for equipment for the National stations were invited in December, closing in the following March. Applications for the commercial licence were invited in October, closing in March 1958 for Brisbane and Adelaide and in June for Perth and Hobart.

Proposals for equipment for the Brisbane commercial station were submitted by AWA, and for the Adelaide station by Philips. I was asked by the Newspaper associates of the HWT, who were proposing to apply for these commercial licences, to examine these proposals and comment. I did so, drawing attention in particular to the need for standby facilities and the desirability of tailoring the installations to the size of the community to be served.

The National TV stations in Melbourne and Sydney were still undergoing construction and installation. Both had begun regular service in 1956 with temporary studios, temporary radiators and on low power. Installation of their Marconi transmitters was completed in 1957- Sydney in July and Melbourne in September - but the associated studios were not completed until January and May 1958, respectively. Most of the Marconi engineers then departed, but Fred Kenyon and Eric Hitchen remained to work in Australia.

We were very proud to have been the first Australian TV station to have commenced regular programming with full transmitter power and with properly designed and installed live studio facilities on November 4th 1956; and in 1957 we were producing afternoon and evening programmes with a live content of 50% - greater than any other station and well in excess of the requirements of the ABCB programme standards.

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Our first tennis DB was to be the 1957 Davis Cup Final from the VLTA courts at Kooyong, fixed for Deecember 26th to 28th. The Kooyong courts were only three and a half miles from our studios, but they lay in a pronounced hollow beside Gardiner's Creek. With the intervening ground rising 150ft higher than that at Kooyong and the studios, covered with trees and dwellings, there was no hope of a line-of-sight path for our single DB microwave relay system, unless a high structure could be erected beside the courts. The question was "How high should this be?" Lyle Lloyd had the answer. He would release a large balloon, tethered beside the tennis courts, while I watched with binoculars from the top of the studio 225ft tower. The balloon cord would have knots at 10ft intervals, and when I sighted it, the necessary height for the link transmitter would be determined.

Lyle obtained some large white balloons from the Department of Meteorology, but found that all stocks of compressed hydrogen had been commandeered by a supply ship of the Antarctic Division - which was loading-up in preparation for a voyage south. The only other available source of Hydrogen was at the RAAF base at Laverton - about 12 miles away. They could suply hydrogen on site, but not in cylinders to be taken away.

Therefore Lyle borrowed an open-sided Herald newspaper delivery van, and set off for Laverton. He

returned quite soon, because he had forgotten the balloons! An hour or so later he arrived back at the studios with a hydrogen-filled balloon bulging from the van on all sides.

It was a fine, still day. Lyle set off for Kooyong while I climbed the tower, armed with powerful binoculars. We had a magneto telephone line installed between the top of the tower and the rack room. When Lyle arrived at Kooyong he rang the rack room from a nearby public phone, and then posted a technician there to relay messages while he allowed the balloon - carefully removed from the open-sided van - to rise slowly above the tree tops. I lay flat on my belly on top of the studio tower with the sun on my back, scanning the undulating country in the direction of Kooyong.

It was a slow business. Just when I thought I would never spot the balloon, there it was - a tiny white spot, bobbing about above a line of trees. I shouted "Eureka!" into the telephone handset, and the message was relayed to Lyle, who said it was in the nick of time - an official from the tennis courts had come out and demanded that this balloon be removed forthwith! It was distracting players practising for the tournament within. Lyle hauled his balloon down, and I descended from the tower.

Our requirement was for a structure at Kooyong at

least 80ft high. Lyle arranged for a guyed tower of tubular scaffolding to be erected in the space between the Kooyong Courts and Gardiner's Creek. With the microwave dish firmly secured on top of this our relay link back to the studios worked perfectly.

With the completion of Studio 1 and its control room in February, pressure of work eased somewhat in 1957 and once more I was able to enjoy outings with my family. In March we went to see "The Pajama Game" at Her Majesty's, this time with an all-Australian cast - Toni Lamond and Bill Newman playing the leads, with Jill Perryman and Jack Little. Tikky Taylor danced the memorable "Steam Heat" number with Kevin Johnston and Toni's husband, Frank Sheldon.

Our Chris, now 15, loved theatre. We became subscribers to the Melbourne Little Theatre, now producing a new play each month in their delightful "Continental" type theatre in Martin Street, South Yarra - the first new live theatre constructed in Melbourne since 1931, with a seating capacity of 410 and modern stage and dressing room facilities. This was the realization of the dream of Brett Randall, who founded the MLT in 1931 with Hal Percy and had worked under cramped conditions in temporary premises until 1956. Brett lived in a flat opposite the new theatre and I met his son Peter through the Television Society of Australia. He had shown me the theatre when it was under

construction and I was very impressed. We looked forward eagerly to every play.

In their 1957 session we saw them produce -

The Three Sisters	by Anton Tchekhov
Relative Values	by Noel Coward
The Grass Harp	by Truman Capote
Come Back Little Sheba	by William Inge
Under Milkwood	by Dylan Thomas
Romeo and Juliet	by William Shakespeare
The Multi-Coloured Umbrella	by Barbara Vernon

and in December a lighthearted revue called "Little by Little". Production was mostly by Irene Mitchell, with some by George Fairfax and one by Peter Randall. Peter and Irene were co-directors with Brett Randall and George Fairfax was manager. John Truscott became resident scenic designer for the theatre, with a brilliant future in store for him. I was to have much to do with Peter Randall in the coming years of television.

Some of the artists in these plays became household names in future stage and TV drama - Sheila Florance, Bunny Brooke, Gerda Nicolson, Jenifer Claire, John Proper, Robin Ramsay, Kevin Colebrook, Joy Mitchell, Pauline Charleston, Carl Bleazby, Peter Aanensen, Sydney Conabere, Penelope Shelton, Judy Banks and many others. Some artists - Wynne Pullman, Bill Catmull, Phil A'Vard, Su Israel and Judy Jack subsequently joined our staff.

In April we saw the Ballet Guild perform "Coppelia" at the MLT under the direction of Laurel Martyn, and in

July the Borovansky Ballet revival at Her Majesty's, dancing the full version of "Swan Lake".

But our biggest thrill was the performance of "The Gondoliers" by the PLC girls for three nights at the Hawthorn Town Hall in April - produced by Maurice Doolan. Our daughter Chris played the part of Inez, foster mother of the King of Barataria on the first night, and the Duchess of Plaza-Toro on the third night. She carried it off with a great deal of style, and we were very proud of her. Chris had a good voice and a full appreciation of Gilbert's satire.

Chris obtained her Intermediate Certificate that year, with a form prize and honourable mentions in the Alliance Francaise and Goethe Competitions.

We had two short holidays away from home. In February we stayed a week at Inverloch on Anderson's Inlet - restful, with beautiful coastal scenery. The hotel had a TV set with a broken tuning knob - set on channel 9. I purchased a pair of pliers at the local hardware store, and thereafter it was tuned to Channel 7 and HSV!

In May I traded-in our Hillman Minx car for a more roomy blue Morris Oxford, and we drove to Adelaide to spend a week with our families. I managed to find time

to construct two sets of bookshelves for our dining room to house my growing collection.

In September at the Princess we saw the very moving play "The Diary of Anne Frank", with the talented 15 year old Elizabeth Waterhouse in the name part and Sheila Florance as her mother. We enjoyed performances of Iolanthe and Ruddigore at Her Majestys in October and November with Grahame Clifford in the comedy parts and the fine deep voice of Richard Watson.

In November saw "Salad Days" at the Princess Theatre - the delightful English musical by Julian Slade - about young people fresh out of University, and a magic piano. The stars were Judy Banks and John Proper, with Lou Vernon, Noel Ferrier and Joy Mitchell. It was a night of happiness and enchantment - a fitting end to a year of grim reality.

By the end of 1957 television was firmly established in Melbourne and Sydney. An important new venture was the move to television of the young talent quest "Swallows Juniors" which, hosted by John Eden, had enjoyed popularity for many years on radio 3DB. It was first aired as a "simulcast" on HSV-7 and 3DB, hosted by Brian Naylor - who achieved an immediate rapport with the young performers. As it gained popularity it continued on HSV only and eventually was re-named "Brian and the Juniors" when the Swallows sponsorship ended. It

achieved Australia-wide distribution, and after 13 years moved to the new Channel 10 network as "Young Talent Time" under Johnny Young. Over its many successful years this show provided a springboard for the development of Australian talent, including many singers and dancers who have become national figures in the Australian world of entertainment.

Assisted by Ted Allen and Lyle Lloyd, I was proud of having conceived the first established Australian studio and transmitting station to begin regular TV programmes - assembled by the expert installation staff provided by Marconis and AWA - but it remained for Colin Fraser to breathe life into that installation before any other TV station in Australia had completed their studios.

Colin was an adventurer into the unknown climate of viewing-public acceptance. He tried everything, and gathered around him an array of talent that stirred the imagination of Melbourne - James Upshaw, Ian Jones, Alf Potter, Mary Parker, Eric Pearce, Jack Perry, Doug McKenzie, Bill Collins, Danny Webb, Ernie Sigley, Noel Ferrier, Bert Newton, Brian Naylor, David Baker - these artists and more, to use a popular phrase, began live television in Australia. Some of them were still in TV 30 years later. It was sad that the money was not then available to develop their potential to the full.

Keith Cairns had hard task-masters in Flinders Street, Station HSV-7 - under the wing of the conservative HWT - has not often surpassed the ratings of its rival in Richmond. But history cannot ignore the fact that live television production in Australia, changing the life and social habits of the Nation, began at Dorcas Street South Melbourne on November 4th 1956.

EPILOGUE

The next 25 years held many interesting and revolutionary developments in TV -

- The birth of live Australian TV drama
- The advent of videotape recording
- The establishment of the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations.
- The introduction of the annual Television Society "Penguin" awards, and the "Logies"
- The Telecom facilities for interstate TV relays
- The use of geostationary satellites
- The introduction of colour in TV, and
- The establishment of additional capital city and regional TV stations.

Participation in all these developments and attendance at international conferences planning the future use of the radio frequency spectrum gave me a second career with a wealth of experiences I had never even dreamed of.

At HSV-7 I had to engineer the provision of new Master Control and Presentation control facilities, the Fitzroy Teletheatre, a special News Studio and a Colour Nucleus Building. I was involved in the design of facilities for some of the new TV stations in other States. Life was very full.

But that is another story.