

## Memorable "Mike" Moments

### (9) John Batten

**M**Y most anxious moment before a mike," says John Batten, "occurred during the filming of 'Backstage,' in which I co-starred with Thelma Hill. We were doing a long unbroken sequence which began on a theatre stage and ended with a love scene in the theatre cafe. The whole scene lasted about 1½ minutes of screening time, which, as film-goers will know, is a pretty long time. The cost of the scene was round about £200, so naturally we were particularly anxious to get the scene right the first time. We rehearsed it several times and then the director gave the order for the cameras to begin shooting the scene. All went well—we kept the correct focusing distance from the camera as it preceded us into the cafe where we commenced the love scene. The director was purring with satisfaction at the easy flow of the scene, and then Thelma and I sat down at the table. I took her tenderly into my arms, gazed soulfully into her eyes, and kissed her. The director was still purring, and Thelma and I sat there kissing. We started to tremble, not with love but with laughter — helpless silent laughter. You see, when we kissed, our teeth collided — so violently that tears sprang to our eyes. Thelma gave a snort of suppressed mirth, and of course that started me off too. There we sat in the middle of a kiss, shaking with laughter, and knowing that after a count of 15 we had to break away and gaze at each other yearningly or ruin a £200 scene. A very anxious moment! However, we saved the situation by pinching each other so violently that our laughter gave way to an expression of pain as we broke away and gazed at each other for the close of the scene.

## ROD TALBOT AND THE DIGGERS' HOUR

**P**UNCTUALLY at five o'clock every Sunday evening all the year round, the stirring march "El Abanico" is heard from 12B, and gives a signal to the thousands who are waiting for it, that the Diggers' Hour is on the air!

Compèred by Ex-serviceman Rod Talbot, this session is one of the longest running broadcast features at 12B. It started back in the days when the northern Commercial Station was the Friendly Road. It is now, as it has always been, the only regular live artist show broadcast on the New Zealand air, and it has been the means of first introducing, and later of making the careers of many broadcast artists. Each year Rod Talbot personally conducts many auditions, and will give any aspiring artist a chance if he possesses sufficient talent. The keynote of the



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hour is variety, and bands, orchestras, vocal, instrumental, and humorous items, studio plays and sketches, are all broadcast. A tremendous amount of preparation goes into the perfection of each turn, all under the guiding hand of Rod Talbot.

### Varied Talent

Regular artists in the Diggers' Hour have become as well known as any announcers. 12B's "Thea" takes her turn every Sunday evening with piano solos, and plays accompaniments. Dudley Wrathall appears in person as the humorous

character "Sergeant Bottle," who has become as firm a favourite with the listeners as Rod himself. Lou Paul, John Gordon, Fred Baird, and Dudley Wrathall, all sing frequently in solo items, and as a male quartet.

Incidentally, it is Fred Baird, chief of 12B's copywriting room, who writes the original plays and humorous sketches that are broadcast during the session, and it is Mr. Baird who conceives and writes the patter for "Sergeant Bottle." From start to finish the whole programme possesses that friendly air of camaraderie which characterises the concert parties of the New Zealand Forces. But the songs, the humour and the sketches are not merely confined to a Digger audience, but have an appeal which is very wide in its scope of entertainment.

### Social Services

The Diggers' Hour is not only entertainment, it has been the direct means of raising funds and gifts to provide crippled and invalid ex-Servicemen with comforts they might never otherwise possess. Rod Talbot, through his Diggers' Hour, has been instrumental in collecting hundreds of crystal sets for soldiers in institutions and for private homes which could not afford a wireless set; scores of gramophones and hundreds of records; parcels of toys at Christmas for the children of unemployed Returned Soldiers; a wireless set for the Community Sunshine Association, where numbers of Returned Soldiers' children are taught; a large wireless set with seven speakers at Mt. Eden prison; and also a similar installation at the Auckland Mental Hospital, where more than two hundred ex-soldiers are confined.

The list goes on through years, and the scope of the Diggers' Hour includes hundred of spare time calls by Rod Talbot personally—calls on soldiers and soldiers' widows, calls of comfort and encouragement, little visits to leave books, fruit, cigarettes and tobacco.

Rod Talbot himself is known by practically every Returned Soldier in the Auckland Province.

### Wounded on Gallipoli

Concerning his own origin and history, he says he was born during one hot summer afternoon in the West Indies about forty-four years ago, and is the son of a retired Major of the R.A.M.C. He arrived in New Zealand in 1912, and two years later left with the Main Body N.Z.E.F. as a machine gunner with the Wellington Mounted Rifles. On Gallipoli he was badly wounded in the face, a bullet entering his right cheek bone, giving him a large sort of dimple which he will bear till the end of his days.

## Meet the LADIES



**D**OROTHEA RYAN, popularly known as "Thea" of 12B, has been on the air for over ten years.

Naturally, during that time she has had much experience and has assimilated a keen knowledge of radio technique. This knowledge, coupled with her unusual talent and her gracious personality, make her one of the most important additions to the list of well known women on the Commercial Broadcasting network.

"Thea" is first and foremost a solo pianist—one of New Zealand's most accomplished and versatile—and she also has the distinction of being the only woman Wurlitzer organist in New Zealand.

She began her radio career with the National Service at 1YA, where she played the piano as solo pianist, and also with the studio orchestra. It was at 1YA, too, that she first became known to children as "Aunt Dorothea" in the Children's Hour.

On joining 12B she became a very popular personality in the children's sessions—as she is to-day.

Each week-day, between 12.30 and 1 p.m., except Fridays, "Thea" charms listeners with her "Piano Request Session." This session has grown from a very small beginning, and the interest is becoming intense as, one after another, listeners try to catch her out with a request she cannot play. She has not been caught yet!

Should any listener not know who tinkles the keys so expertly in their favourite competition, the Musical Story Competition, it's "Thea," and again "Thea" in the Milestones Birthday Club on Wednesdays at 4.45; and "Thea" in the Sunbeams Session. The last-named incorporates a membership of well over three thousand children, and has done much good work for charity.

The dance tune, "Sleepy Maori Moon," is one of "Thea's" compositions, and it has become extremely popular and has sold thousands of copies.