

**C**OMMERCIAL travellers sometimes like to boast, when they get together, of the mileage they have covered with the little bag of samples. The seasoned men of the road know all the tricks. In a railway carriage they avoid sitting over the wheels; they carry a pillow and a rug and always avoid the back seat in a service car.

With 20,000 miles' travelling to their credit in four years the 2YA Camp Entertainers have picked up a hint or two—particularly on how to make an Army, Navy or Air Force truck comfortable on the way to and from shows which they give on an average of three to four times a week. During 1944 the combination gave 140 concerts and this year again, the members are as busy as ever.

In the National Broadcasting Service the officer responsible for the organisation of the work is Malcolm Rickard, programme organiser of 2YA. It is his task to see that the Entertainers, as a body, are ready to visit any camp or station, or carry out any patriotic or charitable entertaining task at almost any time. The performances commenced in November, 1941, and since then shows have been presented in Waiouru, Linton, Delta, Palmerston North, Blenheim and Wanganui, with hundreds of visits to posts nearer home, while some members have taken their entertaining talents as far afield as New Caledonia.

#### Wide Variety

Occasionally the Entertainers are heard over the air as they were the other night when a show was presented at a naval station. *The Listener* accompanied the party, finding them all old campaigners in spite of their youth. Rather than a fixed, composite party, they are a collection of artists with two choruses as a working basis. There are close on 150 artists on whom Mr. Rickard has called in the last four years, therefore the variety in entertainment available is wide. Some members, of course, are more or less permanent, and appear regularly.

Where the 2YA Entertainers score is in the rapidity of their show. The curtain is not used a great deal and when it is down it is only for a few seconds. One item follows another without a breathing space, which, though it might be welcomed by the performers, is certainly not required by audiences. It has valuable help, too, from an excellent orchestra comprised of well-known players and with pianists who can turn their fingers to anything from a classical overture or accompaniment to "hot rhythm."

"Have any of your party taken up the stage professionally as a result of their experience at camps?" we asked Mr. Rickard.

"Several have had offers to go into professional work, but no one has accepted," he said. "Practically all do their ordinary work in the daytime—in offices and so on—and treat the night work on the stage as a pleasant hobby."

The smooth running of the whole show, from the time of leaving town until they return home, is the result of experience. A meeting place is fixed,

# FUN FOR THE FORCES

## 2YA Camp Entertainers Take The Road

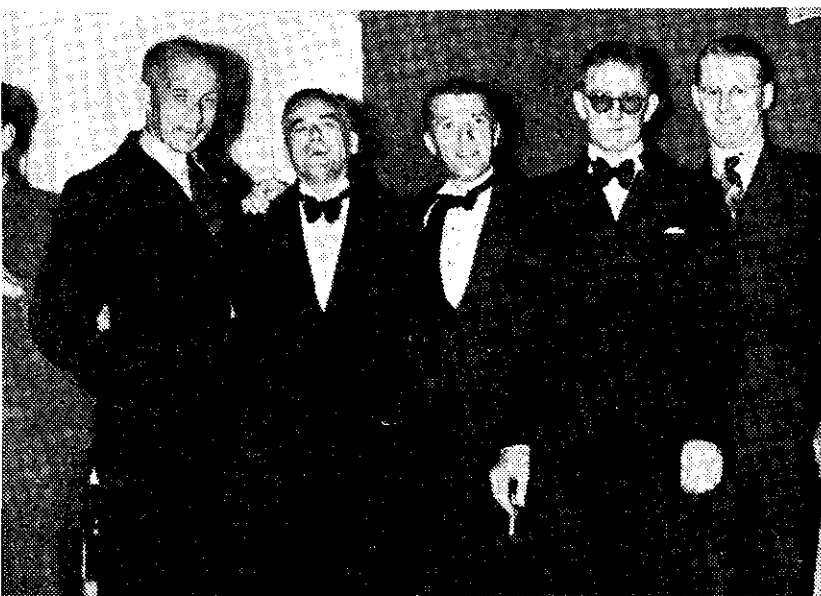
(By a "Listener" Staff Reporter)



Some of the chorus put on a smile for the photographer.



Malcolm Rickard, organiser (left), says something to amuse the ballet.



The male department limbers up.

transport is ready, and nobody is late. No stage properties, except lighting sets, are taken and there is no fuss or bother.

#### Queer Moments

"But if, as you say, you are ready to go anywhere at all to give a show, you must strike some awkward moments on small stages and in small halls."

Were he that sort of a guy, Mr. Rickard would have replied, "You're telling me."

He contented himself with remarking that the party had certainly experienced queer moments. Once, in the middle of winter, they performed in a tin shed with rain drumming on the roof and a howling gale adding to the noise. The roof leaked and, to keep the people on the stage dry, a tarpaulin had to be rigged. Had there been no public address system not a member of the audience would have heard a word or a note. Two large stoves and greatcoats provided a certain amount of warmth. Of course, at this performance, they received one of the most enthusiastic receptions in their experience.

Another time the party travelled by car to Waiouru, one truck leaving Wellington at 3.30 p.m. on a Saturday. Owing to breakdowns it did not arrive until 2.30 a.m. In the meantime search parties were sent out. The same morning the party rehearsed, and gave a show also that morning, played to 900 men in the afternoon, and to 1,200 at night. They arrived back in Wellington at 1.0 a.m. on Monday.

#### Rough Travelling

Sometimes the party travels by steamer and the return journey, after a night in a stuffy hall, is relished. This is in contrast with the occasion when they went far into the hills and over rough roads by truck to visit an American camp. The start of the show had to be delayed half-an-hour while the artists recovered from the trip.

Starting from a very small nucleus—it took all the efforts of those on the first programme to produce a two hours' show—the chorus was made into a feature. At first there were three girls, then three more joined, along with four men. To-day both choruses consist of eight women and four men.

The show *The Listener* saw was well up to the standard of non-stop brightness which the entertainers have established. The audience was composed almost entirely of naval men. The hall and stage were very suitable. With a backdrop showing a huge anchor and a rope, the nautical flavour was there. In the front row were the captain and other officers with their wives and friends. After the show the entertainers were entertained in turn, the "skipper" expressing his appreciation of the show on behalf of the men.

During supper it was announced that as an alternative to road travel the party might return home by steamer. Practically everybody did, rounding off another evening of pleasure for one of the fighting services on a heaving deck and with songs from the show making the journey all too short.