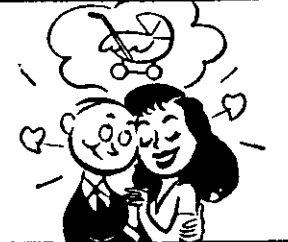
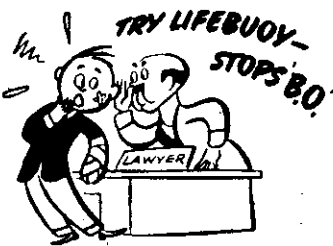
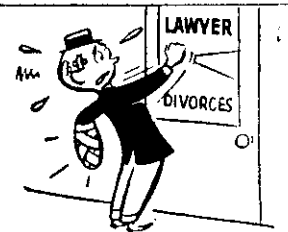
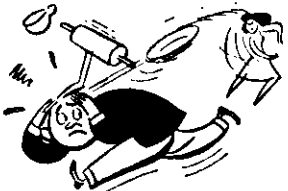


HOME, SWEET HOME



FROM HEAD TO TOE
LIFEBOUY STOPS "B.O."

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KINDERGARTEN OF THE AIR

Novel Broadcasting Feature In Australia

JENNIFER McLEOD, a child of five, had been a victim of spastic paralysis from birth. She had never walked or talked, and the doctors said there was very little hope of her ever improving. Then one day her mother tuned in the radio to the Australian Broadcasting Commission's "Kindergarten of the Air."

The effect on Jennifer was magical. She tried to answer the teacher, and for the first time showed signs of animation and interest.

This was the beginning of a remarkable cure. Soon she was able to sit in her chair, turn on the radio, and although unable to speak clearly, join in the class. Now she can turn over the pages of books, draw with chalk and do many of the things suggested in the programme.

Jennifer McLeod is one of thousands of Australian children in schools, hospitals, and homes in cities, towns, and the far outback, who gather round radios at 9.30 a.m. each day to hear the *Kindergarten of the Air*.

Born From a Threat

The programme had its origin in Western Australia early in 1942, when there was a real threat of invasion. Perth and Fremantle were in danger from enemy bombs, and the Government felt that it was not wise to have groups of small children gathered together. The Kindergarten Union (a voluntary organisation) was ordered to close all kindergartens, and the directors were disturbed at the thought of so many little children being at home all day, with nothing to occupy them.

Then someone thought of bringing part of the kindergarten programme into

Text and illustrations (see opposite page) from the High Commissioner for Australia in New Zealand

their homes by radio and the ABC in Perth agreed to the experiment. The Kindergarten Union appointed one of its directors to broadcast a short daily session and the programme became popular immediately with boys and girls all over the State. When the threat of invasion was past, and the Kindergartens reopened, the *Kindergarten of the Air* continued.

Later, kindergarten organisations in the eastern States saw the value of the broadcasts, and asked the ABC to provide a similar programme for the rest of Australia.

Fun With a Serious Purpose

The programmes are a clever mixture of light-hearted fun and valuable educational material. They serve the two-fold purpose of educating the children and giving guidance to parents.

In planning the programmes, the broadcasters are advised by a special committee of kindergarten experts. In conjunction with the programme, talks for parents are broadcast every Sunday afternoon. The Kindergarten programme includes stories, songs, and special rhythms, and underlying all the fun, the games, talks, and music, there is a plan of child development.

Children are encouraged to dress themselves, brush their teeth and hair, and do little jobs in the house. They are introduced to such valuable pursuits as modelling, drawing, and painting, and they learn to accept responsibility by taking care of animals or birds, planting seeds or bulbs, and helping in the garden.

Small children like to be busy and the broadcasts offer them enough suggestions for satisfying play activities to keep them occupied after the session.

Nature Study

To attract the children's attention to something beautiful or interesting, Miss Fenner, who directs the programme from Sydney, perhaps mentions a rainbow after rain, dew on a spider's web—or else she may say—"It's Autumn! Tell me some of the things you have noticed about the autumn days. I'll tell you some of the things I've noticed. I've watched the leaves falling off the trees, red and gold and brown leaves fluttering down to the ground. Let's sing about the leaves falling down."

And then follows a little song about the falling leaves.

After that Miss Fenner talks a little about how the animals and birds prepare for the winter, and then she says, "Going for walks and hopping and skipping about is a good way to keep warm during winter. Let's play we are going for a walk! We'll swing our arms as we walk!"

Trained pianists provide rhythmic music which encourages the children to follow the suggestion, and young muscles get an opportunity for free movement and valuable exercise.

One day Ruth Fenner may say, "I thought it would be fun to-day if we all played we were going for a picnic in

the bush with our little country friends. We must take our lunch with us. Shall we take some brown bread sandwiches? What shall we have inside our sandwiches? Tomatoes and lettuce and cheese? We'll take a bottle of milk to drink and some pieces of fruit."

So the young audience is caught up in the fascinating world of imagination—and Miss Fenner has an opportunity to talk about Australian plants and animals. The children learn how to build a camp-fire and make "billy-tea"—they hear a kookaburra laugh (Sound effects play an important part in the programme).

On Sydney Harbour

On another day, the country children will be invited to go with the city children for a trip on the harbour. They board the ferry-boat, to the accompaniment of happy music—they hear the whistle as the ferry leaves the wharf, and Miss Fenner introduces them to the Harbour Bridge, in a special little poem:

"Sydney Bridge is ever so strong,
And ever so wide and ever so long,
To walk across it is ever so far,
But not so far in a motor-car.
And while I'm walking, the scooting train
Runs over the bridge and back again."

Then comes a description of the different boats on the harbour, and Miss Fenner suggests: "Suppose you stand up and play you are the little tug-boat pulling the big steamer along? Make yourself very strong as you pull the boat along."

The *Kindergarten of the Air* gives all Australian children, even in the most isolated country districts, an opportunity to take part in kindergarten activities, and to build up a ground work on which to base their education when they go to school, or take correspondence courses.

More than that, it provides mothers with a rich fund of suggestions for guiding their children's activities along constructive lines.

At the same time, children are learning to be discriminating and selective listeners, but most important of all, through the careful planning of the programmes they gain their first experience of community life, which lays the foundations of future good citizenship.

Fan Mail

Both Miss Fenner and Miss Dreyer receive thousands of letters from parents and children from all parts of Australia. Often they include drawings of things mentioned in the broadcasts.

One mother wrote that her small daughter was so impatient for the session to begin that she tried to hurry it up by moving the hands of the clock forward.

On a sheep-station at Tarcoola, on the edge of civilisation in South Australia, a child of three listens enthusiastically every day, and her mother writes that aborigines employed in the house also listen.

A little girl in the Hobart Blind Institution, Tasmania, wrote: "We listen in to your kindergarten every morning, and we love it very much. We feel very sad if we miss it. Lots of love from the blind children in Hobart."

Most surprising was a letter from a United States marine, who said that he listened to the programme at every opportunity.

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