

FIVE YEARS OF "EASY ACES"

ON Saturday, July 6, the *Easy Aces* begin their fifth year of broadcasting over the ZB stations. *Easy Aces* is one of the very few programmes which have been running continuously for anything like that time over the ZB's, though in America the Aces have been top-line radio stars for more than a decade.

Goodman Ace originally conceived the idea of *Easy Aces* as the radio comedy of American home life one day while he and some friends were idly quipping at each other over a bridge table—the Aces actually sit at one while broadcasting. After that, the programme just went on and on, and that is one of the secrets of its success, says Mr. Ace, who is nothing if not conscientious and who keeps in close touch with listeners' tastes.

"So far as my show is concerned, the radio audience wants stories dragged out to the bitter end," he says. "You can't be too sparing with details. Personally, I would just as soon make plot inci-

dental to dialogue, but audiences seem to want story first."

Thinking up plots is something of a burden, Mr. Ace confesses. Sometimes, he says, he can "toss off" a plot in a couple of hours, though more often it takes a whole day. Thinking up the twisted and misused phrases used by Jane Ace in her role of dumb housewife is much easier. He keeps a record of these malapropisms in a little black book, in which he keeps adding and subtracting.

When he is actually producing a show, Mr. Ace confines himself to essentials, and won't have his programme cluttered up with sound effects. If he wants to give the illusion of a room in a busy newspaper office, he uses a single typewriter. He and Jane Ace never have more than one rehearsal. Reading over scripts too many times kills spontaneity, he believes.

They Are Real People

Many listeners still imagine that the Aces are just a radio couple thought up by some overworked script-writer and played by a couple of competent radio actors. Their name is really Ace, how-

A Radio Favourite That "Just Went On and On"



A recent photograph of Jane and Goodman Ace

ever, and they are man and wife. Mr. Ace was born in Kansas City 42 years ago. Jane was also born in Kansas City, and is seven years younger. They went to the same schools, though while Jane was finishing off her education, Mr. Ace was studying journalism, and later holding down his first job on *The Kansas City Journal-Post*. There his flair for humorous writing was soon recognised, and he was given a column and the post of dramatic critic.

Twelve years later, in 1929, he started off in radio as "The Movie Man," presenting a radio version of his newspaper column. The following year he thought up the idea for *Easy Aces* and started it off over a local station. It "clicked" instantly, and in 1931 the Aces betook themselves to Chicago. They have been on the air ever since.

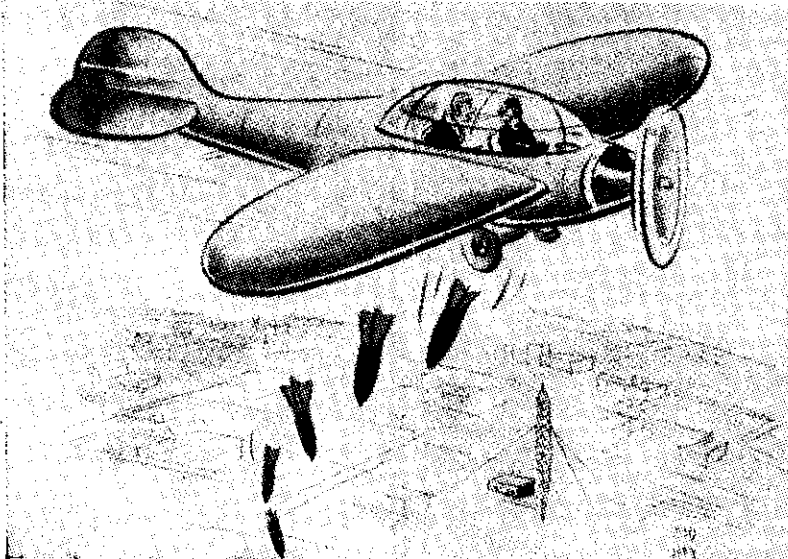
Personal Details

Thumb-nail sketches: Jane is 5ft. 2in. in height, weighs 103lb., has hazel eyes and blonde hair; likes clothes and designing them; dislikes jewellery; admires Jack Benny as a comedian, Vina Delmar and Pearl Buck as authors, and Louis

Alter as a composer (he wrote "Manhattan Serenade," their theme song); is superstitious, keeping up with Goodman Ace's tradition of broadcasting with a hat on.

Mr. Ace is 6ft. tall, weighs 175lb., has blue eyes and reddish blonde hair; likes to write; smokes black cigars incessantly; is always sought out for advice on gags, which he gives freely; is popular with his professional colleagues; admires Lynne Fontanne as an actress, Jack Benny as a comedian, George Arliss as an actor; writes so many malapropisms in the course of a year that he hardly knows when he is talking straight.

Approximately 600 episodes of *Easy Aces* have been broadcast in New Zealand alone. Allowing for only four first-class wisecracks per episode, a low estimate, that means 2,400 wisecracks, which is a lot in any language.



"Broadcasting" (U.S.A.)
"Hey, lay off that station—I'm listening to 'Easy Aces'"

TUBERCULOSIS

(Continued from previous page)

prepared drop of fluid is injected into the arm. If, in two days, there is a raised spot rather like a mosquito bite, possibly red in colour, at the site of the injection, the test is positive. A positive reaction need cause no alarm, but the red spot must be regarded as a warning signal. It indicates that the body has been invaded by tuberculosis germs, and that possibly normal bodily resistance has overcome them. If the test is negative, that is when no redness or swelling occurs, it means that the germs have not got round to you yet. Hence the negative test, especially in children, should be repeated after some time has elapsed. In the United States of America, where 200 people die daily from tuberculosis, the authorities insist that children should be tested once a year from babyhood on. A tuberculin test taken once a year would date the time of the infection, and thus help greatly in the

search for the source of the infection. If spreaders of the disease can be traced, then medical men are enabled to battle with it on more even terms.

Normally, a positive reaction means that the infection is present, and that, given suitable conditions, the disease could develop. Any deterioration in health and bodily resistance gives the germ the looked-for chance. The body may be brought to a low state of health through illness. Causes of lowered vitality are: too strenuous exercise, over-study, over-work, too little sleep, improper diet, or insufficient food. Poor health and lowered vitality allow the germ to take active root.

The next aid after a positive tuberculin test is the X-ray. This shows at a glance whether the infection is still working or is overcome by body resistance and healed. We will discuss it next article.

(Next week: "Tuberculosis" (3), by DR. H. B. TURBOTT.)

"BALLAD FOR AMERICANS"

ONE of the highlights of the NBS "Hail, America" programme on July 5 (see page 12) will be the presentation of a small part of *Ballad for Americans*, a brilliant choral work sung by Paul Robeson and a choir of 500 voices, with Nat Shilkret's Orchestra.

In New York in 1935 a young Virginian poet, John Latouche, felt the need for a sermon against intolerance and persecution. In this temper he wrote the original poem "Ballad for Americans" in ballad form, using a narrative history of the United States as a symbol of freedom and democracy. In New York he gained poetry awards at Columbia University and met Earl Robinson. Composer Robinson is still remembered in Washington State as a modern minstrel, who appeared at recitals in overalls singing his compositions, accompanied by his own guitar.

Between these two men the stirring words and music became an amalgam of sturdy, lyrical, democratic, American poetry-spirit.

On November 5, 1939, *Ballad for Americans* had its first stirring performance over the *Pursuit of Happiness* CBS radio programme. Paul Robeson's performance of the work stirred the studio audience, as well as untold thousands of listeners, into applause rarely equalled. In its November 20 issue, *Time* reported:

"In the studio an audience of 600 stamped, shouted, braved for two minutes while the show was still on the air and for 15 minutes later. In the next half-hour 150 telephone calls managed to get through CBS's jammed Manhattan switchboard. The Hollywood switchboard was jammed for two hours. In the next few days bales of letters demanded words, music, recordings, another time at bat for *Ballad for Americans*."

No work in American music has ever created such spontaneous, tremendous interest. It seems to have caught in words and music the deep spirit, character and philosophy of the heterogeneous American people.