

THE VOICE FROM FOOCHOW

Talks For Radio and Talks For Films

BOB POLLARD provides the voice which New Zealand listeners hear conducting the radio session, *With the Boys Overseas*. The same voice has lately become familiar to theatre audiences seeing and hearing the National Film Unit's newsreels and other movie shorts. Listeners to 3ZB and 2ZB also know the voice. The Pollard vocal chords are almost public property.

The personal Pollard story is less well known. It's quite possible to work with Bob Pollard and get no further with his personal history than a story about Raetihi or Taumarunui, Rangiora or Maitaia or any other place in New Zealand where he's sold pictures for Columbia.

It's no secret that he's growing a moustache at the moment, but no one would deduce from this that once he was a photographic model. But he was.

He had a bad cold a month ago, and yet he's studied pharmacy.

He appears to be quite at home among the gadgets in the places where he works now, but this would not indicate by itself that he's worked at engineering. Yet he has.

He's quite modest, and yet he's worked with Frank Hurley, O.C. of Australia's film unit overseas, Antarctic photographer, cameraman-adventurer.

He looks essentially respectable, yet he's been a jackaroo on Moraro sheep station, Australia.

He appears to be quite gentle. He doesn't break things round the studio, nor produce lethal weapons when annoyed, yet he was, at a very early age, witness of a series of decapitations.

We don't know whether he can swim, but we do know that he was once very nearly drowned, in company with a large number of poultry that was only revived in time for the market by swinging it (or them), head first over burning paper. Fortunately, perhaps, his parents were present, and Bob was not so wet that he needed that sort of respiration.

And he was born in Foochow; but it takes intensive cross-examination to discover such facts.

Adventures in China

To go into more detail:

Robert Herbert Clarke Pollard was born on July 31, 1913, in Foochow, which as everyone should know, was then and is now in China, in spite of Admiral Togo and Wang Ching Wei, or Mr. Matsuoka himself, for that matter.

Then, as might be expected, and as often happens, his adventures began.

While still very young, he took part in war. Not willingly, of course, but nevertheless quite sufficiently intimately. The factions, pro and con, were predominantly Chinese, and were courteous enough to

try and avoid with their missiles the three European residences where he lived. However, the best planned wars sometimes come unhooked, and Bob had to be deposited in a corner behind some packing cases while the bullets flew.

In the same district, some time before Robert Herbert Clarke Pollard was seven years of age, several missionaries were captured by pirates and discovered the truth about the Hereafter sooner, possibly, than they expected.

Off With Their Heads!

The local mandarin had humanitarian views, and determined to avenge them. A party of his retainers went forth and captured the pirates. The captives were taken to a city near Foochow and Pollards senior and junior travelled there to see how China goes on fete for executions. Somehow, Pollard junior happened to be around when all the fireworks had been lighted, the pirates led into the market place, and the executioners assembled. He watched, probably with the technical interest of the very young, while the pirates placed their heads on the blocks and had them hacked off. "No, not chopped off," says Mr. Pollard, whose memory of the event, naturally, remains quite clear — "hacked off. It took some time."

In other respects, he remembers the Chinese as a very courteous people. The Pollard family would be invited to eat with the local big chief mandarin fellow. At his table, they would find themselves eating with their own cutlery—a temporary accommodation arranged by houseboys willing to co-operate to make the visitors feel thoroughly at home. With these they would eat dishes including boiled worms, etcetera. . . .

The almost-drowned incident occurred in a small sailing vessel somewhere at sea (Mr. Pollard did not have time between rehearsals to go into many details), in a typhoon, or hurricane, as the stronger winds are variously known in those waters. The Pollards were lashed to the deck, continually awash with water. Also awash were the hen coops, containing the poultry on the way to market. To make a wet story dry, the ship came finally into harbour, and the merchants of the town rushed to claim their poultry. Many hens were dead, drowned. Some were nearly dead. With great presence of mind, the merchants seized newspaper, set it burning, and soon revived the still-living fowls by swinging them head downwards through the flames. Mr. Pollard reports that this was very effective, and the fowls were rushed off to market, quick and busy, before the cure achieved what the waters had failed to bring about.

And So To Australia

Between 1921 and 1927, Mr. Pollard lived in Australia. He studied pharmacy at Sydney University, worked in an engineering workshop, on a sheep station, as a photographic model, as an extra for Cinesound, in commercial films used as advertising, and on a feature subject with Captain Frank Hurley.



BOB POLLARD
Luckier than the wet hens

In Sydney he went on the stage with the Gladys Moncrieff Company, and later toured New Zealand. Here he first came to anchor on the staff of the Radio Advertising Service. When Station 3ZB went on the air, he was on the staff, and made his first broadcast from 3ZB with "Aggie." He conducted the breakfast sessions for Christchurch listeners for several months and was then transferred to 2ZB. When he went back to 3ZB he went as production manager.

His link with the movie industry revived when he took part in the New Zealand Centennial Film, and joined Columbia Pictures as traveller and publicity representative.

Now he is free-lancing in radio and films, composes the "Boys Overseas" programmes, does commentaries for a lot of the National Film Unit's material, and may be heard in all sorts of radio features from many stations.

WHEN "BRITAIN SPEAKS"

(Continued from previous page)

American Fleets throughout the last war, has been present at every British naval review since the visit of the French Fleet to Portsmouth in 1904 to set the seal on the *Entente Cordiale*, and covered every Naval Limitation Conference in the last twenty years. He accompanied George V. on all the King's visits to ships and shipyards. He was at the surrender of the German Fleet at the end of the last war, and he was the only journalist to see that fleet before it set the modern German fashion of scuttling itself.

"Ferrets" was also the first journalist ever to have his "copy" flown by a naval airplane. That was his description of the surrender of the German Fleet, and it was flown ashore by a 'plane that had to take off from the gun turret — a dangerous evolution in those days, and was only permitted by the naval authorities on account of the importance of his despatch.

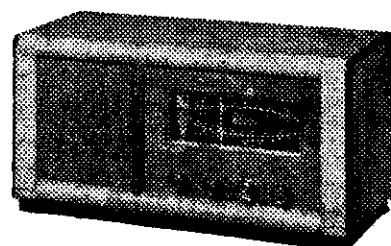
The young airman who did the job was a worthy predecessor of to-day's Fleet Air Arm. When he arrived at Turnhouse aerodrome, he stole a motor-cycle and roared off to Edinburgh. Arriving, he found himself blocked by the crowds that had assembled to see the King and Queen. Buttonholing a policeman and whispering "Admiralty Despatches" he got through—and led the Royal procession all down Prince's Street to reach the telegraph office.

That young airman got a gold cigarette-case from "Ferrets" paper, the *London Daily Express*.

But sharing the life of the Navy and telling its day-to-day story is not enough for "Ferrets." Naval strategy and tactics have been his study since the early years of the century, when he started as private secretary to the then Naval Correspondent of the *London Times*. He has collected a unique library on naval warfare, and his personal friends include many who control the Grand Strategy of the ocean war. He lost many close friends when the Hood blew up.

"Ferrets" himself is not just a naval specialist, though. He has done very sort of newspaper work, and indeed got his first independent job on the *Daily Express* because of his mastery of French, German, Spanish, and Italian. From there he went to the old *Daily News* as Naval Correspondent, criticised and therefore quarrelled with that famous and intolerant Admiral, Jackie Fisher, and was consequently barred from the Admiralty for some years. He was then Naval Correspondent of the *Daily Express* for a long time, and now holds the same post on the *Manchester Guardian*, besides doing an ever-increasing amount of broadcasting.

In peaceful times "Ferrets'" hobby is the amateur theatre, for which he has written, acted and produced. His ambition, though, is to complete his "History of Naval Warship Names," on which he has been working since 1908.



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