

Cruising with the Alert

THE motor-vessel Alert is probably one of the best-known of the smaller ocean-going craft in New Zealand waters. A number of her voyages have been in the news. She was used by the American-New Zealand Expedition which went into Fiordland in 1949. She serviced the Puysegur Point Lighthouse for six months while the vessel which usually does it was being converted from steam to diesel. And she has taken scientific parties to a number of New Zealand's outlying islands—the Snares, the Antipodes and Bounty Islands, and lately, the Chathams. The owner of Alert is A. J. Black, of Dunedin, and starting on Monday, June 28, at 7.15 p.m., Mr. Black is to be heard from 4YA in a series of "conversations." *With M.V. Alert to Fiordland.* Taking part in these programmes with him will be Ken Green, announcer-in-charge at 4YA.

As a fisherman who was also very interested in Sea Scouting—he is still Dominion Commissioner of Sea Scouts—Mr. Black used to make his fishing vessel available for Sea Scouts training, and when, after the war, he decided to get another craft which he could use for this work he picked on an American-built naval launch which had done harbour defence service during the war. This became Alert. Seventy-two feet long and with a beam of 16 feet, she is powered with twin diesel engines which develop about 170 horse-power each. An auxiliary diesel standby engine operates a 10-kilowatt 230-volt lighting plant. Alert cruises at about 10 knots, but is capable of 14 to 15 knots, and with a fuel capacity of 2000 gallons she can cover about 3000 miles.

Those who were aboard such craft during the war will remember the tiny galley with its small oil-fired stove. This disappeared when the vessel became Alert. Now the galley has a full-sized electric stove, a sink with hot and cold running water, and a 33 cubic feet refrigerator—the old one was of six cubic feet. This galley is attached to a saloon

which takes in the original chart house. Alert sleeps 14—on foam rubber mattresses—and is equipped with a 50-watt radio transmitter with direction-finding loop, a depth-sounder and elaborate fire-fighting and life-saving equipment.

All this is told in the first conversation. After that Mr. Black goes on to describe and discuss some of Alert's trips to Fiordland. The first conversation takes listeners from Bluff to Preservation Inlet through 84 miles of Foveaux Strait and a bit of the Tasman Sea—probably the roughest seas in New Zealand waters. This deals particularly with the lighthouse servicing of 1947.

Dusky Sound, the most extensive of the fiords and Mr. Black's favourite, has a programme to itself. It's much more calm and sheltered than the others, with many bays and nooks that give a night's anchorage. In fact, you can spend six weeks in Dusky and never anchor in the same place for two nights running. It has been said that there are 360 small islands in this sound.

The fourth conversation is about Doubtful Sound, where Mr. Black was once timed with a stop-watch pulling in blue cod—60 in 20 minutes. Sharks, swordfish and tuna are among the fish that have been seen there, because the

★ *THE launch Alert leaves harbour on one of her coastwise missions* ★

sea temperature is 10 degrees warmer than on the east coast. This is caused by a warm current from the Queensland coast which also affects the climate of Stewart Island.

The work done by Alert in servicing the American-New Zealand Fiordland Expedition of 1949, whose special study was the acclimatisation of wapiti, is described in a programme about Nancy, Charles and Caswell Sounds; and the series ends with a conversation about George, Sutherland and Milford Sounds.



THE ALCOHOLIC

★ *THE LOST WEEKEND* is the sort of film that is not quickly forgotten, and though it's now about eight years since it was first shown in New Zealand those who saw it won't need to be told that the scene from it on the left shows Ray Milland as an alcoholic fighting a losing battle with whisky in a hotel bar. They won't need to be reminded, either, that an alcoholic is not simply a man who likes the taste of liquor more, or is a bit weaker, than other men.

According to *Alcoholism*, a Voice of America programme to be heard from 2YA at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 29, there are about 4,000,000 alcoholics in the United States, and this programme takes a look at one of them—a fairly typical case. His story is told in dramatic incidents, linked with a narration by Charles Laughton. Some alcoholics were sick before they started to drink, and they may have been alcoholics from the first drink. Others only develop the need for liquor with time, and for them addiction is progressive. But for all types the circle is vicious—a problem starts them drinking, their drinking makes the problem greater and only drink makes tolerable their inability to solve it. The programme discusses the work of Alcoholics Anonymous, and ends with a message from Dr. W. W. Bower, Director of the Bureau of Health Education of the American Medical Association.

Alcoholism is the first of three VOA programmes about medicine to be broadcast from 2YA on Tuesday nights. The second, *The Span of Life*, discusses the way in which medical science has prolonged human life; and the third, *The Progress of Medicine*, describes some of the advances on the crude practices of about 100 years ago.