

# All this and Aunt Daisy too!

PIFCO Electrical Specialties have a world-wide reputation for quality and value. Here are two fine products from the PIFCO range. They are big sellers year round—and especially popular as Christmas gifts. Soon, Aunt Daisy will be telling listeners all about these PIFCO products—and alert electrical retailers, chemists and department store buyers are ordering now to meet the demand.



PIFCO  
HAIRDRYER

Dries hair quickly, evenly, thoroughly, with a stream of hot or cold air. Beautifully balanced; fingertip switches. In handsome presentation case.

Retails at £4/17/6



PIFCO  
VIBRATORY  
MASSAGER

Tones up skin and circulation, helps relieve muscular pains. The inexpensive way to have massage whenever you need it. Retails at £4/17/6.



Trade orders to your nearest Pifco distributor: Electric Lamphouse Ltd., Box 2321, Wellington; Teevee Radio Co. Ltd., Box 5029, Auckland; Andrew Stewart & Co. Ltd., Box 475, Palmerston North; William Lee Ltd., Box 2540, Wellington; Gordon Crighton Ltd., 298 George Street, Dunedin; D. R. Thomson, 223 Fitzgerald Avenue, Christchurch.

## The Aunt Daisy Story

(continued from page 12)

invited to help with an experiment. She was taken to an improvised studio in Courtenay Place. Gus Bluett was there, she remembers, and Clive Drummond, later to become 2YA's chief announcer. Attempts at soundproofing had been made, with the result that the room was excessively hot and stuffy. Daisy crowded in, along with the experimenters, a piano, and a weird tangle of transmitting equipment.

"For my first broadcast," she says, "I put my head almost inside a big horn, like the H.M.V. dog, and sang 'Il Bacio'."

What this sounded like to the "listeners-in" Daisy was never to hear. Certainly radio in those days could torture the best of voices. But she dismisses her performance, anyway, as altogether too easy. "Il Bacio" is very impressive," she says, "but very simple—easier than, say, a sustained pianissimo. My teacher used to say that a man who called 'Ices!' in the street could sing it."

Radio broadcasting had not yet the substance in which to carve a career. Daisy went back to the country and used her fine contralto for calling the chickens. Soon after, the family shifted once more, this time to Ngatea, on the Hauraki Plains. "It was a much bleaker place," Aunt Daisy recalls. "It was drained swamp and there were ditches everywhere. One of our guests took a plunge one night when leaving the house."

"In winter the place was freezing cold and damp. At singing practice in the little hall, the children used to go all goosefleshy. We'd have to send over to plunge one night when leaving the house."

Daisy combated the cold by giving the frozen local girls some exercise in singing. The glee club she trained took part in concerts to which people came from Turua and Kerepehi and the other hamlets thereabout. The girls sang pieces from the operas of Gilbert and Sullivan, and one did "wonderful monologues" from the *Belle of New York*:

Life's just a bubble, don't y' know?  
A painted piece of trouble, don't y' know?  
We come on earth to cry;  
We get older and we sigh;  
A little older and we die—don't y' know?

This mocking pessimism was to echo in Aunt Daisy's ears during the ensuing years. New Zealand lay under the clammy hand of depression. The jobless had been recommended to eat grass. Fred Basham was put on half pay.

Daisy stepped into the breach. She had been a pushful child, but had not grown into an assured and dominating adult. She was clever and talkative, but remained inwardly modest. Her own accomplishments always took her somewhat by surprise. To this day she retains a small, irrational fear that one day she will make a mistake and the NZBS will give her the sack.

So when Daisy set out to work she astonished herself. The driving force against which her aunts had warned in childhood, "Daisy, don't get so excited!" came again to the fore. She says herself: "You had to be pushing, pushing, pushing—all the time. You'd never get anywhere if you didn't." Daisy pushed. The doors of 1YA gave before the assault.

DAISY no longer had to sing with her head inside a horn. Station 1YA had passably effective microphones. "I ran programmes on composers' birthdays," she says. "Brahms and Schubert



AS THEY WERE: Aunt Daisy deluged the Broadcasting Company with letters and its general manager, A. R. Harris (right) was suitably impressed by them

Spencer Digby photograph



and Mozart and all. There'd be a pianist and the baritone Barry Coney and some soprano, and we'd sing excerpts. And I'd give information about the life of each composer. Not just where they were born and where they lived, but funny bits about them—spicy little bits about their lives."

The work was intermittent—a half-hour here and there, with payment at one or two guineas a time. It wasn't enough to support a growing family. Two weeks' work relieving one of the station's staff did little to relieve the financial pinch, but it did change Mrs Frederick Basham, otherwise Maud Ruby Basham, otherwise Miss Daisy Basham, at last into Aunt Daisy.

The job was to relieve Ruby Palmer, alias Cinderella, who conducted the children's session. "Cinderella," she says, "was a dark-eyed, clever, tiny little thing whom I'd seen taking the children's session without a note. She just sat before the mike, telling the children stories and keeping them going." Daisy admired Cinderella's polished technique, but her own confidence remained high. And, when the time came, she found the gift for extempore speech had not left her. Cinderella's slipper fitted, so to speak, like a glove. Aunt Daisy was a hit with the kiddywinks.

But when Cinderella returned, Daisy's Aunt-hood came to an end. She went back to celebrating composers' birthdays, and to singing with Arthur Briggs as a duo (Gilbert and Sullivan), and with Gwenda Weir and Winifred Hill as a trio (*Lilac Time* and others).

Nowadays Aunt Daisy broadcasts without a script, speaking on the air exactly as she does off it. But it was not always so. Her composers' lives were, as the Goons would say, "specially writted for the wireless." She remembers being reproved by Len Barnes, 1YA's Director. "Could you please read that passage," he said, "a little more naturally?"—"We've often laughed about that, because if anything I'm natural on the air. But I was very careful and particular then. I relaxed a little after he said that."

Meantime, in Ngatea, Fred Basham lost his job entirely. The county could no longer afford an engineer. He joined his family in Auckland, where Daisy had already taken the children to finish their schooling. To make ends meet,

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 30, 1957.