



WOMEN'S HOUR women must cope with all sorts of assignments—Marina of 1ZB (above) found herself interviewing a lion cub during a children's holiday session; Prudence Gregory, now of 4ZA, reported a vintage car rally while bouncing along in a 1908 Unic (top right). At right, 3ZB's Molly McNab, clutching her portable recorder, prepares to take off from Harewood in a glider



visitors gesturing their explanations, talking to Doreen and appearing quite unaware of the microphone. Then came the final announcements and the session was over for the day.

Usually an interview has been arranged for after the session, but on this day Doreen was free to follow up her mail, make appointments, enter new programme schedules for the future months, and answer a telephone which rings ceaselessly.

This routine, full as it is, seemed heaven to Val Griffith of 2XN, when she did a relieving stint. Instead of 12 to 15 advertisers each day she has 25 to 28, and it takes her more than half her day to see all her clients.

"From Monday morning to Friday afternoon I work flat out for the Broadcasting Service," she said, "I usually think of my programmes in bed, at dead of night, or when cycling to work, or when making my shopping-reporter calls, and I'm always practising the words I find difficult to say. Time is the all-important factor; I haven't a spare minute, and I use my bike to go from shop to shop.

"There's no spare half an hour or so for finding-your-feet chatter with an interviewee, I plan the questions beforehand, sit the interviewee at the microphone, whizz through a technical test and rush her (or him) through the

programme, and pick up the tape from the technician.

Yet in between these interviews at the station and the hours when she is on the air and the calls at the shops, Val, like all the girls, finds time to go out for special programmes. "We don't get many visiting celebrities here," she said, "but we're lucky in Nelson with such a large province to cover and so many things to give different angles. The little L2B portable tape-recorder, although the technicians regard it as the devil's handiwork, is a godsend as I can cart it all over the place on bike, in car, on boat and on foot. I've been out in the pilot launch, climbing the rope ladder with the recorder slung over my back, and I took it to sea for a week-end round the Tasman National Park coastline, getting interviews in the cool of the evening with moreporks calling in the background. It went with me

deep inside a coalmine, but the interview was ruined because we got talking earthquakes and I suddenly remembered I hated caves and that this very mine had caved in with the big Murchison earthquake.

"Another day I recorded the Women's Hour, and set out in the car at 5.0 a.m., gathered an interview from a drover on the Takaka Hill at seven in the dusky dawn, and once in Takaka went from arranged interview to arranged interview until 6.0 p.m. I saw the Pupu Springs (biggest in the world); Mrs McCallum, who feeds the eels; a dairy farm, a dairy factory, and the Golden Bay Cement works. I came home with 11 programmes and breathed a sigh of relief when I wrote in my daily programme book 'Travels in Takaka' for eleven Thursdays in a row."

Everything a Women's Hour personality does can make material for a programme. Valerie Austin took listeners

with her on her flying lessons, and Molly McNab brought back two programmes made on a whaler in her annual holidays. In bringing back their programmes the girls have learned to cope with sea-sickness, floods and fires, and even the difficulties of interviewing visitors whose English is limited, or non-existent. Mrs Lloyd remembers the time she had a studio of boys all grinning at her in Fijian, a dead loss on the air until she asked them to sing.

Wherever they go, these girls take their sessions with them, always alive to possibilities for a programme. Their work can be pleasant or exciting; it can be routine, or bitterly disappointing, as when a long-promised and important visitor for a live interview does not arrive. The girls have to be able to cope with this and all other emergencies without showing any strain or impatience. Above all, they must be interested in people, 24 hours a day.