

"YOURS FAITHFULLY, ANNE"

"SOMEbody's been eating my porridge, and they've eaten it all up"—Baby

Bear's classic observation, made in 1934 by nine-year-old Ngaire Thomson in the interests of a well-known Australian brand of breakfast food, marked the beginning of her career in commercial broadcasting. Now, after fifteen years, Miss Thomson's youthful voice is familiar to thousands of listeners in Australia and New Zealand, as that of Anne in *Anne of Green Gables*, the Australian serial adaptation of a girlhood classic, at present being broadcast by several NZBS stations.

Ngaire Thomson is a New Zealander—she comes from Eastbourne, where she lived until her family went to Australia when she was nine. She can scarcely remember the time when she wasn't interested in broadcasting. All through her school years in Melbourne she took part in Saturday afternoon Children's Sessions, and was no stranger to the microphone at the time of the Three Bears incident. Leaving Shelford Girls' Grammar School, Caulfield, when she was fifteen, Ngaire Thomson kept up her interest in radio.

ABOUT this time she took part in *Junior Amateur Time*, a session run by Don Baker, a Canadian who took an active part in Melbourne's broadcasting in the middle nineteen-thirties. Baker thought her work showed sufficient promise to warrant her entry into commercial broadcasting. However, as she was still very young, Ngaire took a commercial course and became a stenographer in an electrical firm. During the week she took dictation and typed. At the week-end she was on the air, in amateur teen-age shows.

This spare-time interest in broadcasting led, after eight months, to an audition with a firm of commercial radio producers, several of whose serials were about to go on the air. For one of them they wanted a girl to play the part of an orphan. So Ngaire Thomson, aged nineteen, left the electrical firm, and took the part of an eleven-year-old orphan in *Heritage Hall*.

Although her part in that serial was comparatively small—she recorded only twice a week, three episodes at a time—her decision to make radio her career was justified. Soon she was free-lancing for the AEC, who wanted a little girl for the Schools Broadcasts. At the same time she continued her work with the commercial unit. There is an essential difference between the two units—all the commercial broadcasts are recorded, but the AEC ones are done "direct"—Australian broadcasters call it "doing it live."

"A visible audience makes broadcasting a pleasure and much easier to do,"

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came suddenly to life. "I'll head'er off this way," he yelled, galloping west up Bunny Street.

Casting about, I found the hat jammed in a grating seventy-five yards down the Quay. The daughter was breathlessly grateful and the doll looked smug; an expression absent from the nagging woman's face when, a-quarter of an hour later, my lift had come over the horizon, but her sailor had not.

G. leF. Y.

"Green Gables" Star Visits N.Z.



NGAIRE THOMSON

"A lonely microphone is so unsympathetic"

Spencer Digby photograph

Ngaire Thomson told *The Listener*. "A lonely microphone is so unsympathetic and cold." She has sometimes faced a flesh-and-blood audience of more than 100,000 when taking part in *Music for the People*. These programmes are broadcast by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, from the Botanical Gardens on occasional Sunday afternoons during the summer. She took part in the programme dramatisations which accompanied the broadcasts—once, for example, as the little girl who had no toy but the nutcracker, in Tchaikovsky's famous Suite.

ALTHOUGH many teen-agers listen to the *Anne* broadcasts, much of Ngaire Thomson's fan-mail comes from middle-aged people—women mostly. Since the dramatisation of *Anne of Green Gables* four and a-half years ago, Ngaire has played Anne in three more radio adaptations of the popular series, each book running to roughly 52 episodes. Her successful portrayal of Anne has been paralleled by her equally successful portrayal of another L. M. Montgomery brain-child, Pollyanna.

Ngaire Thomson's recent characterisations have included small boys. In the *Halliday Stories*, originally recorded in Australia ten years ago, and recently re-

acted, Ngaire is heard as the little boy of nine, to whom Halliday tells a good-night story. Ngaire takes the part of Margaret, a seventeen-year-old girl, in another serial, *Stepmother*—being broadcast at the moment to New Zealand listeners. She enjoys playing mothers, particularly in scenes with children (in the course of dramatisation of eight "Pollyanna" books, their heroine has grown up and Pollyanna has children of her own now). She finds light comedy fun, but prefers drama. So now after more than six years' successful free-lancing in commercial radio, Ngaire Thomson is going back to Australia, in a week or two, to Sydney, where the future—and the longer commercial programmes—beckon. She feels she portrays best the unsophisticated teen-age girl and more than in any other part she has ever played, she is "Yours, faithfully, Anne."

[To listeners in this country Ngaire Thomson's voice must be one of the most familiar on the air—she is currently being heard in four or five serials from New Zealand stations: *Anne of Green Gables* from 1XH, 1XN and 2XG, *Heritage Hall* from 3ZB, 2XA and 2ZA, *Stepmother* from 1ZB, 2ZB, 3ZB, 4ZB and 2ZA, and *Pollyanna* from 1XH. Interviews with Ngaire Thomson will be broadcast in the Women's Session from 2YA at 11.0 a.m. on February 21 and 28.]



NEWS COLUMN

Since the war, the task of restoring the huge output of petroleum products from the East Indies has been attacked vigorously by the Shell organisation; and production, now meeting an increased demand, has risen rapidly. During the war, production for vital war purposes was maintained until the Japanese were within striking distance. All installations were then systematically destroyed. Thus delayed in the efforts to get oil, the Japanese advance was interrupted, giving the allies a vital breathing space.

After re-occupation, the process of rebuilding presented a gigantic task. Skill labour had vanished while steel supplies were limited by the world-shortage. 2 million tons were required, an impossible figure to obtain in the time limit set.



However, in the face of the difficulties, Shell has achieved remarkable progress. Where installations have been damaged by Japanese neglect, emergency plants have been installed. Distilling units were constructed entirely from scrap and recovered materials. Emergency storage tanks, steam and electric power units, pipelines, housing and educational facilities for training skilled workers have developed alongside.

Not until 1947 were the oil fields accessible in Sumatra, but within a month, despite the devastation and neglect, the supply of oil to the refineries was renewed. By the end of 1947, production had reached 100,000 metric tons per month. Production in Java has been delayed by political disturbances, but since December 1948, when the installations became available, production has been swiftly renewed. This remarkable progress by Shell in the face of seemingly insuperable difficulties is gradually meeting the demand, which is 35% higher. Petroleum production is vital to the economy of the Orient, and Shell is doing its utmost to speed its rehabilitation.

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