

Bob Miner worked fast and furious in the control room

Laboring under difficulties, members of the staff of WTIC rendered most praiseworthy service to the public during the flood. This scene, taken in the studios, shows several staff members making up flood bulletins and announcements by gasoline and oil lamps, flashlights and candles, the only available forms of illumination.

Left to right are: Announcer George Bowe; Miss Mary Alexander, secretary; John Murphy, night man in charge of information; Telephone Operator Mrs. Annette Stevens; Operator Eddie Kingsley; Business Manager James F. Clancy; Operator Carl Noyes; and Production Manager Paul Lucas (who is probably preparing tomorrow's "Wrightville Clarion" continuity).



Officers Walter Clemens, Mathew Conners, Paul Beckwith

This is Station WTIC

By

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General Manager, WTIC

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HELLO. Hello Hartford! Herman Taylor? This is Charlie Wyley at the transmitter, Herman. Say the power out here has just failed! Yeah. What? Call up the Light Company? I've tried, but I can't get any answer! See what you fellows can do, will you please? You better do something, or we'll never sign on in the morning!"

With this laconic call coming out of the darkness of Avon Mountain at 1:30 A. M. Friday March 20, WTIC's engineers knew for certain that the flood wasn't fooling, and that if the Travelers Broadcasting Station was to continue next day doing its part to be helpful in Hartford's greatest emergency, one exciting night was at hand for all of us.

Perhaps you're wondering what anybody was doing on the 6th floor of the Travelers Grove Street Building at half-past-one in the morning. Ordinarily the station signs off at midnight. Why was there anyone there?

As a matter of fact, at the time the above call came through from the transmitter to the studio Central Control Room, a full staff of executives, engineers, announcers and watchmen was on hand, for WTIC had been fully

organized the day before for emergency service, with everybody, from chief announcer to messenger boy, ready for duty at any moment, twenty-four hours a day. "Dial the Unionville Light & Power Company, quick!" said Chief Engineer Herman Taylor, as Bob Miner jumped to the phone. "Ask them if they can call anybody for emergency current, to send to our transmitter by morning!"

The call was made and the answer was "No" as a worried voice in Unionville reported he had been unable to get through his message for emergency current due to the failure of certain telephone lines, and that if we wanted any help in the matter, we'd have to get it ourselves. Well, we did. Or rather Herman Taylor and Bob Miner did. After considerable trouble the Hartford Electric Light Company was contacted, arrangements were made to secure emergency power to be sent to Avon Mountain; Unionville was called again and told what switches to throw that would SEND the current there; Unionville's engineer, in a rowboat in the dark, paddled around in four feet of water until the proper circuits were made; by 5:30 A. M. WTIC had its current; and by 6:30 A. M. we were on the air, anticipating a busy day, and not to be disappointed.

Let's see now. That was Friday, wasn't it? Looking back, it's pretty hard to get the days straight, for from Wednesday the 18th to Sunday the 21st, we were all just as flooded with extra work as our streets were flooded with water.

Tom McCray, Program Manager, anchored to his desk by the telephone, answering two and three messages a minute, and in between, dictating flood bulletins to secretaries, Ida Burbank, Edith Stockwell, Olive Johnson, Grace Sapsuzian and Mary Alexander. Switchboard receptionist Annette Stevens, pressed into service by the local telephone company as an auxiliary operator, taking care of our own calls as well as calls for everybody in the city. In the control-room, engineers Herman Taylor, Bob Miner, Bob Coe, Pat Clancy, Carl Noyes, Ed Kingsley, Edwin Sanders, Fred Edwards and Al Jackson working feverishly to keep emergency equipment in proper operation. At the microphones, Announcers Fred Wade, George Bowe, Joe Ripley, Phil Becker, Graham Gladwin, Bernard Mullins and Irwin Cowper, reading by the flickering shadows of nervous candlelight, informing the world by the minute how Hartford was getting along. John Murphy and John Berlin did yeoman service in keeping all parts of the organization in touch with one another. It was work all right, but it was fun, too. Fun to feel you were part of a great emergency machine, helping people in time of trouble. Fun to find your waistline going down as you panted and puffed up and down six long flights of stairs six or seven times a day. Fun to get out in the middle of all the excitement and go on the air and tell the world about it. Fun to find that in spite of the seriousness of the situation, there was still a laugh to be had. For instance, there was that moment that occurred shortly after Tom McCray, George Bowe and Al Jackson, had climbed into a motorboat on State Street to set sail for Coastguard Cutter 404, from whose decks they broadcast two short-wave descriptions of the flood as seen from the river. They got there all right, but not before they had stranded their motorboat high and dry on a "No Parking" sign.

Everybody got a laugh on the Cutter too when, sliding by a submerged house with only the attic window visible above the waters, out popped the head of a cheery gentleman who wanted to know what time it was. Irwin Cowper, clinging to the wind-swept parapet on the roof of the Grove Street Trav-

elers Building, seemed funny to everyone but Irwin Cowper, as he nearly dropped his microphone sixteen stories, while downstairs in the studios, some of the transfers made to the programs of the National Broadcasting Company brought many a smile to the gang.

"The flood bulletin I have just given is very urgent," said Announcer Graham Gladwin, fading out WTIC and fading in Major Bowes, whose program had already started from New York. "Ha-Ha," came the voice of the Major apparently in the middle of a sentence "Is that so!"

"You may purchase such and such a product at such and such a company," said Announcer Bunnie Mullins, fading out WTIC another time, and fading in another New York program.

"Yes and at little cost to you," replied the voice of the NBC announcer, in the middle of a sentence of his own.

Perhaps the most comprehensive survey of WTIC's flood period activity is best contained in a fifteen minute summary on the subject broadcast by Irwin Cowper from the studios at 10:30 P. M. Monday, March 23. He said in part:

"With the current flood-waters now definitely receding as Connecticut's most disastrous flood already begins to become part of the past, the City of Hartford tonight, along with the rest of the State, seems to be ready to substitute for the emergency's excitement and hysteria, the calm sober reflection that goes with taking account of stock and reviewing all that has happened to us within the last few days.

"As we look back across the troubled panorama of our people's hasty retreat from rising waters, their bewilderment at the sudden crippling of facilities for light, heat and transportation, their fears and anxiety for the safety of friends and loved ones, certain constructive forces hitherto unnoticed in the bustle of relief activity come to the surface to make us realize how we got along as well as we did, and why it was that, in spite of the most trying conditions, Hartford was an orderly community, self-sufficient and able to carry on.

"Of those constructive forces, most of you by now are familiar with the yeoman service performed by the Red Cross, the American Legion, the State

and City Constabulary, the Military, the City Hall, the Public Utilities and other groups organized for the public welfare. It is our purpose during the next few minutes to give you the details of the part played by the broadcasters—amateur and professional—in cooperating for the public good, and to show you how, by the dissemination of valuable and authentic news reports of current conditions; by the alleviation of fear caused by false and hysterical rumors; by the prevention of the spread of disease through the publication of health reports; by aiding traffic conditions in the broadcasting of emergency traffic regulations; and by bolstering the morale of the community by the presentation on the air of community leaders responsible for that morale, broadcasting too has had a definite share in making the past few exciting days easier for all.

"When you consider how modern broadcasting is dependent upon electric power and how most of Hartford was without that power for many hours, you may well wonder how it was that WTIC, owned and operated by The Travelers Insurance Companies, has been in constant and continuous operation during the flood period, the only local broadcasting station able so to do. Hastily organized to meet the emergency, the engineers at the station's transmitter ten miles from Hartford on Avon Mountain were able to cut in on electric power from neighboring cities after the regular power finally failed, as they, along with the engineers in the Hartford studios and a complete staff of executives, announcers, telephone operators and stenographers, working by candlelight and broadcasting over emergency equipment, settled down for the long watch of continuous duty twenty-four hours a day.

"Possibly a short recapitulation of the problems met and handled by WTIC's engineers will be of interest to you, showing what happens in a broadcasting station when power fails. As soon as it became known that the City of Hartford and the surrounding territory would be inundated, WTIC's engineering staff took immediate steps

to provide emergency equipment in the event of power failure. The city was scoured for radio batteries, and a week's supply secured. Spare tubes and other necessary equipment was also gathered, to take care of the communication between the studios and the transmitter. To take care of the transmitter's power, contact was established with the Union Light and Power Company in Unionville. That company's transformer sub-station was surrounded by four feet of water but a rowboat was secured, a hurried change to the proper power lines was made, and WTIC was ready, on the air as usual, and determined to STAY on in spite of obstacles interposed by the elements.

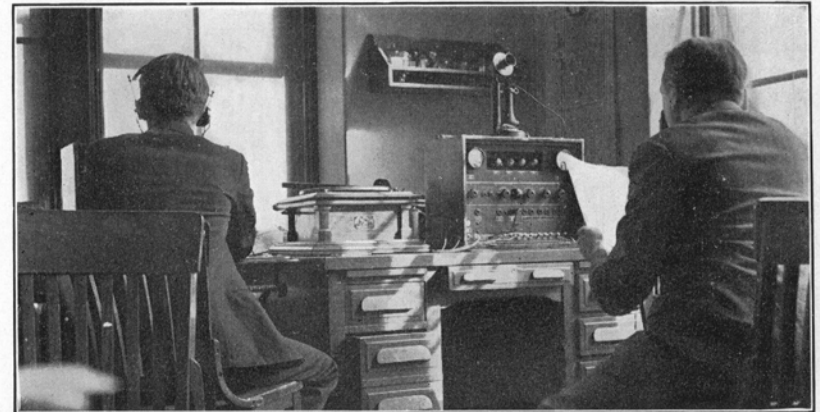
"During all these hurried preparations, steps were also taken to provide a short-wave emergency transmitter to communicate with all troubled areas. With a network of amateur short-wave stations already being organized all over the state of Connecticut, WTIC's short-wave facilities were placed at the full disposal of this group, as these amateurs, working in close touch with the broadcasting station, disseminated valuable flood information to points near and far.

"In addition to all this, WTIC's engineers had to provide an emergency transmitter for the Hartford Police Department, as their transmitter had failed with the power, and it was deemed most necessary that the department be kept in constant communication with all its members for the safety and well-being of the public in general. Accordingly, storage batteries for the emergency transmitter were secured, carried up twelve stories in the Travelers building to the Police transmitter room, an emergency telephone line was established between the Police Headquarters on Market Street and the roof of the Travelers building, and the police were kept on the air also, to do their part in maintaining order.

"Let us return now to the studios of WTIC, to give you some idea of the continuous activity going on there as the flood first threatened, then made good its threat, and then began to retreat. As indicated in the beginning of

this summary, we felt it our duty to stay on the air if such was humanly possible, for valuable information from reliable sources kept pouring in here over the emergency telephone lines and via short-wave communication, and that information it was our job to broadcast to all within reach of our signal. At the outset, may we state that in spite of certain printed reports to the contrary, all announcements broadcast by WTIC during the flood period have been carefully checked and re-checked with state police and other authorities, and no announcements were accepted for broadcasting except from responsible people and organizations. WTIC's policy from the very outset of the flood was to keep unfounded rumors off the air, and to present a true picture of conditions as they actually were. Sensational or 'scare' material was carefully eliminated. Any property damage or loss of life caused by the flood was properly reported; figures were checked and authenticated before being used. Much of the credit for the broadcasting of all this valuable information should go to WTIC's switchboard, through whose emergency lines there kept pouring a steady stream of communication

from organizations working in the flooded areas. Reports on the condition of the river, as it rose and as it receded, were received and broadcast every hour. Weather bureau reports told us when to advise people to evacuate their homes; Public Utility reports told us when to advise the shutting off of gas, and what to do if any emergency should arise on that score. All up and down the Connecticut Valley, reports kept coming in about missing persons. These in turn were broadcast, and in several cases, happy and thankful reunions were brought about through this broadcast information. Typical of this service we were happy to be able to render, was the case of a man whose wife was seriously ill in New Britain. Marooned at Warehouse Point, this gentleman was unable to communicate with his family and was unaware of conditions as they existed in his home. A few minutes after our announcement on the air, WTIC's switchboard received a call, informing us that the information had been relayed to Warehouse Point and that the man had already been able to communicate with his home thanks to a message delivered by an amateur short-wave radio operator.



Broadcasting during the flood

"No small part of the emergency service WTIC has been fortunate to be able to render has been in the matter of public protection through the broadcasting of disciplinary measures brought on by flood conditions. When it was decided to call out the units of the National Guard, these men received their information through our broadcasts. When it was decided to summon the Legionnaires from all parts of the state, WTIC was called upon and was happy to be able to do the summoning. Road conditions in and around Hartford and the flooded areas, traffic regulations and restrictions, and transportation facilities were also made public as part of our regular emergency broadcasting routine, as personal messages by the Mayor of Hartford, Adjutant General Ladd and Lieutenant Godfrey of the Hartford Police were broadcast as an aid to discipline, and for the sake of allaying many fears caused by unfounded rumors. Almost every minute of the past few days, WTIC has been a proving ground for rumors. When scares began to arise about martial law, food shortage and food-profiteering, our studios were able to check on the information, found it false, and lost no time informing the public of the truth in all these matters. Requests from the State Highway Commissioner's Office, as well as from the Hartford Electric Light Company, the Connecticut Light and Power Company, and the Southern New England Telephone Company that we allay certain rumors in connection with their service were also broadcast immediately and, we have been assured, played a large part in calming unnecessary fears. Announcements from the State and Hartford Boards of Health disproving rumors of water pollution and a milk crisis were also broadcast from time to time, as were messages received from the hard-working American Radio Relay League, which sent news about the relatives and friends of Hartford people all over the United States. As a further service in this connection WTIC, at the request

of the Hartford Chapter of the American Red Cross, was able to get information to the National Broadcasting Company in New York, which organization in turn made announcements on the air correcting certain unfounded newspaper reports about the severity of conditions in our city.

"Bulletins, bulletins, bulletins, bulletins! In they came by the hundreds every hour, and as soon as they were checked and authenticated, out they went on the air to do their part for whom they might concern. The Red Cross, the Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Telephone Company, the East Hartford Emergency Committee, these and every other organization cooperating for the public welfare made WTIC their means of communication, and gave us the opportunity we welcomed to further prove the part broadcasting plays in every possible phase of human life. Where public or private schools were closed, their pupils were informed; where factories and other business organizations were closed, their employees were notified and asked to communicate with other of their co-workers not within reach of radio; where Red Cross Supply depots were established, their locations were broadcast for all who might care to contribute; Boy and Girl Scouts were summoned for duty and told where to report. As soon as the Red Cross had enough of one type of material, announcements were made telling what was needed instead; news from the Governor's office about emergency meetings was received and broadcast periodically; certain employees worried about their pay checks were told when and where they would be issued; WPA workers were told where to report for inoculation as an aid to the prevention of the spread of disease; Public Health bulletins came in and were made available to all; all these just a cross-section of the many vital communications received and broadcast as part of our daily routine since Wednesday last.

"Some of you who heard our broadcasts from remote sections of the flood scene have been kind enough to send us favorable comment on the word-pictures we also broadcast from time to time, for our program department, realizing that mere bulletins could in no wise suffice to give a comprehensive presentation of the picture, arranged for outside pick-ups as broadcast by some of our announcers located at strategic points here and there within the flood area. Some of you may have heard our two short-wave accounts of the river conditions as seen from aboard a Coast Guard Cutter patrolling the Hartford and East Hartford shorelines; all the country heard our account of the different stages of the flood as reported from the top of the Travelers tower over the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company. And what of WTIC's regular program service, during all this excitement? As those of you within our Hartford area may not fully realize, our station's extensive power radius brings Hartford within the reach of a vast section of our country unaffected by floods or local conditions as they occur to us. These people, mildly interested perhaps in Hartford's plight, although not directly affected, have looked to us during the past few days, even as they do regularly, for uninterrupted entertainment and news of the world in general.

"For these faithful friends, WTIC is

proud to have been able to adhere quite closely to its regular program schedule, even picking up Trans-Radio News via short wave from our Avon Mountain location so that this service, as always, might still be offered to those who have come to rely on it for their knowledge of the world's current events."

Well, it's all over now and we're all rather tired, but we're still on the job, back in our regular entertainment routine, but ready for the next emergency if ever it comes along. Blankets, sheets and pillows have been returned to the Travelers Medical department, as the studio reception room no longer resembles a dormitory. General Manager Paul Morency, along with Business Manager Jim Clancy and Salesman Walter Johnson, have forsaken their long all night vigils and are reasonably certain now that when the telephone rings, it means "Business as usual." Plant Manager Clayton Randall and Engineer Dick Blackburn, marooned in East Hartford for many days, have silenced their short-wave transmitting which was their valuable contribution to our station's flood activity and are among those present again.

But, if you want a theme song for the Connecticut Valley, we've got one for you, and we'll be happy to join you in singing it with gusto. Old but still good, it's "River, stay 'way from my door."

