

**L**eonard J. Patricelli credits in part a fortuitous knowledge of Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia in rescuing him from a job in boiler insurance and projecting him into the more esthetic environment of broadcasting.

Mr. Patricelli, who was elected president of Broadcast-Plaza Inc. (WTIC-AM-FM-TV Hartford, Conn.) last November after 38 years of continuous service with the stations, recalled the Shakespearean ploy last week:

"I was fresh out of Wesleyan University in Connecticut in 1929 with a degree in English and a specialty in 18th-century literature," he recounted. "I wanted to be a writer, but my first job was in the boiler-insurance department of Travelers Insurance Co. in Hartford. I was on the job only a few days when I realized I didn't want to be the bright young man in boiler insurance. The company owned WTIC and I heard of a job with the station as a script writer. My supervisor gave me permission to apply.

"There was a retired vice president of Travelers, Walter Cowles, who used to screen all job candidates for the station. He looked at my application and surprised me with this question: 'Young man, tell me, did Hamlet feign insanity in his relationship with Ophelia?' I replied, 'Yes,' and gave a learned dissertation for about 15 minutes in support of my view. He sent me right over to see the station manager. I had not known at the time that Mr. Cowles was a Shakespeare buff."

The station manager asked him to write a sample script and to listen to WTIC that evening. If the script was used, he was advised, he would become the first full-time script writer at the station and in New England.

"I went to my fiancée's house that night, tuned in and my script wasn't used," Mr. Patricelli related. "I was crestfallen, but the next day I found out I had been hired. It turned out that the announcer had taken it upon himself to rewrite the script that the management had liked."

**Well Prepared** — Mr. Patricelli paused for a moment in his reminiscences and added with a smile: "What nobody knew until a few years later was that I had written my college senior thesis on the subject of Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia."

His talent for writing and his knowledge of music (he was a violinist and a choral singer in college) were valuable assets both in those early radio days and subsequently. Among today's well-known figures whose talent was nurtured at WTIC are actor Ed Begley, TV-radio host Allen Ludden and composer Robert Maxwell.

Mr. Patricelli's rise at WTIC was steady. He was appointed program

## Career spans the growth of broadcasting

manager in 1943; vice president, TV programs, 1957; vice president and general manager, 1963, and executive vice president, 1966.

As president, he succeeded Paul W. Morency, a colleague for 38 years, who has retired from office but continues as consultant to the corporation.

Though responsibilities in his present position encompass all facets of radio-TV operations, Mr. Patricelli retains an overriding interest in programing. He considers programing the single most-important ingredient of a station.

As an index of growth over the past 38 years, Mr. Patricelli remarked that the staff of WTIC-AM-FM-TV now totals about 200 in contrast to 20 back in 1929.

Mr. Patricelli conceded that 1967 was a year that had not lived up to expecta-

tions in the sales area ("It was a little soft") but said "we were pleased it turned out as well as it did." He is hopeful for an upturn in 1968 and said the stations plan to mount a vigorous effort to acquire additional business in the local and regional classifications.

He speaks warmly of WTIC-TV's facilities, staff and programing. He pointed out that all programing on the station is presented in color; the news department has a full-time staff of 11 people, including five cameramen and a mobile unit, and local entertainment and documentary shows are designed to be responsive to community needs.

"One of our programs called *What in the World?* has been on the air since WTIC-TV began operations in 1957," he reported. "It is a panel show on which well known individuals in the state appear. It has been sponsored continuously by the Electric Light Companies of Connecticut. We produce and put on many documentaries on local issues and we are particularly proud of one program titled *The Rat Problem*, which resulted in a change in the system of garbage collection in Hartford."

**Unfair Attack** — Mr. Patricelli, usually amiable and even-tempered, becomes perturbed when he touches upon the subject of television critics. "We all know that it's impossible to have high-quality entertainment shows on the networks every hour of the day," he stated. "But on every night of the week there is at least one program and sometimes more that are outstanding. Yet we rarely see the critics giving proper credit to the many fine specials that are on all three networks. But I'll say this: The audience appreciates the programs a lot more than the critics do."

Mr. Patricelli has been married for 37 years to the former Lydia Erdman of Middletown, Conn., to whose home he had scurried to listen to his first radio script. He speaks with parental pride about his children, Joan (Mrs. Leonard Horton Jr.) and Robert, who was a Fulbright scholar, a White House Fellow, editor of the *Harvard Law Review* and is now in Washington as Senate minority counsel and special legal counsel to Senator Jacob Javits (R-N.Y.).

His interests outside of his job, his family and his many community-involvement projects reflect his musical and literary inclinations. He plays the fiddle in a Dixieland band, composed of long-time friends, who meet in each other's homes and at private parties. He occasionally composes music, and has a private collection of first editions.

"Some day I would like to write a novel about the TV-radio industry," he remarked. "It would not whitewash the industry, but I would show it in its proper light, which hasn't been done up to now."

## WEEK'S PROFILE



Leonard Joseph Patricelli — president, Broadcast-Plaza Inc. (WTIC-AM-FM-TV Hartford, Conn.); b. New Haven, Conn., March 1, 1907; B.A. in English, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., 1929; with WTIC since 1929 as script writer; program director; VP, TV programs; VP and general manager; executive VP and president since Nov. 1967; m. Lydia Erdman, 1930; children—Joan (Mrs. Leonard Horton Jr.) and Robert; national director, Broadcast Pioneers and Broadcasters Foundation; member—Hartford Rehabilitation Center; director, Connecticut Society for the Prevention of Blindness; the Connecticut Cancer Society, Hartford Golf Club; active in Wesleyan University affairs; edited "Songs for New England Colleges" and "Wesleyan Song Book"; hobbies—golf, gin rummy, music, collecting first-edition books.