

FM-Radio Attracts Expanding Audience

By C. J. SKREEN

Although many citizens may not be aware of it, the fastest-growing medium of communication in America is FM radio, a high-frequency broadcasting system once derisively referred to as the "Forgotten Medium."



KEN KAGER

Statistics bear out the remarkable growth in recent years of FM. In 1956, there were 528 stations on the air in the nation. Today, this figure has increased to 1,033, with 101 applications pending.

This is nearly double the number of television stations in operation and, although far short of AM radio's 3,566 outlets, it represents the biggest percentage increase in broadcasting.

Some estimates place FM sets in 30 per cent of Seattle homes, with 165,000 sets in use in Western Washington. FM set-owners in the Seattle-Tacoma area have their choice of 14 stations, all of which offer a great diversity of programs, including classics, jazz, folk music and talk shows running the gamut in subjects from bird-watching to the crisis in Cuba.

FM's popularity can be traced to several sources: The distortion-free-and-static-free system which, because of its wide frequency range, is able to reproduce sounds to satisfy the most exacting listener, the wide scope of programs, the infrequency of commercials (although station-owners would be happy to rectify this situation) and the comparative monotony of programs on conventional AM radio.

PERHAPS THE outstanding local station in terms of program diversity is KUOW-FM, the University of Washington's training laboratory for future broadcasters, which is on the air from 2 o'clock in the afternoon until 10 at night.

The station has listeners from Vancouver, B. C., to Vancouver, Wash., and, because of its provocative programs, hears regularly from its audience.

KUOW is one of 175 educational FM stations in the nation. While not typical of FM broadcasting—since it carries no paid commercials—KUOW is representative of the high level of programs generally to be found on the FM band.

Through its membership in the National Association of Educational Broadcasters—an organization that operates what amounts to a "taped network"—KUOW is able to present outstanding programs from all parts of the world.

A RANDOM LISTING of programs now aired by the station shows strikingly varied fare: Voice of America music lectures; "H is for Joy," a documentary series on narcotics addiction; Germany Today, weekly reports on the cultural and artistic life of West Germany; Over the Back Fence, a weekly review of the Canadian press; Readers' Almanac, interviews with authors of significant books; Pioneers of Prose and Poetry in America and Coming of Age, a series for youth.

At the local level, the university station, which is staffed by student announcers and technicians, offers such shows as Front Row Center, featuring music and news of the Pacific Northwest theater scene, and Merrimac, a daily program of information, interviews and music aimed at the campus population.

Although the station is designed primarily to provide practical on-the-job training and experience for university students majoring in radio and television, the KUOW management welcomes the loyal support of FM listeners who tune in for the intellectual stimulation of its programs.

As Ken Kager, the professional broadcaster in charge of the 10,000-watt FM station puts it, "When KUOW went on the air in 1952, a major aim was to help round out a complete broadcasting service in this area by providing types of programs not usually aired by commercial stations."

Judged by the response to date, KUOW seems to have achieved its goal with resounding success.



JANE POWELL

Portland Singer to Star in Musical

Jane Powell, Portland, Oregon's gift to the world of entertainment, will star in an hour-long musical salute to spring titled "Young at Heart" Friday night at 10 o'clock over Channel 5.

Appearing with Miss Powell on the N. B. C. colorcast will be Art Carney, veteran TV personality; Gwen Verdon, Broadway musical-comedy performer; Steve Lawrence, singer, and Casey Stengel, former manager of the New York Yankees.

Musical numbers will include "The Doodlin' Song," "Hundreds and Thousands of Girls," "Don't Look at Me That Way," "Ebbtide," "I Feel Pretty" and "Portrait of My Love."

Miss Powell will join Carney and Stengel in a comedy sketch in which the mighty Casey takes a crack at sportscasting. In his inimitable Stengelese, he will conduct an interview with a baseball player named Pee Wee Carney.

Miss Verdon, assisted by the Roy Fitzzell dancers, will perform an original ballet with a Western theme, "Payday."

An impressive ballroom setting will furnish the background for Miss Powell and the Fitzzell dancers when they interpret a poignant story of an unattractive girl who meets a lonely boy at a dance.

Miss Powell is a veteran entertainer despite her youthful years, having made her singing debut at the age of 7 on a Portland radio station.

The songstress had to wait until her early teens before she was a motion-picture star, but, by 15, she had three feature pictures behind her. A score of others followed, as well as night-club, concert and television engagements.

Miss Powell is the wife of an investment broker, Patrick Nerney, and the mother of two children, Geary Anthony, born in 1951, and Suzanne Ileen, born in 1952. They are children of her first marriage to the ice-skating star, Geary Steffin.