



## **Citation for this collection:**

MSS 179 Robert H. Richards, Jr., Delaware oral history collection, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware

## **Contact:**

Special Collections, University of Delaware Library  
181 South College Avenue  
Newark, DE 19717-5267  
302.831.2229 / 302.831.1046 (fax)  
<http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec>  
[askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu](mailto:askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu)

## **Terms governing use and reproduction:**

Use of materials from this collection beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law.

Permission to publish or reproduce is required from the copyright holder. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions.  
[askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu](mailto:askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu)

## **A note about transcriptions:**

Of the original 252 audio-recordings in this collection, 212 of these tapes were transcribed around the time of the original recordings (between 1966 and 1978). In 2012, Cabbage Tree Solutions was contracted to create transcriptions for the remaining tapes. Corrections to and clarifications for all transcriptions are welcome, especially for names and places. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions.  
[askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu](mailto:askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu)

# Mr. Dick Aydelotte

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: An interview with Dick Aydelotte, a very important radio personality in Wilmington over a long period of years. Now, working at WDEL Radio, having just got off the air, with the series of commercials, Eckerd's drug store, automobile dealer in St. Georgia's.

Tell us something about yourself, Wilmington and your radio career at pretty big order.

Mr. Aydelotte: Well, Becky, I got started in radio sort of by chance. I was a freshman at the University of Delaware in 1940. And in 1940, there was no radio station at the University. Nobody even thought about radio, but a group of students had gotten together and formed what they called a radio guild which was nothing more than an informal group of people who met once a week to discuss radio.

And they approached the management of WDEL who at that time happen to be Harvey Smith and Gorman Walsh to ask them to donate a half-hour of radio time on WDEL to the University of Delaware Radio Guild group for presenting a program which would be student-produced, written, directed, announced and engineered entirely by students on a voluntary basis.

Well, a very good friend of mine was interested in engineering from a radio standpoint and he and I were walking down the campus one day. I was a chem engineer freshman and very much engrossed in trying to learn what chem engineering was all about. And he asked me to come in to Metro Hall with him because he wanted to test some equipment for the first show which was going to take place that Sunday from 2 to 2:30.

So this was about a Wednesday and I went in to help -- just go along with him. And he was there and he put up the microphones and he got his equipment ready and then he picked up the script and he said, "Dick, will you read this script so that we can test the mics?"

So I read the script. And I didn't know it at the time, but the director of the radio guild that is a student director of the radio guild was in the building and heard me. And he came over to me and said, "How would you like to announce the first program this Sunday?" Well, actually I was flattered so I said that I would do so.

And the first Sunday came and when I announced the program and Gorman Walsh and Harvey Smith came down to sort of oversee this first program which originated from Metro Hall on the campus. And then the show was over, Mr. Walsh came over to me and said, "I'm losing two men into the draft," or into the army, "how would you like to work for me on a part time basis?"

And again, I was flattered but I had to check with my dad and mom because my grades weren't too great right then in chem engineering. But they said if you want to do it, go ahead. And so I started working at WDEL, believe it or not for 40 cents an hour. And this was in January of 1942. And I worked until December of '42 when I went in to the army for three years. When I came back from the army, I again, was a student at the University of Delaware, as a junior, I had changed my course to premed.

And again, Mr. Walsh offered me a job on a part time basis. And the part time grew into a 40-hour a week job at the radio station plus carrying 21 credit hours at the University of Delaware so I was going pretty strong.

When I graduated from the university, I decided I wouldn't be able to go on to med school because I'd fallen in love with the young lady and wanted to marry her. And I knew I wouldn't be able to sustain her on an intern's pay and four years of med school, so I asked for and received the full time job at the radio station. I started out as a staff announcer. And that was in 1946. And I've been here ever since. Total years of service is some 35 years. Now, how much further do you want me to go, Becky?

Interviewer: Some highlights in -- I'm sure there are some.

Mr. Aydelotte: All right. There are some highlights and some interesting stories. I, as I say, started as a staff in 1946. In 1950, '51, in '48 actually, the company, WDEL started a television station here in town. And channel seven and Gorman Walsh who was then the manager of WDEL radio was put in charge of both stations.

When the TV got on the way, they found out that it was impossible for one man to handle both stations, a radio and a television station. So Mr. Walsh was asked to be manager of WDEL TV and Harvey Smith who was then program director of the radio station was made manager and some two or four months later, Harvey made me program manager which was his full job.

[0:05:05]

And as program manager in those days, we had a lot of network shows. It wasn't a four-hour record show, a news, it was Fred Waring, it was Pepper Young's Family, it was Jack Benny, Fibber Mcgee and Molly, et cetera. Remember, this was in the late '40s.

But then, television started wearing its ugly head and radio was much the same as movies at that particular time. And that we started to run scared. People would say who would listen to the radio when they can watch the action and the move too.

So there came a change in radio broadcasting. From the big time radio shows, the half-hour and hour of variety shows and comedy shows, and radio became what we call, in the business, a service-oriented profession. In other words, instead of entertaining people per se, we let television do the entertaining. And we service people by giving them music which people like to hear; news; public affairs, what's going on around the community; weather et cetera.

And this is what radio turned into to where it became instead of half-hour blocks of programs, like we used to have back in the '40s, into the '50s it became a four-hour record show interspersed with news just about every half-hour. And that is when it is maintained and kept its pace today.

And I'm happy to say that over the years that radio here at WDEL is bigger and better than ever. Our business has grown every year. Our gross business is grown. We maintained our number one rating in the community, so things are moving along pretty good. Now, some of the highlights, you say, of my career...

Interviewer: For example, Harvey Smith mentioned that he remembers the first remote news, the old electric hose and rubber fire, I believe down at six in the market. He remembered that as a specific, well, I don't want to use the word highlight, a critical new part of the radio industry as far as Harvey was concerned.

Mr. Aydelotte: Yes, I remember that very well. Becky, it wasn't electric. It was a Wilmington Sash & Door, that's right. I recall that day very well. It was a Sunday believe it or not. And I had been up to see my mother and dad in Philadelphia and my wife and I were driving home in the evening. And it was dark and as we came down road 202, toward the city of Wilmington, all of a sudden, I saw this orange glow in the sky and I realized that there

was a very big fire. So naturally, in those days, we were not quite as specialized as we are today.

Today, WDEL has a news department consisting of seven people. Those days, we had one or two people and when something occurred to the community that was a great newsworthy, important, Harvey Smith, Dick Aydelotte and everybody else became a newsman. So I took off like a bird for the source of the fire and had turned the radio on in the car and realized that it was the Wilmington Sash & Door. And I heard Harvey's voice, he was already down there.

So I joined him and throughout the course of the evening, for some seven hours we stayed at the fire scene and would go taking turns going back to where the nearest telephone booth was, call the radio station and give reports of the fire. And at that time, it was one of Wilmington's biggest fires. I don't recall now, and time goes by so fast, I don't recall that anybody was killed in the fire but it was a spectacular blaze and drew literally thousands of people to that particular area on Front Street where Wilmington Sash & Door was.

Another highlight, news-wise, two that I can think of right now. One was, I was in bed one morning about 3 o'clock one in the morning when suddenly there was this terrific boom. At that time, I lived in Forest, Brooklyn which is out of the Newport, Delaware area. I realized right away probably what it was. It was in either Marcus Hook or that a ship had blown up on the Delaware River.

So I went to my front window and looked out and it did overlook to Delaware that is from a direction standpoint, our home looked out toward the east. And sure enough there was a giant red glow in the sky. So I called the Delaware State Police and ascertained that indeed a ship had blown up in the Delaware River. So immediately, getting out of bed, putting on some clothes and I took off for New Castle.

When arriving at New Castle, we found that an army barge or army fuel ship, if you want to call it that, had collided with a freighter about, I would say, two miles south of the Delaware Memorial Bridge.

**[0:10:05]**

Well, I was lucky enough to reach New Castle just at the time when a tug boat was going out to the blaze where the ship was on fire and one ship had sunk. And I went along with Major Seiths *[phonetic]* **[0:10:19]** of the Delaware State Police who was since gone to his better reward. But

Major Seiths *[phonetic]* [0:10:25] invited me to go along and I went out and we went around this blazing hawk which 26 men died and I gave on the scene reports over a radio telephone back to the radio station.

As soon as the man got there in the morning, I called him and we had that on in the early morning hours when the news first started.

Another one that I can recall, it seems to be disasters that stick in your mind, but we received a report that down in Elton -- Chestertown Maryland, a fireworks plant had blown up. This was about in the mid-50s. Nobody seemed to know at the time when the first reports came in whether there would be one person dead or as many as 100 might have been killed by this fireworks blast.

So I took off immediately with another gentleman for Chestertown, Maryland. We arrived there in about an hour and a half. And indeed, that a fireworks plant had been completely leveled. Luckily, only 11 persons died. And I say luckily, that doesn't sound like a right word to use but there was a potential of over 100 people could have been killed by this blast.

Morgan Beatty from NBC, a famous name in NBC radio news was tipped off by our news department and he flew to Chestertown. And he and I did several shows for both WDEL and NBC. And that was certainly a highlight.

Another fun, sort of funny highlight that you might get a kick at, Becky, was we got a report that a Hurricane was coming up the coast and I really can't recall, but this had to be prior to 1948 because Bob Kelly who at that time was on our news department and later became administrative assistant to Senator J. Allen Frear and is now with the DuPont Company was in our news department. And when we got the word that a hurricane was coming up the coast, he and I took off in a car for Rehoboth Beach.

We arrived at Rehoboth and we're taking down to the coastguard station. And in turn the coastguard then took us to a tower right at Indian River inlet where he said, we would be able to get a spectacular view of the storm as it came up the coast even though it was dark.

And I had to haul equipment weighing about 250 pounds up this 75-foot tall coastguard tower with nothing but a steel ladder. And when we got to the top of the tower, there was a little house there on top of the tower and we prepared to call the radio station and do an excellent broadcast live right on the 11 o'clock news.

Well, as we sat there waiting and getting ready to go on the air, we both, Mr. Kelly and I noticed that the tower was swaying. And we got a little bit worried about it and the coastguard would say, oh you don't have to worry about that, he said in a velocity that you're going to have here, about winds of 100 miles an hour, it would probably sway two to three feet.

Well, we did the broadcast on the 11 o'clock news for about three minutes, a very vivid broadcast of what it was like to be as close as we were to the hurricane as it came right up to Delaware seashore. There are some of the highlights.

Interviewer: Do you have tapes like this, extent or just the -- does WDEL keep a good file of tapes?

Mr. Aydelotte: Becky, unfortunately, we do now, but in those days, this was before the age of the tape recorder. Most of the incidents that I recounted came before the tape recorder. The only way we had in those days to keep any records was literally a record, making an acetate recording. And the cost factors there were prohibitive.

Today, you can put up a long 1,200 foot or 2,400-foot tape and let it run and it will last three to four hours. These records only lasted for about five to 15 minutes at the most. So, most of the things that I'm telling you about today has absolutely no physical record of having taken place on the air. It's a shame in a way because it would be fun I think to go back and be able to relive some of the experiences that we had, both Harvey and I, over 35 years, there are very few people that I did not interview that ever came through Wilmington. I had the pleasure of -- yes?

Interviewer: Excuse me, I think that is important, since we have limited time, if could possibly look at Wilmington radio then and now and yourself as having been active in working all this time.

**[0:15:03]**

Perhaps some personalities you interviewed that you see as part of the history of the time.

Mr. Aydelotte: Well, yes, let's see Becky, over the years I have had personal interviews with John Kennedy, with Richard Nixon, with Dwight Eisenhower, Senator Robert Taft who was running for the presidency against Eisenhower and those hectic days after the war.

It put me on the spot because sometimes my mind doesn't think too well, there's been, as I said, in those days, Becky, it does not hold true today, but in those days, when somebody of consequence came to Wilmington, you can bet your boots that either Harvey or myself at some time or another would interview them at the Hotel du Pont. Most of the affairs that took place took place in the hotel because in those days, there were no outlying suburban hotels like there are today.

Interviewer: The only person who would rate now probably would be the pope. He's the only person who has made himself available to the media.

Mr. Aydelotte: That's possibly true, yes.

Interviewer: What about these great people? For example, Richard Nixon as a person and interviewee, what was he like?

Mr. Aydelotte: When I say that I interviewed him Becky, it wasn't like sitting down with you in a quiet room and just talking back and forth. The one chance that I got to talk to Nixon at any length was when he visited Wilmington as a Vice President. He was appearing at some affair, I don't remember, in what is now in the Gold Ballroom with the Hotel du Pont.

And even in those days, he had the reputation of being rather cold fish as far as the press was concerned. And I must admit that at the time, when we approached him to do a short interview that I did so with a little -- I didn't know exactly what was going to happen. But he was very gracious, came over to the table where I was sitting with the microphone and the tape recorder and sat down in the midst of this dinner and talked to me for about five minutes.

We discussed at that particular time was right after he had had the famous kitchen incident with Khrushchev. And he was telling me some of the inside of how he felt at the time that this particular confrontation took place between he and the Soviet Premier.

And I found him most interesting to chat with. I got a big thrill. I didn't really talk with President Eisenhower. And one of my greater thrills at radio I believe was introducing the President from Rodney Square. He was not the president at the time; he was a candidate for president. As a republican candidate for president, he came to town. It's also interesting to note, Becky, that back in those days, you will recall, for example in 1976, that Delaware saw nothing of President Ford or Jimmy Carter.



But in those days, every presidential candidate made sure that he came to Wilmington, Delaware and would appear at noon time or at some other designated time when they thought the crowds would be the largest in Rodney Square. Adlai Stevenson, Dwight Eisenhower, President Roosevelt, they all came to Wilmington at one time during the campaign.

Well, as I was saying, Mr. Eisenhower came to town and it had truthfully, Harvey Smith and I have discussed this many times. I believe the largest crowd packed together in Rodney Square that I've ever seen. And I was literally in the middle of the sardine can because our microphones were down on King Street right in front of the public building. And they brought a large, flat bottom truck into the area where Mr. Eisenhower mounted on the top of this flat bottom truck and then spoke to the crowd.

And I had the chance to introduce him to, not only the radio audience, but to the audience there, some 20,000, 25,000 people in Rodney Square. And that was one of my thrills, I think.

Interviewer: What are some of the other important things you want to say? It's important your old alma mater is going to keep you on record.

Mr. Aydelotte: Yes, I think that's nice to know that as the years go by, that I will be a part of the University of Delaware's archives, I guess, that's what you would call it. What we're doing over the years, there are so many stories, Becky that I could tell you that I could go on and on for hours of things that have happened in radio.

We talked about some of the presidential candidates and presidents that came through town. Another facet that a radio man in those days and when I say those days, I mean the '40s and the '50s, we got to do a lot of which was talk to interesting people in show business, not so much from the theater aspect as from the big band aspect.

**[0:20:10]**

In those days, you know, of course the big bands were all the rage in the '40s. And Wilmington was fortunate in that the Hotel du Pont used to bring in big bands for the Delaware association police ball and for other organizations plus the University of Delaware used to, for their junior and senior proms, would always bring in "a big band".

And I can't think of anybody in the big band business over the course of my 36 years that I probably have not introduced and done an actual half-

hour broadcast with. In those days, when Guy Lombardo would come to town at the University -- at the Gold Ballroom over the Hotel du Pont, WDEL had an arrangement with the organizations sponsoring the bands that we would go and do a half-hour broadcast from 10:30 to 11 or from 11:30 to 12 of the old, what we call on the business the old dance band remote.

From the Gold Ballroom over the Hotel du Pont at downtown Wilmington, it's the music of Sammy Kaye and the swing and sway. Well, this fell to either Harvey Smith or myself to do this. So I got to meet people like Les Brown, Sammy Kaye, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Tony Pastor, I could go on and on and on. Funny, little antidote took place in the '50s when Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey who were two big orchestra leaders, the big band business started to falter somewhat so in order to save money, they formed one band called the Dorsey Brothers, it was Tommy and Jimmy.

I didn't know it at the time but they had been feuding for months. They came to the Hotel du Pont, the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra. Dick Aydelotte went over to do the half-hour broadcast. Well, when you were going to do a broadcast like that, you went to the band leader before the program a good half-hour or so and sat down with him and found out what particular selections they were going to play, who was going to be the vocalist so that you could introduce each song as it came along.

Well, I went up to Tommy Dorsey and I said, "Mr. Dorsey, I'm Dick Aydelotte from WDEL, we're going to do the half-hour broadcast, could you tell me," he said, "see Jimmy." So I went over to Jimmy and I said, "Mr. Dorsey, I'm Dick Aydelotte from WDEL, we're going to do a half hour broadcast from here, I'd like to know what selection," he said, "see Tommy."

Well, I went back to Tommy and he just pointed back to Jimmy and I went back to Jimmy and he pointed to Tommy. Well, to make the long story short, I finally went to one of the band members and I said neither of these guys is going to talk to me. They're mad at each other and they evidently don't want to talk to me, what will I do?

He handed me a slip of paper that had nine selections on and he said this has been going on for the last three months. So I never said a word to either of the Mr. Dorsey's until the actual program came on the air when I introduced the program, both of them were as gracious and as nice as they possibly could be. You would think they loved each other dearly. We chatted back and forth during the broadcast, but after it was over, again,

there was suddenly wall that came up between Jimmy and Tommy and myself. And they never said good bye or anything else. And that was a funny, little anthem that took place at Gold Ballroom at Hotel du Pont.

We also used to go to the playhouse on occasions and talked to the stars backstage. This is still done somewhat, Bill Harlem *[phonetic]* **[0:23:26]** one of our staff does it for a program which we call Emphasis Delaware. But in those days -- one thing, Becky, I think that I could point out right here, the difference between radio today and the radio of early days of radio, everybody thought in terms of 15 minutes or half an hour back in the '40s and '30s and even into the '50s. Today, radio thinks that if lasts more than five minutes, it becomes a non-attention getter. The public gets tired of it and they'll turn it off.

So the interview that you used to do 15 years ago with Cary Grant, and I spent one of the most enjoyable hours I ever spent with Cary Grant in a suite at the Hotel du Pont, put together a beautiful 15-minute of interview if I do say so myself, today it wouldn't last three minutes on the air. No radio producer in his right mind would let Cary Grant and Dick Aydelotte on the radio for 15 minutes, 2 minutes maybe, two and a half minutes.

Interviewer: Why is it, they can't, the society used it up, throw it away?

Mr. Aydelotte: I think so, plus the, you know, as well as I do, at least you do, Becky, that also radio today is the medium of the younger person. A lot of young people listen to radio. A lot of older people listen to radio but a lot of the young people and the young people today -- I don't know whether you've been in a car with a young person, when they're listening to the radio and if you had, I think you know what I mean, a selection of music will get over and talk will come on and they'll push that button right away to another station. So therefore, we in the industry know that if we have 15 minutes of talk, we would drive a vast number of our audience away.

**[0:25:06]**

So what we would do today if I had an assignment to do a Cary Grant interview, I would keep it to a two-minute interview at the maximum and try and sit down with Mr. Grant and maybe do 15 minutes worth but then edit it so that I would have two minutes of hard, good interview. In the old days, you just went, turn the microphone on and talk to him for 15 minutes and everybody thought it was great.

Interviewer: Tell us about some of the early election nights' work that you had.

Mr. Aydelotte: All right, Becky, in the older days, now by the older days, I'm going to start now by about -- I'll start with right after the war, 1946, '48. In those days, election returns were gathered by one source and one source only in Delaware and that was the News Journal papers.

And the News Journal papers cooperated very fully with the radio stations by inviting the various stations to come to the News Journal Office and set up equipment and actually do a studio facility in the News Journal and we would broadcast the returns as they came into the Journal.

This happened and I started working with the election returns with Gorman Walsh and Harvey Smith, the first one I ever did was 1942. And then of course, because of the war, we went to 1946 and then '48 and then I've done it every two years since.

I think Gorman and I have celebrated our 18th election return together this past year. It was a rather interesting thing, you know, sometimes we say that science defeats itself and it does to a certain degree. With the advent of the voting machine, the advent of the computer, things happen so fast now that you really don't get to enjoy it the way you used to in the old days. By that, I mean in the days when we were doing election returns in the '40s, there were no voting machines. Everything was by paper ballot and naturally, it took a long time to compile these paper ballots.

So what it meant was, too, that we would get elections returns from the nine words of -- I'm sorry, the 12 words of the city of Wilmington by words and they would come in, the first district of the first word, second district of the first word, 10th of the ninth word et cetera, et cetera and all around New Castle County and the various hundreds out of 2,100, fifty and a hundred et cetera.

And they would come in very slowly, one district at a time and as they came in we were able to report fully which district had gone for which candidate, right on down the line from the president all the way down to a dog catcher, almost.

And this gave the audience who were really interested in the election returns a very good idea of just how their particular district voted and this particular candidate was doing.

But as years go on, on come the voting machines and naturally with the abolishment of the paper ballot and the voting machine, the vote was compiled as each person hit the various buttons and it was simply a tape sent in to the various headquarters and this had about -- and let me put this way, in the old days, again, I say old days, that's the '40s, we never used to be done Delaware's elections until approximately 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning.

Then with the advent of the voting machines, we suddenly started getting the complete results by midnight, 1 o'clock, and we thought this was great. Then we had a new regime and the News Journal papers with Creed Black *[phonetic]* **[0:28:56]** who came as the managing editor and it was his understanding or his feeling that the newspapers and the radio stations were not friendly competitors but were real competitors. And he said, why should we set up shop for you people to get the elections. You're in business, directly a competition to us. You get your own results and we'll get our own results et cetera. So we no longer went to the newspapers.

This meant that the radio stations had to band together and that we did and we went to the Department of Elections and they very kindly allotted a space in their computer center in Delaware.

And this started a whole new thing. And I don't recall the exact year but I remember the first year that we did use the computers, they told us that the polls would close at 8 o'clock and that by 9:30, 10 o'clock we should have the complete election results. All printed out nicely on the computer.

So we planned for this, but something in the back of our minds told us that the best laid plans of mice and men which Robert Burn said, I believe.

**[0:30:00]**

So what we did was send reporters out to the various headquarters in addition to sending reporters to this computer center. And sure enough, our suspicions came true because the computer has bugs in it. And whereby the state should have been complete by 9:30, quarter of 10, by 9:30 and the quarter of 10, they hadn't run the first computer run through view in any district and the whole state of Delaware, nothing had come out of that computer.

And we had to rely completely upon the reporters on our various headquarters that is the republican and democratic headquarters. And it saved us because we had done it, but some of the other radio station had not had the foresight to do that, so they were stuck with reporters in Delaware reporting nothing.

And we at least were able to tell the people of Delaware how the thing were going, how the election was going from the headquarters point of view because still, even with the computer center, the democratic and republican parties were interested in what they were doing. And they had people out in the field and they would report into them and we were able to carry a fairly complete picture. And then finally, the computer was fixed and by about 2 o'clock in the morning, we had the state complete.

Four years later, believe it or not, the very same thing happened. They promised us the computer would come about and do a beautiful job this time. And this time, there was a short circuit in it and it came out with 35 districts and was doing beautifully and was way ahead of everybody else but we didn't get another report for another two hours.

So we have really -- as a reporter reporting election results, I missed the old times in that it used to be that if Mrs. Jones lived in the eighth representative district and that is eighth representative district in the State of Delaware and the 13th voting district in that representative district, she could call the radio station and say how did my district do and we could tell her. Now, with the computer, things happen so fast and so many thousands of totals are coming in to this computer that you cannot break it down. It's absolutely impossible to break down. So we can only talk in terms of the whole state of Delaware, so many districts out of 384 reporting.

Then the old ugly television wears its hat. And if you well know that all the networks now spend millions of dollars in trying to get early results and they put them on computer, so called test areas and they start surmising who is going to win and projecting who is going to win by 9 o'clock at night. After the polls close here in Delaware at eight, they are telling us who the new president it.

And I think this takes some of the excitement out there. I frankly do because although it's nice to know who might going to be -- win and what this have the things look, scientifically, it's nice to compile them yourself and it gives you some excitement to the whole evening and I think that's been taken away from WDEL's election coverage.

Another interesting point of how radio returns on election night have changed is that we realize that we have television competition and we realize that the, given the average family, given the choice of watching it on TV and listening to it on radio are naturally going to listen or watch it on TV, but by watching it on TV, they see the national figures predominate. So in the last election, between Mr. Ford and Mr. Carter, although we carry national returns, we concentrate on the local returns and we have found in surveys et cetera will watch it on TV but they'll also turn on WDEL to find out what's going on in the state of Delaware.

So we concentrate on the governor's race, the U.S. senate representative and down even to sheriff and protonary, et cetera and into the city with the councilmen and the county councilmen et cetera, so that the person that really wants to know what Delaware politics are going to be like should listen to the radio as opposed to watching TV. He can get a national picture from the television, but a strong local picture from radio and that's what our forte is.

One interesting thing that people might get a chuckle out of is that in 1942, when I first started, even before I was employed by WDEL, I used to help out with the broadcast of the University of Delaware football games. Anybody that knows anything about the University of Delaware football history will know that Delaware didn't have too much of a team back in the '30s, back it was great if we won two ball games out of eight.]

In 1940, the very same year that I started at the University of Delaware, Coach William D. Murray came and Delaware lost its first three games by scores of like 32 to nothing, 46 to nothing and it looked like another terrible season then all of a sudden the team started to get on to the double ring formation that Murray brought with him to Delaware and we won the next five games.

**[0:35:15]**

And those games were all played at Old Joe Frazier Field which is still at the University but is no longer used. Well, in 1942, Delaware was on a win streak. We had won every game in 1941 and were starting to win again in 1942 and in those days, WDEL broadcast the Delaware game under the sponsorship of the Atlantic Refining Company and a Wilmington institution in sports by the name of Herm Rightus *[phonetic]* **[0:35:43]** used to broadcast the games. Herm *[phonetic]* **[0:35:45]** had a rather unique voice. He was laughed at by a lot of people but he knew his sports and he loved the University of Delaware and he did a creditable job in doing the sports broadcast play by play.

But one of the funny things happened in 1942. In that, Delaware in those had no press box. There were no stands per se, there were just bleachers. And Joe Frazier Field might have held at a maximum, 4,000 people, 3,000 on the home side, 1,000 or 1,500 on the visitor side.

So I went to Coach Murray who was a...

Interviewer: Don't forget to talk about the people who sat on the blankets on the side of the hill.

Mr. Aydelotte: Yes, exactly. There's this big hill by Carpenter Hall and people used to sit there on the blankets and watch the game. It was a very nice college setting, sort of small college type atmosphere and watching a game at Joe Frazier Field because it was a small college. It was like watching high school football but it had the certain charm about it that is certainly lacking in today's big time college.

However, I went to Coach Murray who was a very historic individual and didn't have much to say about anything and told him that we were going to be broadcasting the game this year, Coach, and it's kind of hard to do from the top of the bleachers, could he make arrangements for us to have some sort of a press box? And in his usual non-smiling manner he said, "We'll check into it."

Well, that Saturday morning, Herman Rightus *[phonetic]* **[0:37:13]** and I went out to the Joe Frazier Field and there was the press box. It consisted of a platform approximately four foot by five feet sitting on top of two by fours, some 10 to 15 feet above the stands. It only would hold one man. So Herm *[phonetic]* **[0:37:31]** very gallantly climbed up and it was a very rickety stand, I might add, and he sat there on a chair and did the broadcast of the game. And I, who was a color announcer and engineer sat some 15 to 20 feet below him in the top row of the bleachers and we did the broadcast that way.

But one of the funniest thing that happened is that right alongside of Joe Frazier Field and back of Joe Frazier Field from where our stands were located, was a tracks of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. And right at the most exciting part of the ball game, all of a sudden, a 150 car freight train would come by.

And when 150 car freight train would come by, it would take maybe two to three minutes for it to pass the point and it was so noisy that you could hear absolutely nothing of what was said on the air. So you would



hear that Delaware was on the 20-yard line first down and ten to go and then you would hear this train go by and it would be nothing but huffing and puffing in steam and noise of wheels clattering on steel rails for about two to three minutes and that it would die away and Herm's **[phonetic] [0:38:30]** voice would come back and you'd find that Delaware had scored and this...

Interviewer: They were singing Delaware forever.

Mr. Aydelotte: Right, Delaware forever. And it was a big laugh, but there wasn't anything we could do about it because the field was there. We weren't going to be in an old railroad, we're certainly not going to not run their transportation on that while the game was on, but at least were some of the things that we put up with in the early days of broadcasting the Delaware games, so we went to various other places.

I remember a trip to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania to play...

Interviewer: **[inaudible] [0:39:01]**.

Mr. Aydelotte: Well, no, it was actually...

Interviewer: Or Simon **[phonetic] [0:39:06]**?

Mr. Aydelotte: No, Becky, let me see if I can think of the name. Isn't that terrible I can't -- Lunenburg College who at that time, Delaware and Lunenburg in 1946, '47 were two of the top small college teams. Lunenburg had an excellent team. In fact, they got down to where the championship of the small supremacy of the east came about right in Wilmington Park where in fact with some 15,000 people.

Interviewer: When did you start broadcasting at Wilmington Park?

Mr. Aydelotte: Wilmington Park, I think Delaware moved to Wilmington Park in 1946. The games originated in -- Becky, I'm wrong. Let's see, wait a minute. Let me think. Yes, that's right, 1946, after the war. I believe I'm right on that. You know, so many years have gone by. But Joe Frazier Field finally, as Delaware started winning more and more ball games, more and more people started coming out. They became very conscious of the Blue Hens. And Joe Frazier Field just wouldn't handle the crowds, so they moved them to Wilmington Park and we played at night.

**[0:40:08]**

Interviewer: Wouldn't you say, looking back on it that Bill Murray's advent at Delaware, it wasn't just an increase in the numbers of students because where it was really good...

Mr. Aydelotte: No, no, it was big time coaching coming in. Yes, a man who -- I'm glad you asked me that question because he was one of my favorite people in this respect that he was a man who, very quiet, very unassuming but a very, a disciplinarian. And before, Delaware Football, you know, he would have somebody that taught history service coach.

Bill was really the first, I'll put it in quotes, "big time coach", not big time per se but...

Interviewer: He was a big time.

Mr. Aydelotte: He was a big time coach and he came to Delaware where the very good record in prep schools and high schools. And he brought about a spirit of winning the Delaware, you know, of course, Delaware finally wound up by winning 52 ball games without a loss and was finally defeated by Maryland, we broadcast that game from the University of Maryland.

Interviewer: I'll never forget when Zambini **[phonetic] [0:41:12]** or what was his name, he went all the way on the first kick-off when he played Maryland.

Mr. Aydelotte: Yes, right. And I'll never forget two of the horrible fog in coming back from college park, Maryland, one of the worst foggy episodes I've ever experienced. You don't remember that but it was terrible.

Interviewer: I just remember that we all expected, okay, well at least follow their own because we were so cocky having won all those games and then he just ran right back.

Mr. Aydelotte: Yes, and that was also the game in which Gerald Dock Daugherty **[phonetic] [0:41:39]** gained 263 yards and six carries and made Ripley's Believe or Not.

Interviewer: Really?

Mr. Aydelotte: Mm-hmm. Okay, stop that one. Now, you've asked me about some of the things that went on at the University of Delaware as far as my radio career is concerned. Other than broadcasting Delaware games, the other things that we used to do on the campus as a radio station, in those days, the senior prom, the junior prom, the sophomore dance and even the freshmen.

Today, if you wanted to get a band to come and play your dance, you know you have to pay thousands of dollars. In those days, it was a matter of hundreds. And by charging small admission charge, you could gather enough money together to have a fairly good size dance band play at your prom or your dance.

So, Mr. Carpenter who owned a *[inaudible]* **[0:42:35]** he's donated enough money to the University of Delaware so that we could get rid of the horrible gymnasium we had there. What was the name of that? Taylor's gym which was a band box to say the least and alongside of it he built a beautiful -- the college built a beautiful field house and it was called Carpenter's Field house and it still stands there.

There's another big field house down by the now Delaware Stadium, but this was the first big building on the University of Delaware Campus. And the college used to put on dances there and they had people like Rey Anthony, Tony Pastor, Tommy Dorsey, the Glenn Miller Band, Ray McKinley and many other dance bands would come and play on the Saturday for a dance. And always, WDEL would go to broadcast to half an hour the music from that dance.

These were the days when that was the thing to do most of every station that was everything, had an half an hour of live music from the beautiful Gold Ballroom of the such and such and such and such, we bring you the music of such and such and it was the thing to do.

Today, we would never think of doing that, but in those days, it was a great experience for me because I got to meet in addition, as I've said earlier on this tape, in doing the dance band remote from the Gold Ballroom of the Hotel du Pont, I got to meet other orchestra leader by doing almost all the dance band remotes from the Carpenter Field House. And it was an experience meeting the people and the band because you would get there early and get to talk to them and they use the weightlifting room at the Carpenter Field House as the band room and they'd sit around on mats talking and we get a lot of the inside stories of dance bands.

I remember that Rosemary Clooney came there one time and I had an interesting conversation with her. Also, Bing Crosby's son Gary Crosby was there. So that meant...

**[0:44:38]**

**End of Audio**