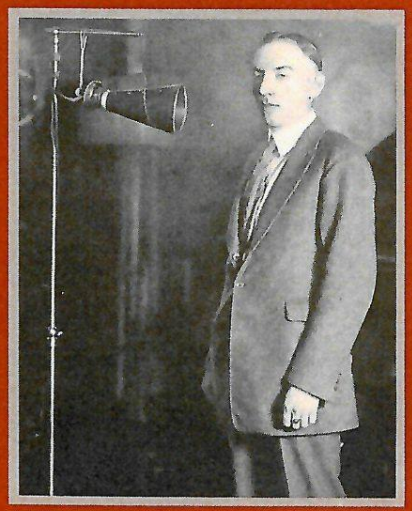
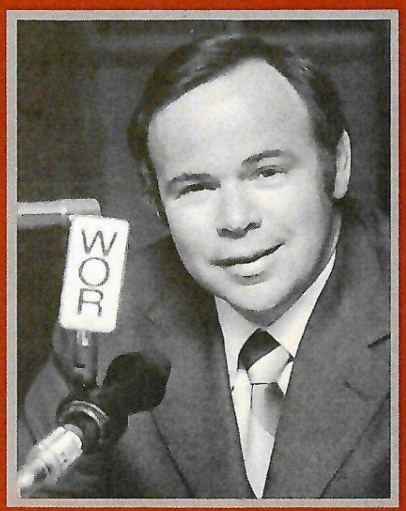
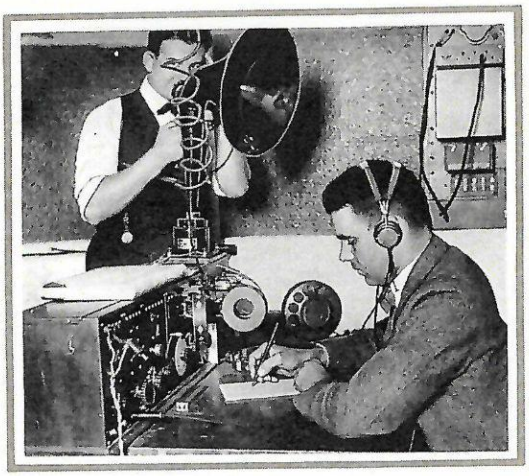
# WOR RADIO






1922-1982

# THE FIRST SIXTY YEARS



*WOR's first control room*

IT HAD BEEN A HECTIC FOURTEEN MONTHS FOR THE ENGINEER, AN EX-NAVY WIRELESS OPERATOR who only was in his twenties. He had walked into Bamberger's Department Store one day in January 1922, just as Walter Mohler, the store's Public Relations Director, had come up with the idea of trying out a radio station as an indirect, but substantial promotional gimmick for the store. It would be an attention-getter to help sell the new wireless radio sets they stocked. Jack Poppele immediately accepted their offer of a job.

The first order of the day was to get the license for the station. Poppele and another man who would be setting up the station with him left Newark on the 8:00 a.m., bound for Washington. At noon, they headed for the Federal Wireless Commission, and by 1:00 p.m. on February 20, 1922, they had the license for WOR to operate on 360 meters, powered by a 250-watt transmitter. This would enable them to broadcast for several hundred miles. It was difficult to pinpoint the station's exact reach because in the country at that time, there were only five to ten thousand receiving sets in use. The call letters were assigned in alphabetical order, so that after Poppele and his partner left, WOS was assigned to a station in St. Joseph, Missouri. WOR has the distinction of being the only station in New York to operate with the same call letters for sixty years. The men were back with the precious piece of paper by early evening. On February 22, 1922, the station went on the air. The first thing ever heard on WOR was a phonograph recording of Al Jolson's "April Showers."

Launching WOR into operation was a full time commitment. The two ex-Marine wireless operators, Orville Orvis and Jack Poppele, and an announcer/manager named Karl Egge, "slept there, ate there, lived there." Lee DeForest, one of the fathers of broadcast invention, came to the station and helped to adjust the transmitter which was located inside Bamberger's department store. Later, Weston Electrical Instruments of Newark sent men over to help. The situation improved, but the engineers found themselves constantly adjusting and nursing the equipment. The staff functioned as engineers and air personalities, and in between (programming wasn't constant in the early years of radio—it ran for a couple of hours in the morning, a break, another couple of hours, and then again in the evening) the staff sold radios.

On April 6, 1922, the transmitter was moved to the roof. Operations improved with the installation of two sixty-five foot masts linked by an eight wire antenna. Reception improved to the extent that calls came in, excitedly reporting pickups in Atlantic City, Brooklyn, and Staten Island.

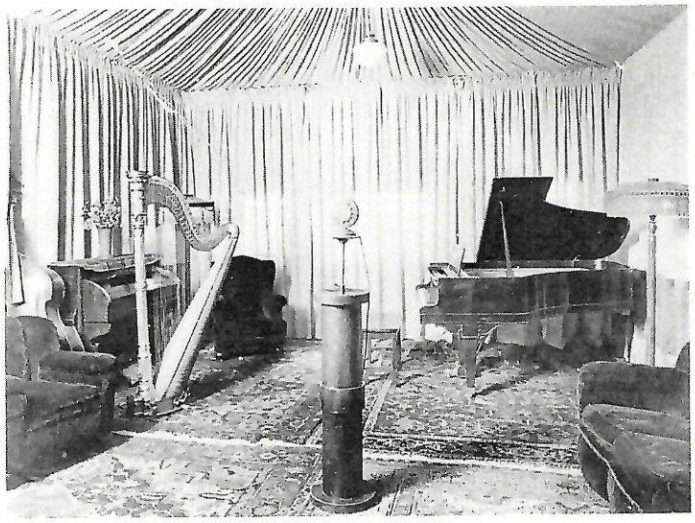


*In the 1920s, families listened to WOR.*



**THE EARLY PROGRAMMING** consisted of music, singing, talk programming, such as religious material and "educational and informative" talks, storytelling for children, and whatever the creative instincts of the staff could conjure on short notice. WOR's first radio personality was a woman named Jessie F. Koewing, who did a daily program of jokes and anecdotes. Her program and *Sky Pictures by Mr. Radiobug,* a kiddie show that ran in conjunction with a puzzle that appeared in a local paper for the children to fill in following Radiobug's instructions, were two early hits. If all else failed, or in the absence of a guest, there was always the old trick of one piano player with three names.

Toward the end of the first year, WOR tried it's wings with its first transatlantic broadcast. This made WOR the first American station to be heard in London, on October 22, 1922, eight months after the station's inception. Paul Whiteman and his band played from the WOR studio in Newark, and were picked up by the British Broadcasting Company.



*1922: WOR's first studio at L. Bamberger & Co., Newark, New Jersey*