

RADIO & TELEVISION NEWS

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TELEVISION TODAY'S NEWS

By **RALPH HOWARD PETERSON**
Director, "Camel News Caravan"

A 15 minute newscast on your screen represents hours of preparation and the services of a highly-trained staff.



John Cameron Swayze before the cameras for the "Camel News Caravan."

PUTTING together the "Camel News Caravan" every day for the television network of the *National Broadcasting Company* might be compared to running a push-button desk for myriad magic carpets and genii all over the world. Because that is what we do through the magic carpets of modern communications and transportation, through the coordinated efforts of a highly skilled staff as we bring actual events from all over the world to the television screen each day.

Only, it is not that simple, nor that easy.

To carry viewers from Seoul to Budapest, from baseball field to the White House, to picture "Today's News Today," calls for a fabulous organization, a highly complicated operation and great expense. We must be ready with manpower and equipment to cover anything that happens in any accessible point on the globe.

This series was started in February 1948 as a straight newsreel program. Newsreel film was edited and put on the network with suitable commentary background. However, television outgrew this form of news coverage very quickly, so the program was turned over to the NBC-TV News Division which developed the technique of mixing live action pickup with film.

Often the program involves at least a dozen switches from New York headquarters to other cities and back again.

Film is being rushed in constantly from more than 100 cameramen stationed strategically around the world.

Producing television's most popular network news show is a 24-hour-a-day job. But take the typical day at the NBC-TV Uptown Studios in the Pathe Building at 106th Street, Manhattan, our headquarters.

Editor John Lynch checks over the incoming news, then he confers with our staff, including Chief Writer Reuven Frank and myself. We decide what is the day's big news and how we can cover it. We check over reports from correspondents and representatives all over the world. Telegrams, cables, radiograms, and transoceanic phone calls carry the assignments and instructions.

We spend the day rushing back and forth between our offices with its news teletypes and the movie projection room where we review film as it arrives.

In the last year, "Camel News Caravan" ordered 250

miles of 16 mm. and 35 mm. film shot. Thirty-five miles of film were shown on the program.

This film may be brought by the cameraman himself from a local fire or a local political event around the corner, or rushed by special courier, jet plane, transoceanic air liner, and motorcycle from some remote corner of the globe. Most of it arrives undeveloped and is prepared for viewing by a laboratory staff here. For this reason, many of our cameramen never see the film they shoot and send in film that millions of viewers see as a routine part of their evenings at home.

One-third of all films included on the Caravan arrive too late to be developed and printed by air time. To make the evening deadline with them, we project the negatives by a special apparatus with reversed polarity. This gives a normal picture to show last-minute news.

To the 16 mm. and 35 mm. sound and silent films from all over, we add the on-camera commentary by John Cameron Swayze in New York, by Bill Henry and David Brinkley in Washington, by Edward Wallace in Cleveland, by Clifton Utley, Jim Hurlbut, and Clint Youle in Chicago, by others in Boston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

Also in the New York studio, we carry the film story with off-camera voices of newscasters like Kenneth Banghart, Radcliffe Hall, Don Goddard, and Bob Wilson. Connie Lempke is the off-camera voice of fashion.

We go through the motions of a rehearsal about 7:15 o'clock to make up our show. This is essential in blending as many as fifteen different segments into the smooth-flowing news program that appears on the coast-to-coast hookup at 7:45 p.m., New York Time. But, at rehearsal, probably half of the segments are not shown. These are picked up from other cities during the actual show, or received at our studios between the rehearsal and the telecast.

Our technique has been improving steadily through the years; our world covering staff grows in size and skill. NBC Vice-President William F. Brooks has described the Caravan as "a major step in adapting the tools of a new medium, television, to the age-old job of reporting news." Also, he might add, it is adapting the great developments of a scientific age to the art of news reporting.