

He's right on top of traffic reporting problems to radio

For 37 years, CFRB announcer Henry Shannon kept his feet planted firmly on the ground.

Then suddenly last summer Shannon, who would rather walk than drive, found his job taking on a new aerial dimension. He's been up in the air ever since, more than two hours a day on the average, reporting traffic conditions from CFRB's jet helicopter for earthbound motorists.

"Until three weeks before I took on the job, I had never even been in a helicopter," admits Shannon. He took over from veteran Eddie Luther, now with another Toronto radio station.

The sensation of riding in a helicopter at 800 to 1,000 feet is entirely different from flying in a conventional aircraft at greater height, but pleasant, Shannon says. And the view is great, not that he has much time for sightseeing.

"I spend all my time looking down at roads," Shannon explains.

At first he felt like a space explorer looking down on an unfamiliar planet.

Now he has no trouble recognizing main arteries. But because the 'chopper' is not stationary, he always has to guard against getting his directions mixed up. Occasionally, he takes a quick glance away to pick out the name of a lesser-used road on the map, or to jot down two or three words as a reminder when he makes periodic voice reports.

Sometimes he's in the midst of reporting one problem area, only to do a quick mental shuffle to inform his listeners of a more urgent one, that may happen directly beneath him while he's on the air.

Most difficult to the new man on the job was defining what was "busier than just busy." Just when he solved that, he thought, Labor Day intervened. People closed up their cottages, children went back to school and traffic patterns shifted.

Shannon has to keep his ears open as well as his eyes. His headset is wired in two ways. Through the right ear, he receives cues direct from the station. Through the left, he listens to the regular CFRB program and listens in to those of the station's competitors who also have helicopter traffic reporters whirling about Metro skies.

Simultaneously he can talk directly with the operator, his own pilot, or those thousands tuned in to 1050 on the dial.

Relations are friendly with traffic reporters in all six whirly birds patrolling Metro and vicinity, and they habitually salute each other in passing with a wave. Shannon doesn't know the others personally, except for RB's auxiliary helicopter, because his landing strip is at York Mills Road and Leslie Street, while they use a waterfront site.

Aloft there's no traffic problem. Shannon's pilot is in constant contact with the Department of Transport as well as skippers of the other

helicopters, to ensure the safety of all.

Since taking over aerial reporting, Shannon is more safety conscious while driving himself. "I see people riding close on the bumpers of cars ahead—tailgating, in other words—and I wish they realized how dangerous it is," he says. Another danger is the curious driver who slows down to look at an accident. Stalled cars can also cause slowdowns, as bad as an accident, he finds.

Shannon got into radio in an unusual way. Born in Vancouver in 1930, he father was a bank manager and for a while it looked like he would follow in his footsteps. He became a bookkeeper, working for a company which sent him to isolated fishing colonies in the north, where the only link with the outside was a once-a-week visit from a seaplane and radio telephone. Regardless of

atmospheric conditions and static, when Shannon came on the radio, the message came through loud and clear.

After four years, he decided to try radio full time. He got the usual advice from the largest stations. "Get some experience first." Undaunted, Shannon did just that—at Trail, Chilliwack and Penticton. He did a morning show and special events, acted as swing man, spoke the news and worked as relief for various shows.

In 1963 he saw a chance to come to Toronto and CKFM, the FM equivalent of CFRB. "Best move I ever made," Shannon says.

For five years he was the early man on CKFM. He had to be up at 4.30 A.M., which enabled him to indulge in hobbies like walking and reading military history, at hours when most of us are still at work.

First a friend, then a host theme for holiday parties

The Hamilton Automobile Club has taken the realistic approach to the problem of drinking and driving, and is willing to face the fact that some persons do drink and drive. Slogans such as "If You Drink, Don't Drive," although often repeated, seem to have little effect, particularly during the holiday season.

The Auto Club proposes that the host who provides the liquor should share the safety responsibility. "First A Friend... Then A Host" is the campaign theme. As a friend of your guests, you should find ways to make it easy for those who will be required to remain sober.

The first rule for expressway-age hosting is obvious—don't push drinks on guests who are driving. It is possible to be a generous host without forcing unwanted refills and without mixing overpotent drinks. You might try a self-service bar where each guest can mix as many drinks as he

wants—and only as strong as he wants them.

You can enhance your reputation and generosity by offering a tempting display of food and coffee at least an hour before people are expected to be leaving. Do this with a flourish, and at the same time de-emphasize the continuation of drinking. Remember that coffee and food have very little sobering power. Time is needed for the effects of alcohol to wear off before man should attempt to interact with machine.

As a friendly, modern host, you may have to arrange for some guests to spend the night rather than drive. Or you may have to exercise diplomacy in arranging for a guest to go home as a passenger instead of a driver. Is it worth risking the possible disfavor of some guests who like to overdrink and drive? We think so. Because of this guest, it is worth being a friend. He will end up thanking you for your consideration.



MOTORISTS VISITING TORONTO find CFRB's "assist" when driving to or from the Metro traffic reports from the Jet Ranger helicopter and traffic reporter Henry Shannon, a valuable

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