



"As you gradually build an identity more people become available to you."

**Betty Kennedy**

**Canada's first lady of radio**

By JANE MULLER  
Champion Reporter

A fluke, a timely twist of fate, began the transformation of a newspaper reporter to one of this country's most well known radio interviewers.

It was a strike at the Ottawa Citizen in the 1940s that planted the seed which would blossom into a career—making the name Betty Kennedy one with which many are familiar. The 56-year-old with a 23-track record at Canada's largest radio network, CFRB, had always wanted to write and, after high school, took the logical step through the front door of the Ottawa Citizen.

She admits the capital city where she grew up had few career opportunities other than the civil service but, during war time, manpower was at a premium and the daily newspaper hired her outright.

In an effort to maintain reader interest during a strike at the paper, Betty was selected to develop a 15-minute radio program. Given no guidelines, she began by trial and error and eventually began to treat the program just as she did a news beat.

By the time the presses at the Citizen began to roll again, the would-be reporter was offered a steady job with the radio station. Her roots had spread from newsprint to the airwaves—fostered by what she calls her "innate curiosity."

"At that time, the idea of switching to radio had never crossed my mind," the public affairs editor of CFRB recalls.

Before becoming a mainstay at CFRB, Betty Kennedy rounded out her background in communications by working in television while living in Ottawa and Montreal. It was once again a case of a chosen path leading elsewhere when she approached CFRB's program director with a program idea she proposed to produce.

She was told her suggestion did not fit the station's format, but they had been looking for a woman broadcaster for the past year. Betty took the challenge.

"No one said at the time which direction the show was to take. All the work I've done has been like that," she explains.

"You have to innovate. You have to originate." The hour-long Betty Kennedy Show presents insight and background into current events. It gave listeners live coverage of the Royal wedding last year and added depth to news events in that country occurring at the same time.

Modern satellite communication has opened new doors for broadcasters and Mrs. Kennedy has passed through many of these with visits to such places as China, Kenya, Ireland and Rome.

"Your deadlines never disappear no matter where you go," says the radio personality who, in addition to producing several shows in her travels, often makes daily reports for CFRB newscasts while abroad.

The pacing of a daily show is of utmost importance as well as the content. Over the years

Betty Kennedy has acquired "an intuitive feeling about how far to go with something."

"You try not to go on the air day after day and beat your listeners over the head with any particular story," she says.

Mrs. Kennedy does not abuse her use of this country's largest station by riding any "personal hobby horses." She admits such a practice would become tiresome and also that she is not at CFRB to air her particular views.

"I'm trying very hard to do upbeat things this summer," she offers, as her hand moves to adjust the long string of pearls around her neck.

While following news events it is often difficult to find material which is of a positive nature. Events of the day have always molded the show and have caused it to evolve over the years. The Betty Kennedy show deals with anything topical—from the Constitution to the environment and Canada-United States relations.

"We've probably done more this year than all the other years put together on the economy... because that interests everybody."

Aside from her years of affiliation with CFRB, Betty Kennedy has become a familiar face as a regular panelist on Front Page Challenge. That weekly show has been on the air for 26 years and Betty has been part of it for all but four of those years. She is one of three regular panelists who, along with a guest, try to identify news events and the people who make headlines.

National exposure through the weekly television show and the radio program of her name have given Betty Kennedy a degree of fame which is an asset to her work.

"As you gradually build an identity more people become available to you. You can't underestimate that factor," she says.

The identity of the station she represents is another plus, especially when working beyond the bounds of this country.

The broadcast journalist did not desert her typewriter when she left the Ottawa Citizen many years ago. She is the author of two books. Both best-sellers, *Gerhard—A Love Story* is a personal account of her marriage to Gerhard Kennedy and his illness, which led to his death in 1975, and *Hurricane Hazel*, a collection of memories of the violent storm.

Although she had put in a full day at CFRB and had driven herself from Milton to Toronto and back (her driver was on vacation), Betty Kennedy looked as though her day had just begun when she breezed into the Georgian-style home she shares with her husband, Allan Burton, at 4:30 p.m. for an interview.

The gardens, which surround the huge limestone house on Walkers Line, are evidence of Betty's green thumb. The tract of land spanning between two concessions provides a perfect setting for long walks with her husband, which often take place before breakfast.

Sitting in the sun room with a view of a kidney-shaped pool, Mrs. Kennedy admits she has a lot of energy. Her natural tempo drives her to work quickly at things and she is able to be flexible.

"I'm obviously in the right area," she says of her career.

When she and Mr. Burton take a break it could be a fishing trip to New Brunswick or a winter escape to Bermuda. With a complexion bronzed by the sun, lipstick and nail polish a perfect match and impeccable dress, it is hard to picture this woman landing a 30-pound salmon, but it's one of her favorite pastimes.

"I try not to be away at too long a stretch," she explains.

"I treat my listeners with a good deal of respect. It takes time to build an audience."

This year Betty Kennedy was named to the Order of Canada, a prestigious appointment honoring outstanding community contributions. These contributions began in 1965 when she became a member of the Metropolitan Toronto Hospital planning council. This was followed by and additional five years involvement with the medical profession as the first non-medical member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario complaints committee.

Mrs. Kennedy set another precedent as the first woman chairman of National Brotherhood Week in 1975, Canadian Council of Christians and Jews. Beginning in 1972 she spent five years as a member of the governing council of the University of Toronto and committees thereof, including the chairmanship of the external affairs committee.

She was part of a three-member team in the mid-70s which reviewed provincial government spending and recommended efficiencies in that area. At the federal level, she was a member of the selection committee for the outstanding achievement award of the Public Service in 1972 and was chairman in 1973.

She is a past member of the citizens advisory committee of the Ontario Medical Association and is currently a member of advisory committees for Ontario Educational Communications Authority, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute (Radio—Television Arts), University of Western Ontario (school of journalism).

Board meetings are another of Betty Kennedy's commitments as a director of the Bank of Montreal and Akzona Inc. She had a hand in the operations of Simpson's Ltd. as a board member from 1974 to 1979.

In addition to their grand country home, she and her husband have a house on the Kingsway in Toronto.

Betty Kennedy has three sons, Mark, Shawn and D'arcy and a daughter Tracy, who is closest to following in her mother's footsteps than the rest of the family. The youngest child, Tracy is studying fine arts at York University, concentrating on the communications field.

Mrs. Kennedy married Allan Burton in 1976.

**Allan Burton**

**An elite member of the club**

By STEVE ARNOLD  
Champion News Editor

If the Canadian Establishment had membership cards, Allan Burton would certainly be among the elite members of the club.

A former chairman of the huge Simpson's department store chain, his listing in the 1980 version of *The Canadian Who's Who* includes positions as a director of half a dozen other Canadian corporate giants.

It is an impressive achievement for a person who dropped out of the University of Toronto's architecture program in 1935 to work for \$12.50 a week in the stockroom of Simpson's flagship store in Toronto.

Of course, young Allan did have certain advantages in his rise to the top of the retailing world, including a father and brother who preceded him in the chairman's office.

That advantage was coupled with a youth spent at the "right" schools (University of Toronto Schools and a private facility in Lausanne, Switzerland), an officer's commission in the "right" militia regiment, memberships in the "right" clubs and the advantages that come from being part of a family of overachievers.

Now retired, Mr. Burton and his wife (broadcaster Betty Kennedy) divide their time between a townhouse in Toronto, their farm near Milton and a heavy schedule of activities, including the chairmanship of the 1982 Royal Winter Fair.

In addition to his responsibilities to the corporations he helps to direct, he also finds time for his life long hobbies of painting, fishing and shooting.

In 1935, as he was finishing his second year of study at the U. of T., Allan Burton found himself facing a difficult choice.

"At that time there were only two architects in all of Toronto who were making more than \$10,000 a year," he said, during a recent interview at his home.

"I knew I could make more than most architects by working in the stockroom at Simpson's."

Finally he made his choice and simply didn't appear for classes when the university session started that fall. He did, however, find it difficult to tell his father of his decision.

"Every morning he would drop me off at the university and I would have to run like hell to get to work on time," he said.

Eventually, however, the dark secret emerged when two of his former professors called on his father to lament that Allan wasn't going to be an architect.

Whatever it was he feared however, did not materialize.

"I learned there really wasn't any great expectation for me to go to university," he said, "but there was certainly pressure for me not to fail at whatever I chose to do."

Eventually, he chose to stay with Simpson's, except for a two-year stint spent working "in the design field" with firms in New York and London,

England. That was in observance of another family rule that demanded "we work for somebody else for at least a year, mainly for the sake of our own morale and to give a company the chance to say they didn't want me."

"The only really meaningful piece of design work I ever did," he adds, is the boardroom furniture still being used by the Bank of Canada in Ottawa.

Mr. Burton's militia service started in 1930 when he enrolled in the cadet corps of the Governor General's Body Guard. In 1933, at the age of 18, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant and retired from the regiment in 1975 after five years as honorary Lieutenant-Colonel.

The position of Honorary Colonel of the regiment is held by the Governor General of Canada.

Mr. Burton doesn't dwell on his military activities. When he enlisted, the GGBG was a cavalry unit "and I never had any other idea than that I wanted to be in the cavalry."

When the regiment was called up for active service in World War II, they traded their horses for Sherman tanks and Lieut. Burton "travelled 7,000 miles by tank, at an average speed of two-and-a-half miles an hour."

He was not, however, the type of soldier who watches little bits of wood being moved about a map during battles.

"I have the doubtful distinction of only missing one engagement the regiment was in," he said.

What he doesn't mention, however, is the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) he was awarded. When asked he says simply he won the medal "for something on the first day of action at Monte Cassino, before I knew any better."

The list of corporate directorships, a necessary element for a true member of the establishment club, is not easily collected, Mr. Burton contends. The appointments must be earned through years of effort.

Currently, Mr. Burton is a director of the Royal Bank of Canada, Bell Canada, Standard Broadcasting Ltd., CFRB Ltd., Electrolyser Corp. and the Hudson's Bay Company.

"There's a long series of public involvement things that are expected of you before the directorships come along," he said. "A lot of involvement with a lot of men. That's how you become desirable as a director."

To prove his own argument, Mr. Burton was active with the Red Cross Society, the Canadian Handicraft Guild, Salvation Army fundraising campaigns, the Metro Toronto United Appeal, Board of Trade, Metro Toronto Industrial Development Commission, St. John's Ambulance, Redevelopment Advisory Council of Toronto and the board of trustees of the Hospital for Sick Children.

In many of those functions Mr. Burton has been able to make lasting contributions to the life of the organization and of his community.

He noted, for example, that he was "in-

strumental" in getting Toronto hospitals to contract with the Red Cross to supply all of their needs for blood, rather than purchasing the substance from overworked interns.

"That's still the most important function that the Red Cross has provided over the years to the hospitals," he said.

In 1960, he was asked by then Toronto Mayor Nathan Phillips to form the Toronto Redevelopment Council to spur businessmen in the core of the city to take an interest in its appearance and future.

"We felt that if the businessmen in the core weren't interested enough to see that development took place in the proper manner then we really were in a sad state. We felt we had to take a hand to ensure that Toronto developed properly," he said.

Those decisions included not extending the subway line along Queen St. scrapping the controversial Spadina Expressway and not developing another east-west expressway south of Hwy. 401.

His current burden of responsibilities are a reduction from the number he carried in 1970 when he resigned from eight other boards of directors "after a physical upset."

"I realized at that time that sooner or later you have to learn that you aren't Superman."

In 1968, on the death of his brother Edgar, he became chairman of Simpson's and held the position until "Mr. Thomson and his group took over."

Simpson's was swallowed up in a corporate move by the Hudson's Bay Company, which was itself swallowed a short time later by the giant Thomson organization.

Mr. Burton's father led a group of Simpson's managers who in 1929 purchased the company after a proposed sale to an American firm was scuttled.

Under the leadership of the third Burton to be named chairman, Simpson's underwent a "marriage" with the American-based Sears-Roebuck chain to form Simpson-Sears Ltd.

"The results of that were a happy relationship that lasted for 25 years," Mr. Burton said, adding that as the original owners of the Simpson's firm died, their shares were spread out and the company became vulnerable to the takeover that eventually befell it.

As the remaining owners saw this trend developing they formed a plan to merge Simpson's with Simpson-Sears "so that we would in effect become a subsidiary of our own child" but eventually, that plan was scuttled by the interference of the federal government's Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA) and Simpson's was taken over by the Hudson's Bay Company.

Mr. Burton was first married in 1938 to Audrey Caro Syer, niece of a former Milton mayor. She died of cancer 38 years later.

He married Betty Kennedy, who lost her husband to cancer as well, in 1976.



"There was certainly pressure for me not to fail at whatever I chose to do."