

## Bruce Armstrong recalls highlights of radio days on retirement eve

by Shirley Whittington  
A kiss from Mary Pickford - Opening a brand new radio station - Three days later, covering a Royal Tour - These are some highlights in Bruce Armstrong's 35 year career in radio. Armstrong retires at the end of this month with a file of memories that sounds like a Who's Who Canadian show business. Sandy Stewart has

called him one of the best technicians in the business. He began in the control rooms at the CBC in 1942 and he's worked with all the greats Andrew Allan, Frank and Austin Willis, Wayne and Shuster, The Happy Gang, Lorne Greene, Elwood Glover, Giselle Mackenzie and Bernie Braden are just a few. Armstrong also served his time on the remote dance broadcasts from places like the old Palais Royale, with bands like

Benny Luois, Bobby Gimby and Bert Niosi. Remembering those nights, Armstrong lowers his voice and does the remote announcer routine: "...overlooking beautiful Ashbridge's Bay, with the music of Joe Banana and his bunch..." He's pretty good at vocal imitations - so good that his Charlie Farquarson impression once confused Gordon Sinclair. "Which one of you b..... is Charlie,

anyway?" said the crusty old broadcaster once, in a meeting with Armstrong and Don Harron. When big names came to Toronto for broadcast specials, Armstrong was the operator. Jack Benny brought his own technicians with him, but Armstrong was the stand-by. "It was Jack Benny's birthday that night," says Armstrong. "He asked us all to the Royal York for a piece or birthday cake."

Mary Pickford and Raymond Massey were guests on a show called Comrades in Arms. "They had to leave a little early, recalls Armstrong, "and Mary went around to thank everybody before she left. I was at the console, both hands busy, so instead of shaking hands, she kissed me on the cheek."

A little CFB maintenance man called Eddie Dunn figures in a lot of Armstrong's memories. "Once Harry Boyle, a top CBC executive, went overseas for a few months and nobody seemed to know where he was, or when he was coming back to the office. Much later, Eddie Dunn opened the door of his closet to reveal a full wall of postcards from Boyle - one from every spot the boss had visited. "Why didn't you ask me where Mr. Boyle was?" asked Dunn. "I could have told you."

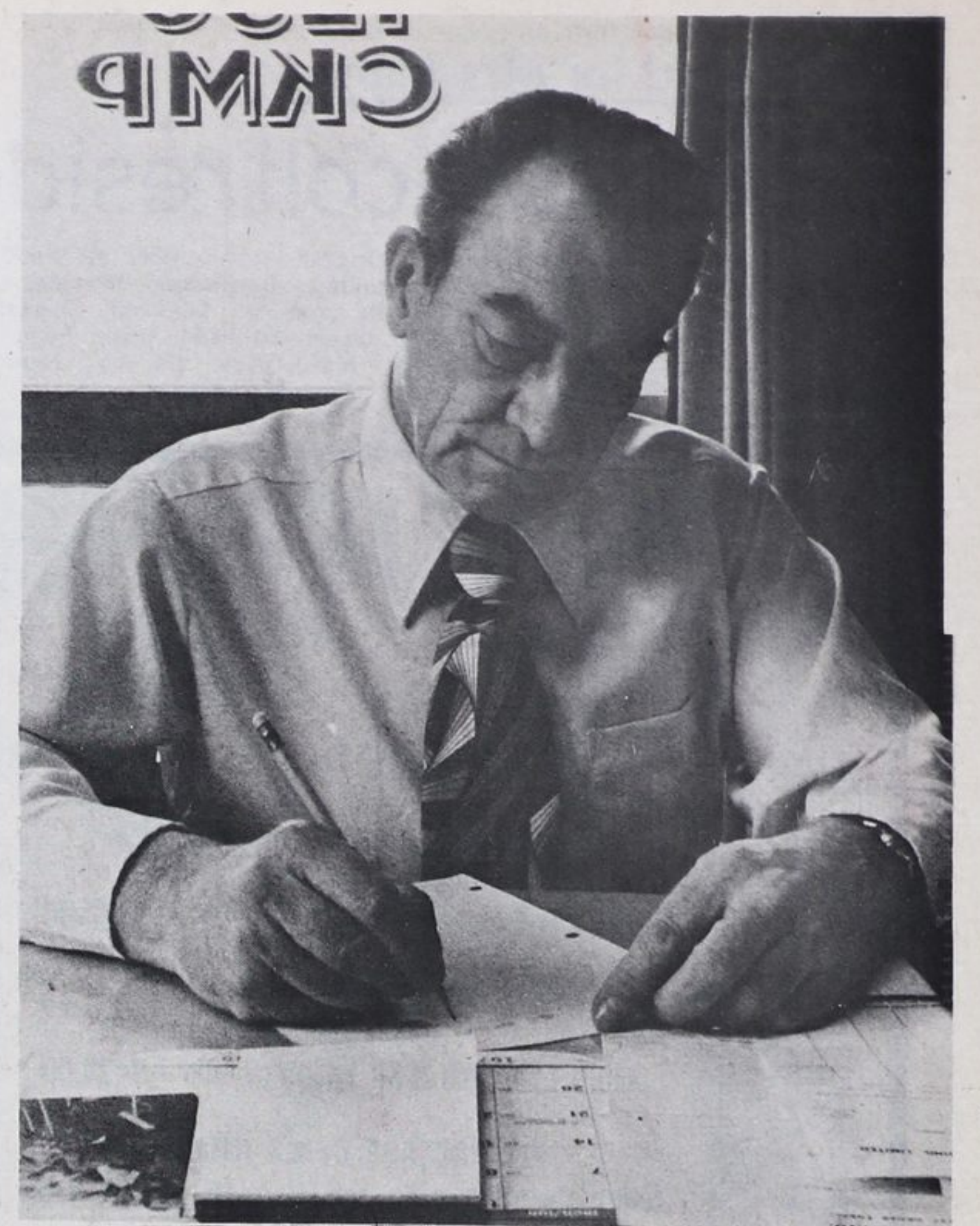
Sound effects are on tape these days, but in the old days they were made on the spot in some pretty ingenious ways. "I remember once we were doing a show that called for the sound of a man going overboard - splash - into the water. Nothing we did suited the producer. Finally, as a joke, the sound effects man brought his assistant into the studio, dressed in bathing trunks, and he had the guy jump into a tub of water. Oddly enough the producer thought that was perfect, so the poor guy had to stand around shivering in his wet trunks until the time came for the splash in the script."

The years at CBC were exciting and stimulating, but Bruce Armstrong felt he wanted to explore other aspects of radio broadcasting. "But by that time," he says, "I'd priced myself out of a transfer to any other department."

This was when he, and two other CBC employees, Stan Tulk and Grant Forsythe, decided to open a new radio station. Why Midland? "We looked at a map of Ontario, and spotted this location as one that needed radio service."

CKMP opened in 1959. Three days later, the Royal Tour was scheduled to pass through Midland. With equipment borrowed from CFRB, CKMP set up five remote locations in Midland and Penetanguishene, and provided live radio coverage of the whole event. Armstrong remembers his words as the Royal couple entrained at the end of the day. "I said, 'There goes our beautiful Princess and her charming Prince! She looked up at me and smiled. I found out later that they carried a portable radio with them at all times, so she heard what I said, and acknowledged it."

Armstrong thinks that his is perhaps the only family in Canada in which all seven members have been actively involved in the family business. Bruce senior was manager for 18 years, and his wife Em wrote copy, managed traffic and secretarial duties as did daughter Arlene. Sons Jim, John, Bruce and Donnie all worked full or part time at CKMP. Now CKMP is part of Eastern Broadcasting. Bruce Sr. retires on February 28. His wife Emma, died early in January. Jim Armstrong is still at CKMP. John is in Victoria B.C. Bruce and Donnie are in Huntsville. Bruce Armstrong says every day of his life has been an education. "And retirement is like a graduation."



Bruce Armstrong at his desk

## Local Red Cross celebrates second birthday Thursday

by Shirley Whittington  
The Red Cross is two years old in the Huronia area. Since its inception in February 1975, Midland, Penetanguishene, Tiny, Tay, Port McNicoll, Victoria Harbour, Elmvale and parts of Flos and Medonte have benefitted from solid and worthwhile programs carried out under the familiar Red Cross banner.

Homemakers, under the supervision of Isobel Jones, assume the care of a household when the person usually responsible for it is ill or unable to carry on. Such service has been provided to over 125 homes in the area, since the Huronia Red Cross began Homemaker's Service. The cheerful and efficient presence of a homemaker has made illness easier to bear in many homes.

Mrs. Edna Stephens heads up the Visitation Service of the Huronia Branch. People who are lonely, infirm, handicapped, bereaved or beset with emotional or adjustment problems can avail themselves of friendly visits from others who can support them through their troubles, and provide practical assistance, like transportation to needed services.

Blood Donor Clinics are one of the best known of Red Cross activities. The Midland Lion's Club, and RCA have both sponsored such clinics, with the support of the Red Cross. There's a constant need for donors, and Mrs. Marion Galt is in charge of this valuable life saving service. All blood collected goes to Toronto, and is supplied to hospitals as needed.

Youth services David Chambers is the newly elected chairman of the Youth Services committee. He and his group hope to bring the Red Cross into the classrooms of the area to make our young people aware of the scope of the organization. Service projects, fund raising and health education programs are some of the ideas under consideration.

There are other Red Cross programs on the horizon. It's hoped that regular blood donor clinics will be established in our area, and plans are already under way for a water safety program which will centre on small craft safety.

In order to help Huronia's residents to develop and maintain healthy life styles, the Red Cross hopes to sponsor programs aimed at better physical and mental health, nutrition, dental health, accident prevention and awareness of health hazards.

President-elect Fred Hacker has several suggestions for those who would like to help the Huronia Branch of the Red Cross to continue their remarkable growth in service to our area. People are always needed to assist in various programs, and if you want to help, contact Mary Theakston, at 549-2064. Existing programs will work even better with the support and encouragement of everyone in the community.

Hacker also hopes that the community will promote new avenues of service. Dave Tournour is the Campaign Chairman for the Huronia Branch. The week of February 28-March 5 has been set aside for a door-to-door blitz for funds in the Huronia area. The goal for 1977 is \$4000. Money collected goes to further the work of the local branch, as well as for provincial and international programs.

It's a worthy cause, and one that has been around on the international scene since 1864. After just two years locally, the Huronia Branch has accomplished a great deal. You can find out exactly what they've done, and what they're going to do by attending their annual meeting - and second birthday - on Thursday night, February 24, at 7:30 p.m. in the Windrifter restaurant.

Robert Hartog, Marian Galt, Eric Eisenberg, Nell Peever and Gary Westgarth are the five founding members of the Huronia Branch, and they will be especially honoured during the evening. Alec Craig, retired administrator of St. Andrew's Hospital, will be presented with a citation for his work in

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President-elect

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