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Doris Chase, Brownville Telephone Operator, Awarded Vail Medal, Part 1

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WLBZ Radio, (January 01 1952) "Doris Chase, Brownville Telephone Operator, Awarded Vail Medal, Part 1". *WLBZ Radio Station Records*. MS 608. D 16.59; CD 9 Track 2. Special Collections, Raymond H. Fogler Library, University of Maine.

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Transcript of a sound recording in MS 608, WLBZ Radio Station Records, Bangor, Maine, 1931-1973

Title: Doris Chase, Brownville Telephone Operator, Awarded Vail Medal, Part 1

Date: Circa 1952

Recording number: D 16.59; CD 9, track 2

Length of recording: 15:26

[transcript begins]

VOICE: Transcribed.

[Music begins to play and children sing The Mighty Hand. Most lyrics not audible.]

HUNTER: Ladies and gentlemen, this is Irving Hunter speaking from the assembly room of the new Masonic Building in Brownville, Maine. Our program is a focus honoring Mrs. Doris Chase, night operator for the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company whose outstanding devotion to duty during a disastrous fire on the night of February 4th, 1951, merits her receiving the national Vail Memorial Award for heroism. The music that you just heard was the Foxcroft Academy Varsity Singers of Dover Foxcroft. The reverend William Gray, pastor of the Brownville Community Church is about to deliver the invocation.

GRAY: Let us pray. Almighty God, Father of us all, grant us thy grace that we may see thy true glory around us. Cleanse from our hearts all hate, deceit, prejudice, and unclean thoughts that we may become worthier servants of thee and our fellow men. Make us more aware, O Father, of the many blessings that come from thee, blessings of freedom, homes, families, and all the uncountable blessings that are unnoticed in the daily rush of living. We thank thee for those who put the needs, wants and comforts of others above their own needs. Help us to see what make their lives great, so we, by their example, will be able to make our lives more worthy of thy love. In the name of the master, we pray. Amen.

HUNTER: Right now, Miss Donna Holmes, an employee of the telephone company in its Bangor business office and popular entertainer is about to offer her version of the current favorite, *The Loveliest Night of the Year*. Popular songstress and accordion star, Donna Holmes.

[Accordion music begins to play and HOLMES sings the following lyrics.]

When you are in love
It's it the loveliest night of the year
Stars twinkle above
And you almost can touch them from here
Words fall into rhyme
Any time you are holding me near
When you are in love

It's the loveliest night of the year
Waltzing along in the blue
Like a breeze drifting over the sand
Thrilled by the wonder of you
And the wonderful touch of your hand, and...
My heart starts to beat
Like a child when a birthday is near
So kiss me, my sweet
It's the loveliest night of the year
When you are in love
It's the loveliest night of the year

[Audience applauds.]

HUNTER: And now we'll hear from David E. Barker, telephone manager of this area, who will open the ceremonies of the award. Mr. Barker.

BARKER: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the telephone family, I bid you welcome. Among our distinguished guests tonight is a gentleman by the name of John E. Tucker, Maine Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars whose organization at the ceremonies at Lewiston in August of this year proclaimed Mrs. Chase Maine's Woman of the Year. Commander Tucker.

TUCKER: It is only fitting that recognition be given those men and women of this community whose untiring efforts have made it possible that our gathering tonight can be held in this beautiful new building erected on the very site of that disastrous February fire. Such industry and foresight employed in creating this fine civic and business center deserves, and has, our grateful tribute. I now present Mr. Scott A. Hutchinson, our General Manager for the state of Maine who will conduct the ceremonies for the evening. Mr. Hutchinson.

HUTCHINSON: Thank you, Mr. Barker, Mrs. Chase, Mr. Percival, Mr. White, Mr. Weir, Dr. Wilkins, invited guests, family, friends and neighbors of Mrs. Chase, it is indeed a privilege, an honor for me to be here this evening to take part in this program in which you are honoring your neighbor, Mrs. Chase, for her courage and resourcefulness on February 4th, 1951. It is my privilege also to extend at this time to Mrs. Chase the sincere regrets and commendations of some other people in Maine who are not able to be here this evening. Senator Brewster, Senator Margaret Chase Smith, Congressman Clifford G. McIntyre, all extend their regrets and a hearty congratulations to Mrs. Chase for the wonderful act that she performed on February 4th, 1951. Governor Payne extended his regrets also and at this time I would like to read a letter to Mrs. Chase from the Honorable Governor Frederick G. Payne.

State of Maine, Office of the Governor, Augusta. Mrs. Doris Chase, Brownville, Maine. Dear Mrs. Chase, Nothing would have given me more pleasure than to be in attendance at the dinner in your honor this evening, but my schedule precludes this. I do want to add my commendation to that being accorded you on this occasion. It is courage, quick thinking, and resourcefulness such as you displayed that makes

us all realize the value of our telephone operators. Your action and resultant aid is indicative of the fine service being rendered by the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company. You well deserve the plaudits extended to you, Mrs. Chase, this evening. Not only the people of Brownville, but the entire state of Maine, appreciates the service you rendered during this disastrous fire. Best wishes for an enjoyable evening. Sincerely yours, Frederick G. Payne, Governor.

The Vail Medal Award, ladies and gentlemen, is a coveted tribute to men and women in the telephone industry and is one for which a careful selection is made from many noteworthy acts throughout the country. I would like to mention at this time some of the acts of heroism and self-sacrifice made by telephone men and women of the state of Maine for which this award has been bestowed previously.

On four different occasions when the communities in which they lived were threatened with destruction, with flood, or with fire, or both, the employees at Bar Harbor, Maine, Peaks Island, Rumford, and Saco, Maine, were awarded citations for their courage and perseverance in maintaining telephone service needed to make calls for food, shelter, and medical supplies for their fellow townspeople. Individual acts of courage and resourcefulness have been rewarded by the bestowal of Vail Medals to Morris D. Appleton of Portland, Maine, and Marshall A. Oliver, now retired. Frederick R. Davis, who is present here and who I would like to have stand. Thank you, Mr. Davis.

Mrs. Chase, our honored guest tonight, now joins the ranks of those distinguished by having received these awards, for she will be the holder of the first Vail Medal Silver Award given in the state of Maine. We are happy indeed that one of your town officers, Mr. Ernest Percival, is here tonight to honor this occasion with his remarks on behalf of the community and townspeople of Brownville, Maine. Mr. Percival.

PERCIVAL: Mr. Hutchinson, invited guests, friends and neighbors, it is my privilege and pleasure to extend to you a most cordial welcome from the town of Brownville. It is indeed fitting and proper that the first ceremonial use of this building should be to honor one of our own townspeople and neighbors. We, her friends and neighbors, are all familiar with the courageous story of her devotion to duty even at the risk of death. We are grateful and proud that she is to receive the recognition she so justly deserves on this occasion. We have with us, here assembled, officials of the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company, and other prominent guests who have come to pay public tribute to Mrs. Doris Chase. I relinquish this privilege to those more able to do so than I. I do, however, wish to express the gratitude and appreciation of the townspeople and business concerns to the telephone companies for their untiring and determined effort to maintain emergency telephone service during this catastrophe and for the efficiency with which they restored normal service with a minimum of inconvenience to their patrons. I also feel it would be amiss if we failed to commend the Masons for this beautiful building which replaced the former Masonic Block lost during the disastrous fire. We feel that the foresight and courage displayed in building this splendid civic and business center is an indication of a turning point in the growth and welfare of this community. We add special praise to the members of the building committee whose civic pride, unselfish and untiring efforts, have made this possible. It is our firm and honest belief, the old saying, "Where there's a will, there's a way," is true. This gathering tonight is a

just, public recognition of those who not only believed, but have proved that the apparent impossible can be done.

[Applause.]

HUTCHINSON: Thank you, Mr. Percival. Mr. Leon W. Weir, Assistant Vice President of the Personnel Department of our company, is here tonight to tell you about the qualifications for this award and something regarding the history associated with it. Mr. Weir.

WEIR: Mr. Hutchinson, our guests of honor, Mrs. Chase, Mr. Chase, their daughter, Marilyn, invited guests, and friends and neighbors of Mrs. Chase in Brownville. The first sentence transmitted intelligibly by telephone was a call for help. "Mr. Watson, come here. I want you." Alexander Graham Bell impulsively called out those words to his assistant after upsetting a battery and spilling acid on his clothing. The true telephone he was ready to test picked up his words and sent them over a wire to a room down the hall where Watson was listening. Since that historic night in 1876, the telephone and telephone people have been friends in need to thousands of people at times of emergency. Over the years a tradition of service to the public has grown out of countless, countless, meritorious acts and service by employees. Almost every day some act is recorded somewhere in the Bell System which exemplifies the loyalty and devotion of telephone men and women.

[End of part 1 of the recording. Continued in part 2.]

[transcript ends]

For more information about this transcript, audio recording, or other materials in Special Collections at the University of Maine, contact:

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