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

Title: Broadcast with Admiral Byrd from Bangor to Little America, Antarctic Exploration Base

Date: August 2, 1940

Recording number: Tape 16, part 1

Length of recording: 26:45

[transcript begins]

ANNOUNCER: Hello, Little America. This is Bangor, Maine, latitude 44 degrees and 40 seconds, longitude 68 degrees and 50 seconds. Tonight through the facilities of the General Electric Company and the National Broadcasting Company, the Bangor Daily News brings you this testimonial program from the state of Maine to Admiral Byrd who is spending his summer vacation with us. Our master of ceremonies tonight is Dr. Rockwell, who needs no introduction to NBC audiences.

[Music]

ROCKWELL: Members of the Byrd expedition, the people of the state of Maine and the millions of visitors who are spending their vacations here, pause at this time to extend their hands across the ten thousand miles separating us from [sea?] tonight and say hello. And your boss, Admiral Byrd, who's here in the studio will say hello later. So at this time, in recognition of your intrepid spirit of pioneering, the same spirit that drove Erik the Red to discover [Mercurochrome?], that driving urge that caused Christopher Columbus to search for a shortcut to India and bring back spice so that Isabella could have cinnamon toast, we salute you tonight. We'll commence our program with a selection by the Bangor Male Chorus of 41 voices conducted by Mr. John White Thomas. The name of your first selection is what, Mr. Thomas?

THOMAS: Seagulls, by [inaudible]

ROCKWELL: Seagulls? We've got millions of them down at Boothbay Harbor and they're having a tough time this year. The fish is so scarce that yesterday the gulls broke into Bill Turner's store and stole three cans of salmon.

[Music]

ANNOUNCER: Next the Bangor Male Chorus sings for you the beautiful ballad, Stars of a Summer Night.

[Music]

ROCKWELL: Next we're going to have a few words from your host, the Bangor Daily News by the editor Monte Bourjaily.

BOURJAILY: Greetings from Bangor, Northeast gateway to America. The Bangor Daily News speaks for two-thirds of the area and half the population of Maine, easternmost state in the Union. Nearest to Europe, we sense its dangers and its menace first. Here in Bangor we are building an advanced airbase with twelve supporting fields that will form one of the strongest air defense areas in the nation. Meantime the potato fields of Aroostook County, world's leading potato growing area, promised a bumper crop. The timberlands provide the pulp market cut off from Europe. The fisheries and lobster pounds help feed a nation. The Kittery and Bath shipyards work 24 hours a day on fighting ships for the Navy. And the normal population of 800,000 is doubled and trebled by summer residents and visitors who come to Maine's mountains, lakes, rivers, and 2,000 mile shoreline to escape the heat. In five weeks, Maine will as usual cast the first vote of any state for the next president of the United States. Most of us believe the old tradition, as Maine goes so goes the nation, will not be broken this year. When you return to the States, we invite you to come to Maine. You'll find the summers cool and the winters comfortable after your experiences in Little America. For the Bangor Daily News and its tens of thousands of readers, I wish you every success and assure you of a warm welcome always in Maine, summer home of your leader, Admiral Richard E. Byrd.

ROCKWELL: Thank you, Mr. Bourjaily. And now huddled around our microphone, there are three players from the Lakewood Playhouse in Skowhegan who will present a dramatic sketch especially written for this program by Bud Byron and Ethan Nolan featuring Arthur Byron. Miss [Arlin?], you're in this sketch. I wonder if you'll be willing to tell us the name and introduce the other players.

[ARLIN?]: Gladly, Dr. Rockwell. The sketch is entitled "Somewhere in Maine." The dean of the theater, Arthur Byron, James Bell and I will play it for you.

NARRATOR: Somewhere in Maine. The peaceful tranquility of the wooded lakes of Maine has not been disturbed by a war-torn world. Here a man finds a cure for jangled nerves and human companionship. With a pipe and a fishing rod the cares of the day are soon forgotten. Somewhere in Maine, on one of its gleaming lakes, the sun is coming up. Through the waning mists of dawn you can see glimpses of the rugged, mountainous skyline. In the foreground, masses of tall pines line the water's edge. Up a little point, two small boats are anchored, their occupants fishing. A blue heron flaps by trailing its long legs and a lonely cry of a loon echoes out over the lake.

JEFFERSON: Any luck, mister?

MAINER: No, but I'm fly fishing.

JEFFERSON: I like worms. Caught a lot of fish, cat fish, that a way.

MAINER: Never caught one in Maine. We've got salmon, bass, [inaudible], pickerel, hornpout and a few others, but no catfish.

MARY LOU: I like Castine.

MAINER: Ever caught a Maine fish, ma'am?

MARY LOU: Not yet. If my granddaddy, Calhoun Lee Jackson, ever found out that we were fishing for these Yankee fish, he'd kicked his way right out of the family tomb.

MAINER: What part of the South are you folks from?

JEFFERSON: Missouri.

MAINER: You don't say? Maine and Missouri raised a big row once. My grandfather used to tell some wild stories about how your state of Missouri slipped into the Union on our back.

MARY LOU: Jefferson, I'm hungry. I want to catch some fish.

JEFFERSON: Hush, Honey. You think I'd do better with a plug, mister? I got a red and white one here.

MAINER: Might try it.

[Sound of a loon call]

MARY LOU: My goodness, what was that?

MAINER: That's a loon, calling.

MARY LOU: Sound like a crazy one.

MAINER: That's why they call them loons.

JEFFERSON: You from up here, mister?

MAINER: Ayuh. My family's been here since before the Revolution. Folks down Penobscot Bay way say Castine settled before Plymouth.

MARY LOU: I'm gonna fish with this little, ol' worm, right on the bottom.

JEFFERSON: I'm gonna try this plug. Watch your head, Honey.

MAINER: Nice cast.

JEFFERSON: Thanks.

MAINER: My grandfather used to tell were down right hurt here in Maine when Missouri horned into the Union with them.

JEFFERSON: Yeah feelings run mighty high on it in Missouri, too, mister.

MARY LOU: Why don't somebody catch a fish?

JEFFERSON: Doggonnit, look at that tangle.

MAINER: Backlash, huh? Makes a mean snarl in your line.

JEFFERSON: [Whistling] You sure know how to get a fly right where you want it.

MARY LOU: Now Jefferson, will you settle down to fishing?

MAINER: My great-grandfather helped get Maine in the Union. We're mighty proud of our state.

JEFFERSON: Nothing to be proud about. Missouri went into at the Union at same time. There had to be two states to get in.

MAINER: [inaudible] they didn't.

JEFFERSON: Missouri came in free, same as Maine. The compromises for the rest of the way.

MARY LOU: Why don't you try a little compromise now and catch some fish? I'm hungry.

MAINER: We believe in freedom. Everybody works for themselves. When my grandfather told me we had three hundred thousand free men when Maine became a state, Missouri was just a wilderness.

JEFFERSON: Listen here, they ain't as many people in the whole state of Maine as they are in the city of St. Louis, Missouri.

MARY LOU: Jefferson, I thought we came out here to fish, not talk about Missouri Compromises.

JEFFERSON: Listen, you realize that Missouri the tenth ranking state in the Union?

MAINER: It's not the quantity that counts. You won't find a more American state in the Union than Maine.

MARY LOU: Jefferson, there's something running away with your string,

JEFFERSON: Boy, he is as big as all get out.

MAINER: I'll tell you something, it's funny what a hundred and twenty years will do for a people. Why here we are fishing like one big family.

JEFFERSON: Look at that thing jump.

MARY LOU: Mister, what's happening to your string? A big old fish has got hold of that funny little feather and he's running away with it.

MAINER: Got 'em. He's a [corker?]

JEFFERSON: He's pulling like a bear too.

MARY LOU: My goodness, Jefferson, he's headed the wrong way.

MAINER: He certainly is. Keep away from my line.

JEFFERSON: You keep your fish away from my line. I'll hook mine first.

MARY LOU: Jefferson, why don't you pull him in?

JEFFERSON: I can't, Mary Lou, he yanked the hook loose, I got to play him some.

MAINER: Hey, you crossed my line. Pull him in, pull him in, you dang fool.

JEFFERSON: Pull in your own fish, doggonit.

MARY LOU: Will you two tend to your fishing and stop fussing at each other?

JEFFERSON: Now you've done it, the line's all tangled, doggonit.

MARY LOU: Jefferson, look out, you're gonna fall in.

[Sound of splashing]

JEFFERSON: Doggonit, I lost my fish and my pole, too.

MARY LOU: You gotta do something. Don't let Jefferson's fish get away with his pole.

MAINER: Well if that don't beat all.

MARY LOU: Oh, something's pulling on my string

MAINER: Steady your boat, you dang fool, want to lose that fish, too?

JEFFERSON: OK, I'll keep quiet.

MARY LOU: Somebody do something, I got a great, big fish.

MAINER: Made me lose mine.

JEFFERSON: Lost mine and a pole, too.

MARY LOU: Oh, Jefferson, look what I got, a great big catfish.

JEFFERSON: Why, Mary Lou, it sure is a big catfish.

MAINER: Catfish? That's a hornpout.

JEFFERSON: I know a catfish when I see one. The Missouri River's just...

MAINER: It's a hornpout, I tell ya.

MARY LOU: Listen, Missouri catfish, or Maine hornpout, Mary Lou is hungry. Now if you all will stop this fighting and come ashore, I'll cook it for breakfast for you.

NARRATOR: And so, relieved, the two empty-handed fishermen, relaxing by the fire as Mary Lou cooks her catfish. The catfish and the hornpout, for your information, are both members of the same great family of fish, the Ictaluridae family, if I must show off my piscatorial knowledge. Just as the man from

Maine and the man from Missouri, 120 years after they joined the Union, are members of the great American family, whose summer habitat is the cool North Country from Maine to Oregon.

ROCKWELL: And now standing at the mic, here is Bill Jenkins, best baritone who ever graduated from the University of Maine. Good evening, Mr. Jenkins.

JENKINS: Good evening, Doc.

[Music – Jenkins sings the State of Maine song]

ROCKWELL: Now I'm going to present a man you've been waiting to hear. A man who has been exploring and going to the far corners the earth since he was 12 years old. At that age, Admiral Byrd went around the world alone. As you know, he's flown across the Atlantic, across the North Pole, and across the South Pole. Boys of Little America, your chief, Admiral Byrd.

[Music]

BYRD: Greetings to you fellows down there at East Base, West Base and Snow Cruiser. I am glad for this chance to talk to you fellas unofficially and to speak my friendly greetings that I have sent in code so many times since I left Antarctica. Needless to say, I wish I were there with you. Besides my liking for the bottom of the world, and your comradeship, there are other reasons that make Antarctica attractive at this time. For example, day before yesterday in Washington it was 107 degrees Fahrenheit in spots, and believe me even though the south polar area is a land of no temptation, it is nevertheless just now a very alluring place. However, I must admit that there can be no complaint about the temperature here in Bangor. It's always pleasant even in the hottest weather. Since my return, I have been trying to keep in touch with your relatives. I've told them that I will be glad to get through any messages they may have to send, or do anything else for them that may be in my power. I want to say that I think it is mighty fine of Mr. Fred Jordan who put on this broadcast and my old friend Monte Bourjaily. Mr. Bourjaily is one of those kind of fellows I'd like to have on expedition with me, a very old friend of mine. And like most things that are worthwhile, especially in the field of radio, such broadcast as these take much time and effort. And we certainly owe these people a debt of gratitude. There is another good thing about this particular broadcast. It gives me an opportunity to thank the General Electric Company for the wonderful thing it is doing for the third time for our Antarctic expedition. And tonight there is present up here, or down here as the New Englanders say, in Bangor, Clyde Wagoner, who conceived the idea of these broadcasts, and upon whom falls a big task of supervising them from Schenectady. It is a strange sensation, Clyde, to be here with you tonight at this, the sending end of the broadcast. So many dozens of times over a period of years I have been at the receiving end, one of the beneficiaries of this great idea of yours. I wonder, Clyde, if even you can fully comprehend what these broadcasts have meant and are meaning to my men. Antarctica is, in effect, another world, so different is it from the land of civilization, where one's waking hours are filled with one urgency after another and innumerable distractions and noise and infinite diversions. Where there's not so much chance to get really lonely, or even to think without interruptions. Whereas, in Antarctica, during the long night there are few diversions except those you make yourself. The sun stays below the horizon. There is little change and much silence, and a great, nerve wracking evenness. It is, in short, an environment where a man can

really think and feel to the fullest. When you miss your people, you miss them to the fullest. Your homesickness becomes a nostalgia. I'm trying to show you, Clyde, what these broadcasts really mean to us. To actually hear the voice of your friend, your brother, your sister, your mother or father, your wife, brings sunshine to the long dark night. Clyde, to the men of these expeditions, you are tops. Your friendliness, your untiring devotion to our well-being, your unselfishness, have won our respect, admiration, friendship, and our deep and enduring appreciation. Clyde Wagoner, upon you with a great heart, we confer the degree of Doctor of the Polar Latitudes, with all the rights and privileges of one who has earned the undying gratitude of polar explorers.

ROCKWELL: Thank you, Mr. Byrd. And now, Little America, one of your members there is Harry Darlington the Third. If you stand by just a second, Harry, your mother, Mrs. George A. Garrett, is here in the studio.

MRS. GARRETT: Hello, Harry. We have all had a hand in this letter and I've had many laughs over the fact that on this occasion you have to stay told, no argument. Elaine Callie and Bobby would have [boated?] over with Lawrence and me tonight, but they could not speak to you, so are using the radio at home. George was here for two weeks, but had to return to Washington. Did you receive George's wire about renewing your aviator's license? Let him know. Elaine is fine. She is enjoying your cards enormously and has her name painted on the door. The ginger has been brought up from Marion's, and after slight repairs is running well. Aunt Cora is here with the three boys. Bill arrives tomorrow for his vacation. Freddy Schafer is being married tomorrow at ? bill to a girl named Walker from Boston. Margo and Marianna are coming here directly from the Havana Conference. We all send our very best to you.

ROCKWELL: And now for Ben Yost's Varsity Eight, here by the courtesy of Frank Worth and the Bangor Fair, accompanied by Jules Lenzburg's Band. The Varsity Eight are going to raise their voices in song and it's too bad we don't have television. You could also see their tongues, a beautiful purple kissed by Maine blueberries, or as some people call them huckleberries. A huckleberry is also a blueberry and if you have some flour and baking powder, it's also a muffin.

[Music, the Song of the Vagabonds]

ANNOUNCER: Next, the Varsity Eight, Where Else But Here

[Music]

ANNOUNCER: And that closes our broadcast to the United States Antarctic Expedition. Two weeks from tonight, the Byrd salute will originate in Chicago sponsored by a Chicago Daily News. This program originating in the studios at WLBZ in Bangor, Maine, sponsored by the Bangor Daily News, reached the people of America through the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company. And the expedition members at the South Pole through General Electric's shortwave station WGEO in Schenectady. Now Stuart Mosher, speaking for our entire cast, to bid you good night from the state of Maine to Little America, and this is the National Broadcasting Company.

[Music]

[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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