

Parker S. Gates runs silent and deep, much like the Mississippi that sweeps southward just a few hundred yards below his hillside office at Quincy, Ill.

The great river carries memories of Indian traders there 300 years ago, the commerce of the packet boats a century ago and the radio-station equipment shipments of Gates Radio Co. a few decades ago. But for Mr. Gates these four-plus decades in the business of broadcasting are memories that live as vividly in the present as when they occurred.

Broadcasting is full of legends of the personal accomplishments of its pioneers. Mr. Gates is one of them, both legend and pioneer. But broadcasting has grown so large and complex it is hard to keep the personal touch intact. Mr. Gates is among those who refuse to surrender. The personal quality must live long after them, he believes, because it is the essence of the thing broadcasting is all about—service.

There are few stations in the U.S., or the world, for that matter, that over the years have not done business with Gates Radio. Networks too. At least 2,000 radio stations in the U.S. now have Gates transmitters. Many hundreds of others, both AM and FM, also have consoles, turntables and other audio gear from Gates. Gates's biggest project was at the Voice of America, Washington.

Since the merger with Automatic Tape Control Inc. several years ago, Gates also has become a leading supplier of station automation equipment. Though many years in television too, Gates presently is intent upon becoming a significant factor in the TV field, just a fortnight ago announcing a complete line of new VHF transmitters.

The Gates move to full-line TV product supplier is an evolution of the aggressive development and marketing philosophy of Harris-Intertype Corp., the Cleveland-based growth company that is pushing into practical products the latest technologies from the merging worlds of printing and electronics, including the aerospace sciences.

Harris-Intertype bought Gates Radio from Mr. Gates in 1957. He continued as president of Gates until last year when the Quincy firm became a division of the parent firm. Mr. Gates then moved up to chairman of Gates Radio under a third five-year contract. He also serves on the new-product-development committee of Harris-Intertype.

The Gates factory in Quincy recently moved inland to a 40-acre site and a big modern plant where 600 employees turn out all manner of product in air-conditioned, dust-free comfort. Many still call Mr. Gates by his first name as he tours with a visitor and he not only replies in kind but inquires about wife

Parker Gates still believes in the personal approach

and children by name as well.

Knowing people as well as product has always been a strength of Gates Radio and its chief executives. Mr. Gates personally spent many post-midnight hours at stations from coast-to-coast testing and checking transmitter installations, a policy that over the years not only won customers but close personal friends.

Rex Howell, early Colorado broadcaster who talks about Mr. Gates like a brother, tells with a chuckle that both times he and Mr. Gates were working on new rigs at KFXJ(AM) (now KREX) Grand Junction, Colo., in the middle of the night some international catastrophe occurred. The first was Hitler marching into the Ruhr, he recalls, and the second was Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Gates recalls, among other things, the period in the mid-30's when trying

to break into the tight transmitter market could be a controversial legal problem as well as a competitive battle.

Behind the scenes in the sales booths at the NAB engineering exhibits could be bloody too, competitively speaking, Mr. Gates remembers. At World War II's end when Gates unexpectedly appeared with new lines of AM transmitters featuring the latest Eimac tubes, he relates, salesmen of a bigger company told prospects it was true the tubes in the Gates gear cost only half as much "but they only last half as long."

The whispers quickly got to Mr. Gates and he put a sign on his transmitter reading "tubes cost half as much, last half as long." The sting of his joke got home quickly, he says, because the next day the sales team of the other firm "came by our booth and literally threw in a towel."

Among one of the many reasons Gates became a dominant factor in the AM-FM field after World War II was the policy of helping finance new equipment, Mr. Gates agrees. Those availing themselves of this service cite Mr. Gates's "keen judgment of character as one reason for its success while others tell how Gates credit-department people come out into the field to help them over the humps in programing, personnel and business problems.

Carl Yates, KSIJ-AM-FM Sedalia, Mo., who pored over his Gates catalogue in foxholes in Korea, whittled his dreams down to a modest \$15,000 start in 1954 on Mr. Gates's advice and help. Now he has nearly \$100,000 worth of Gates gear and wouldn't think of buying anything else, he says.

But the personal touch has worked both ways, Mr. Gates affirms. In 1934 on the death of his father, he says, Bob Compton, WCAZ(AM) Carthage, Ill., suddenly appeared in Quincy and bought \$1,500 worth of equipment, a big order then. Many months later when dining at the Comptons Mr. Gates was to learn the purchase was simply to encourage him to stay in the business.

Zola Compton, now WCAZ president and Mr. Compton's widow, remembers after that dinner Mr. Gates toured the station with Mr. Compton and discovered the gear unused and still packed in the original boxes.

Thursday is Rotary in Quincy and Mr. Gates always shares the lunch with Joe Bonansinga (WGEM-TV Quincy, Ill., now field testing the new Gates TV transmitter), recalling their early days moonlighting with local dance and theater bands. Winter is Florida fishing time for Mr. Gates.

A cherished memory he will never lose: his father, who founded Gates Radio in 1922 so his only son, a "wireless bug," would have a career in the field he liked most.

Week's Profile



Parker Smith Gates—chairman, Gates Radio Co., Quincy, Ill., division of Harris-Intertype Corp., Cleveland; b. Aug. 6, 1907, Davenport, Iowa; began as youth to work at radio manufacturing firm his father founded in 1922, becoming general manager in 1934 and president in 1946; continued as president after firm's sale in 1957 to Harris-Intertype, moving to chairman July 1, 1968; m. Mildred Lichtenberger of Carmi, Ill., March 25, 1933, three daughters—Mrs. William F. (Barbara) Gerdes III, Mrs. Joseph L. (Janet) Conover and Marybelle, 22.