

WBT's PILOT
BRIARHOPPER
FAMILY ALBUM

With
PICTURES AND SONGS



Sincerely, Yours

Fourteen Years On The Air **WBT** Monday Through Saturday

FOREWORD

One crisp September day back in 1933, a small group of unknown musicians stepped up to a WBT microphone and played a spirited hoe-down. This was the first broadcast of a talented musical group which was to become the nationally famous "Briarhoppers", known and loved from coast to coast.

Every day, six days each week at 4:30 P. M., the "Briarhoppers" sing for an average audience of 450,000 WBT listeners, under the sponsorship of Pilot Life Insurance Company. Almost every night they are seen and heard in person at some southern school, church or other community center. Millions have come to love their gay instrumental numbers, the fiddlin' of Elmer (Hank) Warren, the songs of Fred Kirby and Claude Casey, the duets of Whitey and Hogan, the friendly and talented bassist Big Bill Davis, and the cheerful wit of their announcer, Kurt Webster.

In this book you will meet the "Briarhoppers" and their families. To those fans who have never seen them this book will be a personal introduction. To those who know them it will be a treasured souvenir of a fine group of people who for over 15 years have brought pleasure and inspiration to millions through music.

CHARLES H. CRUTCHFIELD
General Manager
WBT



The Websters—Kurt, Nita and Butch

Kurt Webster is a perfect example to prove that a smile goes a long, long way. His sunny disposition and sincere friendliness increases his wide circle of friends and listeners every day.

His nation-wide success as a radio announcer is not surprising when one learns that he is just fulfilling his boyhood ambition to be a top flight radio man. Kurt put his whole heart into his work, therefore he is very popular with Briarhopper fans. He enjoys working with this fine group of boys.

Kurt started his radio career in 1938 at WMVA in Martinsville, Va. From there he went to WBIR in Knoxville, where he was Program Director. Later he moved down the street to WNOX and finally wartime circumstances brought him to WBT. His wife, Nita, had always wanted to live in Charlotte and they have proved they mean it by building a lovely new home a little way out in the country from the Queen City. Kurt loves his home and family which consists of Nita, "Butch" and a little black ball of fur cocker spaniel, better known as "Sampson" (who is the real boss in his family). When Kurt is not at WBT he is most likely at home practicing his newest hobby of interior decoration.

The whole nation is familiar with his revival of the old tune "Heartaches", which set in motion a chain reaction of desire for the old tunes that is still in motion. During its peak of popularity he appeared on Vox Pop and Arthur Godfrey's show and the "Heartaches" record sales exceeded 3,000,000 copies. Aside from the Briarhoppers Show Kurt has a very popular show called "What's Cookin'."

Next to being at home with his family Kurt's biggest thrill is announcing for and working with the "Briarhoppers". To him there is no single star in the group, he feels each member is a folk music genius and loves all of them.



Kurt Webster



The Casey Family—Claude, Mike, Ruth and Leon



Claude, in Full Regalia

Claude Casey is one of the most unassuming of radio artists, unspoiled, unaffected and a devoted husband and father. Born almost in the shadow of WBT's transmitter in the small town of Enoree, S. C.—Claude's pleasing personality and his rendition of romantic ballads, have taken him through a varied career in the entertainment world, from early school day programs, through radio, stage and screen appearances, to his present place as one of WBT's top flight performers and MGM recording artist. For the past eight years he has been a member of the famous Briarhopper outfit.

In his youth he was a whiz at playing the harmonica, but changed over to the guitar for no particular reason at all except that he felt like it. Around his sixteenth birthday he faced the microphone for the first time, playing his guitar at WBTM, Danville, Va. He didn't sing at all then, but as he began to entertain at social affairs around the country, his humming grew louder until eventually it became real singing and yodeling. From this point he made a guest appearance on Major Bowes' amateur program where he was a big success and walked away with a contract to tour with one of Major's units. Most of you will remember the Republic picture "Swing Your Partner", in which Claude appeared with Pappy Cheshire, Vera Vague, Ransom Sherman, Lula Belle and Scotty, and Dale Evans. Also Claude is the composer of over a hundred songs which have won him fame throughout the nation. "Juke Box Gal", co-written with the nationally known composer, Mel Foree, is an example.

Claude and his wife, Ruth, along with their two sons, Leon and Michael, make their home in Charlotte, N. C. Ruth hails from Johnston, S. C., and though she much prefers to remain in the background of Claude's career, friends know that she is the inspiration for many of Claude's achievements in life.



Fred Kirby Family, left to right, Patricia, Mildred, Evon Fred and Dianne.

Fred was born in Charlotte, N. C., on July 19, 1910. His father, the Rev. D. T. Kirby, was a Methodist minister and it was he who started Fred on his singing career. It is easy to understand why Fred knows so many of the well-loved old hymns and why he enjoys singing them so much.

Fred started his radio career at WIS in Columbia, S. C., on his seventeenth birthday, and after eight months his dreams were fulfilled when he returned to his birthplace, Charlotte, and started his first program on Station WBT. There he made a great hit for more than ten years until he drifted off to the big city of Philadelphia, Pa., where he worked for a year on two stations—WIP and WFIL. From the northland, Fred rambled back to the Carolinas, where he turned his talents to entertaining listeners over Stations WBIG in Greensboro, N. C., WCSC in Charleston, S. C., back to WIS in Columbia, and then to WWNC in Asheville. It wasn't long until Fred was back at WBT again, where he received a hearty welcome and enjoyed another few years before he was off once more.

Fred and Don White joined up as a team and started singing on the Nation's Station—WLW in Cincinnati, Ohio, where they remained for a year before Fred and Don separated their partnership. From Cincinnati Fred went to WLS, Chicago, to star on the National Barn Dance for more than a year; then he worked about a year at WJJD, another Chicago station.

In 1941 he received a call from the big boss at KMOX, St. Louis, Mo., who liked his work and offered him a job. Fred enjoyed two mighty swell years there; and for his successful efforts in selling several million dollars in War Bonds and in raising funds for the Red Cross, Mile of Dimes and other organizations, he was awarded special citations from the U. S. government and the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce. In recognition of his work, Fred was also officially named "The Nation's Victory Cowboy".

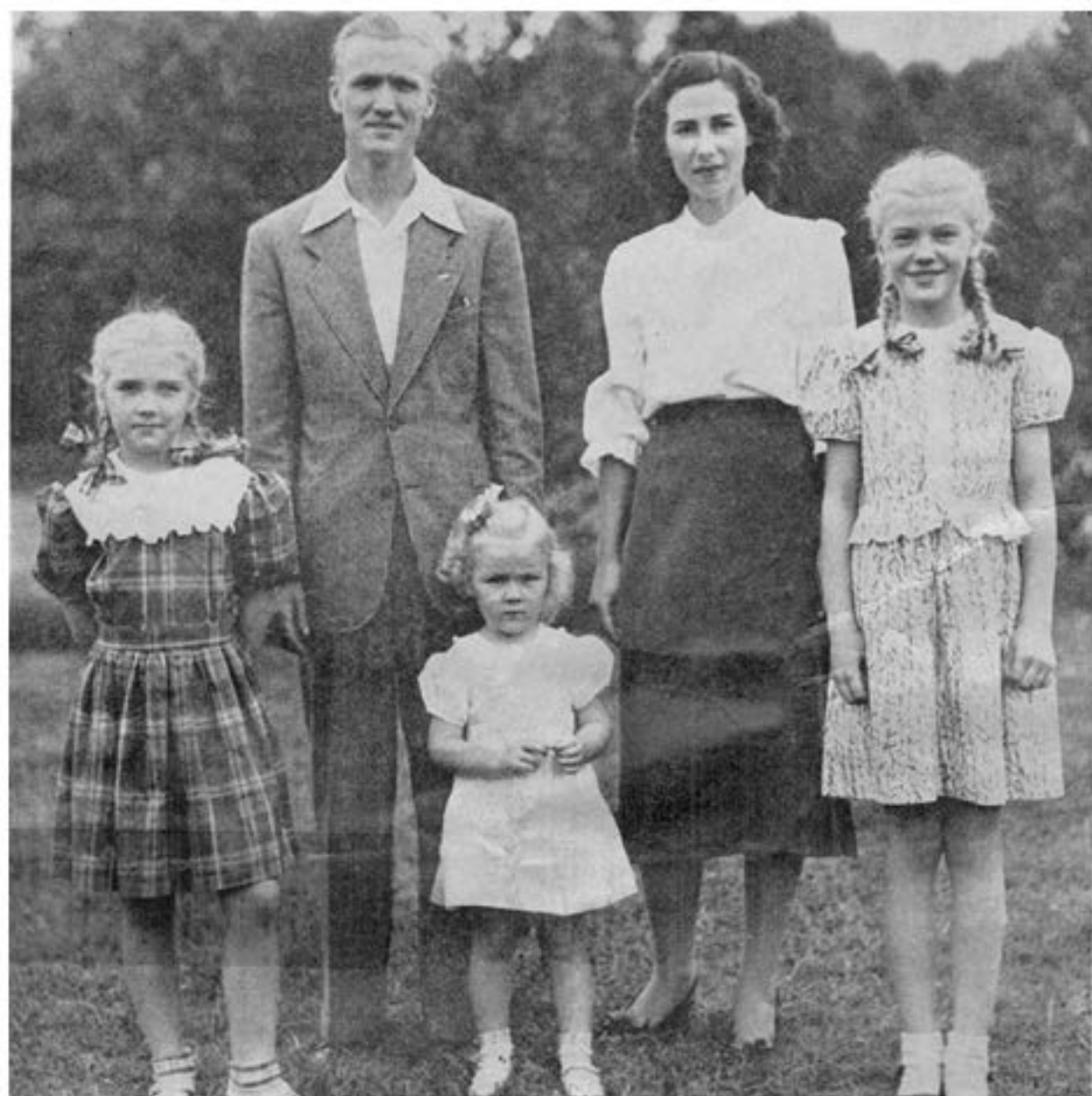
In 1943 Fred returned to WBT. And now holds the distinction of being the first person from WBT to appear on television. This premiere performance occurred on September 25, 1948, at Constitution Hall, Washington, D. C. Fred is married and has three children, Patricia, Dianne, and Evon Marie.

Fred's hobbies are sports in general and writing songs. His biggest hit, as you know, was the great "Atomic Power". His next song release on MGM Record is "God Made This Country".

Fred is six feet tall, 190 solid pounds, brown eyes and black hair. But most important of all, Fred is a good-natured fellow who wants to be a friend to everyone!



Fred Kirby



Rebecca, Whitey, Wanda, Polly, Yvonne—Whitey's Family.



Whitey

Whitey, whose real name is Roy Grant, was born in Shelby, N. C., April 7, 1916. From the time he was a tot he loved the old songs, such as he and Hogan sing today. He also has written quite a few songs himself.

Whitey is married to a lovely lady, whose name is Pauline, but as everyone calls her "Polly" that is the name she chooses. Whitey and Polly have three lovely daughters, Yvonne Ruth, Rebecca Ann and Wanda Paulette.

The first radio program Whitey ever did was in Spartanburg, S. C. From there he went to WGNC in Gastonia, N. C. Whitey and his family are now making their home in Charlotte, N. C., where he does his daily chores on WBT.

Whitey's hobbies are hunting and fishing. He takes lots of pride in his guns and rabbit dogs. Another very odd hobby of Whitey's is meeting policemen and patrolmen. He knows quite a few. The hobby he likes best is reading fan mail from his friends, and meeting them.

As most all of Whitey's fans know he plays guitar and sings lead in a duet known as "Whitey and Hogan" they sincerely hope you enjoy their singing on record and on the radio.



The Hogans—Arval, Evelyn, Patricia and Carolyn

Hogan (Arval A. Hogan) was born July 24, 1911, near Robinsville, N. C., in Graham County, and spent most of his boyhood days in Andrews, N. C. He did his first radio work in Gastonia, N. C., and from there joined the Briarhoppers and is still enjoying working with this fine group of fellows. He plays mandolin and sings tenor with the duo, Whitey and Hogan. His favorite sports are hunting and fishing and now has a hobby of raising hunting dogs and chickens. His dogs at present are Sport, Spot, Runt, Brownie and Beagle. He was married December 23, 1936, to Evelyn Humphries of Telford, Tenn., and has the two children Patricia 9, and Carolyn 3 years. He is very proud of his family and enjoys most of all being with them.



Hogan



Back row: Left to right, Bobby, Hank, Inez. Front row, left to right, Roy, Gene, Jay and Larry.



Elmer Warren (Hank)

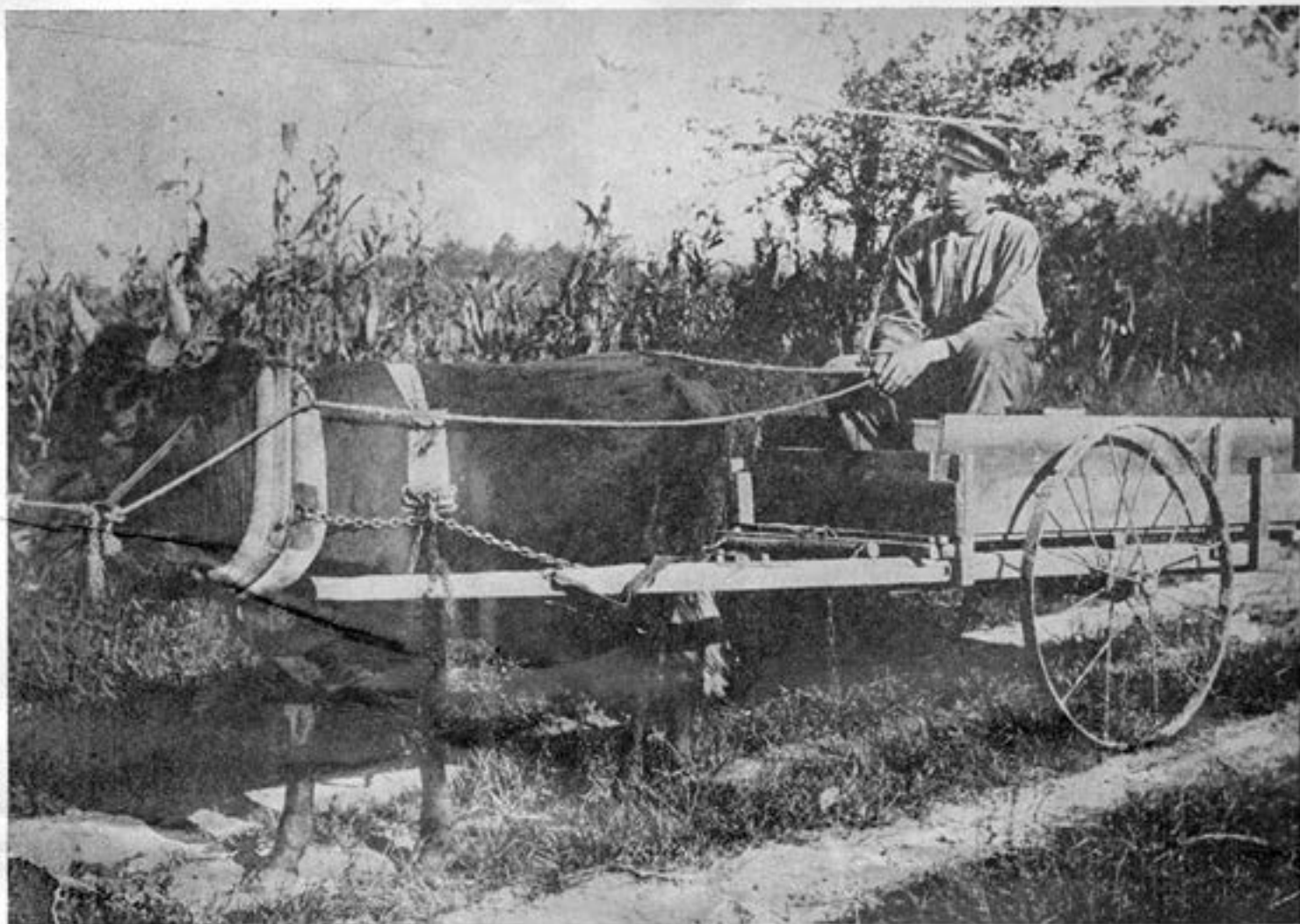
In the summer of 1926, when an unknown youngster named Hal Kemp was directing a dance band at the Terrace Hotel in Hendersonville, N. C., another Carolina lad, also destined for fame, was playing the violin in a dance orchestra at near-by Highland Lake. He was Elmer Warren, a student at the Summer School of Georgia Military Academy, and he was to become WBT's "Fiddlin' Hank", fiddle virtuoso, hillbilly comedian, an indispensable human element in almost every WBT musical program and—as if that were not enough—a photographer of considerable talent.

Mt. Airy, N. C., was the scene of Hank's boyhood and there he received his first violin and bought his first camera. The violin was a gift from his parents who also provided private lessons. The camera was purchased by Hank, second-hand for 75 cents. During school days he played violin in the high school orchestra and in a succession of dance orchestras. At Summer School of Georgia Military Academy he earned all his tuition by waiting on tables and playing in a dance orchestra.

In 1931 Hank married his childhood sweetheart, Miss Inez Turney of Mt. Airy, and settled down to non-musical work in an industrial plant. But music called insistently and after a few years he resigned to join the "Blue Ridge Mountaineers", a traveling troupe playing one night stands in West Virginia, Virginia and the Carolinas. In 1936, he joined the "Tennessee Ramblers" who were playing on WBT and in 1937 appeared with them in a Gene Autry movie, "Ride, Rangers, Ride". In 1938, he began his present association with WBT's inimitable "Briarhoppers". In addition he lends his indispensable fiddlin' to "Carolina Hayride" and "Carolina Calling".

Hank lives at 1933 Central Avenue in Charlotte with Mrs. Warren and their five children, Bobby, 15, the twins, Roy and Jay, 11, Jean, 9, and Larry, 5. His photographic hobby, which started with the second-hand, 75-cent "Brownie", has developed to the point where it calls for a complete dark room and several fine cameras including Hank's favorite Speed Graphic. And if his happy family life, radio work, personal appearances and his photography leave him with time on his hands, he can always relax with his fiddle and the thousands of songs "he knows".

Incidentally, all photos in this book were made by Fiddlin' Hank.



Bill in the Good Old Days

As Big Bill Davis is the oldest member of the Briarhopper organization, quite a number of things could be said about him. (Born in Davidson County, near High Point, N. C.)

Bill's father was a music teacher, and in those days there were not many students, so money was quite a problem to get. Bill wanted to learn to play a fiddle so his dad borrowed a violin and began to teach him. Bill being so young, he doesn't remember much about these lessons. By the time Bill was 10 years old he had sold hairpins enough to order him a fiddle, but when the fiddle arrived the neck had broken off in shipping. To Bill this was very disappointing, so he made him a fiddle out of a cigar box even making his own strings. So his playing started from what you might say "scratch".

By the time Bill was 14 he had started a community band, playing what was known in those days as String Music. He played lead fiddle as it was called in those days. Bill also played in a brass band, using his ox and cart to go to band practice, a distance of about three miles.

Finally Bill got into music professionally playing in all types of groups, bands and orchestras. Now Bill is playing string bass and has done much theatre, concert and symphony work.

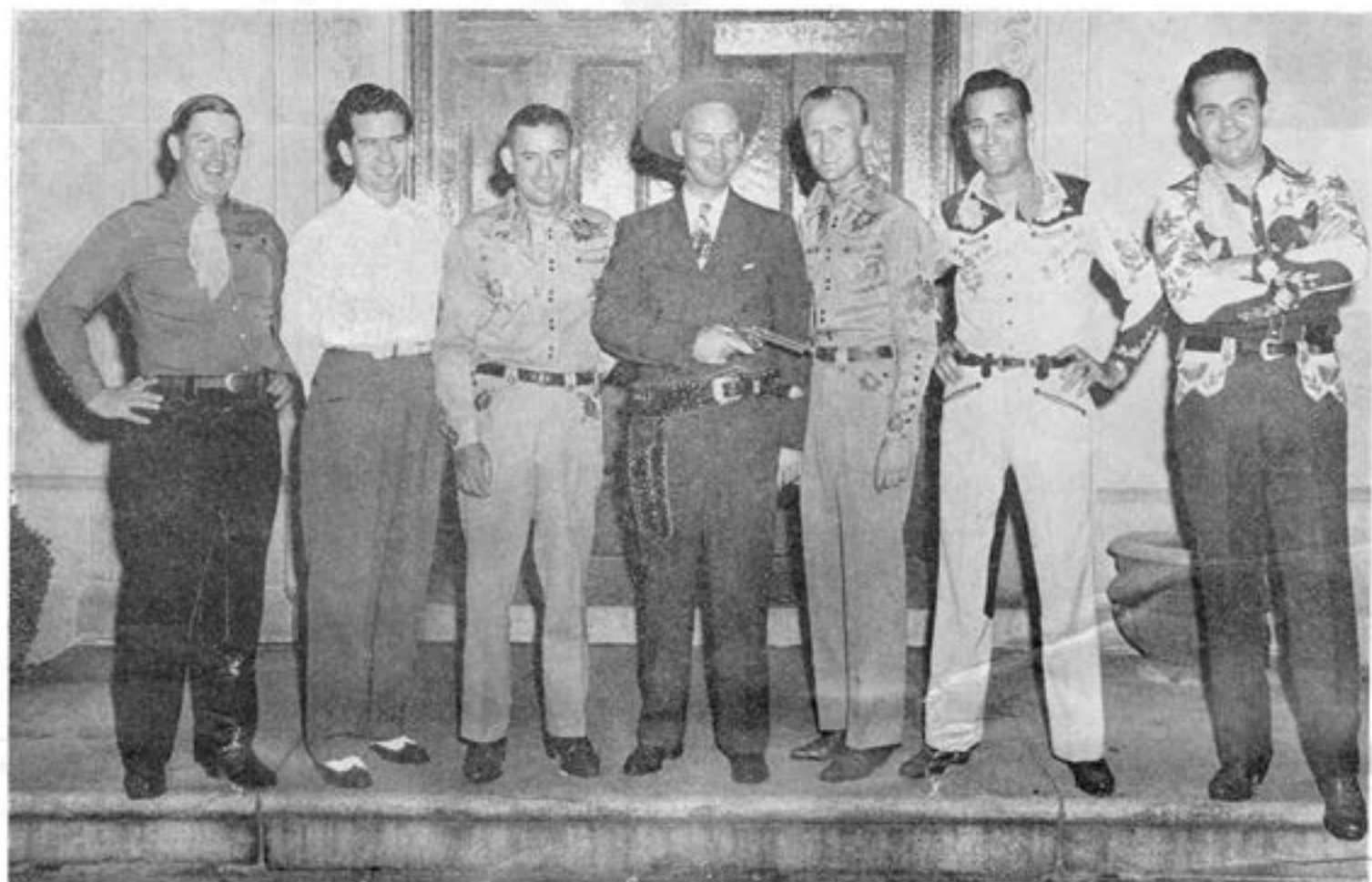
As most of the "old timers" will remember Bill was the leader of the famous program "Bill Davis and His Cotton Blossoms", over WBT many years ago, which Fred Kirby first appeared on.

Although Bill is not a singer on the Briarhopper Program, he has been in choir work most all of his life, singing in choruses and male quartet which is known as the Davis Brothers. It is estimated the quartet has sung for more funerals than any other group. To this, Bill is very grateful he and his brothers could help out so many of their friends and their families in time of bereavement.

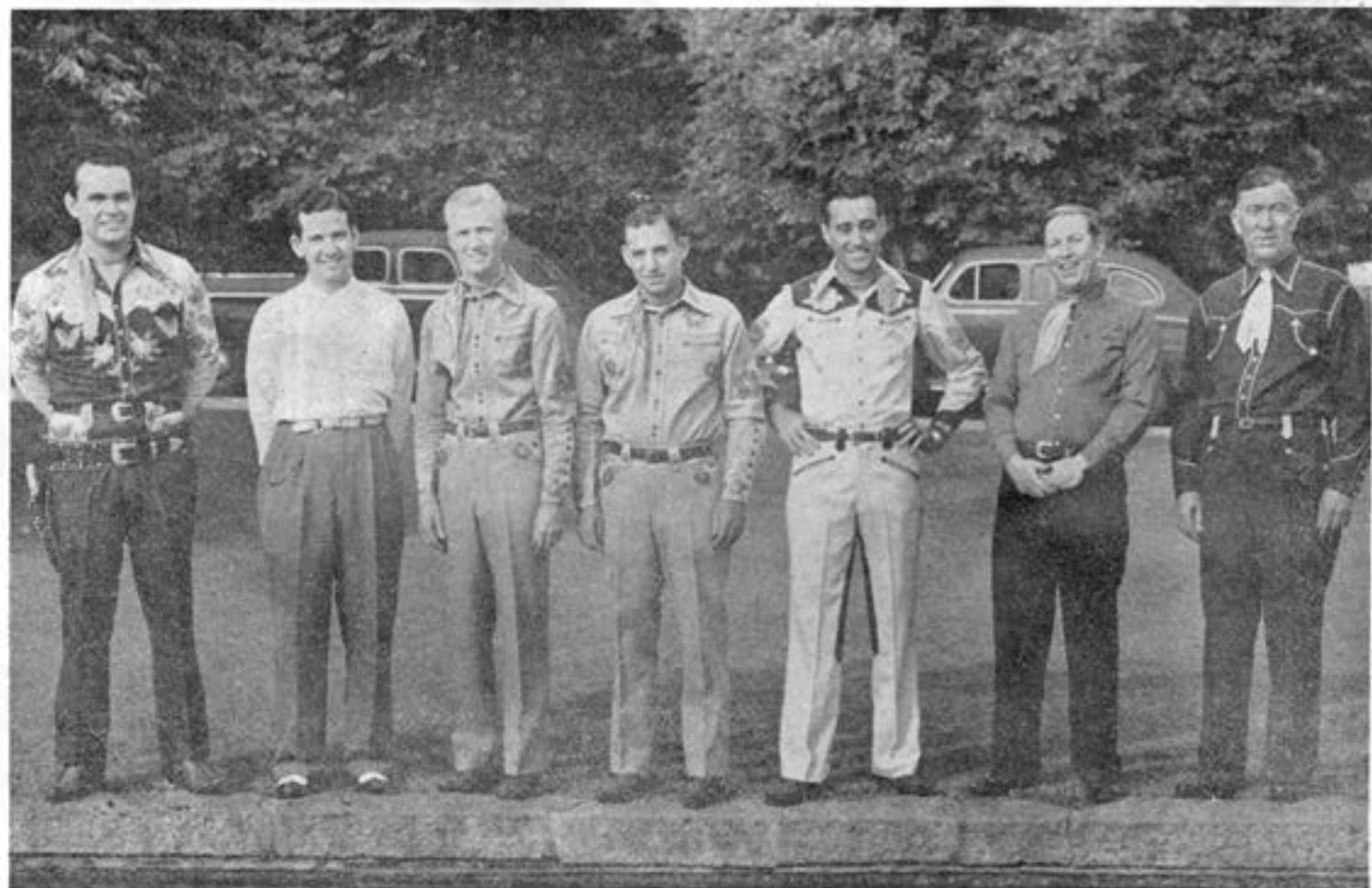
Most, and best of all, Bill says the finest group of fellows he has ever worked with is the one and only Briarhoppers, and he should know as he was a member of the band when it was organized.



"Big Bill" Davis



Hank, Kurt, Hogan, O. F. Stafford, Whitey, Claude and Fred.



Briarhoppers Visiting Home Office of Pilot Life Insurance Company, Greensboro, N. C.

JUKE BOX GAL

Claude Casey and Mel Foree

You used to be my lovin' honey
Now you only want my money
Juke Box Gal, I'm a tellin' you good-bye
You used to go for a little muggin'
Now you go for jitter buggin'
Juke Box Gal I'm a tellin' you good-bye.

We used to watch the moon and stars
As they would shine above
Now you go for the cocktail bars
And somebody else's love
You used to go for my romancin'
Now you go for midnight dancin'
Juke Box Gal I'm a tellin' you good-bye.

Used by Permission.

Recorded by Claude Casey
on MGM Record.

I'M LIVING IN DREAMS

Claude Casey and Mel Foree

I'm living in dreams since I lost you
Just drifting on life's stormy sea
I've paid for the heartaches I caused you
The world holds no sunshine for me
I know it's too late to be sorry
My life holds no future it seems
So now I'll go on broken hearted
For darling I'm living in dreams.

I'm living in dreams of the past dear
With nothing but sorrow in view
Now I have no plans for the future
If I can't go on loving you
You took all my hopes for tomorrow
When you shattered all of my schemes
I gambled on love and I lost you
So darling I'm living in dreams.

Used by Permission.

Recorded by Claude Casey
on MGM Record.

HEARTACHES AND FLOWERS

Music and Words by Fred Kirby

Heartaches and flowers,
Laughter and tears,
Loving you always,
All through the years,
Close to my heart, dear
You're in every scheme,
Heartaches and flowers
Locked in my dreams.

Heartaches and flowers,
Sweet mem-o-ries,
Blue sky and water,
In your eyes I see,
Oceans of tears, and
A world full of joy,
Heartaches and flowers
A girl and a boy.

Heartaches and flowers,
On to the end,
You are the sunlight,
I am the blend,
Moonlight and roses,
When day is done,
Heartaches and flowers
You are the one.

Recorded by Roy Acutt
on Columbia Record No. 2505.

THAT ALMIGHTY DOLLAR

Words and Music by Fred Kirby

Oh that almighty dollar will make you a scholar
But it won't help you my brother, when you
done laid down and died.
You can send all your flowers and weeping
by the hours
But it won't help you dear brother when you
done laid down and died.
Gimme that old time religeon, gimme that
old time religeon
Now that will help you brother when you
done laid down and died.

Oh, that almighty dollar, will make you
rich and jolly
But it won't help you my brother, when
you done laid down and died
You can go to that party, and from your
church be tardy,
But it won't help you my brother, when you
done laid down and died.
Gimme that old time religeon, gimme that
old time religeon
Now, that will help you brother, when you
dooe laid down and died.

Oh, that almighty dollar, won't go to church
with father
And nothing he'll be takin', when he's done
laid down and died,
Oh, that dollar is a sinner, the penny is a
winner
It goes to church each Sunday, while the
dollar rolls away.
Gimme that old time religeon, Gimme that
old time religeon
Now that will help you brother, when you
done laid down and died.

Oh, that almighty dollar, will buy a fancy
collar
But it won't help you my brother, when you
done laid down and died.
You can go to church on Sunday, and cussin'
all day Monday
But it won't help you my brother, when you
done laid down and died.
Gimme that old time religeon, gimme that
old time religeon
Now, that will help you brother, when you
done laid down and died.

Recorded by
Fred Kirby on MGM Record and
Milton Estes on Decca Records

WRITE MY NAME ON THE BOOK

Words and Music by Whitey and Hogan

I ask thee Lord my sins to forgive me
And write my name there on the book
I want it wrote with the hand of Jesus
So it will ne'er be overlooked.

CHORUS

Oh Lord I know that thou art willing
To cleanse and freely make me whole
So write my name there on the good book
In great big words of shining gold.

Oh Lord I know my sins are forgiven
And washed away in the sacred nook
So help me walk in the path of Jesus
And keep my name there on the book.

Oh dear sinner won't you ask the Saviour
To cleanse your soul from sinful care
So when the book is opened up yonder
They'll find your name is written there.

HEAVEN SEEMS BRIGHTER

(Since Daddy and Mother are There)

Words and Music by Whitey and Hogan

One day Mother called us together
And speaking with voice soft and low
Told us that Jesus was calling
And that she was ready to go
These words we never have doubted
For she was a worker we knew
The life she lived daily before us
Her children, each day that we grew.

Now Mother is living in heaven
A place where the angels abide
Shouting and singing the praises
For Daddy is now by her side
Soon I will see their sweet faces
The beauties of heaven we'll share
For heaven seems brighter, much brighter
Since Daddy and Mother are there.

They left this old world with its sorrows
The heartaches and hot blinding tears
Prayers that they prayed still are living
And will through the ages and years
Mother and Daddy have left us
Our burdens alone we must bear
But, heaven seems brighter, much brighter
Since Daddy and Mother are there.

CAN'T SIT DOWN

Who's dat yonder dressed in red
It must be the children that Moses led
Who's dat yonder dressed in white
It must be the children of the Israelite.

CHORUS

Sit down I can't sit down
Sit down I can't sit down
Sit down I can't sit down
Because I just got to heaven and I can't
sit down.

Who's dat yonder dressed in blue
It must be the good ones coming through
Who's dat yonder dressed in brown
It must be the bad ones going down.

Who's dat yonder dressed in black
It must be the children turning back
Who's dat yonder dressed in white
It must be the children of the Israelite.

Recorded by Whitey and Hogan.

JESUS AND MOTHER

By Troy L. Martin

When Mother was called to that land bright
and fair,
I promised some day to meet her up there:
Now I'm on my way to that city of gold—
Where every thing's beautiful, nothing
grows old.

CHORUS

Waiting for me, yes waiting for me
In that beautiful home beyond the blue sea;
When I reach that bright city,
What glory 'twill be to find
Jesus and Mother there waiting for me.

Dear Daddy has gone to that home long ago,
He's up there with Jesus and Mother I know;
I have many dear friends I'm longing to see—
In that heavenly home, they're waiting for me.

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Briarhoppers As They Look On Personal Appearances In Your Home Town