

'Voice From Void' Makes Less Money Today Than When He Was 6 Years Old

By HAL BOYLE
NEW YORK—(AP)—How would you like to be 34 years old and realize you weren't making as much money as you did at 6?

Wendell Holmes is in this position. He is one of the better-known voices from the void that come out of your radio box.

And his career is a good example of the hardships in radio acting, a field to which many feel themselves called—but few hear themselves chosen. For to many golden voices radio offers a pewter reward.

"There are about 5,000 radio actors here," said Holmes. "And last year they averaged \$16 a week salary. Only about 500 manage to earn a truckdriver's living."

Holmes, an ex-child chautauqua star, is now among the top 150 radio actors whose incomes reach several hundred dollars a week. But it took him 15 years to get there. And many were hungry years.

"When I started in 1934 I got \$20 a week for working on 30 shows," he said wryly.

Since then Holmes has been the Voice of Winston Churchill on a number of radio programs and March of Time films. He is currently in three daytime soap opera serials. He also plays Dr. Watson on the MBS Sherlock Holmes program and also enacted the title role in another MBS production, "Scattergood Baines."

"So far I haven't been introduced on the air as Scattergood Baines," he said with a mild shudder. But its a tongue-slip someone's bound to make eventually.

Holmes was named after poet Oliver Wendell Holmes by his schoolteacher parents. At the age of six he won an oratorical contest in Middleport, O., and a chautauqua scout signed him up.

"For the next four years I got \$500 a week or more," he recalled. "That about ruined me, as I've never been able to equal it since."

For two seasons he toured with William Jennings Bryan. The boy gave matinee monologues. Bryan held the natives spell-bound with a four-hour ten oration in the evening.

"I never heard a more tremendous voice," said Holmes. "Bryan could make 10,000 people hear him, and he didn't use a microphone."

"One day our car became stuck in a West Virginia dirt road. Bryan got out in the rain, rolled up his sleeves and helped pry us out of the mud. He said some language to the mud stronger than he ever used on the platform."

When he was 10, Holmes realized he was growing up—and chautauqua was growing down. He went back to school and graduated from Ohio State University at 18.

His parents wanted him to become a history teacher. But Holmes chose radio. His first program on a Columbus, O., station—a 15-minute monologue which he wrote himself—paid \$5 a week. Then he came to Manhattan.

"It is hard to get known here," he said. "It isn't so much what you can do that's important. It's whether you can convince enough directors and producers that they can rely on you. That takes a long time."

In radio people have an Oriental sense of politeness. After each program the actors usually assure each other what a swell job they did. Then they get on the phone and call their wives.

"How was I, honey?" they ask anxiously.

"But you can't always trust even your wife to tell you the truth," grinned Holmes. "She wants to let you down easy, too."

Many countries hold national elections on Sunday because on that day business will be least interfered with and the most voters are free to come to the polls.

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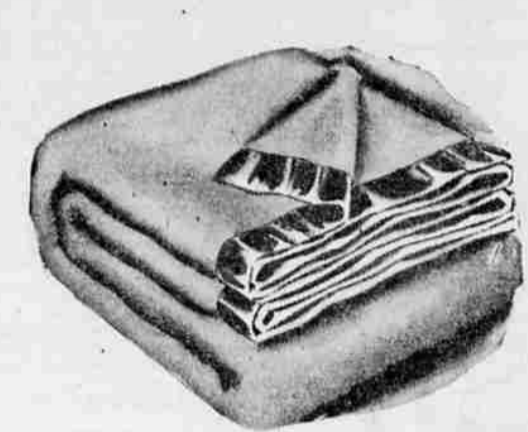
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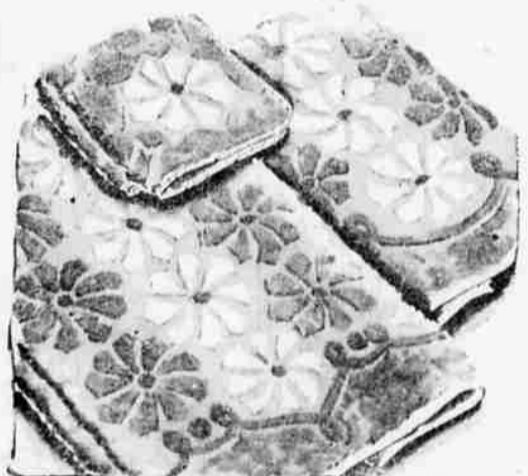
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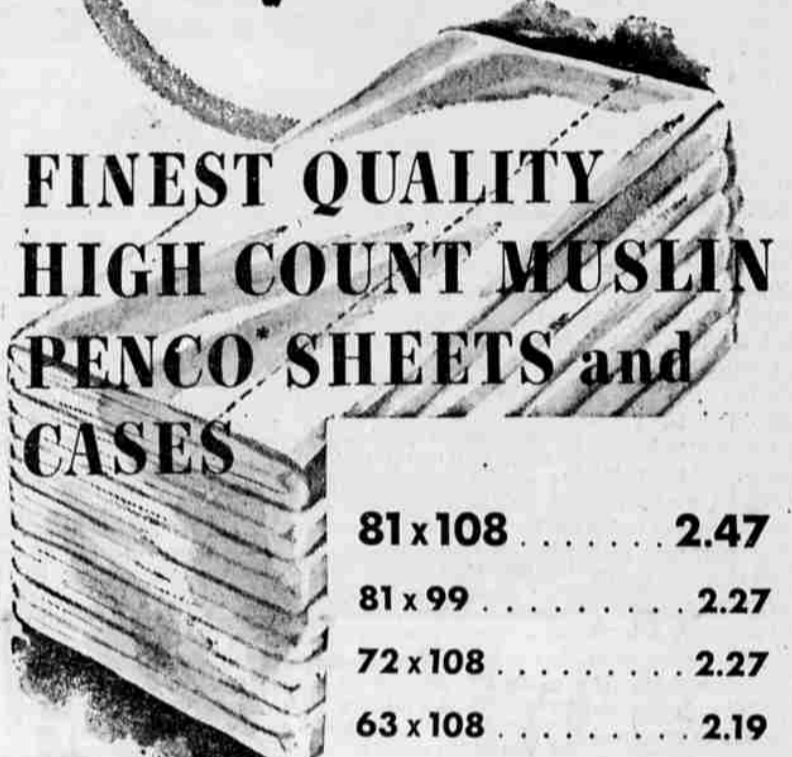


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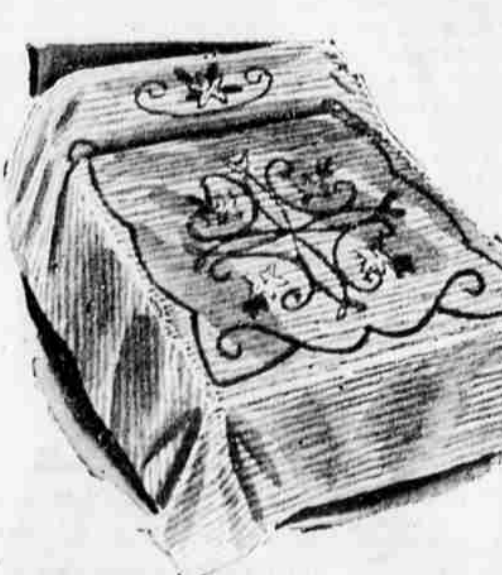
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