Is That So?

By EUGENE BURNS
Ranger-Naturalist

Does the television or radio give the best of smoke door-creak; razor scuffle, an ominous thunderstorm, or the clickety-click of a passenger train.

Sometimes these sounds are the real thing—captured on a record which is played back. More often, they are artificially reproduced. During a recent visit to Walt Disney's studio in Burbank, I wandered happily through a large warehouse filled to overflowing with ingenious and clever sound effects machines.

My guide explained that for home-made effects, many sounds—such as forest fires, steam locomotives, machine gun fire, rain, trotting horses, thunder, or a squeaking rocking chair—could be made in the home. Recorded on a tape recorder and amplified they could be used he explained, in amateur plays.

To imitate a forest fire, he said, take a large piece of celophane and crumple it hard together. If you use smaller pieces, crumpled slowly, the effect is more like the sound of a frying egg.

For steam locomotives, glue two small sheets of sandpaper to two wooden blocks. Then slide the sandpaper-faced blocks together with a loud, long forward stroke and a soft, short backstroke — puff, PUFF, puff PUFF. For a passenger train, accent every fourth puff. So: PUFF puff puff puff; PUFF puff puff puff. With practice you can make your locomotive start, stop, climb steep mountain grades, or fade away into the distant prairie.

To imitate the rapid fire of a machine gun, simply tap two wooden pencils rapidly in short bursts on the bottom of any empty oatmeal carton.

Birdseed and Ping Pong Ball

Rain is more difficult. At the National Broadcasting Co., New York, states Larry Kettlekamp, who wrote The Magic of Sound (Morrow, N. Y.), a ping-pong ball is suspended midway inside a glass case. On this birdseed falls from a turntable and the seed is caught up in a paper cone which funnels it on to a screen. A microphone near the ping-pong ball picks up and amplifies this imitation of the sound of rain. It's well nigh perfect.

Almost the same rain-sound effect can be produced with a box of rice and a ping-pong ball. Hold the ball near your ear with finger and thumb and ask someone to hold a handkerchief under it to catch the rice. Have the rice poured slowly and steadily against the ping-pong ball. Close your eyes and it will sound as if you were standing out in an April shower. The handkerchief will catch all the falling grains so that there will be no distracting sound when it hits the floor.

To produce the sound of a trotting horse on a cobblestone street, use two paper cups. Hold one in each hand with the open ends together. Swinging your hands up and down, brush the open ends together and you'll get a very life-like reproduction of horses' hoofs sounding on cobblestones.

For the noise of a rocking chair or a creaking door, use a paper cup—one without a coating of wax, such as is used for drinking coffee. Bend the mouth flat. Clamp the sides together and slide them back and fourth very slowly with your thumb and finger. Hold the cup close to your ear and you will hear the squeaking noise. Keep the squeaks even and they will sound like a rocking chair. One extra-long squeak will imitate a rusty door opening to perfection.

Finally, for thunder, use a large sheet of tin. Shake it or strike it with a soft hammer and the rumbling effect will be like the roll of thunder in the distance.

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Briefs From the Legislature

Salem — (U.P.) — The Oregon Senate has passed Senate bill 348 to legalize the dual headlights appearing on some of the new automobiles.

Salem—(U.P.)—The Senate voted for a new way of foreclosing mortgage loans. It would by-pass the Circuit Court action now required and give buyers immediate title to property they purchased at a sale to recover unpaid loans.

Salem—(U.P.)—The State and Federal Affairs Committee has tabled two memorials asking Congress to end foreign aid and to call a constitutional convention to place a limit on federal income taxes.

Salem — (U.P.) — Twenty-nine county officials strongly opposed passage of a bill providing for the appointment by county courts of most county officials before the House State and Federal Affairs Committee. The committee recommended the bill to the floor of the house "do not pass."

Salem — (U.P.) — A resolution calling for establishment of a lieutenant governor's office in Oregon passed the House 43-16. The resolution also changes the line of succession to the governorship so that the lieutenant governor, secretary of state and state treasurer would succeed in that order.

Salem—(U.P.)—The House voted 33-26 not to take a proposed investigation of pardon practices of Gov. Robert D. Holmes and previous Republican governors because of the press of taxation and other problems.

DRIVING DIFFICULTIES

Honolulu —(U.P.)— Some 1,000 British soldiers and sailors, on three-day leave from the atomic test site at Christmas Island, were politely asked Thursday to please stop driving rental automobiles. They kept driving on the right side of the road, as in Great Britain, which is the left and wrong side of the road in the United States and its territories, police said.

New Commander

Parris Island, S.C. — (U.P.) — A new command officially takes over at this Marine training base today and will investigate the latest incident arising from a series of recruit-abuse cases.

Brig. Gen. Wallace M. Greene Jr. will be installed base commander in a shift that has been on the planning boards during two months of investigations of four recently-tried abuse cases.

Green replaces Maj. Gen. H. L. Litzenberg, who has been assigned to the military armistice commission in Korea. Litzenberg was placed in charge following a publicized "death march" last April.

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Payroll Gains Hit $89,181,000

Salem—(U.P.)—Payroll gains of about 19,300 employers subject to the unemployment law reached $89,181,000 for the first nine months of 1956 and may pass $100 million when all reports for the year have been processed, the State Unemployment Compensation Commission reported today.

The three-quarter total $1,-11[illegible],353 with over $40 million added by new coverage of firms with two and three employes.

Tabulations made by the commission showed increased wage payments in 30 of the 36 counties up to Sept. 30, 1956. Jefferson and Grant counties recorded the best gains of 34 and 25 per cent respectively.

Others gaining considerably more than the state's average 8.7 per cent included Lincoln, Malheur, Gilliam, Washington, Benton, Klamath and Jackson.

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