

REAL McCOY(S)



Rev. McCoy: a radio voice well-known throughout the Dakotas.

The "real McCoy" is an expression which means "the genuine article" or "something not false." The definition certainly fits N.E. and Lillian McCoy—because if anyone is the genuine article, these two people are.

Rev. McCoy and his charming wife have been helping radio listeners for some 46 years, sharing the Word of God together with music, medical reports about patients in regional hospitals, common sense advice, and community announcements. Their programs of both inspiration and information have become integral parts of the Dakota scene. Remarkd a 40-year-old woman from Napoleon: "Why, I grew up listening to Rev. McCoy!"

The indomitable McCoy's are heard over KSJB for 15 minutes during the business week, 30 minutes on Saturday, and 25 minutes on Sunday. Their Monday to Friday broadcasts start at 9 a.m. The programs are recorded live right from their pleasant, tree-lined home in Jamestown. A now-familiar chorus introduces the broadcast, providing the theme and purpose of the program through the years:

*Got any rivers you think are
uncrossable?*

*Got any mountains you can't
tunnel through?*

*God specializes in things
thought impossible,*

*And he will do what no other
power can do.*

If one of the popular husband-and-wife radio team is ill, the other takes over. If both are going on a trip, they tape the show. It is a busy schedule, but they enjoy it. "We love it! Every day is different," said Lillian.

They have been following their



births, funerals, conditional reports about patients.

Then there may be special items about pending church and community events. A South Dakota hospital administrator told Pastor McCoy that blood donors came from 30 miles away because his program announced the drive.

A funeral director once told McCoy that he was listening to the program when he heard about a forthcoming funeral—and that he was supposed to be the funeral director in charge. He was surprised because he hadn't even been informed yet! Apparently, family members of the deceased barely had time to get their announcement on McCoy's radio program. They figured they had plenty of time to contact the mortician!

The pastor has complete freedom as to what and whom to schedule on his programs because he pays for the time. "That way I'm responsible and not the station," he explained.

The broadcasts cover a big area, at least five states as well as two provinces in Canada. Keeping close to the Word of God is one of

Lillian and N.E. McCoy in their recording studio, located in their Jamestown home. All of their programs are recorded live. Their method of going on the air is rather interesting. They have a radio in another room turned on to KSJB. When Lillian hears the announcer finish his introductions, she quickly flips a dial—and they begin their broadcast.

rigorous timetable for a long time. "When the radio station was launched in 1937, I had the idea of helping the churches with some inspiration," explained Noah Edward McCoy.

"The other purpose, information, happened by accident. A farmer came to me and said, 'I just put my wife in the hospital here. Now I got to go home. I don't have a phone but I have a battery radio set. Could you let me know tomorrow how she is doing?'"

Rev. McCoy said he suddenly realized he could perform an important service by providing information about people on his radio programs.

That conversation resulted in his legendary hospital rounds, a daily schedule starting at 5:30 a.m. to enable him to be at the hospital by 6:30. Often the 81-year-old pastor is one of the first persons out on the road.

Once at the hospital, he sees patients who want a visit, praying and reading the Bible with them. People also frequently leave notes for him to deliver on the air. Then he heads back to his house in time for the morning's broadcast, ready to dispense reports and other messages to his listeners.

The program usually starts with a devotional, with Lillian playing

a hymn on the piano or organ. Rev. McCoy may play his guitar. After the music, the bulletins proceed: hospital and nursing home admissions or departures, marriages,



KSJB watchnight service on December 31, 1953. Left to right: Rev. H.R. Schuetz, Noel McCoy, Rev. McCoy, Mrs. Schuetz, Mrs. McCoy, ArvaDell Tahrán, Elmo Tahrán, Wesley Fish, James Eslinger, Chester Hagel, and Clarence Moser.

Variety of Talents Make Show Succeed



Lillian McCoy at the organ.

the show's aims. McCoy takes a Biblical text, talks about it, and thus reaches many people, some of whom do not regularly go to church. He said he is grateful that he reaches people in business places, hospitals, and private homes.

A salesman from Nebraska recently wrote McCoy, telling he had received assurance of his salvation by listening to McCoy's program. The salesman usually listened to the broadcast when he traveled in his car.

Others become listeners under somewhat bizarre circumstances.

A resident of a nursing home was told she would have to take her bath at nine o'clock. "No," she insisted. "That's when I listen to Rev. McCoy. I'll have to take it afterwards."

Consequently, the nurse, who was attending the woman, had little choice but to listen to Rev. McCoy too. "That's how I became a regular listener," laughed the nurse.

Famous Feud

Rev. McCoy comes from a famous feuding family. He was born in Logan County, West Virginia, the site of the murderous feuds between the Hatfields and the McCoys, a legendary series of hostilities told throughout the world in song and story.

Fortunately, the deadly quarrels had long since vanished by the time Noah was born on February 2, 1902. But he figures he has a natural feuding affinity in his blood, except that now his is confined to the feud between God and the devil. "And I'm on the winning side," smiled McCoy.

When Noah was a boy, his parents and family moved to Regan, N.D. His father was a farmer, but the son wanted to be a pastor when he grew up. "I can't remember when I didn't want to be a preacher," he said.

In those days, a man who felt the call of God to preach didn't wait until he was graduated from some seminary. He just started preaching. That was about how it happened for the young Rev. McCoy, although he later attended

McCoy Family Snapshots: The Early Years



TOP PHOTO, LEFT:

First there was daughter, ArvaDell. This old McCoy family photograph was once sent to radio listeners.

TOP PHOTO, RIGHT:

Then there were two. Son, Noel, joins family scene for another greeting card mailed to friends of the McCoy radio program.

BOTTOM PHOTO:

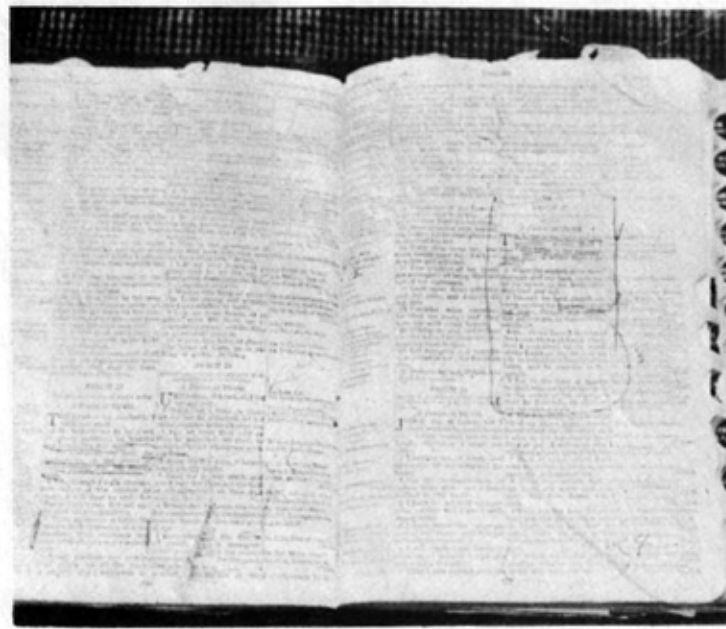
The children are quickly growing up in this 10th anniversary photograph for the radio show in 1947.



"Temporary" Job Lasts More Than 40 Years



The entire McCoy family gets together for a song on one of the early KSJB broadcasts. ArvaDell is now married to a pastor in Rapid City, S.D., Elmo Tahran. Noel is a businessman in Jamestown.



The Bible which the McCoy's use for their radio broadcasts is well-marked with numerous passages underlined and notes and other key words written in the margins.

Northwestern Seminary in Minneapolis.

When his Baptist church sent him to McClusky, N.D., he met Lillian Melom, the church organist. McCoy quickly decided she was the woman for him. They were married on January 1, 1929.

"I didn't want to wait," grinned McCoy. "I was afraid someone else would get her."

Soon he was given a church assignment in Carrington, and, seven years later, the McCoy's moved to Jamestown to begin their radio ministry. About that same time, there was a temporary need in Pingree, 22 miles north of Jamestown, when the Congregational church there lost its minister. McCoy was asked to fill in until someone else would be permanently hired.

"I've been 'filling in' every Sunday since, and that was more than 40 years ago!" laughed McCoy.

In addition to his preaching and radio career, the energetic Irishman became chaplain of the North Dakota Peace Officers' Association, the state prison chaplain, and the chaplain for the North Dakota National Guard. During World War II, every time a troop train passed through Jamestown, Rev. McCoy would be at the station to talk and pray with the soldiers.

Common Sense

Possibly, the secret to McCoy's success lies in his simple homespun philosophy.

Some years ago, on a five-minute midnight spot given him by a radio station, he appropriately read from Psalm 121—"He that keepeth thee will not slumber; He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

McCoy's typical remark to those who might be lying awake worrying at that late hour was, "Now, my friend, God is going to be awake. He'll take care of things. You just go on off to sleep. No use both of you bein' awake."

Influencing others to a worthwhile life has been one of McCoy's most effective ministries. A number of men and women are

Former Chaplain to Penitentiary



Anniversary dinner for Lillian and N.E. McCoy in Gackle, N.D., in 1982. Rev. McCoy is known for his infectious sense of humor. He once teased Senator Milton Young, claiming that his own job was bigger than the senator's.

in Christian work today because of his influence. There are also former prisoners who are now living honest and productive lives, thanks to Pastor McCoy's sharing God's love and promises with them.

When McCoy retired from his position as chaplain to the penitentiary in Bismarck in 1974, he remarked, "I don't suppose there is a jail in the state that I haven't visited at one time or the other."

Attending the ceremony were a large number of inmates, prison workers, and Governor Arthur Link. As they honored McCoy for 37 years of service as chaplain, they handed him a guitar and asked him to play a song. As the venerable pastor strummed the shiny instrument, the entire audience joined in to sing "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

That much-loved song summarizes the work and philosophy of the McCoy's. "Human nature is the same," he said. "We all need the gospel. The Lord is the savior of the world—and every one of us needs to accept Him." □