

GRAHAM MCNAMEE BIO

Graham McNamee (July 10, 1888 - May 9, 1942) was a pioneering broadcaster in American radio, the medium's most recognized national personality in its first commercial decade.

Born in Washington, D.C. and raised in St. Paul, Minnesota, McNamee had early aspirations of being an opera singer. In 1923, while serving jury duty in New York City, he passed the studios of radio station WEAF en route to the courthouse and, on a whim, went to see the station manager. He was given an audition and hired as a staff announcer on the spot.

Radio broadcasting of sporting events was a new thing in the 1920s. The play-by-play announcements were performed by a rotating group of newspaper writers. Their descriptions were matter-of-fact and boring at best. In 1923, announcer McNamee was assigned to help the sportswriters liven up their broadcasts. He wasn't a baseball expert, but had a knack for conveying what he saw in great detail, and with great enthusiasm. He became broadcasting's first color commentator, bringing the sights and sounds of the game into the homes of listeners.

At WEAF, McNamee performed a variety of on-air duties, including baseball color commentary, culminating in doing play-by-play of the 1926 World Series. Over the course of the next decade, first with WEAF and then with the national NBC network, McNamee broadcast numerous sports events (including several World Series, Rose Bowls, and championship boxing matches), national political conventions, presidential inaugurations and the arrival of aviator Charles Lindbergh in New York City following his transatlantic flight to Paris, France in 1927. Later that year, McNamee was featured on the cover of Time (October 3, 1927).

In 1925, at the Radio World Fair, he won a solid gold cup, designed like a microphone, as America's most popular announcer, receiving 189,470 votes out of 1,161,659 votes cast. He was married to concert and church soprano Josephine Garrett.

McNamee continued to broadcast into the 1930s, as the announcer on Ed Wynn's and Rudy Vallee's weekly programs. McNamee played straight man for Wynn, reacting to Wynn's gags. McNamee also worked in motion pictures, narrating Universal Pictures' weekly newsreel.

McNamee opened each broadcast by saying, "Good afternoon (or evening), ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience." He closed each broadcast with,

"This is Graham McNamee speaking. Goodnight, all."

Information taken from Wikipedia, the free on-line encyclopedia