

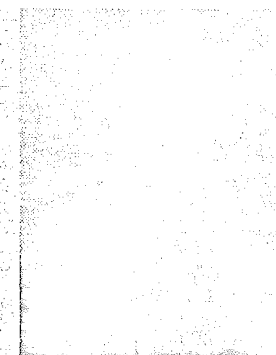
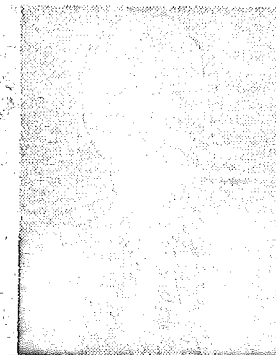
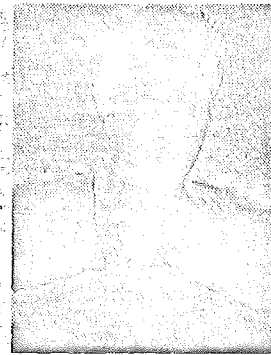
a v.i.p. and me

(very interesting person)

By KATHLEEN A. HICKS

"I think broadcasting is more than a business; it is a way of life and it is a public service. You have to operate within budgets, but so does the Government."

July 11, 1973 Miss News



EDWARD (TED) SAMUEL ROGERS:

Rogers Cable Television

Rogers Broadcasting Limited

Past Chairman — Canadian Cable and Television Association

ME: Your father, Edward Samuel Rogers Sr., founded CFRB-Radio, Feb. 17, 1927. What are your personal feelings about being born into the family that brought radio to Canada?

MR. ROGERS: My father has always been a hero to me, and I am very proud to have his name and heritage. He was a young man of 25 when he invented the A.C. Tube and established Rogers Majestic Corporation. He introduced the Rogers Batteryless radio at the Canadian National Exhibition in 1925; that was the world's first electric radio, before that they were all battery operated. And CFRB was the world's first electric broadcasting station; and it had a different quality and a different sound. Then in 1930, he had an experimental television broadcasting licence, which was the first in this country — there were four issues. He foretold the advent of colour telecasting, and he worked on the problems of both television receivers and transmission. And he died in 1939 at the age of 38, but he had crammed into those years a tremendous amount. So my father was my hero, and I feel proud of carrying on. I am also very proud of what my mother did, because she managed to go through two generations of the Rogers; and she had to make sacrifices both times. Radio is not always a very satisfactory or very successful business enterprise. There were times, for instance, in 1931 when the banks turned my father down to retool the tube plant. My mother pawned her engagement ring and various other things; she got the money and retooled the plant, sold the radios, and she got her ring back. Those are the things I am very proud of. In my own case, there have been problems and again she helped. I think this is great in a family; it's great to have the females and the men working together to try and create something — it creates a family business. And from a personal observation, I am fortunate in that my wife is the same type of woman.

ME: So you were six when your father died; just how did you

happen to go into the radio business without your father to influence and inspire you?

MR. ROGERS: I was lucky enough to have my mother bring me up really in a way of wanting to get back in the business; wanting to sort of do my part, rather than normally feeling an obligation to continue the family business. Our business interests, because of my father dying young and my being so young and the war, were sold off. But I was fortunate enough to be able to start it again, and do my own thing. I had a chance in 1959 to go into it and apply for the new television station in Toronto. Being an optimist, I applied on my own; then I merged with another fellow, and the two of us merged with a few other chaps and we got the licence for CFTO-TV and started a new era of Canadian television. That was how I got started in the business.

ME: Being president of Rogers Broadcasting since 1962, what satisfaction has evolved the past ten years?

MR. ROGERS: I think the greatest satisfaction was creating a new frequency on AM-680, in literally managing like a baby taking the first effort of creeping and then being able to take that first step. We were from dawn to dusk; then finally 24 hours a day and 1,000 watts — you could barely hear it over Metro. Then 2,500 watts, then 10,000 — 10 per cent inspiration, 90 per cent perspiration; infinite attention to detail. So that is probably what has given me the greatest pleasure.

ME: In the '60s, you purchased controlling interest in CHFI-FM Radio in Toronto, CHYR-Leamington, CHAM-Hamilton, and a station in Sarnia. Does your association with these stations just touch on ownership?

MR. ROGERS: The CHFI-FM, the nation's pioneer FM station, I bought shortly after going into CFTO-TV; and that was the foundation for everything we have done. I think broadcasting is more than a business; it is a way of life and it is a public service. You have to operate within budgets, but so does the Government. So that, no, it goes beyond ownership; it involves management and time visiting the markets.

ME: Have you ever done any broadcasting?

MR. ROGERS: When I was in my teens, I applied for a job

as an announcer in Galt and was turned down. But I got a job in Windsor in the record library, and I worked in the newsroom and as an operator and different other jobs in broadcasting. Windsor is one of the hottest places in the summer, and there was no air conditioning in the studios, which were at the top of the Canada Trust Building. I guess you might say what frustrated me the most was that when it got hot, which was very often, the office staff was given the day off but not the operators.

ME: You purchased controlling interest in Coaxial Colourview Ltd., Bramalea Tele Cable Ltd., and founded Essex Cable in 1967. What involvement on your part is put into these companies?

MR. ROGERS: Oh, a lot — I spend most of my time running the cable. I was National chairman of the Canadian Cable and Television Association — my term of office just finished. That is an association of a million and a half cable subscribers through the cable companies in this country. I feel that cable television is helping to make a big contribution right across Canada. It is a great field for future services to the public; there will be shopping at home, burglar and fire protection, reading of hydro and water meters all by cable. And we've got the nation's first 20 channel service — a little magic box of television. It provides people with the opportunity to watch 20 different channels of education, entertainment and information; it is being tested in Toronto and we are up to 10,000 subscribers now.

ME: What brought about delving into the TV medium?

MR. ROGERS: I looked into the business and found that Canadians want to watch more television, and I thought it was a good growth industry in a related field. It is a great field for innovation and for Canadians to invest in. We tried to get our FM onto existing cable companies' spare channels and we had some problems. So I decided for a variety of reasons to go into cable television in '66-'67. Rogers Cable started then and it took over a percentage interest in Coaxial Colourview and it started Brampton-Bramalea Tele Cable. Canada has become a world leader in cable television, and it is great to be a part of it.

over →

"This is where riots start and dissatisfaction sets in"

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ME: Was McLean-Hunter Cable TV, the first to bring cable TV operations to Canada?

MR. ROGERS: No, I think the Garmain system in London was the first. There were two systems in London, and the McLean-Hunter has bought one of those systems, so that probably is where you heard that. The system in Peel Village in Brampton started in 1960, and it was one of the earliest in Canada. The Garmain system started in 1952, but the Peel Village system is one of the most historical systems in Canada; and our company recognizing that is rewiring it this summer covering 1,500 homes.

ME: Do all cable television companies fall under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Radio-Television Commission (CRTC)?

MR. ROGERS: Yes — the Government of Canada passed an act of Parliament called the broadcasting act, which brought cable television under the board of broadcasting governors as it was then, now called the Canadian Radio-Television Commission. There were two reasons for this: one to assure that the public have a certain minimum of standards of technical excellence so that shoddy workmanship and poor quality are not permitted; and the second is that local Canadian stations be given priority on the channels ahead of American and even distant Canadian stations. So it is important that cable television recognize the need obviously for the Canadian local stations to continue to exist, to be economically strong, and to continue to provide a service to the public.

ME: As of December 1972, there were over 600,000 cable TV subscribers in Ontario. Do you foresee the Province of Ontario taking over the licensing of Cable Television?

MR. ROGERS: I think the municipalities, the Province and the Hydro Commissions all have certain legitimate interests in cable television; the use of the roadways; the use of the hydro poles; community and regional development; access programming; libel and slander, and so on. So that I think in the future there will be a pooling of interest by the Province and the municipalities.

ME: How about a unified cable TV system, such as all telephone companies becoming Bell Telephone?

MR. ROGERS: I would think that right now there has been great strength in bringing into cable communications differ-

ent innovators and having a diversity of ideas in this growth stage — the stage of great new developments. There may be a need one day to have one huge company do everything, but I can't see it right now or in the immediate future. I think that the telephone company is on the right track when it started to spin off micro systems and try and not have one huge corporation. The job they have done on Northern Electric has been very good. Still they suffer from being one very large company reasonably centralized. So I would think there is great scope for cable communications to still expand without one huge company owning everything across Canada. I do think there will be a consolidation where people strong perhaps in programming and another company strong in engineering would tend to merge to provide the strengths to each other. I think that's coming and that is sound.

ME: Rogers Cable is one of six cable television firms that is going to service Mississauga. What is your view concerning the controversy of the cable TV issue here?

MR. ROGERS: I feel that Mississauga is unfortunate to have a controversy. Mississauga is one of the last communities to be getting cable service, and I am a great believer that the people should be entitled to at least have the opportunity to buy it. We are just up in the northern portion of Mississauga, cabling Malton and down to Derry Road, so we are not really a part of that whole controversy. All I can say is I regret very much the whole issue in Mississauga and I have the greatest concern over the result.

ME: The Canadian viewer spends 25 per cent of his TV time watching Canadian programs. Do you feel local television is watched sufficiently enough to warrant cable television stations?

MR. ROGERS: Yes I do; there is no question that the community channels are receiving increasing attention. It takes time; when we get more participation from the community that percentage will no doubt go up. There is increasing interest for local events and there are very few of the electronic media that provide it.

ME: Rogers Cable Television services 100,000 Metro Toronto homes. What decision was behind your branching out to bring cable TV to the Brampton-Bramalea area (Channel 10), and do you have a station in Brampton or just a mobile unit on remotes?

MR. ROGERS: Rogers Cable Television started in Brampton-Bramalea. We had 300 subscribers in Bramalea — they were our very first viewers. Our heart and soul of Rogers Cable is Brampton-Bramalea; that's where it all began.

There is no station in Brampton — we have the mobile unit — but we have one of Canada's most modern stations in the new town centre in Chinguacousy. That is the official heart of the Brampton-Bramalea television station; and they always get the first of everything. They've got, I think, one of the most outstanding young men in cable television today. Creig Cole, who runs the programming and the system there and Irene Biggs — a number of wonderful people.

ME: Will cable television become compulsory some day do you think?

MR. ROGERS: I hope not. I think people should have freedom of choice. There are some communities that have antenna restrictions. It is the builders who put those restrictions in; they want their community to be a beautiful place; they want no poles, no wires and no antennas, and so they put in these restrictions. But the cable companies have nothing to do with it.

ME: You and John Bassett are vying with CRTC for Pay-TV in Canada. It has been tried before and didn't succeed. Do you have any reservations about this undertaking because of past history?

MR. ROGERS: Well, first of all, there has to be a recognition that any new development is not guaranteed to be successful. I think that it is appropriate to say that it is important that it have strong financial backing to make sure that the product isn't the one that suffers. Therefore, I feel that the application of Glen-Rogers Limited, as our new company is called, is another factor for it. The other experiment of ten years ago was by a company now called Canadian Cable Systems Ltd., and they failed for a variety of reasons: technology wasn't as developed; they used the cables only for Pay-TV, therefore, they had no other income and they had to offset not just the cost of the programming and the boxes, but the wire. The Commission wants very badly to develop more Canadian programming. They want to give Canadian performers, technicians and artists more opportunity. Pay-TV is simply another way of doing that.

ME: What do you get out of life on a personal basis?

MR. ROGERS: Enthusiasm — a great sense of accomplishment when something is done, particularly when it was difficult or people said it couldn't be done. I think I get the same satisfaction as my wife when she finishes a painting. I get a great deal of satisfaction when we sit around and dream up things. I am fortunate to have a group of people in business with me who are great doers, and who won't just take no for an answer.