

# Alumnus Becomes Top Man at NBC

*Walter D. Scott, promoted from president to chairman, is publicity-shy executive.*

By TOM MAHONEY

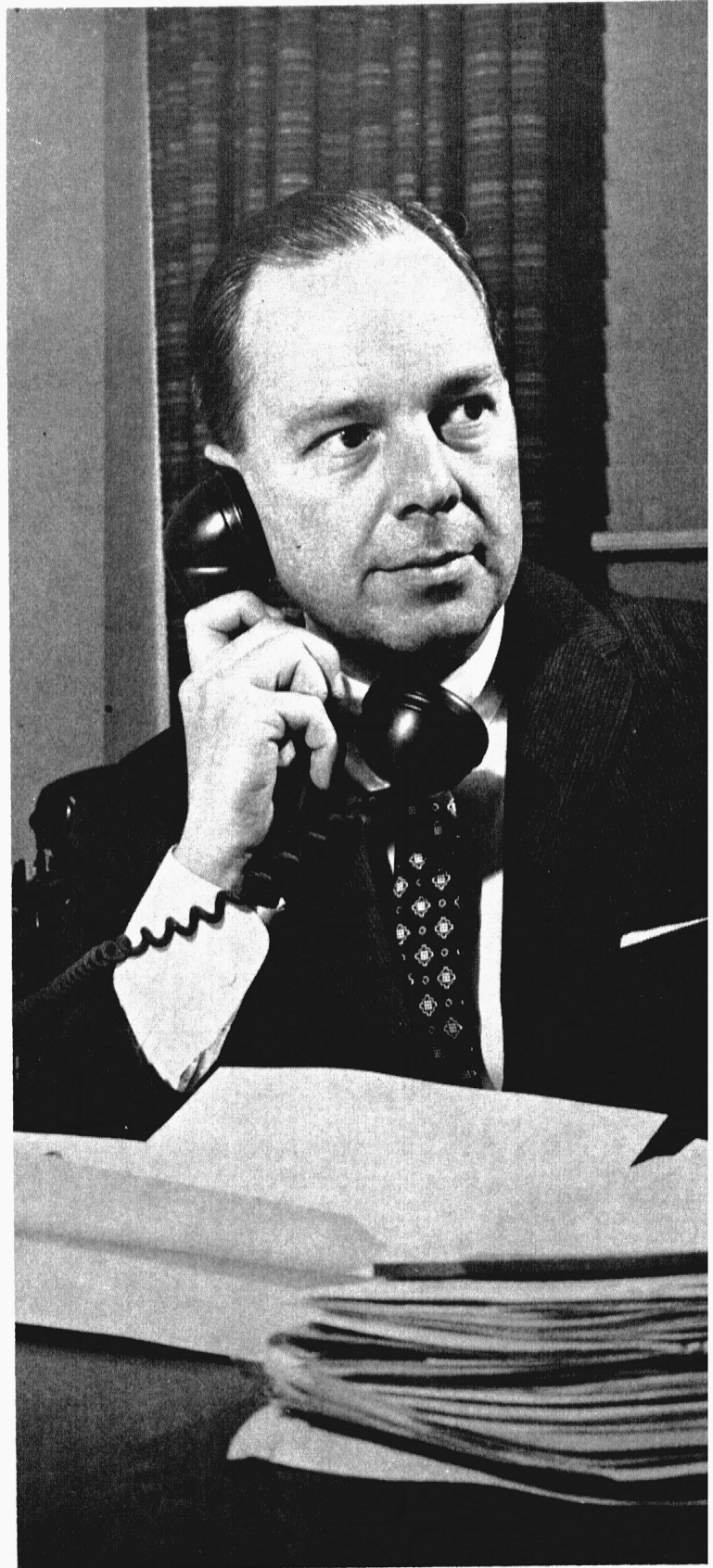
WALTER DECKER SCOTT, B.J. '36, who as a student completed college in three and a half years, on January 1 was named president and chief executive officer of the National Broadcasting Company, Inc., oldest of the broadcasting networks. While continuing as chief executive, he was promoted to chairman on April 1, a few weeks after his 51st birthday.

His advancement was the most important of a series of network changes in which younger, quiet, urbane, efficient executives previously unknown to the public replaced nationally famous autocrats in top communications posts. *Variety*, the bible of show business, headlined them as "The Dawn of a New Era in Broadcasting."

But the rise of Scotty, as he was known in his Neff Hall days, came as no great surprise to advertising men like his classmate, Marvin McQueen of St. Louis. NBC last year sold advertisers \$488,000,000 worth of time, film and talent, an increase of 12 per cent over the 1964 level.

Nor did Walter's emergence surprise many of NBC's 4,500 employees. They have known him for 28 years as a hard-working, low-key salesman and for 17 years as a self-effacing, publicity-avoiding executive who has often taken a complicated problem involving sales, programming and perhaps engineering and solved it quickly in a firm but gentlemanly manner.

NBC has a big publicity department and he believes in the limelight for show business personalities but not for executives like himself charged with internal administration. He belongs to few organizations. His only hobby is a little golf. He makes almost no speeches and sees the press rarely. "I have seen many talented men ruined by publicity," he explains. "It is possible to be-



## *You never heard of him before? He planned it that way.*

come so involved that you don't have time to do your work."

He rises early to do his and usually makes it from his Park Avenue apartment to his office around 8 a.m. "But," he adds, "I don't stay here all night, like some people." His office is a spacious but simple one in a sixth floor corner of the Radio Corporation of America Building in Rockefeller Center. A major item of furniture is a color television set.

THE DAY-TO-DAY DECISIONS that run NBC in all of its ramifications are made at morning meetings with president Julian Goodman, who is chief administrative officer, and David Adams, senior executive vice-president of the network. Some sessions last only twenty minutes but decisions may be made or approved involving news coverage in Vietnam, trans-Atlantic satellite transmissions, or color television specials.

"Hot" telephones for dealing with fast-breaking events are on Goodman's desk rather than Scott's but the Missourian is responsible for everything to the NBC board of directors. He is deeply concerned with long term planning, relations of the network with the government, community antennas, and the opportunities and problems of still unfolding electronic technology.

Except for thinning hair, Walter looks much as he did when at M.U. He has warm memories of the University and his native state. He was born March 2, 1915, in Kansas City where his father, the late Robert M. Scott, owned a linen supply business. The future NBC executive attended Central Junior and Senior high schools and wrote for the student newspapers.

While there he wrote a feature story about a model airplane that flew during a school assembly. This won a gold medal in a state-wide contest and he received it in Columbia at a Scholastic Press meeting sponsored by the Missouri School of Journalism. He resolved to study there. But he first attended Washington University, St. Louis, for a year on a scholarship that his grades had earned and there joined the Kappa Alpha fraternity.

His high marks continued when he entered M.U. in the fall of 1933. He studied American History under Prof. Elmer Ellis, who had come to M.U. from Iowa the year before and later, of course, became President. Though majoring in journalism, Scott took courses designed for students earning distinction in history.

IN JOURNALISM, he won a John W. Jewell Scholarship, membership in Kappa Tau Alpha and was elected president of Alpha Delta Sigma, the advertising fraternity. He also took part in Workshop dramatic activities under Don Rhynsburger. He remembers Dean Frank Martin's "History and Principles" course and also as a classmate, Frank Lee "Sonny" Martin, the dean's son, now the West Plains, Mo., publisher. Scotty reported news, sold and wrote advertising for the *Missourian*, piling up extra hours by working between sessions and also worked at summer jobs. He was interested enough in radio then to have a set in his room at the K.A. house, where he first lived and then in a Hitt Street apartment that he shared with Wade Hampton Jones, B.J. '35.

Scott and several other seniors were interviewed by Gene Robb, then a Washington Hearst man, who visited

Johnny Carson, a fellow Midwesterner, is visited by NBC's chairman of the board.



M.U. in the fall of 1935 scouting college talent for the Hearst publishing and broadcasting organizations. Robb was a Midwesterner, a graduate of the University of Nebraska. They got along famously and Scotty was impressed with his glowing picture of the opportunities for service and achievement in a far-flung organization.

Robb, who is now publisher of the *Albany Times-Union*, talked to a hundred students in a few days and can remember little about the interview except that Scotty amply met the three criteria which were the basis of the talent search.

"The boy had to be in the top half of his class in grades," recalls Robb. "He had to have shown some leadership, been elected president of something. He had to have earned some money and know the value of a dollar."

But nothing came of it at the time. When Scott finished school in January, 1936, six months early thanks to high grades and extra hour credits, he went to work for the A.P. Green Refractories Co. in Mexico, Mo., where Art Bond, the 1924 Tiger football captain, and more than a score of other Missouri graduates were employed. But the Depression continued and the brick business was affected like all others.

"I was put in the mail room with a view toward working in the advertising department," he recalls. "There may not have been a job. After a few weeks, I was fired."

UNDAUNTED, HE MOVED ON to the Robert H. Brooks Co., an advertising agency in Little Rock, Ark., as a copywriter. There he wrote building and trade journal copy for a lumber company but decided that he "was not a writer." He then joined the *Daily Oklahoman and Times* in Oklahoma City as an advertising salesman.

The interview with Robb in Neff Hall 18 months earlier then suddenly bore fruit. Scott was summoned to New York to join the Hearst organization as a trainee at \$35 a week. Also Hearst trainees at the time were two 1934 Missouri graduates, Charles W. Balthrope and Willard Schroeder, and Howard Lee Young, B.J. '35. Balthrope is now president of KITE in San Antonio, Tex. Schroeder is general manager of the Time, Inc. radio and television stations in Grand Rapids, Mich. and has been chairman of the National Association of Broadcasters. Young is president of the American Zinc, Lead & Smelting Co., in St. Louis.

Others have also gone high and far but in 1938, Scotty and several others lost their sales jobs with Hearst Radio, Inc., in sweeping changes following the naming of Elliott Roosevelt, son of President Roosevelt, as head of the organization.

Scotty promptly joined the sales department of NBC. He has been there ever since except for World War II service. This was with an antiaircraft unit of the Coast Artillery. He spent most of the time with a detail on special assignment, first at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland and then at White Sands, N. M.

Earlier, he married Miss Arline Julia Stenz, who had studied at Columbia University, at Hewlett, Long Island, on Oct. 5, 1940. They have two daughters. Shelly, the elder, is now Mrs. Diedrick Cassel and the mother of a son and a daughter. Her husband is with Air France in New York. Valerie, the younger, is a student at Goucher College, Baltimore.

RADIO GREW UP in the years just before the war. F.D.R., Hitler, Mussolini and other voices of history were on the air. Instead of just tearing news off United Press tickers, the networks began to build news organizations of their own. Television, first glimpsed by the public at the 1939-40 New York World's Fair, came after the war and in recent years color television, something for which Scotty has been an ardent salesman.

Working at first under George Frey, a somewhat legendary NBC sales manager, Scott grew with it all. He was made eastern sales manager in 1949 and national sales manager of the radio network in 1951. The next year he became administrative sales manager for the radio and television networks. He was made vice-president and national sales manager, television network, in 1955 and vice-president, television network sales, at the start of 1958.

He was named executive vice-president of the television network in February, 1959, and given jurisdiction over all NBC-TV programming, talent, sales, business and facilities functions. He was elected a director of NBC in 1960. He is also a director of the Advertising Council and the Brand Names Foundation. In October, 1965 his title was changed to president, NBC Television Network. His big jump came two months later.

In reporting Scotty's Missouri background, *Television Age* noted that Thomas Waldrop Moore, ABC-TV president; Sam Cook Digges, administrative vice-president of CBS films; and Norman E. Walt, vice-president, special projects, CBS Inc., all spent at least part of their college days at the University of Missouri. Other alumni include Elmer Lower, president, ABC News, and Hal Hough, vice-president, CBS Program Services.

The magazine asked, "What Ever Happened to the Ivy League?" noting that it was the "traditional" producer of business leaders. "Looks like the Midwest training and the University's School of Journalism are winning new recognition in the communications world." □