

RADIO

THE SAGE OF SWING

Don Davis, the extraordinary president of WHB, publishes a magazine.

The curious combination of a song, a suitcase, and a slogan has had a lot to do with the fortunes of Kansas City's Station WHB, Mutual Broadcasting System affiliate. The song, *Roses of Picardy*, was a factor in the station's sale in 1930; the suitcase is significant because Don Davis, WHB president, practically lives out of it as national station representative; and the slogan, "The Swing is to WHB in Kansas City," sets the pitch for all WHB promotion.

In his latest scheme, the unpredictable Davis sliced off a bit of the slogan, emerged last month with a meaty, pocket-sized magazine titled *Swing, An Apparatus For Recreation*.* The curvaceous young woman on a swing, who is featured in all WHB advertisements, became the cover girl of the new publication (see cut p. 98).

Modus Operandi

Swing digests talks by Mutual commentators and public figures, seasons the serious reading with chatty comments on the local nightspots and theaters. Davis and editor Jetta Carleton, former WHB continuity head, explained they were striving for a balance in *Swing* comparable to that of good radio programming. Right now, Davis plans to distribute *Swing* gratis to advertisers and time buyers, print it on quotas allowed local commercial printers. He will also send plates of the copy to other Mutual stations for local printing under the title, *Trend*. Each issue of *Trend*, of course, will carry the advertising of the individual station circulating it. While general newsstand circulation is only a dim hope for the future because of the paper shortage, Davis made a test on the newsstands in Kansas City, selling *Swing* at 25¢ a copy. Half the issues sold out in six days.

Donald Dwight Davis, bespectacled, rotund and apple-cheeked, with a talent for slinging one quip after another, ambled out of the University of Kansas in 1918 with a Phi Beta key, a sense of humor and a fondness for drumming. Five years later he was a partner in

* He is indebted to Noah Webster for the subhead.

the advertising agency of Loomis, Baxter, Davis & Whelan, Inc. (Kansas City). One of the prize accounts was the Cook Paint & Varnish Co., which sponsored *The Cook Painter Boys* over Station WDAF, now the National Broadcasting Co. outlet in Kansas City.

One of the Cook Painter Boys, burly John R. Wahlstedt, who had picked up the title of "Cook Tenor" in 1929, was the great delight of Charles R. Cook, president of the paint company. Cook especially liked Wahlstedt's rendition of *Roses of Picardy*. When the program shifted from WDAF to WHB, Cook decided to buy the station, have real control over his favorite tenor and pet tune.

Costly Cook Tenor

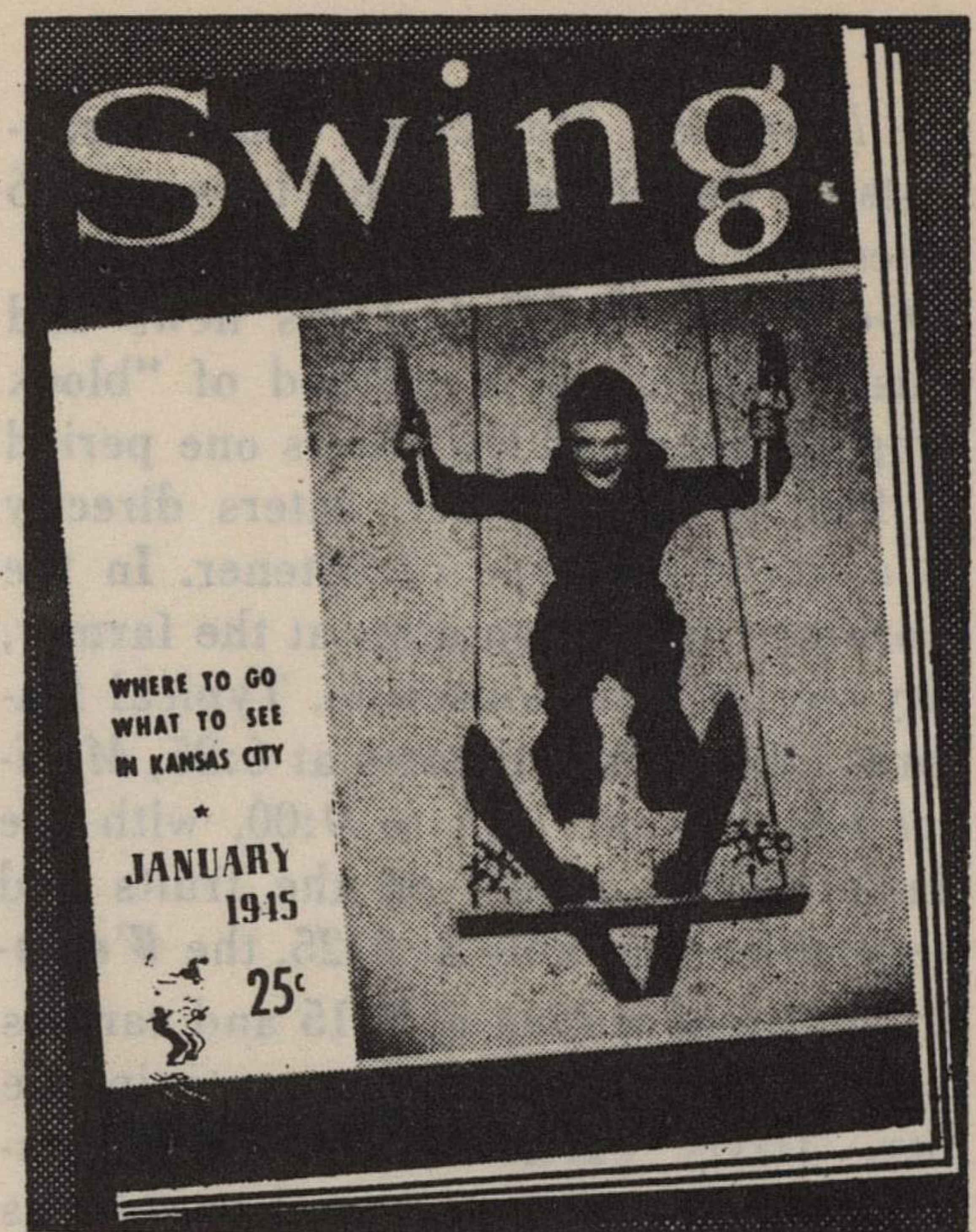
In 1930, when WHB became a wholly owned subsidiary of Cook Paint & Varnish, company officials settled back contentedly. But while the "Cook Tenor" continued in good voice, the station lost money steadily: *Roses of Picardy* became a more and more expensive treat. After a year and a half of this, President Cook asked agencyman Davis to try his hand at running the station. A pioneer in radio advertising from the agency angle, Davis saw the chance to put some of his ideas in action, promptly took over as president of WHB in 1931.

A struggling operation with only a daytime broadcasting license, WHB obviously needed unusual promotion to



WHB'S DAVIS

He sliced off a bit of the slogan



WHB'S SWING

Its future looks bright

gain any notice. And Davis knew where to get it: he became national advertising representative himself, now is probably the only station president handling both jobs. In selling WHB, Davis employs the special flourish distinguishing most of his activities, has arranged so that anyone can reach him with spectacular ease in any part of the U. S.

Previously he had a telephone answering service in key cities, now has a setup with Spot Sales. When a time buyer interested in buying time on WHB telephones a Spot Sales office in New York, Chicago, Kansas City, Hollywood or San Francisco, Spot Sales instantaneously contacts Davis, wherever he may be, by wire or telephone. Sometimes within a matter of minutes, Davis is in touch with the prospective customer.

Conquistador Davis

While Davis' base of operations is Kansas City, in an average month he spends about a week in Manhattan, a few days in Chicago going and coming, perhaps jumps to the Coast and back. In between, he keeps up with his reading, the drama, aviation and padding his supply of anecdotes. And, besides the usual clubs, he is one of the plumper Conquistadores del Cielo of New Mexico.

Best known as WHB's rambling representative, Davis is still responsible, along with station manager John T. Schilling, for the ingenious programming that has grabbed WHB the top rating for morning listening in Kansas City, long since gave the Cook company a paying proposition. WHB's high rank is all the more remarkable because it operates on only 1,000 watts. Davis brought the original *Musical Clock* to Kansas City; his *Weatherman in Person*, was produced in 1932. was the first such service on the air; and he began

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