

Rick Campbell's mornings in upper space

By JOSHUA COHEN

The ashtrays are still hours from being put on the tables and a footfall on the thick carpet in the Safari Room sounds like an ominous whisper. At 6 a.m., Rick Campbell, CKEY's morning man, is alone in his 54th-floor aerie in the Toronto-Dominion Centre—but not lonely.

"I'm a loner basically," he explains.

Besides, there are thousands of people out there listening to him, and if he wants to talk with someone a push on a button connects him with a wise-cracking operator at the studio on Davenport Road. Occasionally he can glance out the window and wave at the CKEY helicopter, its landing lights flashing a greeting as it drifts by on its traffic report run. And the view is spectacular; on a good day all the way to St. Catharines.

Not this particular day, though. The sky has a pewter hue and snow is falling. Beyond the visible harbor edge is outer space. A cheerless day.

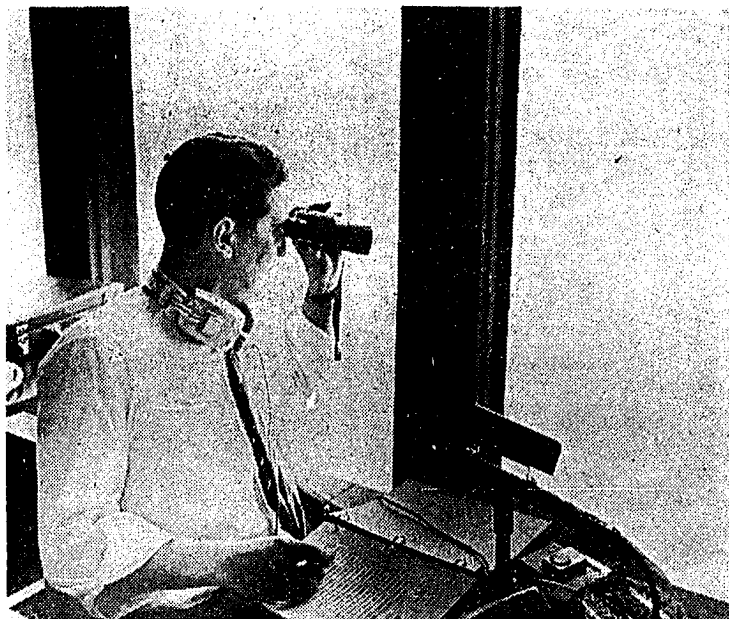
There's the sound of cheer, however, in Campbell's voice, a warming "good morning" that comes with 20 years' practice in modulation. For the next four hours he'll be a kind of anchor man, blending the show's newscasts, music and weather reports into a unit with his comments, quips and commercials.

Campbell awoke at 4:45 a.m., lit his first cigarette of the day at 4:47 a.m., then gulped his first cup of coffee.

"And you know what? The Queen Bee gets up and makes it for me. Now, there's a treasure."

His Safari Room studio has some of the comforts of home: the seltzer-water fountain in the restaurant adjoining the cocktail lounge is a 10-second walk away, the washroom is just across the corridor and a restaurant worker brings him a pot of coffee.

Twenty miles west, in Clarkson, his children are still asleep. "I've got three of them, all teen-agers, none of whom I plan to have in this industry, although they'd like to be in it." He said it matter-of-factly, not bitterly, although he may have been reminding himself



Campbell: on a clear day he can see St. Catharines, otherwise just outer space.

how hard it was on the system when he first became a morning man.

"I was in sort of semi-shock for a while. Basically I've been a night performer all my life in radio and television and I still fill social and professional engagements at night. But there's the compensation of knowing others are working at this time of the morning too. Actually, though, it's fairly easy to convert."

Campbell has that way of starting off with a punchy statement, then qualifying it. When a recorded voice described in breathless awe the marvels of a new jungle movie, Campbell remarked: "You hear that? Every movie that comes along, it's the greatest. Some of them are very good, though."

His desk, a couple of tables placed side by side, is littered with papers: commercial scripts, a list of the records the operator will put on the turntables

tion," says Campbell. "He knows exactly what I'm doing. An inexperienced operator would foul things up like you'd never believe.

"Oh, yes, about TV. Well, you have to depend on 50 or 60 people. In radio a couple of people can handle things. And in TV, unless you've got a staff job, you work in 13-week cycles. That is, your job can be cancelled at the end of 13 weeks. It's a wonder they don't all turn into psychotics."

Always alert, Campbell hears the last note of the music on the speaker, how ever low it's turned, and moves to the mike to introduce Joe Morgan.

"This fellow I dig. He's not a Gordon Sinclair type, but he's a really salty fellow. He's got a shiv out for the City Council. He's a prodder."

(Morgan is talking about a forthcoming political clambake at the Royal York Hotel—"strictly window dressing"—and rebuking Metro for firing two court clerks—"a low blow.")

Joe Morgan finishes and Rick's back on the air with a commercial extolling the virtues of a foreign-made car; mellifluous tones of controlled excitement wafting through a cloud of cigarette smoke.

"No, the smoking doesn't bother me. Never cough. My ears? They're what I call magic ears, mothers' ears. You know, when the baby coughs in the middle of the night, the mother can hear it 20 yards away.

"Keeping track of everything even when you're carrying on a conversation with someone is a matter of time orientation. But you don't learn it overnight. I've been in this business 20 years. something has to rub off in that time."

Ten o'clock is getting closer as Campbell consults the log and makes a rapid calculation. He calls Peter Crampton on the intercom. "Peter, can we do a switch on the 10:04 spot commercial?" It involves substituting a recorded commercial for one Campbell was to do live. Crampton says they can do it.

"After all," says Campbell, "when you've left, you don't want to come back."

at the Davenport Road studio, wire-service stories sent by taxi from the studio and several sheets giving in detail the entire log for the program.

With a pencil, Campbell ticks off each item on the log as its turn comes, or slashes a line across it. By 10 a.m. it will look like the trail of sparrows with dirty feet.

"You know, radio's my cup of tea. TV is a lot of work with little exposure. I was on the CTV night show for three years."

Rick abruptly stops talking when the music stops. "Cloudy with some light snow," he says into the microphone. "Chance of drizzle. A high of 28 degrees and down to 15 tonight." A few minutes later, Peter Crampton, the operator, tells him on the intercom the latest information is a high of 30 degrees.

"He's an integral part of the opera-