

25 years and many, many watts ago WSGN got its start

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It was just 25 years ago.

H. L. (Pop) Ansley sat in his house at Fountain Heights amidst a jumble of wires and stuff that looked as if it came straight from Greenberg's automobile graveyard.

He spoke into an odd-looking apparatus.

Then there emerged from loudspeakers and earphones as far away as Five Points and maybe Powderly these magic words:

"This is Pop Ansley broadcasting his powerful 10-watt radio station at Fountain Heights."

Pop Ansley was on the air!

AND THE INFANT, radio, was yelling out its 10-watt lungs with all the lusty vigor of babes since time began.

That was the beginning of Radio Station WSGN.

Today WSGN, with a 50,000-watt FM voice and a 5,000-watt AM voice reaches thousands of Alabamians far-and-wide.

WSGN will celebrate its silver anniversary next Saturday, and for one full week will do its best to outdo its best on the occasion of reaching its 25th birthday.

The modern, high-powered Radio Station WSGN today sits atop Red Mountain sending forth top-flight local programs and American Broadcasting Company Network shows to the thousands who take the magic of radio for granted.

But things were different when Pop Ansley tinkered for an hour or so a night with his little sta-

tion that was to grow into the 25-year-old giant.

You can twist your dial today to 610 and get music, speeches, the latest news events. You can hear kings abdicate, listen to the sounds of battle across the seas, get a recipe for a new kind of cake, hear a symphony orchestra or maybe a hillbilly band, get the baseball game, or hear the comics read.

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SOME 40 HIGHLY-TRAINED men and women on the WSGN local staff keep the programs running—along with the hundreds of ABC network stars, newscasters and technical workers.

But when Pop Ansley operated the forerunner of WSGN, then

Big anniversary program

Twenty five years of service. Network stars, Sens. Lister Hill and John Sparkman, and Gov. Gordon Persons, an array of local talent will take part on WSGN's silver anniversary program at 8 p.m. next Saturday night.

H. L. (Pop) Ansley, first owner of the station; Allen Clark, manager of the station under its second ownership and others will take part.

Mr. Ansley, now living in Florida will tell of the early 10-watt days of the powerful station.

known as WKBC, it was a one-man operation pure and simple, a hobby that kept the latter-day crystal set builders, the owners of battery radios and the newer electric radios busy at their dials.

Sometimes Pop Ansley would announce: "Tonight I'm broadcasting on five watts. Has anybody got a tube I can put in to get back to 10 watts." It was all pretty informal. Sometimes Pop

played records. He never heard of radio commercials.

In 1929—the year the stock market hit the skids and President Hoover was promising prosperity just around the corner, Pop Ansley sold his broadcasting station to R. B. Broyles, and J. Allen Clark became the manager, announcer and program director for the station.

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THE FURNITURE COMPANY moved the station from Fountain heights to the balcony of the downtown store.

Allen Clark, a radio station on his hands, tried to find an engineer acceptable to the Federal Radio Commission (the forerunner of the FCC). He couldn't

find an engineer in Birmingham, but Gadsden came through with a trained man.

Back in the days when the station operated from the furniture store, Dud Conley was a favorite voice.

Allen Clark played records for the entertainment of the growing number of radio listeners. The commercial came into its own. In a fashion the station was paying its own way and Birmingham radio was moving ahead.

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THE STATION was moved to the basement of the Tutwiler Hotel in 1932—while the depression still was dark and gloomy.

Radio was growing.

Then on June 1, 1936, The Birmingham News bought Radio Sta-

tion WSGN and Henry P. Johnston became general manager of the station.

Meanwhile, the 10-watt broadcasting outfit had grown into a 250-watt affair.

Under The News ownership and Henry Johnston's direction WSGN began to grow by leaps and bounds.

In 1942 the station moved up to 1,000 watts, then in 1948 WSGN was the second Alabama station to go into FM broadcasting.

The station will open its silver anniversary week with a star-studded one and a half hour program from 8 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. next Saturday night. Other big events will follow through the week.