

How TV came to Greenslopes' wounded Queen's men

The "flying saucer" man

brought a miracle to Brisbane . . .

by *JOHN ELLIOTT*

LAST Friday morning a red fire brigade truck pulled up outside four-decorated Parliament House in George Street.

Firemen jumped out, screwed down clamps and shot a hydraulically operated fire ladder up 80 or 90 feet to the tower roof of the Parliament building.

A quiet, 44-year-old

A quiet, 44-year-old executive standing nearby took off his grey suit coat, slipped into a safety belt, strapped a huge metal "dish-shaped" disc on his back and started to climb the ladder.

"He looks like a flying saucer" said one of the firemen below.

The "Flying Saucer" was John Ernest Telfer, Engineer-in-charge of Amalgamated Wireless television department, now in Brisbane to televise parts of the Queen's visit.

Already he has followed the Queen with TV cameras in Sydney and Canberra. And for the last week he has been working at top pressure organising Brisbane's TV show.

ganising Brisbane's TV show, which will be radiated to Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital, by arrangement with The Courier-Mail.

Part of day's work

HIS "saucer" climb, which stopped traffic in George and Mary streets, is just part of a day's work in getting his equipment set up.

The "dish" television transmitter had to be carried up to the roof. So John Telfer carried it up himself.

For with Australian television still wrapped in swaddling clothes, he has to be his own Director, Producer, Technical Adviser, and handyman.

John Telfer had not even heard of television when he joined AWA in 1927 as an office boy.

Then he had two main jobs, filing correspondence and buying lunches for the others in the office.

The lunch-buying part of the job was the worst. So one day he walked Sydney for hours collecting enough coins to give one of the typists her change of a pound note in halfpennies.

The accountant "ticked him off," but AWA might have been impressed by his inventiveness and determination.

For a few months later they gave him a start in radio work, servicing receivers.

Later he became a design engineer, but it was not until 1948 that he saw his first

1948 that he saw his first television picture.

Tests in a park

AWA set up a camera in their Sydney building to televise people in a park about three-quarters of a mile away.

On one of the park seats a man was sleeping. The camera operator turned the tele-photo lens on him to show those watching the screen how the camera gets close-ups.

As the close-up came on to the screen there was a burst of laughter. The man was one of their office staff who had fallen asleep and overstayed his lunch hour.

An office boy was sent out to wake him up.

"That really impressed me with the potentialities of television," Mr. Telfer said. "I also decided to take my naps well away from television cameras."

With other engineers he was trained in TV work, and some years ago was given charge of all television demonstrations in Australia.

That did not mean televis-

ing only chorus girls and comedians to show would-be television station owners production methods.

"Television's uses are not restricted to the entertainment field," Mr. Telfer said yesterday.

"There are unlimited opportunities for its use in

There are unlimited opportunities for its use in scientific research, in industry, and in education.

"In industry, TV cameras can face with impunity heat and fumes too intense and dangerous for a human being. They can look unblinking into a fiery furnace and transmit a clear view of combustion and slagging conditions.

"They can face the white heat of molten steel and in a hundred ways can take part in operations where perhaps due to a slip, mishap, or miscalculation a human life may be lost."

Doctors were impressed

TO show doctors how television could help them he organised for AWA to "shoot" several operations.

"With tele-photo lens we could give those watching the screen a better view than the surgeon had himself," he said.

"One delicate eye operation we televised was wonderfully successful. The eye was enlarged to the size of the viewing screen and as the surgeon stitched the cornea after the operation it looked to those watching as if he was using a crowbar and tarred rope to sew up sheets of cellophane.

"A demonstration of a jaw operation we gave to a dentists' congress was so graphic a reporter watching it fainted

and several dental surgeons had to leave."

His ideas on the future uses of television?—Almost unlimited!

TV cameras are being used in the United States and Great Britain for the remote control handling of radioactive atomic materials while the scientists shelter behind walls of protective lead bricks.

Set in strategic position they can also be used to guard vast areas of forest from fire, and to watch walls of jails, reformatories, and mental homes.

Banks and business offices are now using TV in many parts of the world to flash information about signatures, accounts, balances, and a multitude of other records from office to office without wasting a staff's time in travelling.

Battery operated back-pack "walkie-lookie" TV cameras have already been developed to transmit pictures to base stations. These are being used for better news coverage.

Cameras can also be used at terminals for aircraft control, and placed around great ocean-liners can give pictures in the bridge and engine rooms of wharves, tugs, towlines, and other berthing equipment to help them to dock.

Underwater television has already been used for salvage operations. It was a TV camera that found the missing British submarine Affray that sank off the coast of England in 1951, and located

England in 1951, and located the wreckage of the missing Comet airliner in the Mediterranean this year.

TV can also help at scenes of disaster. A camera can be lowered into a mine pit to direct rescuers, where human access might be impossible because of heat, fumes, or gases.

Bushfires and floods

IN bushfires, floods, or earthquakes, a TV camera in a helicopter could flash a picture back to rescue headquarters, even though hundreds of miles away.

Television is already recognised as a powerful means of education, though many people often claim a TV set in the home interferes with children's study.

Says Mr. Telfer: "Televi-

sion's interference with homework, reading, and recreation is less than sometimes indicated. But in any case viewing habits are largely parents' responsibility.

"Fears that TV may damage eyesight are unfounded."

Most people in Australia think of television in terms of a set in their own home to bring them information and entertainment.

"But," warns Mr. Telfer, "Don't think a TV set makes radio broadcasting obsolete. Experience overseas has proved ordinary radio sets

proved ordinary radio sets remain as popular as ever.

"Television is a different medium altogether."
