Sun Spots Add Some Radio Spice, Sneaking Private Phone Calls on Air

Girls' Discussion of Blind Date Mysteriously Gets on Sedate Program as Magnetic Storm Continues—More Auroras Unlikely

Radio listeners heard some spicy and unscheduled telephone conversations yesterday and the trouble was laid to the current magnetic storm caused by sun spots.

It happened during the 11:45 A. M. broadcast of station WAAT, and a few minutes later during the station's noon news period. WAAT, during the first period, was broadcasting a program of recorded songs by Bing Crosby, when a conversation between two men was interjected suddenly—and quite clearly—into the background.

The radio men tried in vain to clear up the trouble; even the local telephone men, to whom the station appealed, could not help. A representative of WAAT said it was allowed to continue on the air because, although somewhat "strong," it was "not particularly objectionable." Then the conversation vanished.

A few minutes later the trouble was back, this time with a mysterious conversation between two girls who were talking about a "blind" date. The conversation was called rather "spicy." Before a switch could be turned, however, the cross-talk had faded and decorum was again supreme on the WAAT program.

Following the first cross-talk a number of listeners called the studios of the Jersey City station to ask if WAAT had adopted a new program policy. They were assured it had not.

A woman telephoned from Delaware Water Gap to explain that her house was full of children who were listening to the program. She wanted to know if more of that type of broadcasting could be expected, the WAAT representative said. After the cross-talk between the girls a number of New Jersey men phoned to ask, jocularly, if the station needed any help.

Later in the day telephone technicians isolated the offending circuit, but an exhaustive test revealed no trouble with the wires.

Outside the New York area the magnetic storm still raged and most transoceanic circuits were inoperative. Long-wave channels, however, seemed to get clearer. This happens in such disturbances but engineers have never been able to find out why.

With direct short-wave channels "out," RCA Communications reported a way had been found to reach Europe via Buenos Aires. North and south short-wave transmission suffers much less in magnetic storms than east-west, or west-east circuits. Taking advantage of this, the big radio "guns" or RCA at Riverhead, L. I., were aimed southward at Buenos Aires instead of London. At Buenos Aires the New York circuit was relayed over a beam directed northeastward from the Argentine to England. A good channel resulted, far superior, it was said, to the direct one from New York to London. The radio "detour" was more than 12,000 miles in length.

RCA technical men reported no effect on television during the height of the magnetic storm. The reason is that television waves are "too short to be affected by the disturbance," or are immune for some reason not known by engineers, it was said.

A report from the American Telephone and Telegraph Company indicated that while land broadcasting channels were unaffected, oceanic telephone circuits were more or less "out." The transpacific channel to Honolulu, however, was one of the few circuits operative yesterday. The telephone men called the storm severe, but in no way as far-reaching as the disturbance that disrupted service last Easter.

The enormous sun spots have moved from the center of the sun, where they were observed a few days ago, over to one side, scientists at the Hayden Planetarium of the American Museum of Natural History reported.

It was believed that the movement of these sun spots, together with the rotation of the sun on its axis, would make it "highly unlikely" that the aurora borealis, which staged a rare and spectacular show about New York on Thursday night, would give a repeat performance.