

Biographies

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Pioneer - Member of CAB Hall of Fame

Rose, Ernest G. "Ernie" (1916-2008)

Raised on the prairies, Ernie Rose's ambition was to become a radio operator on one of the giant luxury Empress liners that sailed around the world from the port of Vancouver. His dreams never materialized. Instead, he remained on shore to bring the world to Canada through television.

He became one of the few people in the broadcasting industry whose career led from crystal sets and spark-gap transmitters to sophisticated satellites. Like his father, Ernie became an amateur radio ham operator. In pursuit of his commercial licence, he enrolled at the Sprott-Shaw School in Vancouver. Graduating in 1934 he was ready to travel to many of the places he had got to know through amateur radio. While waiting for an opening on a ship, he and another high academic achiever accepted an offer to go to work as announcer/technicians with Sprott-Shaw's radio station - CKMO. They split the \$65.00 monthly salary of the one man they replaced but were doing the work of two men and putting in 10-to-12 hour days, 6 days-a-week. Ernie's pal went to sea and Ernie became CKMO's chief engineer, picking up the full \$65 salary. He even found time to get married. In 1940, he left CKMO to join the CBC as an operator/ technician.



In 1947, on learning that Seattle would soon have its first TV station on the air, Ernie and a colleague set out to build British Columbia's first video receiver from the purchase of a "carload" of war surplus radar equipment. Facing the challenge of the mountainous terrain and the 150-mile distance from Seattle, the duo managed to bring in the weak signal of KRSC-TV. One of the first TVs in Vancouver, it was a huge attraction for the neighbours.

In preparation for the CBC's entry into TV, at the urging of his wife Jean, Ernie went to Toronto in 1953 for a training session on television. He had progressed from maintenance supervisor to assistant technical director, when he was handed the job of building Vancouver's first privately-owned TV station - CHAN-TV - an undertaking that involved 30-thousand pieces of equipment, and research into leading-edge technology in Japan and the USA.

Then, came BCTV and the extension of service to CHEK-TV covering Vancouver Island. Ernie relied on the knowledge and contacts he'd made while extending the CBC's reach over most of B.C. Via networking, CHAN's TV service was extended to the Okanagan-Mainline (Kamloops, Kelowna, Vernon, Penticton) and then to the Cariboo up to and including Prince George, and finally the West Kootenays. The extension involved 30 transmitter sites and some 800 miles of microwave routing, of which 300 miles was owned

