

TV News And Notes

By WILLIAM HYDER

EVERY night at 11 P.M. some people we know well look right at us from the television screen and tell us about news, the weather and sports results. This seems perfectly natural, but the man with the pleasant manner isn't really talking to us. He is sitting in a bare studio looking at a box full of electron tubes and wires. He isn't talking to the cameraman, who is hidden behind the box with his face buried in a viewer. He isn't talking to the floor manager, who is standing at the other end of the room thinking about Ocean City. What it comes down to is that the announcer is talking to himself. He is generating his charm and personality in a vacuum, with no outside motivation and no response.

If you think this is easy, try it. Wait until you have told some friends or relatives a good story—at a party, for example—and roused considerable interest or amusement. The next day go into a room by yourself and sit down. Look at the doorknob and pretend that it is a television camera. Then tell the doorknob the same story, and try to do it with as much enthusiasm and expression as before.

Toughest Part Of Job

This is the sort of thing television announcers have to do. It doesn't always come easily. Wynne Mar, Channel 2's weather girl, says that trying to project her personality to the camera is the hardest part of her job. Bill Bolling and Bill LeFevre, both of whom recently

came to WMAR from local radio stations, agree. All three have found that though radio experience is valuable in some ways, it is no help in developing a personality suitable for television. TV demands a more relaxed and natural manner.

Many TV performers work up their person-to-person manner by imagining an audience. Dave Stickle, who reads the 7 P.M. news on Channel 2, visualizes people—sometimes people he really knows—listening to him in their homes. Stickle was a newspaper man before becoming news director of WMAR, and had no training as a speaker or actor. He says that he has no illusions about being a slick, professional personality, but merely tries to conduct himself as if he were visiting in someone's living room.

"Perfect Guest"

The same thought is echoed by most TV announcers. Jim Lyons, of Channel 11, says he tries to talk *with* the viewer rather than *down* to him. "Be the perfect guest," says Lyons, "so you'll be invited back."

Although all announcers strive for the relaxed manner, there are different methods of securing it. Lyons tries really to be relaxed. He believes that false attitudes are obvious to the viewer. On the other hand, Don Bruchey, who displays one of the most pleasant and casual personalities in town as host of Channel 2's late movie, confesses that his apparent relaxation is achieved at the cost of inner tension—even after seven years before the camera.