



HASTINGS PATRIOTIC COMMITTEE

FUN SESSIONS

1942 - 1945

*Souvenir . .
Programme*

MUNICIPAL THEATRE
HASTINGS, N.Z.

WEDNESDAY, 24TH OCTOBER, 1945

Hastings Fun Session Committee



R. C. ENSOR

J. W. JONES

H. B. POPPELWELL

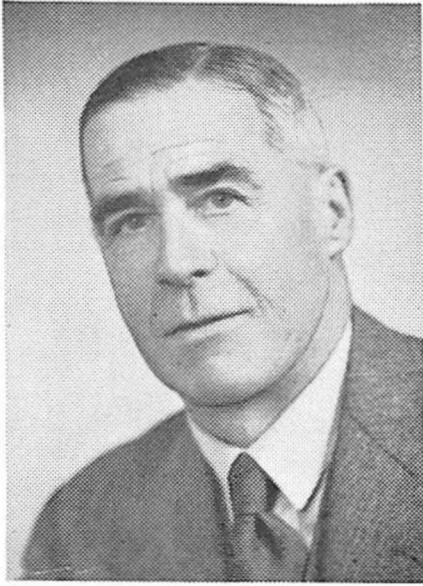
G. E. G. ROGERS

J. D. BAXTER

E. H. CULVER



LIEUTENANT G. E. H. HARDENBERG.



HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR.

Foreword

IN PAYING MY TRIBUTE to the magnificent work of the Fun Sessions Committee, not only with regard to Fun Sessions, but in all major Patriotic money-raising efforts since 1942, I am deeply conscious of the vast amount of effort that has been given to Patriotic work by a tremendous number of enthusiastic helpers, many of whom have contributed in both time and money at considerable personal sacrifice as their means to assist in the War Effort.

The price of war is high—so high that its cost cannot be measured—but I am proud to have been publicly associated, during the war years, with the people of Hastings, the great majority of whom have indicated in no uncertain terms that they were prepared to play their part in providing for the welfare of their menfolk overseas, whose reputation as fighting men is second to none.

It is significant that New Zealand should have provided Welfare Services for her sons overseas of such a high standard that they, too, were proclaimed as second to none. It is equally significant that Hastings never once lagged in the provision of its share of these services, and has, in fact, established a reputation in Dominion Patriotic circles of which its people may well be proud.

It has been the work of such committees as the Fun Sessions—which to-night concludes what is probably one of the best Patriotic records of the Dominion—that has been responsible for this reputation and for bringing the Patriotic work of Hastings to such high standard.

War is evil and merciless, costing the lives of the best of our youth. From this evil, however, emerges that spirit of unselfishness and sacrifice which confirms our faith in our fellow men and indicates that we re-affirm the principles of Justice and Democracy even to the last.

In expressing my deep gratitude to all those who have contributed in such large measure to the successful conclusion of the war, I express also the hope that the bonds of comradeship which have been firmly bound during the terrible war years will continue in the "Battle of Peace" with the same unselfish patriotism which has marked their community effort in the war.

We must never forget, nor allow our children to forget, the price that has been paid for freedom; nor must we allow to fade from our memories the spirit which in war brought final victory, and which in peace must prevail if we are to hold that freedom for which many have paid so dearly.

A. I. RAINBOW, Mayor,
Chairman Hastings District Patriotic Committee.

Formation of Fun Sessions Committee

HOW DID THE FUN SESSIONS START?

HOW AND WHEN did the Fun Sessions start? It was in February, 1942, that the Mayor, Mr. A. I. Rainbow, called a meeting of carefully selected enthusiasts with the object of raising the Patriotic funds by means of dances and entertainments. Days were locking black in 1942. The Executive of the Patriotic Committee hoped that, in addition to raising funds, it might be possible to provide some distraction from the ugly war situation. Various suggestions were discussed and rejected at this meeting. It was the suggestion of a weekly radio quizz and guest artist session that gave the inspiration from which Fun Sessions were born. It was this thought which was developed by the then Entertainment and Dance Committee, comprising Messrs. H. B. Poppelwell (Chairman), E. H. Culver, R. C. Enser, G. E. H. Hardenberg and G. E. G. Rogers (Secretary), who afterwards were joined by Messrs. J. D. Baxter and J. W. Jones, and became more popularly known as the Fun Sessions Committee.

It was this team that originally coined the name, and organised Fun Sessions; that since 1942 has been behind all major money-raising efforts in Hastings—including the record-breaking Queen Carnival which raised £28,000 in less than six weeks, and the outstanding Patriotic Carnival at the Showgrounds which in one day grossed the amazing total of £6000. These achievements were not the outcome of good luck. They were the result of the most careful planning; the refusal to recognise obstacles except as something to be overcome; an outstanding capacity for hard work, and the co-operation of hundreds of fellow patriots, whose loyal community spirit has contributed so much to the success of all Patriotic undertakings in the Hastings district.

It is significant of the boundless energy of the team, that they were called together on February 18th, 1942. Within one week they had met three times, and within a fortnight they submitted to the Patriotic Committee, not only a detailed programme for the first Fun Session, but the complete outline for at least four other money-raising functions.



Mr. H. B. POPPELWELL
(Chairman Hastings Fun Sessions and Entertainment Cmtee.)

Since the inception of the Hastings Fun Sessions and Entertainment Committee in February, 1942, Harry Poppelwell has been Chairman of the Committee. His leadership, enthusiasm, quiet efficiency and sound judgment, combined with a flair for selecting the right entertainment, have contributed in large measure to the success of Patriotic money raising.

The First Fun Session

FUN SESSION No. 1 was staged on March 30th, 1942. IT WAS NOT ENCOURAGING, but it was good experience. At that first Fun Session the attendance was such that patrons in the dress circle were asked to come down to the stalls to make it look at least like a crowd.

Fun Session No. 2 a week later brought a slight improvement in attendance, but Fun Session No. 3 was tragic! Everything went wrong! The weather was frightful; the attendance was worse! There was a profit—it totalled £6/13/10! By this time the critics said "I told you so," and the faint-hearted said "Call a halt before we lose our money." But this was not the spirit of the Fun Session team. The next meeting took longer. The show was torn to shreds. Candid criticism there was in plenty. The next programme was prepared and more money spent in advertising. Fun Session No. 4 saw the Municipal Theatre at least comfortably full. Fun Sessions were being talked about. Before long the Committee faced a serious problem, that of accommodation of patrons.

There were no reserve seats, and it soon became necessary to devise some way in which to deal with the vast crowd which clamoured for admission at least two hours before each show started. When it was no longer possible to handle the crowd, it was decided to open a box plan and charge a booking fee. So regular were the patrons of the Fun Sessions that there were soon permanent



Mr. E. H. CULVER.

With unbounded enthusiasm and an amazing capacity for detail, Eddie Culver has played an important part in Patriotic activities. His work with publicity and advertising has reached a particularly high standard, and has no doubt contributed largely to the success of Fun Sessions.

bookings, which in recent months have totalled well over 500. Fun Sessions were established. They had provided laughs at a time when things were grim. In September of that year the Patriotic Committee had been asked to raise £16,000 in twelve months, but in less than two months the Treasurer held £28,000! Towards the end of the season Fun Sessions were well and truly established. The last eight contributed substantially to the Queen Carnival Campaign, the respective committees assisting with the sponsoring of programmes. The last Fun Session for the season was held in November, 1942, and the total raised was £1656/12/6.

CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR CHILDREN.

It was significant of the enthusiasm and capacity for hard work of the Fun Session Committee that they decided to organise a Christmas Party for the children of Servicemen overseas. This party was to be some compensation for the absence of their fathers. The Committee quite reasonably could have made a call on Patriotic funds for the party, but members chose instead, to raise the money with a raffle campaign. The party was a brilliant success. No fewer than 543 children were present. Many of the younger ones were accompanied by their parents. Children were never so well entertained.

There were limitless ice creams, fruit salad, cream, jellies and soft drinks, while each child left

with in armful of gifts distributed by Father Christmas and his fairies. Thanks to the usual generosity of the Hastings people, nothing was spared to create the atmosphere of Christmas. Decorations included a massive Christmas tree laden with presents, while Father Christmas' arrival with sledge and sleigh bells added the last thrilling touch to a party the children will never forget. Committee members were tired, but not too tired to visit the Memorial Hospital next morning in full regalia to repeat the performance for the children there.

GUY HARDENBERG GOES TO CAMP.

Disaster loomed ahead for 1943. Guy Hardenberg had entered camp. A born comedian, and one of the mainstays of the first season, he left a blank which looked hopeless. The Committee recalls the particular Fun Session when an attempt to auction fell flat and an inspired Guy removed one garment with every bid, until clothed in a piece of stage cloth and one sock, with the audience rocking with laughter, Guy point-blank refused to accept bids which were now hurled at him. Yes, Guy Hardenberg would be hard to replace, for comedians are always rare.

Then came the Committee's first stroke of luck. Good fortune brought Jack Baxter to Hastings. After having sworn never to appear on the stage again, Jack was persuaded to team up with Fun Sessions solely because it was a Patriotic show. With Jack Jones as foil there was born, perhaps the greatest comedy team ever seen in the Hastings Municipal Theatre. Among their many successes was the introduction of topical ditties which have been responsible for much hilarity, while the absurdities of "Splodgers'" antics as the awkward soldier will be ever remembered.

FUN SESSION COMMITTEE OPENS FOR NAPIER.

Though the Committee lost Guy they were by no means down-hearted, and it was typical of their unselfish enthusiasm that, prior to opening their own season in 1943, they gave Napier Patriotic Committee a start by staging Napier's first Fun Session. The news of the success of the Hastings Fun Sessions had spread rapidly, and it was not surprising that Napier's first Session run by the Hastings Team should open to a capacity house.

There followed an immediate set-up for Napier, whose team of Fun Doctors received every assistance from the Hastings Committee. It was fitting, however, that wholehearted co-operation should be accompanied by a hearty rivalry, which undoubtedly inspired both committees to give of their best.

FUN SESSIONS IN THE PACIFIC.

It was in 1943, too, that one of the leaders of the Napier Fun Sessions received a special appointment with the Pacific 3rd N.Z.E.F. Division and began the production of Fun Sessions in the



Mr. R. C. ENSOR.

With his services willingly given since the very early stages Dan Ensor has applied his natural talent with tireless energy. Brimming over with new ideas, his cheerfulness and good humour prevailed throughout—even when his latest scheme was rejected.

PROGRAMME

Final Fun Session - No. 130

SPONSORED BY Mr. J. W. SHAW

PART ONE.

- 1—"AUNT GWEN" AND HER ORCHESTRA open the Show.
- 2—INTRODUCING THE FUN SESSION TEAM.
- 3—NOW IT'S THE CHILDREN'S TURN.
- 4—ONCE MORE WE SAY: "SING, EVERYBODY, SING."
 - (i) Cuddle Up a Little Closer.
 - (ii) My Dreams Are Getting Better All The Time.
 - (iii) Meet Me in St. Louis.
- 5—"BY REQUEST."
- 6—SOMETHING FOR THE ADULTS: "Words Mean Money"
- 7—EVERYBODY'S FAVOURITE--JEAN McPHERSON
- 8—NOW IT'S "TOPICAL TIT-BITS" and THE TWO JACKS.
- 9—IS YOURS A LUCKY SEAT?
- 10—WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR—
THE McGOWANS.
- 11—SPRING IS IN THE AIR!

I - N - T - E - R - V - A - L

And the time to buy your Raffle Tickets.

PART TWO.

- 1—IT'S THE ORCHESTRA AGAIN.
- 2—SOME MORE FAVOURITES, AND ?????
 - (i) Shine On, Harvest Moon.
 - (ii) Wear a Great Big Smile.
 - (iii) Till We Meet Again.
- 3—WE MUST HAVE A "YES-NO," SO HERE IT IS.
- 4—ANOTHER LAUGH WITH THE TWO JACKS.
- 5—MORE MELODIES BY JEAN McPHERSON.
- 6—WE "SAY IT WITH MUSIC."
- 7—IT'S GREAT, ISN'T IT? THE JACKS again!
- 8—RAFFLE TIME AND THE AUDIENCE QUIZZ.
- 9—HERE THEY ARE AGAIN—THE McGOWANS.
- 10—THE TEAM Presents "WHAT A VOICE!"
- 11—HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR.
- 12—GOOD-NIGHT, PEOPLE.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

Pacific area for the benefit of New Zealand and other troops. Reports came back that Fun Sessions were as popular with the forces as with the people at home.

FRUIT FOR THE 3rd N.Z. DIVISION.

It was at this stage, too, that murmurings came through that New Zealanders in forward Pacific areas had expressed a wish to taste again a New Zealand apple. Arrangements were made immediately for the dispatch of apples, of which a total of nearly 1000 cases were paid for and sent by the Hastings Committee.



Mr. J. W. JONES.

A comedian depends on a foil on whom he can work his "stunts." Jack Jones' greatest aim has been to play up to his partner. He has done this with an outstanding ability and unselfishness which says much for the esprit de corps which has characterised all Fun Session work.

Mr. J. D. BAXTER.

A comedian of outstanding quality who has given himself wholeheartedly, not only to Fun Sessions but to any Patriotic effort. Quiet, unassuming, Jack Baxter has been the means of cheering many thousands during the war years. His "gags" will be quoted for years to come.

FUN SESSIONS AT WAIPAWA AND WAIPUKURAU.

An S.O.S. from the Mayor of Waipukurau at the opening of his 1943 Patriotic Campaign met with an immediate response, and the theatre was filled to the doors when the Hastings Fun Sessions Committee launched the town's Patriotic Appeal.

Waipawa Patriotic Committee hastened to follow the lead, and requested a special Fun Session to help them out. Once more a capacity house rewarded the team's Waipawa appearance.

Members of the Fun Session will always remember the lavish hospitality of these two towns.



Mrs. E. H. CULVER.

With enthusiasm and generous-heartedness "Aunt Gwen" has led the Fun Session Orchestra since the first "Session." It has been her enthusiasm and the solid work of her Orchestra, both at rehearsals and during the show, which have played such a large part in any success achieved.

A FUN SESSION MEETING.

Perhaps one of the greatest contributing factors to the success of Hastings Fun Sessions has been the amazing balance of the Committee. During the season the Committee met at least each Monday evening at Harry's home.

It is fitting at this stage that tribute should be paid to the admirable culinary efforts of Mrs. Poppelwell who, since the inception of Fun Sessions, provided such a variety of magnificent suppers at these meetings. However heated the debate or seemingly important the discussion, it ceased with the arrival of supper. Although there were whisperings of nightmares (!) justice was done in full measure to the delicacies which were produced in such abundance and variety.

Mention has been made of the balance of the Committee. It was at these meetings where the bulk of the Fun Sessions work was done. It was here that opinions were freely expressed and criticisms offered with a frankness which was received always with that spirit of unselfishness which was so apparent in all Fun Session activities. It was here that the programmes of Fun Sessions were thrashed out to the most minor detail; it was here, too, that new ideas were presented and given consideration. There was no ceremony with these new ideas. They were worthy of discussion or they were "out." If they were "out" it was this one word which greeted the suggestion.

Fun Session meetings were informal—delightfully informal. Never once did the Chairman exercise his authority, and never once did the Secretary record minutes. Good humour and banter prevailed throughout, and the Hastings Fun Session Committee has established to the complete satisfaction of its members that "artistic temperament" is but a myth. It is certain that members of

the Fun Session Committee will always recall with the pleasantest of memories those informal Monday gatherings which were scheduled to begin at 7.30 p.m., and frequently concluded after the clock had struck midnight.

SESSIONS AT PUKEORA SANATORIUM AND NAPIER MILITARY CAMP.

If the entertainment offered by the Fun Sessions to the Hastings public has been appreciated, how much greater has been the appreciation of the Pukeora Sanatorium! It can be taken for granted that the Fun Sessions cannot possibly go out of existence without just one more visit to the Sanatorium—for it was here that the team felt their efforts were bringing an hour or so of real cheeriness. Visits to the Napier Military Camp, too, will be recalled for the wild enthusiasm and acclamation of the men.

It was visits such as these which encouraged the Committee to continue its work, for here was real and spontaneous appreciation.

SEASONS 1943-44-45.

The Fun Sessions Committee opened its 1943 season, and it was now not a question of how could seats be filled? but one of how could seats be found? If patrons at times have found difficulty in obtaining seats, their troubles have been small compared with the worries of the Committee in their efforts to make 1300 seats go round. Many visiting guest artists have left Hastings the proud possessors of the box plans showing every seat reserved.

During these seasons the Committee sustained public interest, and expresses its gratitude to the many hundreds who have offered suggestions, many of which have been adopted and have been the means of giving the Fun Sessions new leases of life.

The Committee is naturally proud of its achievements. From very humble beginnings, it will not only have completed its 130th performance, which is probably a New Zealand record, but it will have raised well over £10,000 for Patriotic and "After-Care" Funds. Its reputation has been such, that it has created an interest in Auckland, Wellington, Palmerston North, Gisborne, Napier and Dannevirke to an extent which has inspired similar productions in these towns.



Mr. G. E. G. ROGERS

(Secretary Fun Sessions and Entertainment Committee.)

As Organising Secretary of the Hastings District Patriotic Committee since its formation in 1939, George Rogers has been the force behind the scenes of all Patriotic activities in Hastings. His ability as an organiser was soon recognised and his services were sought frequently by the Hawke's Bay Provincial Patriotic Council. Although responsible for the detailed organisation of all major money-raising efforts, he has given a vast amount of his time and energy to Fun Sessions.

Hastings District Patriotic Committee

THE RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT of the Hastings Patriotic Committees is one of which its people may well be proud. During the war years, never once has Hastings failed to fulfil its Patriotic obligations; in fact, on almost every occasion it has more than fulfilled its quota—while it is safe to say that on more than one occasion the example set by Hastings Patriotic efforts has been an inspiration and benefit not only to the Hawke's Bay Provincial Council, but to the Dominion Conference of Patriotic organisations. Before the close of the present campaign, Hastings will have raised well over £100,000 during the war years; its parcels committees have distributed nearly 20,000 parcels, while the goods handled at the Patriotic Depot have totalled well over half a million.

Hastings Patriotic efforts have been co-ordinated into sub-committees whose personnel number some 250, but in the field of money-raising it has been established that every organisation in Hastings, from children to adults, from churches to politics, and some thousands of other private individuals, have actively participated with money-raising campaigns in varying degree.

The Patriotic activities of Hastings have covered a tremendous field. There has been the Seed Cropping Committee, which has produced hundreds of tons of seed and vegetables when these were in short supply. During 1942-43 the Committee produced sufficient of certain types of medicinal leaf for the needs of the British Commonwealth, while profits amounting to over £6000 have been transferred to Patriotic Funds.

The reclamation of waste material, particularly paper, provided onerous tasks for a number of enthusiastic Patriotic workers, who stuck to their jobs week by week and year by year.

The collection, sorting and packing of some 60,000 garments fell to the lot of the Lady Galway Patriotic Guild, while another team of consistent workers have performed a similar service with books and magazines for the men of the Services. Thousands of books were packed for despatch to the Middle East and Pacific areas, while the Mercantile Marine received its share also of the reading.

Hastings, too, has provided a team of silent but painstaking workers in the hundreds of women who have knitted over 15,000 woollen garments. The Air Force Relations Committee, too, has provided a similar service for Air Force personnel.

The Hospitality Committee has found hostesses for hundreds of visiting Allied Servicemen, while the hostesses themselves have provided the most generous hospitality to men, many of whom were direct from the jungle campaigns of Guadalcanar and Tulagi.

The Welfare Committee already has financially assisted some hundreds of men of the Services who through circumstances outside their control have returned from overseas to find themselves with financial troubles. This committee, too, assists disabled men with their applications for pensions.

Add to all these a hundred smaller activities combined with the magnificent efforts of similar enthusiastic committees at Havelock North. All co-ordinated, they form one vast Patriotic Organisation which has reflected "the will to win" of the people of this district and their desire to play their part in providing welfare services for the men who have given the greatest service in the cause of Democracy and Freedom.

Thanks

IN PRIDE OF ACHIEVEMENT, however, the Committee is deeply conscious of its indebtedness to a vast number of people who have generously assisted in so many ways: to the hundreds of guest artists, many of whom have travelled long distances at considerable personal sacrifice, and none of whom, although many were professional artists, have ever accepted fees for their performances; to the many organisations, public, professional and private, whose members have at all times willingly appeared to assist with our programmes; to the many people who have arranged for guest artists, including Mr. Geo. Miller, of Wellington, who has organised the visits of leading Wellington artists; to the hotel proprietors who have always willingly offered accommodation for the visiting artists; to the House Manager, Mr. J. Hannen, the girls of the W.W.S.A., and others who have voluntarily assisted with the multitudinous "front-of-house" duties; to those two firms, Messrs. Fails Ltd. and J. Escott, who in turn accepted the arduous responsibility of handling box plan reservations free of cost; to the many public bodies, business houses, professional men and others who have not only sponsored programmes, given raffles and other gifts and prizes, but who have assisted with stage properties; to the canteen section of the W.W.S.A., who from time to time have given back-stage suppers for returned Servicemen and guest artists; to the lantern projectionists and public address operator, without whose help community singing could not have been successful; to that great-hearted man, James W. Shaw, who has "fathered" Fun Sessions since their inception, whose magnificent contributions and moral support are typified in the sponsoring of this, the last Fun Session; to all those, far too numerous even to classify, who have assisted in any way, the Committee extends its sincere thanks and expresses its appreciation of their willingness at all times to assist in this Patriotic work.