

Famous Star Made Debut In Mount Pulaski

Appeared In Minstrel Show When 3 Years Old

Publisher's Note: The cartoon opposite appeared in the Times-News Nov. 4, 1947.

The following article about Vaughn De Leath appeared in a New York City paper in 1930:

A snappy band blared its brassy melody in front of the brilliantly lighted theater in Mt. Pulaski, Illinois. A great event—this gala night in Mt. Pulaski, and the town was out en masse. A little tow-headed 3-year-old girl, who tightly clutched her mother's hand, bobbed along in the stream of patrons, which passed through the door.

She was entranced when the creaky curtain, with its roll at bottom, was laboriously hoisted to the top revealing gorgeously dressed minstrels seated in a semi-circle and singing melodiously. The colorful minstrel program—the first theatrical of any kind that Vaugh De Leath had ever seen, left its indelible mark upon the now famous singer, for from that night on, she resolved some day to sing herself.

Vaughn De Leath, known as the "original radio girl", and the "first lady of radioland," and now the popular star on the Voice of Firestone program, who celebrated her 10th anniversary radio debut in January. The contralto is heard by millions of radio listeners throughout the world, every Monday night.

When this favorite contralto was 12 years old she was director of an orchestra, and at 12 she sold her first song. Vaughn De Leath composed many songs as a child, and several months ago, while exploring an old forgotten trunk, she found one of her earliest efforts, "Old Glory," which radio listeners received with enthusiasm on the Armistice Day program.

While still in her teens, Vaughn De Leath was the first member of her sex to send programs over the air, and long before any of the present elaborate radio stations were thought of, she sang into the odd little microphone located in the old World Tower building in New York. She sang and told stories into an old horn that originally had seen service on a 1904 model phonograph, to an eager audience of a few amateur experimenters in radio and wireless operators on ships.

Vaughn De Leath was the first woman to be heard by radio in European countries, and she is the originator of the soft, melodious type of singing which has many exponents. Weekly she receives hundreds of letters from everything from her renowned earring collection to advice on how to sing.

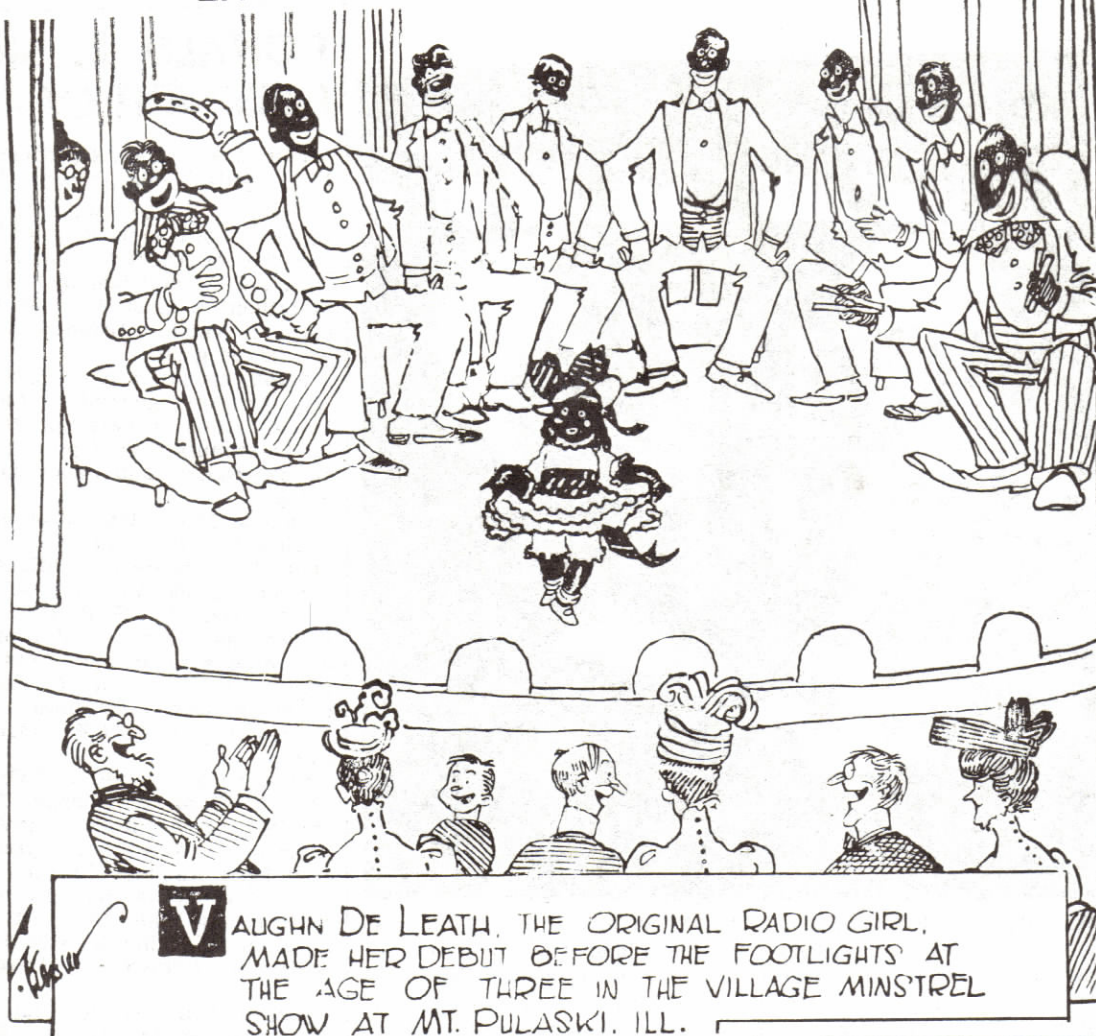
But according to the contralto, the style of singing was born of necessity—to prevent breaking tubes at \$110 each, in the early stages of radio.

In every studio there was a red light which flashed frantically when over-ambitious singers warbled high notes which endangered the sending apparatus. After observing a number of calamities, Vaughn De Leath modulated her voice, studied human nature, worked for tone and the natural expression of emotions by the human voice, and the soft, expressive singing which was to sweep America when first heard.

She is one of the most popular stars in radioland, and her Connecticut farm is always filled with guests who are recipients of her genial hospitality. She loves company.

Vaughn De Leath's programs are broadcast at 7 o'clock central time Monday evenings over a chain of 49 stations that include: WOC, WDAF, WEA, WGY, WSM, WWJ, KSD, KYW, etc.

LITTLE MOMENTS IN BIG LIVES



SPECIAL INTERVIEW WITH NOTED SINGER ON LAST VISIT HERE

First Woman's Voice To Be Heard Over Trans-Atlantic Radio.

Editor's Note: This special interview with Vaughn DeLeath appeared in the State Register at Springfield, Sept. 3, 1941, while she was visiting old friends in Mount Pulaski.

RADIO PIONEER

With the melody and lyrics of one of Stephen Foster's immortal compositions firmly in her mind, and preparing to sing in a way designed for safety's sake, a young lady stood amidst a maze of odd apparatus one evening in 1920 in Newark, N.J. 15 minutes later, Vaughn De Leath had made history.

Hers was the first woman's voice transmitted across the Atlantic ocean by radio, and her song styling became known as crooning, which was destined for a long life. Miss De Leath was selected for this important experiment because Okeh Recordings of her "new fangled" type of singing was considered by radio experimentalists as ideal for transmission — and it was safer. High soprano notes more than often shattered the delicate radio tubes of those days, and cut short any program in progress at the time.

In a very short time, Vaughn De Leath became known as "the original radio girl," as well as being credited with the origination of crooning. Later she was dubbed "the first lady of radio." Quickly then, she was signed to appear on a radio program sponsored by a tire company. In the years that followed Miss De Leath grew in fame. Before her trans-Atlantic broadcast, received in seven of Europe's largest cities, she had experience broadcasting in the World Tower Building in New York City soon after Dr. Lee DeForrest, a close friend, had developed the audition, a radio tube which makes modern reception possible without the use of earphones.

Vaughn De Leath is the professional pseudonym of Leonore Vonderlieth, daughter of Mr and Mrs. George W. Vonderlieth, Mt. Pulaski. She loves her home town dearly, so much she said "that I came hundreds of miles out of my way Monday to visit Mt. Pulaski." She left Tuesday night for Oklahoma City where she is featured on a radio show of 39 weeks duration from WKY, sponsored by a coffee company, to be broadcast over the National

Broadcasting Company network with which most of her radio years have been spent.

She recollects her start, in entertaining — at the age of three years she stepped out upon the stage of the old Scroggin opera house in Mt. Pulaski. A second later she ran from the spotlight crying. Removing the burned cork makeup, her mother discovered that Leonore was broken out with measles. At 6 years Miss De Leath went to California to study music — began recording at 19 years, has been with radio 21 years.

For sentimental reasons she has kept a letter received in 1919 from which she quoted this statement made by a fan: "You have inaugurated a form of entertainment which will no doubt become very popular in the near future."

Of radio she had to say "it is the largest contribution to American culture since the invention of motion pictures. The movie educates the visual side of culture; radio appeals to the higher, educational culture."

Miss DeLeath also claims to be the most televised woman in America, that is until a year ago. It is her opinion that television is suffering lack of development now because of commercial difficulties, insufficient sets and great expense, and defense production.

She has broadcast from most of Europe's principal cities, including Paris, where she sang atop the Eiffel Tower; has been sponsored by many of the nationally known products; and is familiar with many of radio's top entertainers of the day. William Garrity, engineer on the Atlantic broadcast for Miss De Leath, recently supervised the recording of the 4-track sound accompanying the motion picture, "Fantasia," considered the greatest production attempt with sound to date.

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR RADIO STAR

(Oct. 14, 1943)

It was a solemn scene of unusual interest in Mount Pulaski cemetery at 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 10, 1943, when memorial services were held at the grave in the Vonderlieth family lot for Vaughn De Leath, internationally known as the "First Lady of Radio".

The famous star's ashes were received in the city about two weeks ago, and placed in the

foundation of the monument erected there.

With a large number of old family friends and relatives present to attend the services, Rev. Ray O. Zumstein, pastor of the St. John's Lutheran Church, stood before a number of beautiful floral tributes and conducted an impressive service. He spoke of the life of Vaughn De Leath from the time she attended the Sunday School of that church, on through the years to become so well known in music and in radio work.

Her sister Mrs. Alma Cunningham, of Los Angeles, Calif., who came East a short time before her sister died, remained in New York City on business in connection with settling the estate. She arrived here in her old home city, last week, with the ashes of Vaughn De Leath.

Home Talent Play of 1897

On Tuesday, Nov. 9, 1897, an interesting home-talent production was given in Scroggin Opera House, Mount Pulaski, Ill., entitled "An Evening of Fun at the Union Depot," as a benefit for the Public Library. The performance was sponsored by the Mt. Pulaski Woman's Literary Club, with W. H. Clear as manager.

Although the program has been published before in the Times-News, we are going to repeat the names of those comprising the cast of characters, as follows:

Arthur F. Clark, Mrs. C. H. Otis, Oscar Huck, X. F. Beidler, Alma Vonderlieth, Will Wacaser, Oscar Danner, Mrs. Anna Eminger, Gene C. Clear, W. T. Lushbaugh, Mae Fowler, Eugenie Duboce, Della Washburn, Almira Cheney, Louis F. Myers, Marie Werlich, Dr. Will A. Swain, Sam Myers,

Ada Clark, W. H. Stafford, Mrs. Flora Mitchell, Virgie Smedley, Beryl Otis, Marguerite Clear, Don Beidler, Tommy Leahy, Burnie Lonacker, Mrs. Perry Hills, Emma Tutwiler, Mrs. H. F. Lushbaugh, Fannie Ralston, Jeannette Ralston, Earl Eminger, Mrs. W. H. Stafford, Herman S. Bekemeyer, Virgilia Pumpelly,

Grace Snyder, Herbert N. Capps, Charles H. Otis, Mrs. X. F. Beidler, Mrs. George A. Huck, Mrs. J. F. Lucas, Clarence A. Mayer, and others.

Those In Business In 1897

This performance was given a long time ago, but calling your attention to it once more is to tell who were in business in Mt. Pulaski at the time. Many of our readers will no doubt remember and enjoy reading their names.

Following are those having ads on the program folder:

Willis W. Snyder, tailor.
Mt. Pulaski Steam Laundry, Fred A. Schafer, Prop.
William Mann, Meat Market.
First National Bank.
R. S. Hershey, Furniture and Undertaking.
H. J. Mayer & Co., General Merchandise.
West & Son, Electric Light Plant.
Dr. P. H. Oyler, Physician and Surgeon.
C. D. Streeter, Lumber.
Walter W. Mayer, Jeweler.
W. F. Starz & Co., Flour Mill and Elevator.
Charles C. McKellar, Cigar Manufacturer.
John Christmann, Barber; Louis F. Weidenbacher, assistant.
Irvin Eminger, Cigar Manufacturer.
Ralston & Snyder, Contractors & Builders.
Mt. Pulaski Poultry House, I. T. Clark, Buyer.
Mt. Pulaski Wind Mill Co.
David Diamond, Clothing.
Scroggin & Son, Farmers Bank.
J. P. Fowler, General Merchandise.
Robert Turley, Meat Market.
Scroggin Hotel, R. F. Smithers, Prop.
Mt. Pulaski House, Walter McGraw, Prop.
Will S. Bonnell, Carriage Painter.
Clobes & Anderson, General Blacksmithing.
A. M. Rummer, Carriage and Wagon Repairing.
John L. Beidler, Druggist.
L. O. Addleman, Restaurant & Bakery.
C. H. Otis, Tinner & Plumber.
Mrs. C. K. Roberts, Notion Store.
Mrs. O. T. Capps, Millinery.
S. H. Newlin & Son, General Merchandise.
F. M. Schuler, Drugs.
Joe A. Horn, Attorney-at-Law.
The Globe Lunch Room, opposite Hotel Jenner.
E. A. Danner & Son, Clothiers.
C. F. Schafer, Hardware.
Dr. J. H. Evans, Dentist.
Hotel Jenner.
James J. Snyder, Hardware.
The Mt. Pulaski Weekly News.
Myers Bros., Clothing.
W. A. Drobisch, Shoes.
Harmon F. Lushbaugh, Jeweler.
Louis H. Drobisch, Barber.
Rigg & Jones, Physicians and Surgeons.
Mrs. Anna Drobisch, Millinery.
Shoup & Buckles, Hardware & Notions.
John W. Seyfer, Druggist.
Bekemeyer & Clear, General Merchandise.
A. K. Shride, Furniture & Undertaking.

Homestead of Vaughn De Leath on S. Marion St.

