



Then and Now



Point Loma Naval Radio Station NPL Pioneered Navy Communications

By Marie Brenn Crane
Guest Writer

Part one in an occasional series about radio station NPL, a history-making radio station that sat atop Point Loma at the turn of the century.

The siren on the Operations Building of the Point Loma Naval Station blared, shattering the quiet of the balmy morning and interrupting the leisurely breakfast that the officer in charge, Wayne Prather, and his wife had just begun.

Recalling that day, Prather admitted, "We'd had a late night at the Marine Officers Club and were looking forward to a lazy day. The kitchen telephone jangled almost simultaneously with the siren's blast, and I jumped to answer."

The excited caller was Chief Fraser, on watch at radio San Diego station NPL on Point Loma.

"Mr. Prather," he urged, "You'd better come to the station right

away."

Vexed, Prather wondered aloud, "Why, do we have problems with the Marine guard?"

"No, but you'd better come right away!" insisted the anxious Fraser.

Prather reluctantly pushed away from the unfinished breakfast. "Keep my food warm, Honey. I'll be right back," he remarked as he headed toward the nearby station. The memory of the next moments remain vivid to the 90-year-old Prather. "As I stepped inside the station, the Chief, eyes wide and hand shaking, waved a message at me while he talked on the phone. I reached for the piece of paper, a monitor copy of the Pacific Fleet broadcast, read the contents, and couldn't believe my eyes. In shock, I stumbled into my office, called my superior, Lt. Comdr. Wright, and quoted the message:

"Japanese attacking Pearl Harbor. This is not, repeat, not a drill."

The message that changed the world had been sent at 1000 PST.

Sunday, December 7, 1941. (This was 7:30 a.m., Pearl Harbor Time.)

Radio Point Loma (NPL) immediately relayed the first news of the attack to the rest of the world.

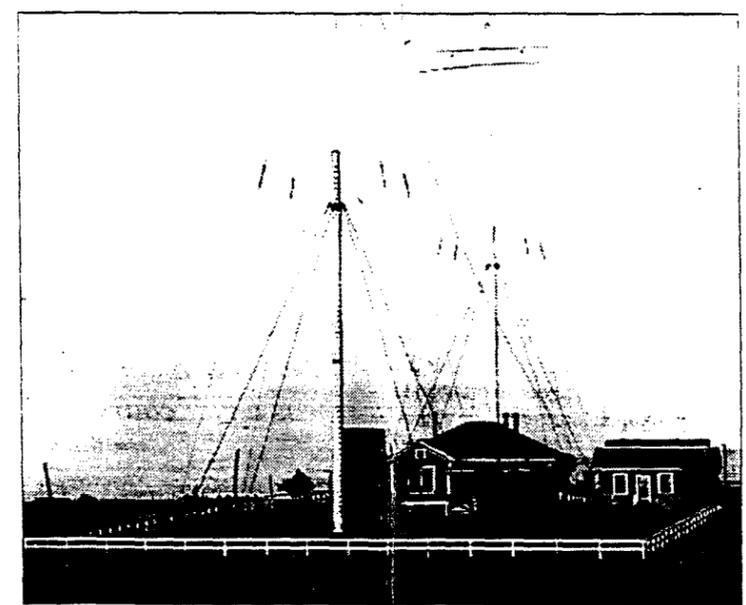
"Just the day before," Prather explained, "NPL had made arrangements to take over broadcast control for the Pacific Fleet while Pearl Harbor's facilities were being repaired."

Prather was deeply moved by the response of his crew.

"As the operators heard the devastating news on local radio, every one of them hastily reported to the station for duty. We organized them into shifts as needed, and they stayed on the job for 60 hours."

NPL continued to pick up the signals direct from Oahu, even after Hawaii's high-powered transmitters went back on the air, relaying the messages through Chollas Heights in East San Diego as an emergency backup for Radio Pearl Harbor.

But the attack on Pearl Harbor



Radio station NPL Point Loma, about 1907, view to east toward city. Established in 1906, NPL was among the first in the experimental new field that would eventually be called "radio."

photo courtesy of Marie Brenn Crane

was only one historic moment in the long record of history-making events for the innovative crews of radio station NPL. They had been establishing world records in communications since their first day of operation at

the turn of the century in a tiny wooden building atop remote Point Loma.

Next Week: NPL's role in the message that set off World War I and the beginning of wireless transmission.

Printers & Brothers, James Gang Saddles Up For 20 Years

By Kristen Collier
The Beacon

20 years, the enterprise has matured to do offset printing of business cards, letterheads, catalogs and



Rich added. Sportfishing outfits such as the Red Rooster, Fisherman's Landing and H & M Landing began