

# H. V. Kaltenborn Spent Several Years Of His Youth In Merrill

H. V. Kaltenborn, known today to millions as dean of radio's news commentators, as a journalist, lecturer and author, spent many of the years of his boyhood and youth in the city of Merrill. The son of Baron Rudolf von Kaltenborn, one-time officer of the famed Hessian guards, with whom he served in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71, Hans was born in Milwaukee on July 2, 1878.

With his parents, he came to Merrill in 1891 and entered the Merrill High school, working after school hours in the paint, oil and glass store which his father established here.

In school, the gangling youth who was to become a broad-shouldered, nearly six-footer, was a good student and his best marks—all in the 90's—were for United States, General and English history.

After school hours he repaired broken windows, painted sash, unloaded brick and sold paint, receiving \$3 a week, the most of which he spent on his hobby—bicycling.

Hans spent hours in the basement of his home learning to juggle Rhine wine bottles and balance articles on his chin. When the young lads of the town—the Merry Merrill Minstrels—put on a show at Berard's opera house, one of the star acts on the program was "Will o' the Wisp", Indian club juggling and swinging of lighted torches—by Hans von Kaltenborn. His ability to juggle and balance, which he still retains, once saved his life when he was captured by a band of guerilla soldiers in 1927 in the interior of China, where he was en route to see a bandit chieftain following an interview with Chiang Kai-Shek, head of the new Nationalist government. The guerillas liked the act so much they let Hans through their lines.

Cycling was all the rage in the late nineties and Hans was in the thick of it. He was the Merrill consul for the League of American Wheelmen, of whom there were more than 900 at that time.

The war with Spain found him underweight, boy itching to go. He enrolled on June 30, 1898 in Merrill's Co. F, 4th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry and was sent to Camp Douglas, Wis. Stuffing himself with bananas and milk, he made the weight limit.

He wired to C. N. Johnson, then publisher of the Advocate:

"Passed examination today. Hip, hip, hurrah. Nelly father."

And the editor commented: "The many friends of Mr. Kaltenborn in this city rejoice with him and admire his pluck. He will keep the Advocate readers fully aware of what transpires where Company F goes."

Kaltenborn was probably the only writer to cover the Spanish-American war in two languages. He augmented his Army pay by serving as war correspondent for the Merrill Advocate, Milwaukee Journal, and the Lincoln County Anzeiger.

He wrote many long and interesting articles to the Advocate about his experiences as a soldier at Camp Douglas and later at Anniston, Ala., where he was discharged on February 28, 1899 as first sergeant of his company.

After a trip through the south he returned to Merrill in the latter part of May and took a job as city editor of the Advocate.

He stuck at the city desk that summer and spent the following fall and winter as a lumberjack at a logging camp on the Wisconsin river, in charge of the "wanigan."

In the spring he went to work for a newly-established paint and oil company and plunged into the activities of the Lake View Cycle Club, serving as announcer at many of the club's racing events. He also completed a Century Run on July 29, 1900, making the hundred miles from the Lincoln hotel and back—via Wausau, Antigo and Dodgeville—in ten hours and thirty minutes.

Hans suffered another attack of wanderlust as stories of the great Paris Exposition fired his imagination. He made plans to make a cycling tour of Europe, studied French and arranged to act as foreign correspondent for the Advocate.

On August 28, 1900 he headed for New York and got a ride to Liverpool as nursemaid to a bunch of cattle on a cattle boat. He toured England, then went to France, Germany, Belgium and Corsica, selling stereoscopes and writing to the Advocate of his adventures.

He returned home on June 3, 1902

and started to take shorthand lessons and C. N. Johnson wrote: "Hans v. Kaltenborn was in Wausau yesterday where he is taking lessons in shorthand preparatory to assuming a position on some large eastern daily newspaper. Mr. Kaltenborn is another of several young men who have taken their initiatory degrees in journalism under this Norwegian—a pretty good lot of young men. Be men, boys, and fix your ambition on the uppermost star. Work hard and the future is secure. God bless you all."

Kaltenborn went east and got a job on the Brooklyn Eagle. It did not take the ambitious reporter long to realize his need for more education. He prepared himself by studying at home and in 1905, at the age of 27 years, matriculated at Harvard

as a special student.

He took an active part in all phases of college life and was graduated with many honors in 1909.

He took a job as tutor of Vincent Astor aboard the palatial Nourmahal, yacht of John Jacob Astor.

Kaltenborn then went back to the Eagle and forged rapidly ahead to the associate editorship of this great newspaper.

He organized and conducted extensive tours for the Eagle in the United States and abroad and did much traveling over the world on his own. He gained a reputation as a lecturer on foreign affairs. He studied the people and places he visited, interviewing many famous personages in every country.

Kaltenborn originated radio news broadcasting when he addressed the



In the above pictures, H. V. Kaltenborn is shown as a War Correspondent in the Pacific during World War II, and as First Sergeant of Co. F, 4th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, during the Spanish-American War.



Here are two pictures of H. V. Kaltenborn and Ed. Helldeman, both taken on Lake Fenwick, one in the nineties and the other taken when Mr. Kaltenborn was here on a visit in the early thirties. Ed. Helldeman, local barber, was a great fisherman and evidently he and Kaltenborn were seeking a pike or a bass when the first photo was taken. Shown in this picture on a visit here in 1932, Kaltenborn and Helldeman again got into a boat, and again posed for a picture, on the same lake about 40 years later.