Excluding members of Parliament and legislative assemblies, Ian Smith, 509 22nd Ave. N.W., could possibly claim some sort of record in the handling of plane boarding passes. Between 1951 and 1959 he made 500 round-trips from Calgary to Edmonton, turning in 1.000 tickets.

During that period Ian was principal soloist with Canada's National Back to the Bible Hour when it originated live from Edmonton's Capitol and Paramount Theatres. When these programs were taped Ian made many more flights to the capital city but hasn't kept track of them.

Senator Ernest Manning, then premier of Alberta, instituted this program in 1948 from the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute. While the name and format was changed, The National Back to the Bible Hour was the continuation of the old Sunday afternoon CFCA broadcasts originated by the late William Aberhart, first Social Credit premier in the world.

From 1948 to 1951, Ernest journeled down from Edmonton most Sunday afternoons to carry on these broadcasts in which he was the principal speaker — or preacher if you will — and at which Ian was often a guest soloist. As a matter of fact, his was a well-known voice then as he had often sung on Mr. Aberhart's programs as early as 1933.

The weight of office made it impossible for the premier to continue his journeys to Calgary weekly or even semi-weekly and thus it was the BBTH was moved to Edmonton and was broadcast live for 15 years over CFRN.

Sharing in the musical program directed by Mrs. Manning was Mary Shortt, violinist of Calgary, Ian and later his wife Marion. The trio is heard today on the Back to the Bible Hour but under somewhat different circumstances.

Beginning in 1967, all programs were taped with the Calgary musicians going to Edmonton on the call of Muriel Manning who has built up a creditable library housed in the MM Research System Centre. There are violin solos by Calgary's highly respected Mary Shortt; duets by Ian and Marion as well as numerous Edmonton artists' works in solos, quartets, etc., on file.

It is indeed an ill wind . . . for Ian Smith might never have attained such national recognition had it not been for the depression. He had come from Greenock, Scotland with his parents at the age of 13 months, and when a young man, started his life's career with the Canadian Pacific Railway. This was in 1927 and in 1974 he retired prematurely from the position of Sleeping Car Reservations Supervisor, which post he had held for 23 years.

His service with the railway, however, was interrupted by the depression and he was laid off in 1931. It was then he turned to music full time. He took vocal lessons from Madame Thom and never stopped studying in earnest until he received his LRSM degree from the London Royal Schools of Music. He was called back to the CPR in 1935, which must have tough going for the youthful musician.

While his baritone voice had been heard in the land since 1933 on Mr. Aberhart's CFCA Voice of the Prairies programs, he recalled his first singing engagement before a massive audience was during a revival meeting conducted by the late and noted Evangelist Amy Semple McPherson.

There were many such public appearances to follow. Ian told me the highlight of his secular singing career was his role with the first appearance of the Calgary Choral Society under the direction of Harold Ramsey. It was 1953 and Coronation Year when the society presented Merry England concert version, featuring Anne Ziegler and Webster Booth, British artists. Ian took the baritone lead and Mrs. Robert (Janet) Warren, still active in Calgary musical circles, was contralto soloist.

Ian also participated in the Civic Commission Coronation Service by singing Land of Hope and Glory at a mass gathering in Victoria Park. He was also chosen to sing O Canada at the official opening of the Stampede Coral December 15, 1950.

Mr. Smith has sung with the Calgary Light Opera Society when on one occasion his opposite female role was Olive Michener, sister of Canada's immediate past governor general; the First Baptist Church Choir; CPR Male Voice Quartet; as soloist with Jascha Galperin's noted trio heard three times weekly on special radio broadcasts; over CBC in Vancouver under the direction of John Avison to name only a few. He has also sung at more than 500 funerals. In the 50s he and Marion travelled with the Mannings on national tours, singing and preaching the gospel and meeting their Back to the Bible Hour fans.

How this busy human being found time for politics I'll never know but I do know that he was vice-president of the Alberta Social Credit League for 11 years; president of the Calgary Social Area Council for 13 years and was runner-up in the 1957 federal election to Progressive Conservative, the Hon. Douglas Harkness, Calgary North, one-time minister of defence. Ian was carrying the Social Credit banner of course.

And now that he has retired, he will be able to give more time to his hobbies of movie photography and stamp collecting. He returned recently from a trip to the Middle East where he took several reels of action. Nor are Ian's round-trips ended, for apart from his occasional flights north for tapping new programs, he will be attending meetings of the Board of Management of the National Back to the Bible Hour of which he was recently made a member by Senator Manning, president.

IAN & MARION SMITH
Baritone's scrap-books

Those who belittle Calgary's culture — past and present — should immerse themselves in the scrap-books of local musical doyen Ian Ferguson Smith. Pages of clippings, photographs and programs reveal the scope and fervency of the city's musical past.

Many international stars, including Dame Nellie Melba, Sarah Bernhardt, Sophie Tucker, Clifton Webb, Jack Benny and Fred Astaire, appeared in the fledgling city.

In the early days of this century, Calgary and Toronto were the only cities in Canada with their own professional symphony orchestras. Calgary was on the Pantages and the Orpheum circuits that brought headline vaudeville talent. Touring drama troupes playing for Calgary's Grand Theatre had the largest stage in Canada, capable of handling the most ornately dressed road shows.

Smith, brought to Calgary as an infant by his Scottish parents in 1912, joined the ranks of local musicians as a pianist and singer. His rich, well-trained baritone voice was soon in constant demand. Not only a soloist, he had the distinction of sharing performing honors with top-rated visiting artists and the finest singing groups in the city.

Employed by the CPR's ticket and sleeping car services, Smith was one of many laid off during the Great Depression. In earnest he pursued an interim career as a singer. For four years, until he was rehired by the railway, singing brought him far more renown than financial reward.

It was a natural that he should become a member of the popular 50-voice CPR male Voice Choir, directed by baritone Glyndyr Jones. During that time, Smith was a member of the busy Calgary male Quartette. The other three vocalists were real estate's Lyle brothers, E.C. and Kennett, and James Richardson who, later was replaced by A.N. Hutchinson.

When radio concerts appeared on Calgary's musical scene the four singers became, for the duration of each broadcast, The Horseshoe Mummers, sponsored by the Calgary Brewery. They performed in CFAC's Tapestry Studio atop the old Herald Building. The master of ceremonies and narrator was the brewery head's nephew, Geoff Dover.

Off the air the quartette was just The Mummers, Ian Smith, Roy Austin, A.B. "Pat" O'Riordan and Fred Jarvis. For weeks they were part of the Capitol Theatre stage show, performing with Jaffe, His Violin and His Band between films. They were accompanied by violinists Jack and Dorothy Norton and pianist Alan Crawford or Alberta Boyd. Under yet another name to suit the occasion, that same Calgary foursome was billed as the Fireside Quartette for other 1936 radio shows.

Smith sang on all three local radio stations. He was widely heard on the weekly broadcasts originated by William Aberhart. To this date Smith has chalked up 50 years with that program and its successor, Canada's National Bible Hour.

In those between-wars years, the scrap-books reveal, our musical community was thriving. The Calgary Women's Musical
Club had been meeting in the Isis Theatre, a cosy sandstone playhouse erected by pioneer Dr. Lindsay as a family picture house on 1st Street West near 12th Avenue. But by 1935 the club had 500 members and its monthly recital meetings were attracting an equal number of guests to performances in the Palliser Hotel Ballroom.

Local artists such as Olga, violinist wife of S.C. Nickle; pianist Jessie Ackland; High River's Odette De Foras, soprano, who had become prima donna at London's Covent Garden Theatre; and Norma Piper, famous for La Scala and other European performances, drew crowds without fail.

The musical club, for its Celebrity Concert Series of guest performances in the 1930s, brought to Calgary violinist Fritz Kreisler; Metropolitan Opera prima Donna Grete Stueckgold; England's Percy Grainger and Jose Iturbi of international concert hall fame. On two occasions, Smith's favorite baritone, world-famous Lawrence Tibbett, packed the old arena on the Exhibition Grounds with a crowd of 4,000 music lovers in 1937.

Beginning in 1907, the Alberta Musical Festival was an annual showcase of talent. It was attended by 2,000 music lovers on its 26th birthday in 1933, when Calgary's population stood at only about 82,000.

Since the 1890s, Calgarians had flocked to light opera performances. From modest beginnings in the frontier town, shows had developed to the extent that, in 1932, the Calgary Light Opera Society staged Miss Hook of Holland for three nights at the Sherman Grand. Smith grins when he recalls his singing role as one of the loafers in crowd scenes. The following year, in November 1933, the society played The Quaker Girl to packed houses.

There was a series of sellouts for another Calgary aggregation, the Carolina Minstrels, with a cast of about 50. In those days before racial hypersensitivity, 41 singers and comedians in the group wore "black face" and nobody felt it was a putdown when the Grand Theatre throbbed with the boisterousness, accents, lyrics and sentimentality of Can't You hear Me Calling Caroline?, Every Nation Has a Flag But a Coon and Darktown Strutters Reunion.

That troupe played for two nights and a matinee in October 1932 and later performed in Lethbridge. Smith also sang "colored hits" solo at the Variety Theatre on 8th Avenue East, singing Chloe and Old Man River. He shared billing honors with a fire-eater named Frenchy the Human Torch.

It's all there in the scrapbooks: performances of the singing Orpheus Society and the Palace Theatre appearances of the Calgary Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra was conducted by Grigori Garbovitsky with concert master Jascha Galperin, first violinist Jean de Rimanoczy and Smith as soloist.

The veteran Calgary songster was also a soloist in an entirely different vein in November 1935. That's where I found we had something rare in common. In Calgary, Smith sang. Far away from home as a broadcaster on the West Coast, I performed as announcer for the same star. Smith appeared at the Grand; I at the Foursquare Gospel Tabernacle on Kingsway in Vancouver. The featured performer on tour was evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson.

Now, who was muttering something about cultural war-
The Calgary Male Quartet - about 1929.
Pete Lyle (Elmer), Richardson, Dick Lyle (Kenneth), and Ian Smith.