

Susquehanna

THE FIRST  FIFTY YEARS

Radio



Philip K. Eberly

POWER
104
KRBE

The NEW Country
EAGLE 97.3 FM

San Francisco
KNBR 68

Magic 93 fm

104
KRBE
Hits, Without the hype.

570 KLIF AM
"TalkRadio"

POWER
99

W-QBA
RADIO
CONTINENTAL

The Classic
Wgh fm
97


WARM 98

WSBA
AM 910

KFOG
104.5 FM

WFMS 95.5
IS COUNTRY MUSIC.

WARM
AM 590

MAGIC 93 FM

TALK RADIO
WTKN
AM-570

**Susquehanna Radio
The First Fifty Years**

Susquehanna

THE FIRST  FIFTY YEARS

Radio

Susquehanna Radio Corp.
York, Pennsylvania
1992

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Researched and written by Philip K. Eberly

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Susquehanna Radio • The First Fifty Years
is dedicated to all those employees—
past, present, and future—
whose talents have contributed to the
success of Susquehanna Radio.

Author's Acknowledgements

Writing on any aspect of American popular culture of the past 50 years is a formidable challenge. Yet, when the subject matter encompasses one institution within that culture, the parameters are well defined and the points of departure are its people. Thus, to interview persons who passed through Susquehanna Radio's first half-century became a necessity and a pleasure. I acknowledge a debt of unspeakable gratitude to the scores of present and former employees, and others, who could answer the questions I sometimes didn't even know to ask. The number of yesterday's and today's staffers, all part of the Susquehanna cavalcade who helped in some way, is staggering, and I apologize that I cannot begin to thank them by name.

Obviously, this history could never have seen the light of day without the support of Susquehanna Radio's Chief Executive Officer Louis J. Appell, Jr., and its President Arthur W. Carlson. To them I extend my special appreciation for their unwavering faith in the project, for their continued backing through months when there were no signs of tangible progress, and for their willingness to lavish superior production values on the finished product—all hallmarks of a first-rate organization.

Likewise, Dave Kennedy, Sue Krom, and Polly Stetler deserve special recognition for their efforts in the editing process, as do members of the corporate secretarial staff, past and present, for their tedious transcribing of interviews from cassette onto paper, and for typing various drafts of the manuscript.

Finally, I should like to pay boundless thanks to my sainted wife, Lois, whose forbearance, whether a writing task is in progress or not, can only be described as beyond category.

Philip K. Eberly

Philip K. Eberly

Foreword

In the early 1940s, when WSBA was just an idea, then a probability, and in 1942, an actual fact, I was a young man in my teens. While the excitement of these events was infectious, age and school demands placed me very much on the fringe of the activity. Little did I suspect that the small one-kilowatt venture in York would lead to a lively, lifelong career in the radio industry.

This book is about Susquehanna Radio and its 50 years of operation. It is not intended to be a simple history book with a listing and description of chronological events. Rather, it is a book about the people of Susquehanna, what they have done, what they have accomplished, and their collective successes and failures. It is a book about many events, the kind that seemingly can only happen in radio. Some are humorous, many are unusual, a few are tragic.

The radio industry in the United States is peculiarly American—it is as spirited, as eccentric, as competitive, and as diverse as the audience it serves. From the early days of radio to the present, the sheer growth of the industry and the vast number of stations it has fostered has driven competition among stations to a fever pitch. And in an industry where a listener's loyalty can be lost as quickly as it takes to turn the dial, the challenge to a station's staff and management can be considerable. Unlike Great Britain, for example, where the four government-run BBC stations and the handful of independents guarantee a certain continuity of listenership, the loyalty of the average American radio listener is difficult to earn.

Radio is very human. In its news and information, it is not merely words on a page; it is a voice that conveys compassion, or urgency, or humor. In its entertainment, it is the full range of the musical spectrum which mirrors the diversity of radio's audience. It is the presentation of the talk show host or the weather person or the traffic announcer. It is the quality of its technical staff, its research team, its sales team, and its administrative staff. The components of a successful radio station are nearly too many to list.

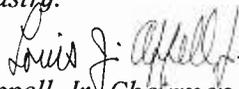
At Susquehanna Radio, we have been truly fortunate to have attracted many of the most talented and creative people in the industry. Many have remained with Susquehanna with a loyalty and dedication uncommon in an industry known for its turnover.

This book is dedicated to all the people who have worked for, do work for, and will work for Susquehanna. There are thousands of individuals who have made significant contributions to the Company's success over the past 50 years. For every person mentioned in the book, there are many others who could have been mentioned. For every story told, there are a hundred more. For any person or significant event that has been missed, we apologize.

Compiling Susquehanna's 50 years of history has been a monumental task requiring the efforts of many people. But credit for Susquehanna Radio—The First Fifty Years truly belongs to Philip K. Eberly, whose time, talent, and understanding of Susquehanna and the radio industry have resulted in a work of which he can be proud. Thank you, Phil.

In closing, there are two thoughts which predominate as I review the past 50 years. The first is the incomparable, unique, and irreplaceable contribution made by Art Carlson to Susquehanna Radio's success for nearly 35 years. Art is a very special person whose good humor and tendency toward self-deprecation often overshadow a keen intellect, a truly creative mind, a commitment to excellence, and an undiminishing devotion to radio—qualities which have enabled him to provide dynamic and effective leadership. He has truly earned the recognition, both within the Company and to the outside world, as the personification of Susquehanna Radio.

Finally, I consider how fortunate I am to have had the opportunity to be associated with such a fast-moving, utterly fascinating industry as radio broadcasting. Often frustrating but never dull, radio management presents challenges and rewards which are not often found in other endeavors. Almost uniquely, radio is first and foremost a business of people. This fact virtually guarantees a daily exposure to the full gamut of the human experience. A typical day at a dynamic station can provide emotional swings from exhilaration to depression, from a succession of small triumphs to the most humbling of defeats. It is a business in which the overly cautious are left in the dust while prudent risk-takers flourish. I am grateful that fate provided me the chance to play a small part in this remarkable industry.



Louis J. Appell, Jr., Chairman
Susquehanna Radio Corp.

Pioneer Days

Early WSBA



Chapter 1

To persons of a certain age, any reference to “The War” will always mean that period between December 7, 1941, and September 2, 1945, when the United States was engaged in an all-out effort to subdue the Axis enemy, Germany and Japan.

No aspect of American life was untouched. Millions of young men and women were serving in the armed forces and their daily fortunes (especially those in combat) were being followed intently. Meanwhile, what was taking place in the civilian sector offered a fascinating counterpoint to the air, sea, and land battles in far-off places with strange-sounding names. Along with the ever-lengthening casualty lists that marred family life across the country, civilian America faced the severe rationing of scarce items—gasoline, meat, and tires, among others.

All of show business began to reflect the general theme of an America at war. Through popular music (“When the Lights Go on Again All Over the World,” and “The White Cliffs of Dover”), Broadway (*This Is the Army*), and the movies (*Wake Island*), the American public was constantly reminded of its wartime status.

Radio, the pre-television mass entertainment medium, more than any of the performing arts, mirrored the nation’s involvement in the conflict. The frequency of newscasts was stepped up and dramatic shows were written with wartime themes. Audience participation shows featured servicemen and women as contestants almost exclusively. The war was uppermost on everyone’s mind.

Into this most unsettled period of modern history came WSBA to York, Pennsylvania, on September 1, 1942. In fact, the station’s

origin bore a historic World War II imprint: WSBA's license, dated December 15, 1941—technically a construction permit—was the last license granted in the country until the wartime freeze was lifted.

In 1941, the York area, located in southcentral Pennsylvania, was serviced by a single radio station, WORK. With a population of nearly 57,000 in the city and over 120,000 more countywide, the potential market for a second radio station was recognized by two WORK employees, Otis B. Morse IV, announcer and program director, and Willis Weaver, engineer. With the identification of the attractive and available 900 frequency, their belief in the success of a second station grew.

But the making of WSBA required the help of a third key player. In a stroke of near genius, Messrs. Morse and Weaver approached a man with not only tremendous business experience and a vital interest in the community, but a strong background in theater management as well. His name was Louis J. Appell, Sr., president and owner of The Pfaltzgraff Pottery Company. Through the combined talents and resources of these three men, the dream of a second York radio station soon became reality.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Otis Morse IV

Willis Weaver and I made our presentation one evening, and, like the good businessman he was, Mr. Appell let us do all the talking. We covered the technical side of it, the programming side of it, and the sales side until about 11 o'clock. At that point, he got up and walked over to the washroom. He washed his hands and said, "How much will it cost?" We said we thought the station could be put on the air for about \$35,000. And he said, "OK." I heard later the initial cost came in for much more than that.

Housed in a brick structure of colonial design, the building that would be WSBA's home for the next 34 years was located two and a half miles north of the city of York on Pennsylvania Route 111, also known as the Susquehanna Trail. The company formed to own and operate WSBA was given the name Susquehanna Broadcasting Co. The precise origin of WSBA's call letters will probably remain a mystery. Legend has it that the letters stood for Susquehanna Broadcasting Authority. However, this could not be substantiated through documentation or through the personal recollections of participants present at that time. Some pioneer stations chose call letters with special significance: e.g., WLS, for *World's Largest Store*, originally owned by Sears, Roebuck, and Co.; or WHP, for the *Harrisburg Pa-*

triot newspaper. But other stations in earlier times allowed the Federal Communications Commission to assign call letters arbitrarily. WSBA may well have been in the latter category.

The building was designed by C.S. Buchart, a young York architect, who recalls how the style of architecture came about: "I was contacted by Louis J. Appell, Sr., to visit his office above the old Wizard Theater on Market Street, where the York City Municipal Parking Garage now stands. Mr. Appell and Mike Landau (manager of the Pfaltzgraff Pottery at the time) had seen a station in Charlottesville, Virginia, which they liked. So I went there to study it."

Initially, all facets of the operation were located on the first floor: two soundproof studios—one large enough to accommodate a symphony orchestra—with an elevated control room between them; reception room; newsroom; administrative and accounting offices; and executive, sales, program, and continuity offices.

From the first, a high standard of engineering was established at WSBA. A 240-foot radiating tower, combined with the latest, most advanced RCA transmitter, and other state-of-the-art equipment (most of which barely beat the wartime moratorium on such "non-essential" items) assured the best sound technically possible.

The early engineering tasks at WSBA were supervised by two men: Willis Weaver was the chief engineer and Woodrow G. Eberhart, Jr., recruited from WCHS in Charleston, West Virginia, was the first director of engineering. While Mr. Weaver's tenure at WSBA was short, Mr. Eberhart remained head of engineering until mid-1951.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Woodrow G. Eberhart, Jr.

Before WSBA's first manager, Bob Kauffman, made me an offer to join the staff of the new station in York, I had helped put two other stations on the air: WVFD, Fort Dodge, Iowa, and WGTC, Greenville, North Carolina.

When I arrived in York, the building out in RD 5 was just going up. As the equipment began coming in, we had it shipped to the Pfaltzgraff Pottery and assembled it on the second floor. Although the war had been on for six months, equipment was still reasonably accessible. We did have trouble getting copper wire for the ground systems and other kinds of electrical wiring. But we scrounged around and got enough wire together to put in the ground system.

Our biggest problem in engineering at first was keeping engineers because of the draft. We hired two women engineers at WSBA: Jane Trent from WCHS, the station I had left (Jane may have been one of the first women engineers in the country), and Betty Matson from York.

We think of broadcast technology today as being very advanced and a bit forbidding for the newcomer. Well, I can tell you some of the functions we had to perform then with what is now considered primitive equipment offered their share of challenges. For example, before tape, we did all our recording on smooth acetate discs. The recording head worked like a lathe affair, so that it would advance out as it cut grooves in the discs. Unlike later equipment, we recorded from the center to the outer edge of the disc, so the chips caused by the recording head cutting into the acetate would be in back of the head. If you recorded from the outside in, the chips would get all tangled up in the process.

If you recorded something off the air, it was not the simple matter tape is. For example, I remember recording several of FDR's "Fireside Chats" from the network for playback the next day and "The Paul Whiteman Show" by the cumbersome acetate process.

Wartime conditions dictated a low-key WSBA opening day ceremony. An invocation, greetings from York Mayor Harry B. Anstine, an address by Lt. Gov. S.S. Lewis (a Yorker), and a rousing "Music of All Wars" sung by The Rotary Chorus highlighted the station's inaugural broadcast. The last-minute realization that the station lacked an American flag to raise during the ceremonies sent an employee scurrying to the local Sears, Roebuck store.

But if WSBA came into the world without great fanfare and hoopla in deference to the troubled time, it nonetheless quickly became an information and entertainment force to be reckoned with. At "900, the Midpoint on the Dial," the station's nondirectional signal reached into 15 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, in addition to sections of Maryland, New Jersey, and Delaware. Now the second station licensed to York, WSBA was poised to do battle with WORK, a well-entrenched affiliate of the NBC Red/Blue and Mutual networks with a 10-year head start.

The nucleus of the 21-person staff consisted of Robert Kauffman, general manager, previously with stations in Mankato, Minnesota, and Greenville, North Carolina, and also The *Cedar Rapids Gazette*; Otis Morse IV, program director; Woodrow G. Eberhart, Jr., director of engineering; Willis Weaver, chief engineer; Max Robinson, chief announcer, formerly with WHO, Des Moines; Sam Leavitt, sports and news director; news editor Saralee Deane, from WHB and KMBC, Kansas City; Herman Stebbins, farm editor; Neil Robinson, continuity writer; and Lew Trenner from WBAL in Baltimore, and Louis Lang, salesmen.

The WSBA programming during its earliest days was built on news (usually on the hour) and recorded music drawn from a large li-

brary of 78 rpm records and two transcription services, plus local and syndicated wartime service features ("You Can't Do Business With Hitler," "Gardening for Victory"). Special effort was made to make WSBA microphones accessible to as many people as wartime rationing would allow. Judicious use of gasoline enabled the station's 1942 V-8 Ford sedan to transport the gear for broadcasting York High football games, daily luncheon music shots from York's Rainbow Grill, Sunday afternoon "Victory Dances" from the Valencia Ballroom, and other events from remote locations.

During the station's first decade, no staff member had a greater impact on the air product than Program Director Otis Morse. A native Yorker, he began his career on WBBM, Chicago. From there, he returned to his hometown as an announcer and later program director at WORK. As WSBA's first program director, he functioned as an administrator, a writer, an entertainer, a newscaster, and a narrator—and he tackled each with a single obsession—to make WSBA the premier station in York. When WSBA-FM entered the picture in 1947, he also served as its program director. Later, Otis Morse became the first anchor and special events supervisor for WSBA-TV. Mr. Morse left the Company in 1955 to become secretary to Gov. George Leader of Pennsylvania.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Otis Morse IV

While all the excitement of constructing the station was going on, we were writing up program schedules and making all the other preparations needed to launch a new radio station. We did this at some makeshift offices in the Pfaltzgraff factory on West King Street in York. It was a little hard to keep in mind that you were working *there* for a radio station that was taking form out on a beautiful meadow in York, RD 5, when you were surrounded by pottery dust.

Our original programming included regular commercial recordings supplemented with the transcription service. We programmed each musical selection, whether on recording or transcription, in advance. We worked setting things up for three months, seven days a week, before we went on the air.

Finally came the time for a dress rehearsal, and then another, and another, four straight days. Everybody who had anything to do with the programming went through this—everyone except Herman Stebbins. It was early harvest time on the farm and nobody saw any reason to drag him in from the fields to rehearse. Well, opening day on September 1 finally came, and the only thing that really went well was Herman Stebbins!

Just as incorporating a farm show into our schedule was innovative, so were we determined to take radio out where news was happening. Now this was in the pre-tape recording days, and besides, we

had a telephone company which required a month's notice to order remote lines. That left us with just one choice, using a monstrous Presto recording machine. It was supposed to be portable, if you could lift 250 pounds and carry it any distance. We used that Presto for everything away from the station until tape came in, and I think my left arm today is still longer than my right because of that.

We also had our share of trouble with the early tape recorders. It seemed they never worked right when you really wanted something badly. I remember when Harry Truman's 1948 "Give 'em Hell" campaign train came to York, we got what we thought was some good tape for quick shots. But when we went back to the station, not a stinking piece was of air quality. Fortunately, our remote line for the Truman speech was in place and we were able to get that on the air.

One thing any program director of a new radio station must do is quickly establish recognizable personalities and features. For Otis Morse, the first such personality was Herman Stebbins.

Mr. Stebbins' long run on the WSBA daily farm program (called "On the Farm, with Herman Stebbins") came about through his association with Sinking Springs Farms, connected in ownership with the Susquehanna Broadcasting Co. A native of Ohio, Mr. Stebbins had become the managing director of Sinking Springs Farms in 1938. Four years later, when WSBA went on the air, he was appointed the station's first farm director, a position he held until he retired in 1979. While his dairy herds at Sinking Springs Farms were winning state and national production awards, the influence of his radio program grew in the agricultural community as well as among advertisers. The long list of "On the Farm" sponsors during the Stebbins years reads like a Who's Who in American agriculture. For WSBA's first decade, the program was heard during the noon hour, and after that in the early morning. Looking back over more than four decades, Herman Stebbins describes what it was like to wear two hats—one as a practicing farmer, the other as a radio broadcaster.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Herman Stebbins

When they were putting the first WSBA program schedule together in the summer of 1942, I understand Bob Kauffman (the first general manager) said, "This is a natural—the farm manager as a radio farm director!" The next thing I know, there I was standing behind a microphone.

This was pretty exciting stuff for a young guy who didn't know a thing about radio. The war was on at the time and much more attention than usual was focused on agriculture. Preparing a daily

radio program and still keeping after my responsibilities at Sinking Springs Farms kept me stepping pretty lively. Of course, I always drew on the resources of my farm work to give added dimension to the agriculture news.

As near as I can recall, the only program available in this part of Pennsylvania beamed to farmers was "The National Farm and Home Hour," heard on NBC. So we tried to localize our approach to farming in this region. I was always amazed, however, at how many non-farmers listened. It always seemed on the strength of the mail and comments, there were as many townfolk who tuned in as those who made their livings on the farms. Knowing other farmers, though, I should have realized that as a group, they never seemed to have too much to say about things like radio listening. But I knew, just by keeping my ears open, going to meetings, talking to government people and salesmen, we *did* have most of the farm community as regular listeners. As time went on, we did tilt the show somewhat in the direction of home gardening, food tips, nutrition and the like to give it as much general appeal as possible.

Over the years, we had a wide range of sponsors—feeds, fertilizers, equipment, chemicals, seeds, paints, building materials, energy systems.

Speaking of advertisers, I helped to create one that's still going strong today. Not long after I started doing the radio program, I remember being in a meeting with Mr. Appell (Sr.) and Phil Kable (Susquehanna's first corporate secretary). I offered a suggestion that somebody ought to do something about advertising milk through an association.

Mr. Appell said, "You're the guy to do it!" When I tried to beg off by saying I didn't have time, he came right back with, "The busy people are the ones who get things done." So, guess who organized the first milk producers' association in this area?

For Louis J. Appell, Jr., in his teens that late summer, his family's new radio station served as a fascinating diversion from concerns about his role in a world at war. Home on vacations from prep school, he had watched the WSBA building rise from its foundation. In the summer of 1943, between the end of school and his freshman year at Harvard, he spent time at WSBA working where needed, observing all phases of the operation and acquiring a knowledge of broadcasting fundamentals. His insights and recollections have proved a valuable resource in tracing the Susquehanna story.

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers the Early Days at WSBA

WSBA was conceived when two gentlemen paid a visit to my father at our home. I recall that one was Otis Morse, a York radio pro-

fessional, and the other, Willis Weaver. I learned that Mr. Weaver was a radio engineer who had determined a new station could be built in York on the 900 kc frequency.

In spite of the fact that the station would only be permitted to operate during daytime hours, and thus be competitively handicapped, the decision was made to go ahead and build the station. A location was picked on Sinking Springs Farms property, and a local architect, Clair Buchart, was commissioned to design the structure.

My earliest memories were of climbing around the building while under construction. Unfortunately, I was away at school when most of the various activities preparatory to putting the station on the air took place. However, I did have the opportunity to work at WSBA during the summer of 1943.

What with the concerns about World War II and the dislocations it caused, things were rather informal and often pretty unprofessional in those days during the summer of '43. There was a great deal of individual creativity in evidence, regardless of format or programming policies. For example, the morning show host, Red Kain, once played a stirring marching song, announcing it as the Phillips Exeter Academy alma mater (which it wasn't), simply because I was present and it's where I went to school.

No doubt partly due to stress and strain brought about by the war, nobody took things too seriously. A station rule which stated that persons should not enter a studio while a broadcast was in progress was consistently overlooked. When Hal Shutz, a talented musician, played the organ, most of the staff knocked off work and sat listening in the studio.

During that summer my main role was that of errand boy, although I did have a frequent opportunity to assist in the newsroom. Of course, those were exciting times because the war was being heavily waged on both the western and eastern halves of the globe. The news machine bells rang constantly, announcing important news bulletins, and on each occasion, the staff jumped into action to get the latest news on the air. Despite being thousands of miles away and safe from harm, the thrill of being involved in momentous events was ever-present.



Commercials on WSBA at first were few and far between. "Per inquiry" operators found the congenial spot-free climate on WSBA to their liking. Vitamins, flower seeds, self-taught piano lessons, and other "PI" items helped pay many of the initial bills. Local advertisers were slow in taking notice of "that new station out on the Susquehanna Trail." Armed with the PI success stories, the small sales force began convincing York merchants to get on board.

In WSBA's formative months, WORK, choosing to follow the time-honored custom of ignoring an upstart competitor, paid no attention to the new radio voice in town. However, as 1943 began, word of advertiser success stories and speculation about a growing WSBA listenership—there were no ratings in those days—began reaching the competition. Suggestions that WSBA was making inroads were waved aside with lofty disdain. At that time, only network outlets were considered “quality” stations; of the 913 stations on the air, those considered to be the crown jewels of broadcasting were affiliated with the National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System. Many of these (particularly the NBC affiliates) were the old-line, pioneer facilities whose origins dated back to the mid-twenties, the dawn of networking. Independent stations which had to rely on recorded music and news were often the objects of scorn, considered by the ruling radio establishment to be unfit for membership in the broadcasting brotherhood. In the NBC diadem, WORK was considered an essential component.

But if radio star wars in 1943 were fought on the battlegrounds of network affiliation, WSBA would become a worthy opponent for the well-entrenched WORK before the end of the year. The addition of a live musical combo to WSBA's program lineup that year further strengthened the station's attack on WORK's position, and may have had greater impact on its acceptance during the first decade than any other factor.

House bands, as old-time radio buffs know, were employed by many radio stations in the thirties, forties, and fifties. In most cases, musicians who comprised these groups were versatile enough to perform in both the classical and popular modes. Some stations also hired a second type of group to play live music, a country and western band (called “hillbilly” then). Since WSBA operated only during daytime hours, a house band was deemed unnecessary. Instead, a staff organist, Hal Shutz, filled that role. As for a country and western combo, the one the station hired was destined to become a legend of sorts, and except for a few minor changes in direction might have ascended to show business heights.

The band, The 101 Ranch Boys, was originally formed with musicians from Kansas and Oklahoma: Andy Reynolds, leader and acoustic guitar; Smokey Roberts, accordion; George Long, string bass; and Cliff Brown, fiddle. Named after an actual ranch in Oklahoma, The 101 Ranch Boys offered more than the standard country and western repertory; their comedy routines and other stage artifices helped develop a large following, on the air and off.

Not long after The 101 Ranch Boys began producing their melody and madness on WSBA, in early 1943, Louis Vyner succeeded Robert Kauffman as general manager. Mr. Vyner, who was also conductor of the York Symphony Orchestra, developed a close relationship with the band, championing their cause and separating his own musical biases (and those of his friends) from the necessities of commercial broadcasting.

Usually heard Mondays through Fridays from 8:30–9:00 A.M. and six days a week from 3:30–4:00 P.M., The 101 Ranch Boys programming ran with full sponsorship, and, along with the per inquiry ads, provided the indispensable commercial foundation for the station's future successes.

Late in the 1940s, two high water marks for the group were reached when they landed a Columbia Records contract and a coast-to-coast network radio show on the American Broadcasting Company.

Originating in WSBA's Studio A, The 101 Ranch Boys' ABC program was heard from noon to 12:30 P.M. on Saturdays. It lasted almost four years, an unusually long life span for a sustaining coast-to-coast show anytime, but a stunning one in those trying days of network radio during the late forties and early fifties. Scripted and produced by Otis Morse, the program was a half-hour of "straight" music (no comedy), showcasing the band's versatility. Mail and phone calls poured in to ABC and WSBA after each broadcast. Ironically, in the late fifties, just as country music was beginning to establish for itself a strong national identity, The 101 Ranch Boys disbanded.

It is doubtful whether the success WSBA enjoyed in its early days would have come as quickly as it did had it not been for The 101 Ranch Boys. How this country and western band landed at WSBA and subsequently became woven into the station's program fabric provides not only a fascinating fragment of Susquehanna history, but a captivating slice of Americana as well. In the following account, William (Smokey) Roberts, the band's accordion player, traces the band's odyssey from the Midwest to a newly minted radio station in Pennsylvania.

A WSBA Instant Replay—William (Smokey) Roberts

Back in Kansas City—I guess I was about 12 years old at the time—I was sitting in my dad's lumberyard one day playing and a guy named Andy Reynolds walked up to me and said, "How'd you like to go on the radio and play your accordion?"

I said, "Well, I don't know much about it." But Andy persisted, saying his newly formed band playing on W9XBY in Kansas City needed an accordion player. Naturally, for a 12-year-old kid to get a

shot to play on this important 50,000-watt station was a big thrill. So the four of us—Andy on guitar; Cliff Brown, a Cherokee Indian, on fiddle; George Long on bass; and myself—were playing on W9XBY and making personal appearances around the Midwest when we got two attractive offers at the same time. One was to go to York, Pennsylvania, the other to Shreveport, Louisiana.

I didn't think my mother would let me leave home, but she finally gave in. We had another problem, though. Three of us wanted to come to York, but Cliff voted for Shreveport. And you know how we convinced him on York? We told him that alligators would eat his kids down in Louisiana, and thanks to an Indian superstition he believed us. So help me, that's how York won out!

We took off, the four of us, in a 1936 Ford. I remember coming over old Route 30 and the rain we hit in those mountains! We only had about 10 dollars between us, so we would eat anything we could find. I remember Cliff using his Cherokee technique to kill rabbits, which we'd roast over open fires. There were times we thought that old Ford wouldn't make it over those mountains—or us either, since we had to stop to heat up every so often. We did finally make it. I believe we figured we traveled 1,200 miles from Kansas City.

Everything was uphill after that. We had fun on the air, we had fun on the stage. We played six days a week on WSBA, and we played all the fairs, carnivals, festivals it seems like in every town and city in Pennsylvania and surrounding states. We also played a big show at Independence Hall with Roy Acuff and Gene Autry and other big names from all branches of show business. I remember President Truman sitting in the front row laughing and enjoying the show.

I think we were more than a radio band—we were an *act*. And Otey (Morse) was so important to that act. Without Otey, I'm sure it would never have worked. He was part of the Ranch Boys. Whether it was our daily shows, or the later ABC show, Otey knew how to keep everything together.

You have to remember we were a bunch of young dudes in those days, ready to whoop it up any time. And what we played was called "hillbilly" at the time; it wasn't country, or it wasn't western—they called it hillbilly! And that used to bother me. I came from *Kansas* and there's no hills in Kansas! Our main thing was "Western Swing," like Spade Cooley and the Sons of the Pioneers. We *could* play hillbilly, you understand, if we had to, like when we got some jobs down South.

The hillbilly thing reminds me of an interesting story concerning Cliff. Cliff Brown could play bluegrass like mad on his fiddle—more than bluegrass, actually. He could double-bow and even triple-bow. Well, WSBA got a new manager after we were there a while. His name was Louis Vyner, and he was also conductor of the York Symphony Orchestra, and a classically trained violinist. Occasionally, for fun, he'd come on our show and play fiddle. Well, Cliff tried to

teach him double-bow and triple-bow action and Mr. Vyner could not learn it. On the other hand, Cliff picked up "Flight of the Bumble Bee" in no time.

All of us could hear a song once or so and we had it. That's why we seldom repeated tunes on the air. And being on six days a week, two shows a day, that says something. We weren't afraid to try different things. Cliff, for example, had a repertoire of fiddle tunes that isn't written on paper even today. We did Spanish songs, even polkas.

We gave each guy a fair share of the spotlight. We split the money five ways, too, except for Andy (Reynolds), who acted as manager and received a little extra. (The four-piece band was supplemented by steel guitarist Leonard Zinn shortly after the Ranch Boys arrived at WSBA.) We trusted each other and we didn't have fights. Oh, we argued over the music, but that was it.

In addition to The 101 Ranch Boys, a second program innovation that greatly influenced the early growth of WSBA was its becoming a network affiliate in 1943. The network, originally known as the Blue Network, had as colorful a beginning as its name. With this affiliation WSBA could lay claim to another historic role, for it was one of the fledgling network's first member stations.

Through a clash of marketplace forces and government involvement, network radio underwent a crucial change around the time WSBA was experiencing growing pains. Beginning in 1927 with the Federal Radio Commission and continuing under its restructured successor, the Federal Communications Commission (established in 1934), there were skirmishes of varying intensity between the networks and the government agency overseeing broadcasting, not to mention between the networks themselves. The conflict between NBC, CBS, and the FCC heated up considerably in the early forties with the release of the agency's *Report on Chain Broadcasting*, largely the work of then-Chairman James Fly.

One of the report's key recommendations called for the divestiture by NBC of one of its two networks, the Red or the Blue. Among other conclusions, the report claimed that a two-network parlay was a deterrent to new radio enterprise and monopolistic in effect. At the time, NBC's affiliate lineup included 136 stations (CBS listed 115). Many were powerhouses, booming signals into wide regions of the country.

Acceding to the inevitable, in 1942 NBC Chairman David Sarnoff ordered a dividing up of its 136 affiliated stations. The Red Network became NBC, and the Blue Network was sold.

WSBA carried its first programming from the newly formed Blue Network in the autumn of 1943. By the end of 1944, the "Blue"

designation was phased out and the fledgling network became ABC, the American Broadcasting Company. The WSBA-ABC connection was to last through 1958, after which the station declared its independence and returned to its programming roots—music and news.

Beginning in the spring of 1943, as competition from WSBA heated up, WORK launched a large and persistent newspaper campaign. At the time, most newspapers refused to carry the program schedules of local stations as a public service feature, although they often did print the program listings of the major networks' New York stations. Rather, local stations' only access to the newspapers was through paid advertising. Through paid advertising channels, WORK's program schedules and frequent tune-in ads were soon running side by side with the New York "public service" listings.

WSBA countered with its own campaign of small newspaper ads, plugging its new network shows and heavy schedule of news. WSBA's programming contrasted favorably to WORK's broadcast day, which, heavy with NBC shows, featured only a limited number of newscasts. Within the year, WSBA intensified the rivalry by printing its entire program log in York's two daily newspapers.

The programs on WSBA continued to reflect the homefront's preoccupation with the war. Such station-created shows as "Music for Morale" and "Victory Farmers" were interspersed with other local and network entertainment features, and, of course, a stepped-up roster of newscasts as the war escalated. With the invasion of the European continent in the spring of 1944, the WSBA newsroom became an even more bustling nerve center.

It is difficult to exaggerate the pervasiveness of World War II on broadcasting. For WSBA to have been part of that historic milieu enabled the station to perform a great public service and earn credibility as a responsible information and entertainment medium.

As the "third" network, ABC was pushing hard to gain recognition. Most of the blockbuster shows, day and night, were of course on the two older networks. And given WSBA's sunset sign-off, the limitations of programming against a well-stocked local NBC outlet (and several out-of-town CBS stations whose signals were quite listenable) meant competing with one arm tied behind the back. Nonetheless, the station was turning a nice profit as the books for 1944 were closed, and such daytime network shows as the "Breakfast Club," "Breakfast in Hollywood," "Ladies Be Seated," "My True Story," "Jack Armstrong," and "Terry and the Pirates" added some luster to the schedule.

While the network program factory was sending more and more product down the line, local features were not overlooked. Religious, civic, and public service organizations learned early on that WSBA

could be counted on to fulfill the FCC's stipulation that a radio station "serve the public interest, convenience, and necessity."

From the beginning WSBA presented live broadcasts of a complete religious worship service every Sunday at 11:00 A.M. Members of the York County Council of Churches (formerly the County Ministerium) took turns on a monthly basis.

Starting about the same time, the ministerial group produced the daily "Radio Chapel," which aired at 1:15 P.M. The two other major faiths were represented by such programs as "Message of Israel," "The Sacred Heart," and "The Christophers."

One other religious feature that had its genesis in WSBA's early days should not be overlooked. It was the "Radio Church." Sponsored by the Radio Church Ministries, Inc., the program was literally responsible for founding a church. A small congregation grew out of the daily devotionals conducted by the Rev. and Mrs. Joseph Irwin in their home studio from 7:30-8:00 A.M. Beginning in 1951 the weekday broadcasts were discontinued, but the Sunday service from 8:00-9:00 A.M. remained on the air until Mrs. Irwin's death in 1972. The Radio Church not only broadened the diversity of WSBA's audience, particularly in those first years, but it proved an excellent barometer in gauging how far the WSBA signal was reaching. The Irwins reported mail from as far away as upstate New York and a distant corner of New Jersey.

For young people, WSBA introduced the "Yankee Doodle Club." This popular Saturday morning kids' show enjoyed a long run. The Club's guiding light, Helen Miller Gotwalt, also wrote and produced a series of weekly historical sketches, "One White Rose Forever," which enjoyed the same sponsor over its 10-year run.

Quickly admitting to being "the oldest member of the WSBA Alumni Society," Helen Miller Gotwalt came to WSBA less than a year after the station began broadcasting. A junior high school English teacher in the York City schools, she had applied for summer employment; fortuitously, the station was "between continuity writers." Through the years she lent her talents to a wide range of station activities: producing a long-run children's show and a historical showcase; assisting in the writing of the station's promotional brochures; serving as "Action Line" editor; co-writing "An American Idea"; performing continuity department bullpen duty; and representing the station at numerous industry and public service functions.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Helen Miller Gotwalt

One obstacle was my lack of skill as a typist. I was fast but inaccurate, and because I was also a fast reader, I was a poor proof-

reader. I only saw what I assumed I had written. In all my previous professional experience I had worked with an editor, with the result that none of my original typos appeared in print. If I wrote **BIG BOTHER** when I meant **BIG BROTHER**, someone had the wit to correct it. Not so with announcers! Most of them read exactly what was written.

My first proof of this cracked up the entire staff, including the engineers, and drove me to the edge of suicide. It was for a choral concert:

Sunday night will be a grand night for singing at the First Methodist Church in York, where the YMCA Chorus will present, etc., etc.

Not a bad lead, I thought. But my fingers had played me false, and to all listening out there in radioland, it was announced that "Sunday night will be a grand night for **SINNING** at the First Methodist Church."

After Japan surrendered in 1945, America's radio stations returned to normal programming. A new general manager also signed on with WSBA at this time. Succeeding Louis Vyner was Walter J. "Shorty" Rothensies, former district IRS collector and theater manager. From the network, now called ABC, came new shows to WSBA. Advertising agencies were developing "experimental" program vehicles for advertisers, mainly of the audience participation genre.

Sponsorship of such shows reflected the spirit of the economy as the first peacetime year since 1940 began. Advertisers, imbued with the drive to launch new products and reinforce support for established ones, continued to use network radio as their primary advertising medium.

In an industry noted for fast turnover, WSBA has proven an anomaly. At any given time, its employee roster includes people with 10, 20, and even more years of service. Announcer Wayne Trout chalked up 18 eventful years at WSBA, the final six as program director. He joined the announcing staff full-time, fresh out of high school, in 1947.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Wayne Trout

Even before I could drive, I would hitchhike out to the station every weekend. I guess I started to become a nuisance, but in the process I began to learn to do some commercials on the air. Otis (Morse) would let me read an occasional newscast and maybe introduce a record or two.

In the spring of my senior year in high school, Otis came up to me one day and said, "We'll pay you to work weekends." I think I

was paid 30 cents an hour. And then when I graduated later on I went to work full-time. I thought this was heaven!

One of my favorite assignments in those days was announcing the Big Band remotes from the Valencia Ballroom. I used to try to do these dance remotes the way the big network announcers would do them. I'd come in over the band's opening theme song and say, "From the beautiful Valencia Ballroom, in the heart of the White Rose City in downtown York, WSBA presents the music of *whomever*."

Halfway during the broadcast, I'd do a short interview with the bandleader. And I'll never forget the time Boyd Rayburn—a rather obscure name except to the real music lovers of the Big Band era—turned the interview process around and asked, "Wayne, how did York get the name *White Rose City*?" Well, I must confess, I guess I wasn't quite the debonair, well-rounded announcer I thought I was, and all I could think of responding to the maestro was, "Boyd, we're going to put our research staff on that one."

Which brings me to one of my most eventful days in radio—an infamous one, I might add—on a very hot late spring Saturday afternoon, my freshman year at WSBA. We were carrying one of the last Metropolitan Opera broadcasts of the season. I hated to see them end because all the announcer had to do was a station break every now and then. So the announcer on duty would often go outside on a nice day to stretch his legs or whatever.

Well, on this day in question Mel Richards (another announcer) had just bought a set of golf clubs. I said, "Mel, I believe I could get to like golf. Mind if I take a look at your new clubs?" He said OK. So I proceeded to look at a few clubs and took some balls out of the bag.

Now there was a circular driveway in front of the original WSBA Building with a flagpole in the middle. The station sat about 50 yards off the old U.S. Route 111 highway, so I decided to go back about 50 yards more. I put the ball down and thought that taking a shot would be very interesting. You have to remember, I didn't even know how to hold a golf club, let alone how to swing it. Well, I gave that ball a whack and could see it was going far beyond the grass circle and flagpole.

At this point, another participant in the tale of Wayne Trout's ill-fated first golf swing describes the ball's destination.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Mrs. Louis J. Appell, Sr.

I remember bringing my daughter home from a horse show one very hot Saturday afternoon. It was so hot we had all the windows in the car open as we passed by WSBA on the way home. Well, Wayne Trout, at that very instant, took a perfect golf shot which

went through the open window and hit my daughter square on the chin! She started crying because it hurt and she was exhausted from the horse show.

Now back to Wayne Trout:

Well, I didn't even have to wait for the complaint to come through the chain of command, because the car backed up and the irate driver informed me who she was. Here I was just starting out on a career, and to think I would beat the odds of driving a golf ball through the open window of a moving car whose driver happened to be the owner's wife! Otis saved me, and I can guarantee you I took no more such unauthorized Metropolitan Opera intermission golf swings.

Helen Norton, nee Appell, was the youngest member of Susquehanna's first family in 1942 when the Company launched its flagship station. Too young to remember much about those times, let alone WSBA's formative days, she characterizes her recall as "spotty at best." Nonetheless, she shares her memories of WSBA's first decade.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Helen Appell Norton

Prior to the station's going on the air, there was some testing of the signal. I was down at the station one day when Father asked me to do a little testing which amounted to my saying, "Testing. One. Two. Three. Four. Testing." There was a call-back, I believe, from someone on Long Island wanting to know who was doing the testing.

Other than that, I don't remember too much of what was going on 'til a little later when the station was on the air. I do recall the two grand pianos in what we called the "big studio." The pianos were obviously for live recitals, concerts, and the like. At the time I was involved in music, and since the piano at our house was becoming a little decrepit, I'd go down to the station and practice when the studio was not being used, generally in the evening.

One night, one of the engineers had the audacity to record me, and I remember how embarrassed I was.



In the early days of 1946, as Louis J. Appell, Sr., Woody Eberhart, and Executive Vice President and General Manager Walter Rothensies met to set the course for Susquehanna Broadcasting, the questions were: Should the Company pursue that very dim light

called television which was barely discernible among post-war technological advances? Should the major effort be directed toward going after a full-time grant for WSBA, even though it meant giving up that choice 900 kc dial position? What about FM—was it the broadcasting wave of the future, as some communications seers were predicting?

Based on the Company's own careful studies, some intuitive judgments, and the counsel of various technical and legal advisors, the decision was made to apply for an FM license as soon as the wartime freeze was lifted. "Yes," equipment sources said, "FM gear would probably be more readily available than hardware for TV." WSBA-AM's daytime-only status also played heavily in the decision to apply for an FM license. With the sign-off at local sunset, and a desire to hold on to the 900 kc dial location, it was reasoned that the establishment of WSBA-FM could be an ideal way to continue Susquehanna's broadcasting day through the evening hours. An FM application was filed and a construction permit granted early in 1947.

A New Medium?

WSBA-FM



Chapter 2

When WSBA-FM took to the air at 103.3 mc in July 1947, there were 140 stations nationwide beaming signals on the FM band. Just six months later, the figure had jumped to 458, with 926 FM outlets authorized by the FCC. Compared to the 17 television stations operating (out of the 73 authorized), these numbers indicated that a significant slate of investors in the broadcasting community, like Susquehanna, divined a bright future for FM.

FM was the brainchild of Edwin A. Armstrong, an engineering professor at Columbia University. Working on his idea of a “separate listening band” through the early 1930s, he first petitioned the FCC for an experimental station license in 1935. Mr. Armstrong was rebuffed at every turn, thanks mainly to the networks (and their vested interests in AM) and equipment manufacturers (notably RCA). Only a threat to take his idea to a foreign country and the installation of a new FCC chairman, James Fly, enabled Armstrong to get an FM station on the air in 1940. World War II came along shortly thereafter, putting FM on hold. As the 1940s drew to a close, the demand for FM licenses that had quickened the brave new postwar broadcasting world gradually declined, with the FCC and set and equipment manufacturers focusing their attention on television. By the end of the decade, FM broadcasters’ bullishness about the medium was also winding down. In his lifetime, Edwin Armstrong never saw his FM dream realized, but by the fall of 1990, FM’s share of the radio audience soared to 73.8 percent, according to the book *American Radio*, by James H. Duncan, Jr.

But in the hot summer of 1947, having an FM license was much like heading down the highway without a road map. The public knew little or nothing about frequency modulation, and WSBA-FM was thus confronted with a listener education problem of no small proportion. Advertisers were reluctant to sign on, and perhaps most important of all, the physical means to hear WSBA-FM was spotty at best. Even the majority of those dealers who did stock FM receivers were unimpressed by its potential.

Despite these drawbacks, a determined WSBA management and an already busy AM staff worked long sweltering hours to meet the July sign-on target. Taken by itself, preparing a radio station from scratch is a mind-boggling undertaking, with engineering, programming, promotion, sales, and legal considerations all having to come together by day one on the air. Add to this a requirement to educate the local listening public, and it is not difficult to agree with one announcer who characterized their effort as “heroic.”

The same dedicated WSBA staff members who were “minding the AM store” were responsible for the care and feeding of FM. Those whose contributions should be noted include Woody Eberhart (chief engineer); Ray Ensminger (engineer); Sydney Robbins (commercial manager); Otis Morse (program director); Judy Oberlander Smith (who joined Susquehanna in 1949 as secretary to Mr. Morse); Fred Shaffer (chief announcer); Mel Richards, Wayne Trout, and Ad Weibert—who went on to become chief announcer on Ed Sullivan’s “Toast of the Town”—(announcers); Celestine Krantz (traffic director); George Appell, younger son of Louis J. Appell, Sr., (special assignments); and Philip Eberly (continuity writer).

Physically, WSBA-FM’s studio was an unused room in the WSBA Building on the Susquehanna Trail. AM and FM shared the existing offices and control room. Like its AM counterpart, the WSBA-FM control room housed two engineers, four turntables, and two consoles. The tower and transmitter, however, were located at a different site, a specially purchased property on South Queen Street in York selected for its favorable elevation.

A WSBA-FM Instant Replay—Woodrow G. Eberhart, Jr.

My most vivid memory of WSBA-FM is the tower. We had to put up a self-supporting tower—up on the Queen Street Hill, I believe—because we didn’t have enough room to guy it. It went up on a very cold winter day and they had to add antifreeze to the cement in order to form a firm footing for that tower.

WSBA-FM installed the first 10-kilowatt FM transmitter built. RCA manufactured it; for those days it was a pretty powerful piece of

equipment. There was a certain tube RCA was trying to develop at the time, and they would call to ask permission to come over from their plant in Lancaster, after the AM signed off, to test new tubes. They would test these tubes at higher power, running it up to 12, 13, 14 kilowatts. Then they would put temperature sensitive paint at certain points on the tubes and observe what the color would change to at 300 or 400 degrees. This way they could tell where the hot spots were on these tubes.

There were all kinds of technical problems. In order to get the signal from the studios at RD 5 to the FM transmitter and tower on Queen Street, there had just been developed a low-power (probably 100 watts or so) transmitter that would do the job. It was called a Link transmitter. At the time, there was no station operating on Channel 8—WGAL-TV was on Channel 4—so we used that frequency. There was no microwave then either to get high quality signals from the studio to the FM transmitter. And, of course, when WGAL-TV moved to Channel 8, we had to vacate that frequency.

Before the station equipment was installed and listener education for FM could begin, radio set dealers needed urging to stock and promote FM receivers. Sydney Robbins, WSBA-AM commercial manager, was in charge of this job. Mr. Robbins also supervised FM time sales, as well as audience and sales promotion campaigns. Working with him was young George Appell.

A WSBA-FM Instant Replay—George Appell

My relationship with FM began in the spring of 1947 when Woody Eberhart and I drove to New York to pick up a piece of radio equipment from the Link Corporation. We borrowed a truck from the farm to go over and back in one day.

That same summer between my sophomore and junior years at Harvard, my father suggested I work at the radio station. My job was to try and prepare the groundwork for the forthcoming opening of FM. To do this, I was supposed to go to radio set distributors and retailers in the area and explain what we were doing and when WSBA-FM was going to come on the air.

One of my key assignments was to encourage these people to stock FM tuners. Many radios in those days did not have an FM band, and since it was vitally important to get these tuners into the hands of listeners, we pushed the wholesalers and dealers hard. I also showed them an easy way to make an aerial by cutting a strip of wire and twisting the ends.

I also had the job of going around encouraging dealers to run display ads congratulating WSBA-FM, and at the same time, use the space to sell FM sets and/or tuners. As time went on, this advertising

grew and I could see it develop into a newspaper supplement. Part of the supplement would be general information about FM, the background of FM, what it would do, how to make aeriels, where to buy converters and so on.



The WSBA-FM listening fare followed the conventional FM programming wisdom of the day. The sobriquet "fine music" had already been coined, and anyone drawing up an FM schedule knew that the music and other elements had to be "quality" and strikingly different from AM. During the early months the schedule began at 3:00 P.M. with news and FM varieties. Offered throughout the evening were 13 musical programs, interspersed with four newscasts and two sports updates.

WSBA-FM also delivered superior audio quality for locally originated music. Special broadcasts by choral groups, high school musical organizations, and the York Symphony Orchestra unquestionably helped generate listener interest in York's pioneer FM outlet.

Because frequency modulation was so new in 1947, the station's promotion was often focused on the excellence of reception rather than on the programs themselves. Five points were stressed over and over:

- Static virtually eliminated. This applies to both natural and man-made.
- Station interference practically abolished.
- Fading almost eliminated. Programs stay at the volume you want.
- Studio quality of tone. You get clarity and perfection of reception.
- Perfect realism. It's like having the artist in the same room with you.

In addition to emphasis on sound reproduction and reception, listeners were aware that WSBA-FM was playing music unavailable anywhere else. Capitol Records had just come out with a new transcription service which featured popular and classical music; this, together with material from the existing World Broadcasting Service Library, accounted for most of the music beamed from 103.3 on the FM dial. Nothing so mundane as a needle on a commercial record groove was heard on WSBA-FM in those days.

If only WSBA-FM's success had been more than artistic. As the 1940s drew to a close, the entire FM industry was unable to generate substantial sales interest. A number of factors contributed to this: the public's fascination and the FCC's preoccupation with television; the

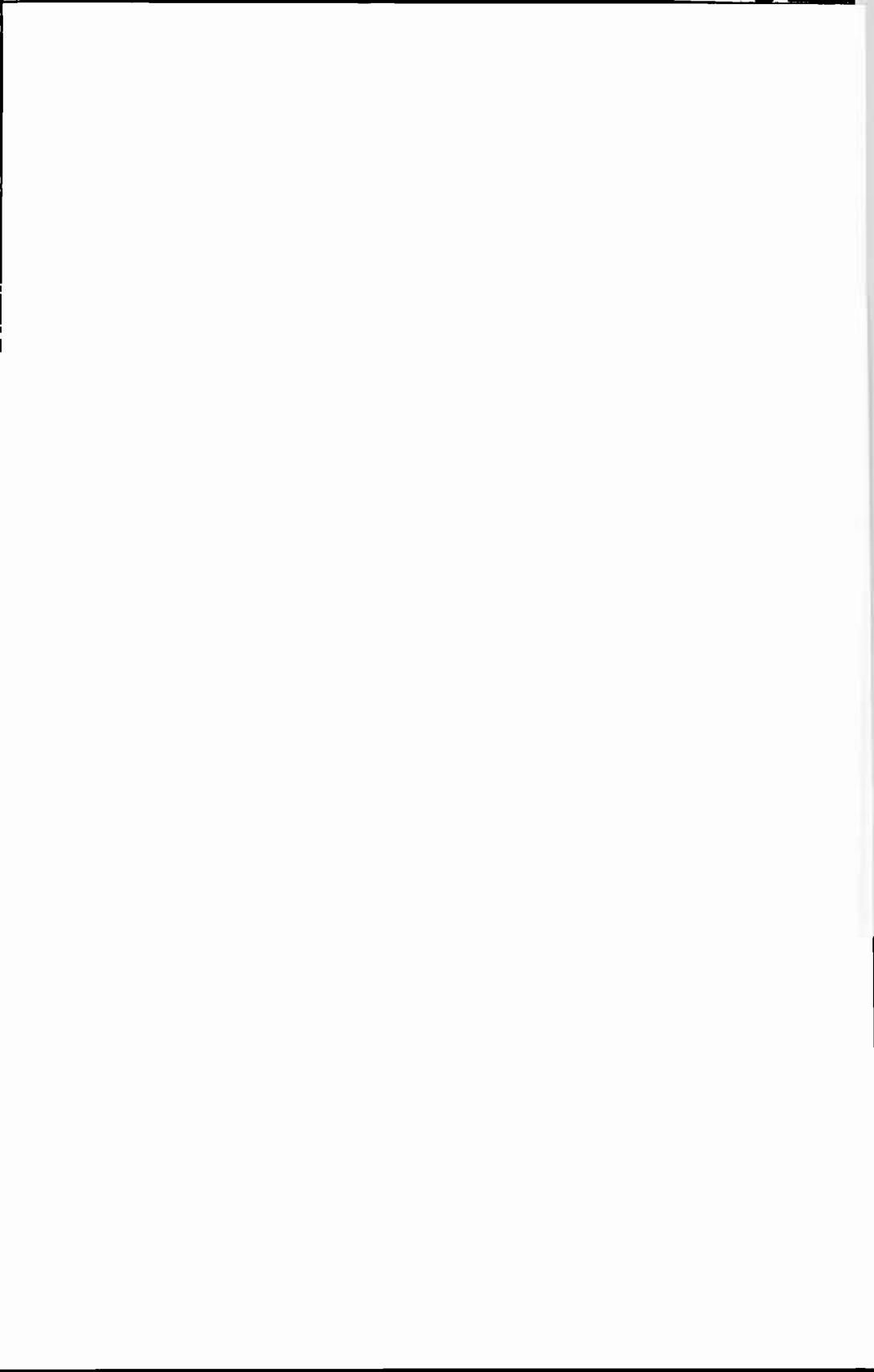
FCC's failure to relax certain rules and regulations regarding the FM band; the FCC's failure to require manufacturers to include FM on all receivers, especially automobile radios; the public's perception that FM was supposed to be a commercial-free service; and the arrival of the long-play record and the corresponding push to sell players.

In early 1952, the decision was made to turn back the WSBA-FM license and to use its transmitter building as the site of a soon-to-be established WSBA-TV. While the prospects seemed grim, sunnier days for frequency modulation still lay ahead.



Although the time for FM radio had not yet arrived, WSBA-AM was able to put its own rousing finish to the decade. Thanks to the long-awaited word from the FCC in October 1949, WSBA became a full-time station. The frequency move from 900 kc to 910 kc meant some signal sacrifice, but the proximity to the original location required little in the way of listener education. The only disruptions concerned printed material and the occasional mistaken announcement of the former dial address by the announcer.

History will surely record WSBA's first decade as one of transition. Through the dedication and hard work of WSBA's first team, Susquehanna Broadcasting moved firmly into what may be called the "Modern Era" of broadcasting.



Through the Tube Darkly

WSBA-TV



Chapter 3

For Susquehanna, like hundreds of radio licensees, there was no bonfire of enthusiasm for operating a television station. Uncertain expectations raised all manner of related concerns regarding equipment availability, conflicting signals (pun intended) from the FCC, and gloomy forecasts for television from the three major radio networks. At NBC, for example, a research department memo in June 1946 predicted an \$8 million loss from television over a four-year period. The entertainment-information mix that had configured network radio was virtually all that had been decided on in the programming arena; prospective television programs were therefore viewed questionably as simply successful radio shows with cameras turned on them.

Through the next two years, American television technology slowly advanced. Then in late 1948, just when it appeared that a cohesive nationwide television service was underway, the FCC abruptly ceased the granting of television licenses. Interference, it was said, had to be studied. In 1950, the outbreak of the Korean War prompted an extension of the “freeze,” which, all told, would last for three and a half years. When the moratorium on new outlets began, 108 stations already possessed licenses to operate America’s newest home entertainer.

Some cities had no TV station—Austin, Denver, Little Rock, Portland (Oregon). Others had only one—Houston, Kansas City, Milwaukee, St. Louis. The impact of the new home-based sight-and-sound medium was dramatic: movie theaters closed, restaurants and nightclubs experienced losses, and jukebox and taxicab receipts went down. The advertising trade press reported more than one Hazel Bishop-type sales success. Before its 1950 TV campaign, the cosmetics manufacturer did an annual \$50,000 sales volume; by

1952, solely through television, its sales soared to \$4,500,000 and continued rising.

If potential television licensees in the cities cited above were in a quandary, those who positioned stations in medium-sized markets, such as York, could multiply the dilemma tenfold. The freeze order languished in the Washington bureaucracy until early 1952, when the FCC issued its "Sixth Report and Order," an omnibus television package with items to please various groups. Channels 2 to 13 in the already established VHF (very high frequency) band were to be supplemented by 70 new channels in the UHF (ultra high frequency) band. Expansion room for commercial television seemed to be assured. Both in VHF and UHF, a number of channels were reserved for education. In all, provision was made for 242 educational stations; the number was later increased.

Whatever ambiguities and uncertainties were raised by the "Sixth Report and Order," Susquehanna and hundreds of others prepared to go into television. The minute the freeze was lifted the Company went into action, filing a construction permit and ordering equipment to venture into the unexplored world of ultra high frequency television. The only TV reception available at the time in the York area originated in Lancaster, where WGAL-TV had been operating Channel 4 since March 1949—on low power, and hence not viewable in many sections of York County. Three Baltimore channels (2, 4, and 13) sent minimal signals over a small portion of the county's southern section. The FCC's "Sixth Report and Order" had assigned Channels 43 and 49 to York, as well as UHF allocations to Harrisburg and Lancaster. At the same time, Channel 4 was deleted in central Pennsylvania and Channel 8 (which had originally been awarded to York) was assigned to WGAL-TV. Since there were no competitive applications for Channel 43, WSBA-TV could begin working on its installation by summer 1952, when the construction permit was official. The facility was located at the site of the soon-to-be-silenced WSBA-FM. The feverish activity at 2005 South Queen Street centered not only on getting on the air quickly, but getting there as the nation's *first* UHF station.

Louis Appell, Jr., recalls that "everybody's adrenalin started to flow" as engineers and others from the radio side put in long hours to ready the new station for broadcast. This was one of the young Susquehanna president's first major projects since he took over the reins of leadership following his father's death in 1951. He would attack the Company's entry into TV with a balanced mix of conservative business orthodoxy and elements of daring that were to mark his entire career.

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers It Well

We firmed up the equipment order with RCA and let them know we were in a hurry to get on the air as fast as we could. In fact, the strategy was to get a head start, knowing the channels in Harrisburg were in dispute, causing delays in getting stations on the air there. We wanted to make the station financially successful as soon as possible and then move the transmitter to an area near where Ski Roundtop is today. That way we could put a signal in Harrisburg and Lancaster and WSBA-TV could be the ABC affiliate for the three-city market. That plan, of course, did not materialize.

Our antenna had been fabricated, was delivered, and a crew was brought in to erect it. This would have been in early fall of '52. Well, the crew, in the process of hoisting the antenna to the tower, dropped it. Our antenna was a total loss. We were fortunate enough to secure a replacement and have it mounted on the tower before the transmitter was ready.

RCA had told us we could expect delivery in early December. Obviously, we wanted to have the distinction of being *the* first UHF station on the air. As it turned out, we were not technically the first UHF station, since Storer Broadcasting had been operating one on an experimental basis. But we were the first UHF station with a commercially manufactured transmitter. I think the records will show that we did get on the air first, if only by a couple of hours.

Engineer Ray Ensminger recalls the anticipation and excitement at the RCA plant as four UHF stations vied to be the first to send out a signal: "I went over to Camden (New Jersey) and then rode back on the truck with the transmitter. It was one of the first four that came off the production line. There was a big ribbon-cutting ceremony at the plant. As soon as they cut the ribbon, we zoomed out of the parking lot and the race was on to see who would be the first UHF station on the air. My recollection is we were the first with regularly scheduled programming, but another station beat us with a test pattern."

As far as much of the industry was concerned, WSBA-TV was considered the first UHF station.

Since the entire installation was designed to get WSBA-TV on the air as quickly and inexpensively as possible, there were limited facilities for studio presentations. Newscasts and modest productions were to be the only live programs. Sometime later the plant was to be enlarged, but for those first few years people on the performing end felt the heat as the complete operation was housed in one room of the old FM transmitter building—the studios, the transmitter, and the film projection, slide projection, and production areas.

On The WSBA-TV Monitor—Ray Ensminger

Since the entire station was in the old FM transmitter building, you can imagine what a tight fit it was. The complete operation was in one room—and let me tell you, with those large kleig lights, the heat in that studio was something else. We had the cameras outside the little studio and shot through the window. Bear in mind, the transmitter was in there and so were the operating personnel and the projectors. When everything was going full blast, temperatures hit 115 or 120 degrees in that room on a warm summer afternoon.

When we did live programming, which was usually in 15-minute blocks, all the doors and windows you could possibly allow open were opened. Behind-the-scenes people showed up in shorts during the live productions. We'd close the doors when the shows went on. As soon as they were over and we went into film or network, we'd open the doors and everybody'd run out, lay prostrate on the grass and try to recover. It was absolutely exhausting! But those were pioneer days and we felt lucky to do it. We felt good about it. We felt it was a mark of accomplishment.

Getting a UHF station on the air in this rather rudimentary fashion produced only a ripple effect as far as viewership was concerned. Although TV set penetration was approaching 50 percent of American households at the time, it would be almost a decade before the FCC required manufacturers to include built-in UHF tuners in their receivers. External UHF converters cost between \$75 and \$100. Reception was described as spotty in some areas of York County, while others reported receiving an excellent picture. Unfortunately, Susquehanna's CEO was not among those who received a clear picture: "I was living on South Beaver Street at the time and I remember when tuning it in, my heart sank right down to the bottom of my shoes. The picture I got was incredibly bad. On the screen was merely a slide of Santa Claus in some Christmas setting. And in true traditional Christmas fashion, there was snow everywhere. But unfortunately, the snow was not a weather phenomenon; it was technical."

Telecast hours for WSBA-TV's first year ran from 5:50 P.M. to 11:30 P.M. During its initial phase, the station was actually affiliated with two networks, ABC and Dumont. (The latter turned to WNOW-TV when it went on the air in 1954; by the end of the decade, both WNOW-TV and Dumont had faded from the scene.) The following program schedule for August 17, 1953, sent out to newspapers and the fledgling *TV Guide*, documents a typical day in WSBA's early life.

ON THE WSBA-TV MONITOR—TUNE IN TONIGHT!

- 5:50 P.M. PROGRAM PREVIEWS AND SIGN ON**
5:55 P.M. NEWS HEADLINES—world, national, and local news
6:00 P.M. THE EARLY SHOW—"People's Enemy" Evelyn Douglass, Preston Foster
7:00 P.M. OTIS MORSE REPORTS THE NEWS—York's Ace Newscaster spots the gripping stories in today's news (Loc. Live).
7:15 P.M. EDDIE WALESKI'S SPORTS REPORT—Sports highlights and guest (Loc. Live).
7:30 P.M. OPERA VS. JAZZ—ABC (Outstanding personalities from the classical and popular music fields hurl musical harpoons.)
8:00 P.M. TALENT PATROL—ABC (U.S. Armed Forces compete for top honors.)
8:30 P.M. TWENTIETH CENTURY TALES—ABC "The Swami" Morris Ankrum (Stories of drama, comedy, romance and adventure).
9:00 P.M. SCHMIDT'S STAGE S "Uncle Charley"—Cliff Arquette, Frances Rafferty, and Ross Ford (A "Big City" vacation and an Uncle Charley from an escort service, who is a horsebetting fiend, make a really humorous story.)
9:30 P.M. RETURN ENGAGEMENT—ABC "Driven Snow" Bruce Cabot (Stories of drama, comedy, adventure, and romance.)
10:00 P.M. MONDAY NIGHT FIGHTS—DTN Bantamweights Henry "Pappy" Gault vs. Billy Peacock—12 rounds.
10:50 P.M. RINGSIDE INTERVIEWS—DTN
11:00 P.M. 11TH HOUR NEWS (With Jim Curtis reporting) (Loc. Live)
11:10 P.M. EDDIE WALESKI'S SPORTS REPORT (Late sports roundup) (Loc. Live)
11:20 P.M. PROGRAM PREVIEWS AND SIGN OFF

Bob Stough (who had started at WSBA-TV as a salesman in 1953, left a year later and returned as manager in 1956) remembers Channel 43's first months on the air: "This television thing was new to all of us. Inserting a commercial within a syndicated film was rather perplexing. I recall the first show I sold, 'Dangerous Assignment,' starring Brian Donlevy, to Penn Appliance Distributors. Our film director had never spliced a commercial into a show and had no idea where the first break should occur! Then there was the 'Gene Autry Show' that Phil Eberly sold to Stroehmann Brothers Baking Company. The film would tear or we ran the wrong commercials, always something. Stroehmann's cancelled out after 26 weeks."

Wayne Stambaugh, one of Channel 43's early engineers, remembers a live commercial for a vibrating chair: "A fairly large, stately woman was supposed to demonstrate the chair's qualities. Well, what we got instead of a gentle vibration was a minor earthquake! The guys in the control room considered it a great comedy act rather than a commercial."

Finding programming to fill air time turned out to be a far greater problem than anyone had anticipated. Although ABC had awarded affiliation contracts to stations on its radio network, ABC-TV had a limited commercial lineup to begin with, and the ad agencies handling these shows were reluctant to place them on a new UHF outlet like WSBA-TV. But as Louis Appell, Jr., would quickly attest, every network show obtained was an important step forward—not for compensation, but for the tune-in value of the shows. He spent much of his time during his first years at the corporate helm attempting to acquire ABC-TV network programs for the WSBA-TV schedule. Occasionally the effort paid off, but mostly there were responses such as this:

American Broadcasting Company
7 West 66th Street, New York, 23, NY
Susquehanna 7-5000

October 11, 1954

Mr. Louis J. Appell, Jr.
President
WSBA-TV
RD #5
York, PA

Dear Louis:

At the present time we don't have any chance to get you an order for Liggett & Myers' STU ERWIN. As Jim Szabo advised you earlier this month, they will not add any stations until the first list is cleaned up. . . .

Cordially,
George Smith
Station Relations

WGAL-TV, meanwhile, had improved its coverage by boosting power to 7 kw almost simultaneously with WSBA-TV's on-air date in December 1952. Channel 8 had affiliation agreements with NBC-TV and CBS-TV; the station even carried a few ABC-TV programs whose sponsors preferred a VHF facility's fringe time over UHF prime. Ad

agency executives from all over the country were making regular treks to Lancaster at this time to prevail upon Channel 8 for program clearances.

Gradually, as the decade wore on, the number of homes capable of receiving UHF increased. Advertisers were slowly but nonetheless consistently ordering WSBA-TV for their programs. The Army-McCarthy hearings, carried exclusively by ABC-TV, helped build additional interest in Channel 43, as did the network's stepped-up sports coverage. In 1958, the station installed a new 12 kw transmitter that improved coverage markedly.

Despite a shaky start, local program quality was improving. Some of the early approaches were too ambitious for the scrappy UHF pioneer and were dropped. Others survived well beyond the span often accorded show biz ephemera. Many a York Countian will recall these locally produced shows:

- "Club 43"—Ed Lincoln's weekly live dance show attracted teenagers of the rock-and-roll age.
- "Otis Morse and the News"—WSBA-AM's news director, Otis Morse, served TV in the same capacity.
- "Al Saunders"—Mr. Saunders hosted a variety show—featuring anything from Arthur Murray dancers to a chimpanzee to recordings—and always with a stage presence that came off as witty, urbane, and entertaining. During several seasons of televised basketball games he was the commercial spokesman for the bank sponsor. His props: a French beret, easel, grease pencil, and artist's pad.

In rolling the WSBA-TV credits, the traditional final entry, "executive producer," must be reserved for Bob Stough, general manager for the station from 1956 to 1980. Managing a TV station means different things to different managers. Although managers have the two basic objectives of saving the license and showing a profit, few managers fix leaky roofs or flooded cellars or mow lawns in emergencies. Bob Stough found these part of the Channel 43 territory.

A long ago New Year's Eve illustrates the almost fanatic devotion Bob Stough demonstrated on numerous occasions. December 31 fell on a Saturday that year and at the close of business on Friday, no one had yet sold the syndicated live "Guy Lombardo New Year's Eve Show." By noon Saturday, this frustrated the tenacious WSBA-TV general manager. To the phone he went, and by mid-afternoon he had a sale. But the job was only half done. Fortunately, his dependable administrative assistant, Sonia Strohman, was available and came to the station for the rest of the afternoon while the commercials were prepared. Loyalty ran strong.

Though Bob Stough and his compatriots fought the good fight, it was never a fair one. And the factor that made it thus can be summed up in one word—*intermixture*; that is, intermixture of UHF and VHF license grants. WGAL-TV, Channel 8, a VHF island in a central Pennsylvania sea of UHF stations, was the bone of contention since the freeze had been lifted. A few days after WSBA-TV took to the airways, Channel 8, originally assigned to York, was given to Lancaster, and, at the same time, granted a power boost to 7 kw. In early 1954, when WGAL-TV was granted a power boost to 316 kw, York and Harrisburg stations filed a petition for a rehearing with the FCC in March 1954. It was denied, and in June that year Channel 8 moved its transmitter closer to York and Harrisburg, making it a regional station by increasing its antenna height and power. Through this action, says Louis Appell, “the FCC totally destroyed a commitment they had supposedly made to UHF operators when they permitted VHF stations to increase their power. This, after they had gotten a number of us throughout the country to apply for UHF channels, invest in equipment, and build stations. We had been under the impression that the commission had made its UHF commitment because the VHF band simply could not accommodate enough channels.” The UHF-VHF fiasco promoted one of the strongest rebukes of the time. Said the *New York Times*: “The history of television is a history of official procrastination, a history that brings out the danger in bureaucratic rule.”

Protests over the commission’s actions also came from various nonbroadcasting quarters, but none like the following hard-hitting editorial in the *York Dispatch*. The newspaper, a predictably conservative voice, lashed out in its August 3, 1954, edition. It even suggested political skullduggery was afoot.

On The WSBA-TV Monitor—A York Dispatch Editorial

The operation of television is very much of a mystery to the layman, but scarcely more so than is the performance of the Federal Communications Commission. This comment is inspired by the commission’s decision to reject protests against a Lancaster station’s intrusion into York County with a powerful transmitter that is playing havoc with local reception from adjacent channels.

The offending station is WGAL-TV, owned by the proprietors of the Lancaster newspapers, through VHF Channel 8. This same corporation controls Radio Station WORK in this city. Although the FCC would not permit the owners to establish a TV station in York under a rule which limits ownership of TV stations to one per firm,

it sustains the right of this same ownership to set up its Lancaster station . . . on a centrally located elevation on this side of the Susquehanna . . . much nearer to York than to Lancaster.

Whatever financial gain prompted the owners of WGAL-TV to maneuver must take into account the loss of good will over here through an action that is widely unpopular. The Lancastrians seem to have powerful friends in Washington.

At the same time Channel 8 was expanding its coverage, the Baltimore VHF channels were expanding theirs. Most York Countians with a modest antenna could pull in the three Bay City network outlets, and, to a somewhat lesser degree, some viewers were able to receive satisfactory pictures from Philadelphia channels.

In the meantime, WSBA-TV had looked to its ABC connection to act as an antidote to the WGAL-TV power boost. The Susquehanna TV outlet had, as part of its long-term strategy, looked forward to being the exclusive ABC outlet in York, Lancaster, and Harrisburg. But three months after the devastating Channel 8 power increase, word arrived of a new competitor:

American Broadcasting Company
7 West 66th Street, New York, 23, NY
Susquehanna 7-5000

August 10, 1954

Mr. Louis J. Appell, Jr.
President
Tele Station WSBA-TV
York, PA

Dear Lou,

I have been trying to get you on the phone, but I am advised you will not be available until sometime Wednesday.

I was calling you to advise you that we are announcing the affiliation of WTPA in Harrisburg, PA.

WTPA has cancelled their NBC affiliation and will become the ABC station for Harrisburg effective September 19, 1954, and thereafter.

Best personal regards.

Sincerely,
s/Donald S. Shaw, Jr.
Regional Manager
Station Relations

There were other operators around the country, of course, who were enduring similar waves of frustration. Clearly, they reasoned, some sort of unified action on UHF/VHF intermixture was in order. Thus was formed in late 1953 the UHF Industry Coordinating Committee. The Committee rallied approximately 50 UHF operators from around the country to the cause. One of the first items on the agenda was to lay down a statement of principles for subsequent presentation to a U.S. Senate subcommittee. In early spring 1954, in meetings in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Washington, D.C., the group hammered out a list of basic concerns facing UHF licensees. These concerns focused on three areas: the power problem, the receiver problem, and the economic problem.

Agreeing that legislative relief was the only solution, the UHF industry organization took its case to the U.S. Senate Communications Subcommittee hearings on May 4, 5, and 6, 1954. Louis Appell, Jr., who testified before that committee, remembers Congressman Kenneth Keating (later a U.S. Senator from New York) "asking a couple of rather pointed questions, indicating some skepticism as to the validity of our position. At the time, I only wished that I had taken him by the hand and brought him up to York and shown him in person what the situation was."

The hearings, alas, came and went with no congressional solutions. WSBA-TV, nevertheless, kept plugging away. ABC-TV, which had a long way to go to reach parity with CBS-TV and NBC-TV, gradually added programs that caught on for Channel 43: "The Mickey Mouse Club," "Walt Disney Presents," "Maverick," "Wyatt Earp," "The Rifleman," "The Lawrence Welk Show," "American Bandstand," "The Untouchables," and "77 Sunset Strip." But despite the added luster of new top-notch programming, the stark reality remained: VHF-UHF intermixture made a fully competitive TV service in York, Pennsylvania, impossible.

Despite these obstacles, WSBA-TV was a growing, if not thriving, enterprise. ABC-TV shows on Channel 43 and innovative local programming were helping to move UHF sets into more and more homes. In 1958, the new 12 kw transmitter improved coverage throughout York County.

In an effort to compete more effectively with WGAL-TV for advertising, a sales triad was formed by WLYH-TV in the Lebanon/Lancaster market (formerly WLBR-TV), WHP-TV in Harrisburg, and WSBA-TV in York. Bonded into a single sales entity, these three stations offered clients the opportunity for Harrisburg/York/Lancaster coverage (just as WGAL-TV did), and the convenience of only one paper transaction. They would split the revenue on a formula based on

ratings. The three-station consortium was called The Keystone Network and had the John Blair Company as its national sales representative. It worked well, and the national business picture brightened somewhat. Then a few years into the agreement, someone asked the question, "What if all three of our stations belonged to the same national network; wouldn't that make our position even stronger?"

At the time only WHP-TV was affiliated with CBS-TV, the other two being locked into ABC-TV. With William Paley's programming riding high at the time, and his network shows getting second-class status at WGAL-TV, why not try CBS? After two years of intense lobbying at 485 Madison Avenue, the network's New York headquarters, CBS bought the idea. In 1963, WSBA-TV and WLYH-TV became CBS-TV affiliates. Channel 43 was now home for the CBS blockbusters of the seventies and eighties: "The Ed Sullivan Show," "The Lucy Show," "The Jackie Gleason Show," "The Andy Griffith Show," "All in the Family," "Beverly Hillbillies," "Have Gun, Will Travel," "Gunsmoke," "Dallas," "Dukes of Hazzard," and "Mission Impossible." In 1971, WHP-TV pulled out of Keystone, leaving a two-station alliance which remained in effect until Susquehanna sold WSBA-TV in 1983.

Although the new network affiliation did bring some improvements, the bottom line through the sixties and seventies was, by existing TV standards, quite modest. The advent of cable systems throughout the area both helped and hurt; Channel 43 was now being transmitted with picture-perfect reception into areas it never before penetrated, but relaxed FCC rulings allowed cable systems to carry more than one CBS station, which resulted in program duplication. Cable also delivered more outside stations—from Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington—which further splintered Channel 43's viewing audience. On the plus side, a 55 kw transmitter replaced the 12-year-old 12 kw unit in 1970. This was a decided advantage for viewers who did not subscribe to cable, as television more and more defined a family's lifestyle in many homes.

Serious discussions on how to improve the prospects for WSBA-TV continued through the 1970s. In 1975, Mr. Appell turned over the reins of supervising executive to Bill Simpson, corporate legal counsel. Toward the late seventies, ABC-TV began a meteoric rise to the top of the network heap. Sensing that this might augur well for WSBA-TV, Bob Stough and Bill Simpson prepared an elaborate presentation aimed at wresting ABC-TV away from WHTM-TV, thereby making Channel 43 the network's sole affiliate in the York/Lancaster/Harrisburg market. James Duffy, then ABC president, listened attentively, but nothing was accomplished.

In 1978, Peter Brubaker succeeded Bill Simpson as supervising executive. When Manager Bob Stough took early retirement in 1980, he was succeeded by Jim DeBold. Prompted mainly by the great changes in communications that had roared through the 1970s, intense studies and discussions concerning the station's future were instituted. Technology had literally changed the face of American television. Even though intermixture had long since ceased to be an issue, satellites, cable TV, and the VCR threatened Channel 43's future. Early in the decade, some forecasters had predicted the combined audience share of the three conventional TV networks would dip below 70 percent by mid-decade. By late 1986, the share had dropped to 66 percent, and one look at Cable TV of York's *TV Host* edition showed 34 program sources, including two channels each for ABC, CBS, and NBC. Also among the smorgasbord of choices were several Baltimore and Philadelphia independent stations, as well as the newly created cable networks.

Going independent—that is, dropping the CBS-TV affiliation—had been one of the possibilities considered. But, in effect, that would have meant a re-invention of WSBA-TV. The cumulative impact of the rapidly changing forces shaping television in the early eighties dictated the decision to sell WSBA-TV.

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers It Well

The gradual demise of The Keystone Network had left Channel 43 as one of the three competing CBS affiliates in central Pennsylvania, plus full-power CBS stations in Baltimore and Philadelphia. It was clear that, in this role, there was very little opportunity for the station to grow. In fact, indications were that a continuation in this mode was likely to see a contraction of our audience and our ability to maintain the station as a viable entity.

An alternative that was discussed over a fairly long period of time was that of becoming an independent station. The success of a number of independent stations throughout the country had become well known, and it was clear this route might have some attraction. On the other hand, it was also apparent that, in order to make the transition from a network affiliate to an independently programmed station, it would be necessary to invest a large amount of money. We would also have had to relocate the transmitter and purchase new programming equipment. Furthermore, it would have been necessary to locate station management which had experience and a record of success in this unique form of television. It was clear we simply did not have the experienced manpower available to become an inde-

pendent station and pull it off successfully. The substantial capital investment and manpower problem posed challenges we felt could be best left to someone else.

Further consideration in the decision was Susquehanna's ownership of the cable system in York. The FCC for a long time had maintained a rather ambiguous position concerning jointly owned TV and cable systems in the same area. We were concerned that their position might change and ultimately force the sale of either the cable system or the TV station.

Quietly the search for a buyer got under way. After one false start in November 1981, the final sale of WSBA-TV took place on March 11, 1983. The buyer was Mohawk Broadcasting, an Idaho corporation specializing in independent TV stations. Mohawk's president, John Serrao, also served as the station's general manager. On August 28, 1983, the last WSBA-TV station identification flashed on the Channel 43 screen. The next day, the call letters became WPMT (for *Pennsylvania Movie Time*).

And so ended Susquehanna's television station career. The WSBA-TV experience spanned 30 of communication's most exciting years. Indeed, Susquehanna's behind-the-scenes adventures in television were often more fascinating than the ones that appeared on the Channel 43 screen.

The End of the Beginning

WSBA



Chapter 4

If the Susquehanna chronicle of the 1940s was a two-part story, split into wartime and post-war periods, the next decade would have its own dividing line, signifying the Company's awareness of the need to respond to the swiftly changing nature of broadcasting.

Radio program schedules in 1950, on the surface, looked pretty much as they did in 1940. A network affiliation still bore tremendous clout on Main Street and on Madison Avenue. NBC and CBS continued to send their affiliates most of the top shows. ABC, even by dislodging a show now and then from the Big Two, retained its image as the "third network." WSBA vigorously pursued ABC for all the commercial prime-time shows that the network could provide, and the drive was reasonably successful. Some of the higher-rated ABC programs now heard in York for the first time included "Stop the Music," "Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet," "This Is Your FBI," "Inner Sanctum," "Walter Winchell," "Jergen's Journal, with Louella Parsons," and the "Friday Night Fights." Nevertheless, there were still some gaping nighttime holes. The station's daytime network lineup, meanwhile, remained strong despite a vacant slot here and there.

Such noticeable open spaces, day and night, were of concern to management, for this was, after all, still the era of big time network radio. The answer lay in syndicated programming. Syndication firms had sprung up over the years, offering a wide variety of products to individual stations. Every category known to radio—music, comedy, variety, drama, soap opera—was available. Many features were of superior quality, so much so that national advertisers occasionally sought to bypass network transmission and develop their own station

lineups, supplying outlets with the shows on large 16-inch transcription discs. One syndicator which arrived late in the game—perhaps sensing that television would soon become a formidable competitor to radio—was an esteemed name in show business. It was to this source that WSBA turned.

If any syndicated program package was a bigger blockbuster than Metro Goldwyn Mayer's during WSBA's first year of full-time broadcasting, the fact was well concealed. The shows were chips off the venerable film company's production block: "Judge Hardy's Family," "Adventures of Maisie," "Story of Dr. Kildare," "Crime Does Not Pay," "MGM Theater of the Air," "Good News from Hollywood," "Hollywood, USA," and "At Home with Lionel Barrymore."

Thanks to a growing sales department that included Louis J. Appell, Jr., advertising on the syndicated shows was virtually sold out in their one-year run. The same aggressive approach succeeded in landing sponsors for expanded news, sportscasts, and weather features. A major coup of sorts was accomplished in selling the *York Dispatch* a package of block programming—four strips of local news, six days a week. The newspaper prepared the newscasts and bought the time to air them.

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers It Well

My initial post-war exposure to WSBA was in 1949 when I signed on as a salesman. In those days, selling radio was like selling television time today: offering spot adjacencies to ABC shows or whatever the program might be. I also recall selling programs. My most memorable success in selling programs was to the York County Coal Dealers Association. Not only was it necessary to overcome the bleak outlook for their product, but a large group of individual operators had to be convinced to act as a unit. It was a challenge that only a very young, inexperienced salesperson would have undertaken.

I had no real background in the selling of radio, but I did find it interesting and very rewarding in a psychological sense, while at the same time feeling like a fish out of water.

In 1949, of course, we also attempted to sell advertising on the FM station—a difficult task due to the limited listening audience which then existed. I recall the intense discussion which my father had with his advisers in 1946, as to whether to apply for a TV license or an FM license. For reasons of which I am not aware, it was decided to cast the corporate lot with FM.

In 1950, I was elected a vice president of the Company, and began participating in policy discussions. I recall that efforts were made to spruce up the schedule that fall in order to improve our competitive position with WORK.

WSBA's initial season as a full-time operation led to a full-press national sales effort and the appointment of WSBA's first national sales representative. The firm was Radio-TV Representatives, Inc., founded by Peggy Stone.

By 1951, although radio sets in America still outnumbered television receivers 96 million to 15.8 million, one thing was clear: television would one day surpass radio as the home mass entertainment medium. Since nobody knew when, WSBA, like all other network affiliates, continued plugging holes in the dike, adding program fare from the Frederic W. Ziv Company ("Philo Vance," "Boston Blackie," "The Guy Lombardo Show," "The Wayne King Show," and "The Cisco Kid," among others). Ironically, the Ziv shows provided a better income potential than the network fare they replaced. Network compensation to affiliates, based on a complicated formula, never amounted to much on the bottom line. On the other hand, a station could realize two or three hundred percent more income per hour with programs of its own origination.

ABC, not unmindful of the casualties in its program ranks, at this time introduced the "co-operative program" concept, wherein network-fed features could be sold by affiliates to local sponsors. Under this banner, WSBA carried "Headline Edition"; news commentators Paul Harvey, Pauline Frederick, Elmer Davis, and Martin Agronsky; "Mr. President," starring Edward Arnold; "Piano Playhouse"; and an assortment of others.

Despite the heavy emphasis on news, every avenue of conventional radio programming was pursued to attract listeners and dollars. The WSBA creative factory was pressed into overtime service, adding a women's director, Ethel Grey, who did a daily program; Drew Pearson and Penn State football; and an audio version of a then-popular television musical attraction, the "Mohawk Showroom, starring Roberta Quinlan." A downtown York newsroom was built in the lower level of the newly acquired Appell Building, 53 North Duke Street.

Sadly, in June of 1951, Susquehanna Broadcasting Co. founder Louis J. Appell, Sr., passed away at age 57. "Soon after that," Louis Appell, Jr., recalled, "I got involved with settling his estate and other matters and started spending less time at WSBA." Chief Engineer Woody Eberhart, who had submitted his resignation a few days earlier, before Mr. Appell's death, agreed to stay on for another month. Lew Jones, assistant chief engineer, was named to replace Eberhart. A young York native, Ray Ensminger, was hired to fill the vacancy in engineering.

Mr. Ensminger's first assignment was to record a memorial concert by the York Symphony Orchestra in honor of the late Mr. Appell.

His recollections of WSBA engineering span broadcast technology from the vacuum tube and acetate recordings to the compact disc and digital audio.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Ray Ensminger

Engineers in those days were pretty much like one-arm paper-hangers. We had to take extensive readings of the transmitter every half hour and play the records for the announcers from the control room. We had to take trips, which took a half-hour, through the tower field, day and night, and coordinate them with our inside duties. Having your tower field in the middle of a cow pasture is somewhat unique. It was not unusual to walk into the enclosure around the fence area surrounding the tower and not see anything in sight, close the door behind you and find you are completely surrounded by cows when you come out.

I remember one time I carried a canvas satchel full of tools out to work at the base of one of the towers. I was out there working and after a while I turned around looking for my tool satchel and it was gone. I looked all over, walked around a pretty wide radius. Next thing you know, I spotted it in a cow's mouth, carrying it across the field. I ran after the cow, and of course, the faster I ran, the faster the cow ran. I guess she figured she got a prize and was going to hang on to it. As she galloped along, the tools were flying all over the tower field. Finally, she dropped the satchel, but I had to go and pick up the pieces.

About this time, since WSBA-FM faced moribund sales, most of the selling effort focused on the AM side. Not finding much support from the network, management gave serious consideration to an approach by the Mutual Broadcasting System about becoming an affiliate.

The youngest of the four major radio networks (begun in 1934), Mutual was unhappy with its arrangement with WORK and sought another affiliation in York. Reasoning that two networks might be better than one, Susquehanna entered negotiations, and from early 1952 through 1956 MBS placed shows like "Wild Bill Hickok," "Queen for a Day," "Bob and Ray," "Bob Considine," "Fulton Lewis, Jr.," the World Series, and professional football on WSBA.

Despite that two-network parlay, however, the signs of the networks' fading influence were everywhere. With each passing month through the mid-fifties, program after program ended up in radio's obituary columns. To be sure, there were occasional spurts of activity. For example, as a network affiliate, WSBA was on the cutting edge

of the "electronic church." Noteworthy among those whose radio pulpits extended to York were "Hour of Decision" (Billy Graham), "Revival Time," "Radio Bible Class," "Wings of Healing," and Oral Roberts.

Greater servings of recorded music were showing up not only on WSBA's daily program menus but also on those around the country. In a 1954 poll, *Billboard* revealed that of the 109.4 hours the average radio station was on the air each week, 63.8 hours, or 60 percent, were devoted to record shows. Few new pop stars found a place in the musical firmament in that immediate pre-rock period, so WSBA built successful commercial vehicles around the familiar names—Rosemary Clooney, Perry Como, Jo Stafford, Frank Sinatra, Vaughn Monroe, Dinah Shore, Fred Waring, and a few others.

Just as ominous for networks and their affiliates as the 1954 *Billboard* survey was a confidential study released that same year. Commissioned by the William Esty Company, one of the country's largest advertising agencies, the report predicted that by 1956 regular radio network operations would be virtually eliminated.

One look at a mid-October, 1955 WSBA weekday afternoon program log furnishes dramatic proof that the decline and fall of traditional network radio was virtually complete:

12 Noon—News
12:05 —"On the Farm"
12:15 —Weather
12:30 —"World at Midday"
12:45 —"Musical Caravan"
1:00 —Paul Harvey (ABC)
1:15 —*York Dispatch* Headlines
1:18 —"The Woman's World"
1:55 —News
2:00 —"Musical Caravan"
2:55 —News
3:00 —"The Tune Dial"
3:55 —News
4:00 —"The Tune Dial"
4:45 —"The Patti Page/Ray Anthony Show"

It was not only recorded music that filled the gaps left by departing ABC network programs; play-by-play sports also afforded a logical program source in this time of network fadeout. In 1953 WSBA joined the Philadelphia A's and Phillies' and the Baltimore Orioles' regional baseball networks; these, together with Penn State football, ABC college football, Mutual professional football, and occa-

sional high school basketball games enabled WSBA to legitimately call itself "York's Sports Station" through much of the 1950s.

In those waning days of network radio, one Saturday morning ABC show provided a small ray of sunlight: "Big Jon and Sparky," originating from Cincinnati, explored the kids' world, played appropriate music, and read passages of fitting literature.

Management changes during this time found Louis J. Appell, Jr., who had succeeded his father in the leadership of various Appell enterprises, as president of Susquehanna Broadcasting Co. When Walter J. Rothensies resigned as vice president and general manager in 1953, he was succeeded by C.L. "Chick" Doty. After Mr. Doty's departure a year later, Mr. Appell began playing a more direct role in the day-to-day activities of WSBA.

During this period of the early to mid-1950s, Bob Shipley and Al Saunders were an effective program leadership team who pieced together and supervised the eclectic program schedule characteristic of affiliated stations in the declining days of network radio.

A native of Indiana, Bob Shipley had in his formative years developed a keen interest in radio. By 1953, when General Manager Walter J. Rothensies hired him to join the WSBA staff, Mr. Shipley already had valuable radio work experience to his credit. Six months after joining WSBA, he was made program director. When WSBA switched to the Top 40 format, he and Al Saunders were responsible for implementing the countless program guidelines and policies. In 1960, Mr. Shipley moved to Akron, Ohio, as program director of Susquehanna's newest acquisition, radio station WHLO. In 1962, he returned to York to be the program director for the re-activated WSBA-FM. In 1968, as Susquehanna continued its expansion, he joined the corporate staff as group music coordinator. With the expansion of WSBA-AM news in 1981, he rejoined that staff as anchor on its key newscasts.

The radio bug bit Al Saunders at age 10. When most kids wanted to be Eddie Cantor, he wanted to be Jimmy Wallington, the announcer. After several years at station WCHA in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, Al Saunders came to WSBA in 1955 as an announcer. In 1957, he was made operations manager and presided over the first years of WSBA's smashing Top 40 program success. He was made general manager of WHLO in 1961, and later became vice president of the Midwest region with responsibility for Susquehanna's Ohio and Indiana stations. In 1978, Mr. Saunders became station manager of what was then WLTA in Atlanta, where he remained until his retirement in 1987. How he came to Susquehanna requires beginning his Instant Replay back in Chambersburg.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Al Saunders

When I was program director at WCHA, I hired a talented young announcer named Bob Shipley. When Bob came to WSBA as program director, well, now it was his turn to hire me.

It was rather interesting, my first work schedule at WSBA. I did the morning show until 9:00 and then came back and did two hours in the afternoon from 3:00 to 5:00. The rest of the time there was news, network, and various other program items. I was literally the only disc jockey except for Dick Biondi who came on at 6:00.

With that sort of programming, I was amazed how little announcers had to do at WSBA in that era. Studio A, the large one, was over to the left where our regular full-time morning newsman, Denny Kaye, and I used to retire at about 10:00 with a catcher's mitt and a baseball and play catch. All we had to do was miss the concert grand piano in the corner. No air people worked too hard at a network affiliate.

But these were the final days of network radio as the mass entertainment carrier. Former network executives Sam J. Slate and Joe Cook, in their book *It Sounds Impossible*, recall a poignant moment in connection with NBC's "Bandstand": "Bert Parks had just finished reading through the script in NBC's Studio 6-A. In the 15 minutes before air time, we talked about the shows he had emceed over the years—"The Camel Caravan," "Stop the Music"—and the excitement these programs used to generate. He looked out into 6-A's auditorium. It was only a third filled. Bert smiled and asked, "Did you ever get the feeling the whole business is sliding into a lake?"

Bert Parks was wrong, of course. The whole business was not "sliding into a lake"—only a part of it. A new kind of radio lay just down the road, and Susquehanna Broadcasting would be in its vanguard.

A Station Reborn

WSBA



Chapter 5

On New Year's Day, 1957, no one involved with Susquehanna Broadcasting Co. could have forecast what a milestone year it would turn out to be. The "new WSBA" that began rising phoenix-like out of the ABC network ashes set in motion a major expansion that was to catapult the Company to the status of a coast-to-coast radio station enterprise and an industry leader.

The convergence of two events in 1957 provided the catalyst. The first involved the ABC network. While the three major networks were immersed in their booming TV divisions—Mutual was radio only—they nevertheless vowed eternal devotion to their radio divisions. Cynics suggested that rather than dedication to the medium, it was the fear of regulatory consequences to their television operations that kept ABC, CBS, and NBC in the radio business. In any event, it was apparent that no one at the "Big Three" had yet devised a creative approach to making radio networking viable in the age of television. It fell to Robert E. Eastman, a network outsider, to suggest a possible solution. Although the grand plan he envisioned for network radio never materialized, Eastman was on the cutting edge of an even more pervasive movement—the resurgence of radio itself.

Robert Eastman's idea was quite simple. As executive vice president of John Blair and Company, a national radio sales representative, Mr. Eastman encountered a new type of programming being run on several successful client stations. The essential components of this new kind of radio were music and news, carefully fashioned into a mixture that included contests and hard-hitting promotion. It even had a name: "Top 40 Radio."

"Why," reasoned Bob Eastman, "couldn't these same elements of music and news, etc., that are so effective for a select group of local stations be applied at the network level? Instead of recorded music, why not live singers and bands? Couldn't 'name' hosts fill the role of the local disc jockey?"

Eastman took his plan to the top brass at American Broadcasting Company, and they bought it. In the summer of 1957, Mr. Eastman became president of ABC Radio and installed big studio orchestras and vocalists who performed "cover" versions of hit songs. Name emcees were also featured. He even changed the name of the network to American Broadcasting Network (ABN), a change that lasted less than a year.

When the ex-Blair executive became network president, he brought with him a small entourage from stations represented by his former employer. This group's mission, among others, was to set up a Station Services department. Its function was to consult with ABC affiliates to help them become better stations, thereby contributing more in terms of ratings to the network. One member of the new Station Services department was Arthur W. Carlson, former salesman at WDCY, Minneapolis.

Born in St. Paul, Minnesota, Art Carlson's career in network broadcasting was preceded by sales positions at three radio stations and a television station. When ABC abandoned the Eastman plan, Mr. Carlson joined Susquehanna Broadcasting at its newly acquired station in the Scranton/Wilkes Barre area, WARM. With the purchase of WHLO in 1960, he was appointed vice president/general manager of this Akron, Ohio-based station. In 1961, Susquehanna established its Central Radio office, appointing Mr. Carlson vice president/radio, and later, in 1978, senior vice president of radio. When restructuring of the Company's various divisions took place in 1985, Mr. Carlson was named president of the Susquehanna Radio Corporation. In 1977-78, he served as chairman of the Radio Advertising Bureau.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

In August 1957, the announcement went out to all affiliates about ABC's Station Services arm. The very first one to take advantage of the announcement was WSBA. Louis Appell and Al Saunders came to New York and met with Dale Moudy (an engineer) and me. From that point onward, we maintained a close dialogue with WSBA, which soon became one of the very first Top 40 stations in the East.

I remember one interesting sidelight. As the WSBA tapes were reviewed in New York, listening to Al Saunders do the morning

show, we gave some consideration to replacing the morning guy on KABC (Los Angeles) with Al Saunders, who sounded infinitely better. However, first of all, we found out we didn't have the authority, and second, we were concerned about harming our first "client."

The programming had barely begun to air when funds were cut off, virtually eliminating all live programming; thus barely as it began, it came to an end.

As the key player in the American Broadcasting Network effort, no one can tell its story better:

Bob Eastman Remembers It Well

Leonard Goldenson (ABC chairman) and the rest of the people were willing to give the network Top 40 version a fair trial, except at that particular time ABC was having a struggle, trying to carve out a niche in television. Their primary cash flow, from the theater business, was supporting the building of a TV operation and also supporting what we were trying to do on the radio side. In the summer of our first year (1957), an Asian flu epidemic cut down very sharply on theater attendance, and consequently the whole operation. As the cash flow to our effort was cut off, our enterprise was chopped off at the ankles, not by anybody—call it circumstances, or fate.

Concurrently, in the late summer of 1957, the second event of consequence that was to shape the direction of Susquehanna took place.

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers It Well

Bill Rust, who had owned some radio stations in New Hampshire and had done very well with them, had just bought WNOW (in York). Before taking the station over, he and one of his associates invited me to lunch. Without saying it directly, they indicated they were going to come in and show us how to run radio stations. Well, I took that as a challenge.

About that time in the trade press we were reading about the success of the Top 40 format. This sort of piqued my curiosity. These things all converged at one point in time—the lunch with Rust and Bob Eastman's consulting group at ABC. My decision was that, if these (Rust) guys were going to come to town and show us how to run radio stations, we had better beat them to the punch. So I went to New York and met with the people from ABC, and consequently met Art Carlson.

WSBA did indeed beat WNOW to the punch. Working together, the consultants from ABC, WSBA Operations Manager Al Saunders, and Mr. Appell reprogrammed the station. Within a short time it was number one in York and Lancaster and close to the top in Harrisburg. Only an occasional listener protest marred the overall reaction to the change.

As the Top 40 format shifted into high gear at WSBA, 24-hour-a-day broadcasting was also inaugurated. Twenty-four-hour operations at that time were generally limited to a few powerhouses in major markets, so round-the-clock broadcasting lent another innovative note to WSBA's distinctiveness. Much of the credit for making the station's post-midnight show a building block of its dramatic success must go to Gil David.

Gil David, a native Yorker (he was sponsored in the local Soap Box Derby in 1947 by WSBA), returned to York in 1958 to become WSBA's "dawn patrol" disc jockey, a job he held for 10 years. (He later returned to the Susquehanna fold at WGBB in Long Island, where he eventually became program director and operations manager.)

Mr. David says he can never dismiss from his mind the phone call he received in Weston, West Virginia, from WSBA's Al Saunders. That call changed the direction of his radio career.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Gil David

"Hey, we're going to go 24 hours," Al said, "and we need somebody with a first class license."

I said, "I don't want to work all night."

But then I thought seriously about my situation in West Virginia. The manager was a real problem. Then, too, the station was located close to the state mental asylum, and since they wouldn't let the patients have pencils, all my fan mail came written in crayon! So I decided that even if it took an all-night show, I had to get out of Weston. So I became WSBA's first all-night disc jockey. What I thought would be a short-term thing turned into 10 years.

Al said, "We're going to bill you as 'Little David.'" And that's what I became—"Little David, Keeper of the Mushroom People." I was also called the "All Night Satellite" sometimes.

You encountered all sorts of people on the all-night beat—drunks, kids roaming around, even state police who stopped in for coffee.

Then there were the phone calls. Some came from what I called the "Lonely Hearts Club." These gals would call every night and want to hear the same records. Calls came in from listeners who were inebriated, or having problems at home, whatever. You talked

with them and sympathized, of course. It was amazing. During all those years I was on the air, not 15 minutes went by that I didn't get calls from York, from Lancaster, from Harrisburg.

You really had to pace yourself to maintain the enthusiasm for five or six hours with the Top 40 format. It was rough sometimes.

Thanks to dedicated WSBA airmen like Gil David and equally committed salesmen, the York/Lancaster/Harrisburg regional marketing concept was working. *WSBALand* became a part of the marketing language in the area, as well as a term in everyday conversation. So here it was—a decade into the television age and this radio station was alive and well.

Those who were present at the “new WSBA” in the late fifties say nothing can match the electricity surging through the organization in its early days. The line between work and play often became hazy, hours meant nothing, and the joy of riding on a high note was a reward in its own right. Leading the charge was the newly appointed operations manager, Al Saunders.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Al Saunders

They were some of the most exciting times in my career as we took this fairly dull, only moderately successful radio station in York, Pennsylvania, and turned it into a totally contemporary Top 40. We had donkey races as promotions, we had a softball team, we had a Miss *WSBALand* promotion—and so many more.

One of the first things we did was tie-in with ABC on a national contest. It was called the “Most Beautiful Ears in America,” dreamed up, I believe, by Irv Lichtenstein, the network's promotion director. One of our *WSBALand* listeners won it and got an all-expenses-paid trip to New York.

Our announcing staff had to make the transition to the high energy, guttural thrust required of Top 40 disc jockeys. And believe me, that was not easy. In those first days of Top 40, Denny Kaye, Bob Shipley, Wayne Trout, Gil David, Ed Lincoln, and I had to work hard to make the change.

We had to be “up” all the time, we had to relate to the audience, and we had to be funny. In my own case, I got my gags and one-liners from the *Reader's Digest* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Also, someone had loaned me a copy of the *Urban Encyclopedia of Comedy*.

I also had an alter ego which I was able to concoct by pushing a button to make an automatic filter on the microphone. He was “Roger, the Red-Eyed Thermometer.” “Growlin' Allen Saunders” would say, “What's the temp, Rog?” And on filter, Rog would come

in and give the temperature, after which he and I would engage in conversation. One letter I received said, "It is obvious that Roger is a lot funnier than you, Al. And you're not gentleman enough to admit it."

As soon as I got off the air each morning, I put on my other hat as operations manager. And we'd begin working up another contest or promotion.

"Well, here we were in late 1957 with this tremendous success on our hands," Louis Appell, Jr., said in describing that watershed time for the building of the Susquehanna radio group. "I remember saying to Al Saunders, "If we can do it in York, why can't we do it elsewhere?"

The question was more than rhetorical, and the answer was not long in coming. Susquehanna would soon make its first acquisition.

Taking the Expansion Plunge

WARM



Chapter 6

Not long after WSBA's Top 40 rating triumph, it came to the attention of President Louis Appell, Jr., that a radio station might be available for sale in Scranton, Pennsylvania. With the highly promotable call letters WARM and an ideal dial setting at 590 kc, the 5-kw station was a virtual "sleeping giant." WARM's principal owner was William Scranton, whose ancestors had founded the town and who was to become governor of Pennsylvania in 1962.

"I called Bill Scranton and said we'd be interested in buying his radio station," Louis Appell recalls. "He said, 'That's fine, except I am very close to a deal with someone else.' That someone else was Ken Cooper from New York City."

Undaunted, Mr. Appell determined that should the Cooper sale fall through, Susquehanna would be ready and waiting. To this end, Mr. Appell offered Art Carlson the position of manager, in the event the Company became the licensee. As negotiations between WARM and Ken Cooper began to stall, Louis Appell and Art Carlson met in Scranton. ("Every time it was in the middle of a snowstorm," Mr. Appell groaned.) And with each visit, their appetite for the station increased. They felt, with their good management, WARM could certainly become the dominant station in the area.

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers It Well

Art and I were just drooling over WARM. We saw tremendous potential there, so we continued to keep in touch with Bill Scranton. Ken Cooper's interest eventually dwindled and disappeared, so we were in line to buy the station.

To this day, I cannot get over Bill Scranton's curious reaction during the negotiations. He went to great lengths to assure us that we were dealing with an honest, sincere person, and that person was Bill Scranton. I have always found that to be quite a source of humor, because it never occurred to me that Bill Scranton was anything other than a straightforward, honest, upright citizen in every respect.

The concept of "Top 40 Radio" helped revitalize the entire radio industry and was the booster rocket that enabled Susquehanna to soar into the media explosion engulfing the communications world. Since music and news were what radio did best in an age of television, Top 40 Radio relied heavily on these components. Thus, when Susquehanna took over WARM (located on the fourth floor of the Bowman Building in downtown Scranton) in mid-1958, the first order of business was to remove all vestiges of "old time radio," i.e., the kinds of miscellaneous features conventional network stations were still airing in the late 1950s.

Central to the success of Top 40 management was a basic sensitivity to nuances—nuances of timing, of sound reproduction, of listener empathy. Nothing was left to chance. Top 40 was quality-controlled all the way, beginning with an orientation for the entire staff on what to expect. It covered such items as how the salesmen should sell "this new sound in radio" and how the telephone operator should handle complaints about the disappearance of familiar program forms. Deejays were not allowed to enter the format without thorough training, including "dry runs."

Engineering also played a pivotal function in the meticulous attention to quality demanded by the committed managements of Top 40 stations. Prior to Top 40, equipment and its use were often regarded as necessary evils. With the advent of Top 40, the status of the chief engineer improved drastically.

Before operators like Susquehanna instituted the Top 40 format, they replaced much of their existing equipment. Reverberation units were installed to give the station a "big" sound, records were transferred to tape cartridges to eliminate scratches from constant use, special teletype clatter was crafted to lend an urgency to newscasts, and "filter" mikes and other devices were built by engineers to give select disc jockeys "character" voices and alter egos. These and other technical implementations created for Top 40 Radio a distinctive ambience. One such technical improvement was the creation of the transistor by Bell Laboratories in 1948—a boon to radio in general and to Top 40 stations in particular. The pristine clarity of a good Top 40 station was easy to identify and came through unmistakably even on small speakers.

Supervising the technical refinements required for Top 40 showcasing at Susquehanna Broadcasting was a new director of engineering, Glenn Winter. When Mr. Winter joined Susquehanna, his responsibilities included the technical supervision of three stations—WSBA, WARM, and WSBA-TV. His first major assignment was to refurbish and/or replace equipment at WSBA and WARM so that the transmitted sounds would meet the discriminating standards required in Susquehanna's new era of radio programming. While overseeing the technical transitions at WSBA, he made periodic trips to the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area to advise in the acquisition of WARM.

A WARM Memory—Glenn Winter

One of the first projects Mr. Appell asked me to undertake was to assess the technical operation at WARM, which I did. WARM's antenna system was a five-tower array (which on the air we called the "Five Towers of Power"), and it gave us a lot of problems. It took a lot of time and effort on the part of our technical people to adjust this antenna system properly.

Now, you have to bear in mind, WARM's tower field was located 10 miles west of Scranton. The five towers were spaced over a half mile apart. The end tower was literally in a swamp, resting on the top of 20-to-40-foot poles that acted as piers. We constantly asked ourselves, "How do those poles stay vertical?" Standing in the swamp as it was, this tower could shift, resulting in a change of our signal pattern. Thus, we had to devise a scheme that would detect the slightest dislocation, which we did.

Much of Art Carlson's time in his early days at WARM was spent working with the air staff on the basics of Top 40 Radio. Tapes of successful Top 40 stations became standard training tools. A tape that stood out at these sessions was by one Chuck Daugherty, the quintessential Top 40 disc jockey from WQAM, Miami.

"We cloned a small generation of Chuck Daugherty sound-alikes," Art Carlson recalled. "Chuck, by nature, talked upbeat, sang along with the music from time to time, used all sorts of one-liners, puns, etc., and in general incorporated the vital elements of what we were trying to implant at WARM."

The original WARM air staff (Don Stevens, George Gilbert, Jack Murphy, Harry Newman, Vince Kearney, and Jackson Gower) resisted, but they eventually adopted these elements—and more.

There was a great deal for WARM's pioneer cadre of air personalities to master. Replacements that were to follow could always be

trained by the “veterans,” but during these first days the challenge for the original cast was formidable. Among the guidelines they had to follow were these:

- Fast-paced delivery to create excitement and enthusiasm.
- Absolutely no dead air.
- Never use the word “record”—substitute “music,” “tune,” or “song.”
- Never offer a negative comment about a record.
- Talk over the instrumental introduction of a recording, but don’t step on the lyrics.
- Promote. Promote. Promote—the next newscast, the next weather-cast, a new contest, a new disc jockey, etc.
- Follow the requirements for giving the proper number of time checks, weather reports, station call letters, and the personality’s name per hour.
- All recorded elements must be separated by “live” voice of the air personality; thus no running commercials back to back.
- Disc jockeys are not allowed to take outside telephone calls during their shows.
- Air personalities should strive to spend one hour of show preparation for every hour on the air.

As for the music those disc jockeys played, it, too, was carefully chosen. The very name, Top 40, referred to the 40 leading popular songs in the station’s service area during the previous week—a collection of recordings that was often much the same in other geographic areas around the nation. Each week a music panel at WARM composed of the station manager, program director, and music director compiled the slate of the 40 leading songs in the station’s coverage area, based on continuing research—record sales, listener requests, and trade paper compilations. There was also a weekly “Pick Hit,” a tune the panel predicted was headed for the charmed circle of 40. From the inventory of 40 plus one, the air personality was expected to follow a strict record rotation policy: the number one song and the Pick Hit played once every three hours; the top 10 rotated every three hours; tunes number 11 through 20 rotated every four hours; and those 21 through 40 rotated every six hours.

As the nation’s pop music tastes gradually shifted from the harmony-oriented practitioners of Hollywood, Broadway, and Tin Pan Alley to the less-renowned tunesmiths who turned out a mixed bag of rhythm and blues, rockabilly, and rock-and-roll, most of the old-line radio outlets ignored the new product, choosing to cling to the more traditional variety. It was the new breed of independent radio propri-

etors, considered second-class citizens in many quarters, who played the *hits* (i.e., the Top 40 hits) on their music and news stations. Some of these music and news stations (WNEW in New York, WIBG in Philadelphia, KFVB in Los Angeles, and others) developed great popularity, and the musical environment created by their rhythmic contours charted new directions in sound.

Also woven into the mosaic of sound called Top 40 Radio was the promotion. The promotion never ceased on WARM. From small fun-and-games to contests to block-buster events, the promotional fare was often humorous, often topical, often upbeat, sometimes off-beat, always family-clean, and never dull. Whether the promotion was serious, zany, topical, short-term, long-term, on-the-air or off-the-air, its chief functions were twofold—to stimulate listener involvement and to get people talking about WARM. Whether it was a deejay leading a donkey through the Scranton or Wilkes-Barre streets carrying the sign, “I’m the only one who doesn’t listen to WARM,” or “WARM Day” at Rocky Glen Park featuring top names in pop music and free rides, the promotion engine never stopped running.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

There were so many promotions. We often built them around air personalities. Two I recall vividly involved Len Woloson (our first all-night man) and Frank Jaye (the “Man of a Thousand Voices”).

One Washington’s Birthday, we dressed Len up as George Washington, faked an anonymous call to the station from someone claiming to be George Washington, saying that at noon he was going to throw silver dollars across the Susquehanna River. Well, he threw a few silver dollars in the river—we didn’t want to waste too many—shook his head, and then walked across the bridge from Kingston to downtown Wilkes-Barre. In the meantime, this was being covered by the media, including us. Frank Jaye was our man following Len as if it were a news story.

The second part of the plan involved Len walking into the Europa Lounge, the largest and busiest restaurant in downtown Wilkes-Barre, sitting down, and ordering cherry pie for dessert, still dressed as George Washington, of course. We weren’t paying Len very much, and he enjoyed the opportunity to eat unlimited amounts. I think he had two steaks and probably forgot to order the cherry pie. But the promotion had its desired effect of confusing everyone. Our competitors kept going around, calling it “WARM’s hoax.” We never did acknowledge that we had anything to do with it, other than covering “that nut, claiming to be George Washington,” who called WARM because WARM was first in everyone’s mind.

The other one that comes quickly to mind involved Frank Jaye. I called a meeting in which my challenge was to brainstorm what we could do to create commotion in the "square" in downtown Wilkes-Barre. We wound up by having Frank Jaye on the marquee of Pomeroy's Department Store. He was not supposed to come down until a certain amount of money was raised for a certain charity. Whoever was supposed to be watching on behalf of the station called me to say he (Jaye) was not there. It turned out that from the marquee he was able to get into the department store, very close to the bedding department. When they found him, he was sound asleep on one of the beds!

But there was another side to WARM's initial success. While entertainment figured heavily in the program mix, a station does not get a 40 to 50 percent share of the audience within 60 days of new management and hold it month after month merely by playing hit records and running promotions. An important part of the WARM mix was news.

At first, some of the news was prepared and delivered by air personalities, going directly from their shows to the news desk. This gave rise, particularly in the lexicon of Top 40 detractors, to the pejorative term "disc jockey journalism." Despite that characterization, the station took its news responsibilities seriously. Among the guidelines of news policy were these:

- Deliver in a style that is punchy and authoritative.
- Write with picturesque and "emotional" adjectives.
- Use minimum of 12 stories per five-minute newscast.
- Be alert for bulletins and interrupt playing of a record if necessary.
- Use sound to enhance a story—if it doesn't impair journalistic integrity.

Occasionally, the interchangeable disc jockey/newsman modus operandi caused some anxious moments. There was the night, remembered by then-Program Director George Gilbert, when air personality Len Woloson, despite following news directives, prompted a deluge of phone calls:

"In his teaser headline of the lead story (which preceded the standard recorded newscast sound identification), Len read, 'Pope is dead.' What he was referring to was a fatal accident in which the victim's name was Pope. Well, five seconds after the words were out of Len's mouth, all the phones lit up, and they stayed that way for quite a while. It took us the rest of the evening to straighten that one out."

A key device in the station's news operation—as effective in the 1990s as it was then—was the “WARM Newstip.” Listeners were invited to phone in outstanding local news stories to which they were eyewitnesses. If the story checked out and was deemed to be of sufficient importance, it was used on the air. A leading story was selected weekly and the submitter awarded \$5.90. The competition among *WARMLanders* to supply Newstips often became spirited, according to George Gilbert:

“I took a Newstip call one afternoon from a guy who described a gentleman ready to leap off the Harrison Street Bridge in Scranton. His next statement was: ‘And don’t tell me you have that already because there he goes!’ So we checked it out, and, sure enough, it was factual in every detail. Incidentally, he won the \$5.90 that week.”

Although Newstips, high listenership, and promotional activities had to some extent fostered a certain interest in WARM as a news source, the station could hardly be said at that point to have had a news image. This was to change gradually, but a single Newstip, perhaps more than any other factor, accounted for WARM news’ coming of age.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

It was during February of 1959 that we received a Newstip that there was some kind of accident in a mine at Port Griffith. For whatever reason, we didn’t have anybody in news or programming to go out there, so we prevailed on Bill Musser (a salesman at the time) to head to the scene. As the story developed during the day, there were indeed 27 miners trapped below in a hole that had caved in. Not only had WARM broken the story, but among other things, Bill had commandeered the only nearby phone. The lone house next to the mine shaft served as a radio/TV newscenter and a newspaper newsroom. We were getting calls from all over the country, and all the wire services, the *New York Times*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and other major newspapers had sent reporters.

By this time, we had marshalled every employee available. Don Stevens as program director more or less coordinated our coverage. The adjacent Susquehanna River posed a real threat. There were two railroad tracks used to haul coal from the mine shaft, and the ground under part of the track had collapsed. Rescue workers had cut one track and dropped empty boxcars into the gaping hole to keep the water from pouring in where the miners were located. About eight o’clock that night, Don, Bill, and I were at the mine shaft, while most of the other reporters were off in another area getting organized. In the darkness, all of a sudden somebody yelled that all the men were coming out.

Don bolted across the remaining railroad track to the airshaft where they were indeed coming out. Don immediately phoned the station with what I think is one of the all-time great eyewitness extemporaneous news reports. Don had a penchant for saying "Yes, indeed" to everything. And on the final line of his first report after the rescue, he said, "Yes, indeed! This was the miracle of Port Griffith!"

Manager Art Carlson, well aware that commercial success does not necessarily follow hard on the heels of creative success, was not satisfied with the pace that achievements were being translated into sales. Selling any intangible successfully is a challenge met by only a limited number of salespeople. Radio time is a particularly elusive product, and the "new WARM" required special selling skills. Early reaction in the marketplace was predictable—WARM's competitors lambasted it, and many advertisers either rejected the programming and hence did not sign on, or they adopted a wait-and-see stance.

No one in WARM's initial sales efforts describes the challenge this created more heartily than Jim Davey. An early sales recruit at WARM, Jim Davey built a successful track record as a local time salesman. (He left WARM in 1965 to become general sales manager at Susquehanna's WGBB in Long Island, then came back to WARM as general sales manager in 1975 and was promoted to general manager in 1977. He left WARM in 1985.)

A WARM Memory—Jim Davey

We were referred to, of course, as "that rock-and-roll station." Many conservative businessmen were reluctant to be associated with our format. Department stores were a particularly difficult category for us. So were banks who considered us "those young kids up in the Bowman Building."

The competition often worked harder selling against WARM than in pushing their own stations. "It's only a fad," they kept saying. They also continually reminded advertisers about our "young audience."

Then, of course, we had to contend with their trying to shoot holes in our Scranton/Wilkes-Barre story. At the time WARM came along, the Scranton newspaper wouldn't accept advertising from a Wilkes-Barre department store, and vice versa the Wilkes-Barre papers. People in Scranton read the Scranton paper and watched Scranton television and people in Wilkes-Barre stayed with their own newspaper and TV station—this was the way most advertisers looked at it, and to a great extent that was true.

So along comes WARM with its regional coverage. The competitor radio stations worked hard to convince clients that if they

were a Wilkes-Barre business, they were foolish to pay for Scranton. And in Scranton, our competitors said, "Hey, why pay for all that extra coverage of Wilkes-Barre or Hazelton?"

But we gradually wore that sort of thing down. We *knew* we had the listeners. And we knew we had an excellent staff behind us. Our people were *the* producers of great commercials in the market. They were the best sales tools anyone could ask for.

Act I at WARM, then, during the early months under Susquehanna ownership, was like a critically acclaimed hit play whose sales and marketing effort had a way to go before it capitalized fully on the winner the producers had crafted.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

The biggest problem I encountered was finding not just "good" sales people, but anybody who would work for us.

We inherited Joe Maccia. Joe's basic selling tools included being dressed in a suit and tie and having an envelope in his pocket—which may or may not have included the rate card. His technique was to stand on a busy street corner in downtown Scranton and run into people and see if they wanted to buy any spots. Inasmuch as he was at the outset the only salesman we had, his account list was the best one at the station.

There was another unusual fellow, Walt Beemer, who wanted desperately to work for us. He dressed in tennis shoes all the time, but we hired him anyway.

The sales department that ultimately emerged at WARM tackled an often hostile marketplace with a pair of weapons which would win the support of a large family of advertisers and the (mostly grudging) admiration of its competitors.

The first, program rating dominance, we have discussed. The second was an outgrowth of the former called "strip marketing." Historically, media markets were defined by newspaper circulation. In Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, each city had a newspaper with virtually all circulation in its respective city and county. That area was its market. Radio and television stations were licensed to a single city and primarily programmed to, and sold in, that city and its county.

Certain radio and television stations, however, have the ability to transcend such parochial marketing boundary lines. Starting with a strong signal that physically boomed out over the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazelton/Poconos region, the new Susquehanna station involved those areas, first in its program and news approach. After that,

the sales department could call on businesses in all those precincts and present a viable advertising medium for marketplace consideration. (This was also the strategy being used in the York/Lancaster/Harrisburg market of WSBA, and later at WHLO.)

National advertisers, like their local counterparts, needed to be educated on the strip market concept involving the two key county trading areas (Lackawanna and Luzerne) that for so long had been treated as separate marketing entities. The "educators" were the charter members of Susquehanna Broadcasting's new national sales representative, the Robert E. Eastman Company.

The same independent thinking and freewheeling hustle that characterized his days as a Blair sales executive marked Robert Eastman's style when he opened his own shop. There was, for example, an early contest he ran for advertising agency people. In trade paper ads, Eastman listed his charter member stations, under which appeared some blank spaces. Agency types were supposed to guess who the Robert E. Eastman Company's next three station clients would be, the prize being an all-expense trip to Bermuda.

"It was an impossible contest," Bob Eastman later admitted. "Nobody could possibly win. But it did feed us a lot of information. Some of the call letters that came through turned out to be pretty good prospects."

One of the "tigers" who signed on before the Eastman firm was a year old was Frank Boyle. Mr. Boyle was a time salesman at station WJR in Detroit when Bob Eastman hired him to open a branch office in the Motor City. In the early 1960s, the Eastman Company moved him to New York. Through the progression of management chairs, he became president and chief executive officer upon Mr. Eastman's retirement in 1975. (Ten years later, when he himself retired, he founded a brokerage firm to specialize in the sale of radio and television properties.)

A no-nonsense sales rep, Frank Boyle sometimes ruffled station clients' feathers with his tell-it-like-it-is approach. Thus, in the following WARM Memory, one must bear in mind that "Top 40 Radio" and "rock-and-roll" were anathematic terms in much of the marketplace back then. Managers whose stations played the new music had to be circumspect in describing their formats to the buying community. Euphemisms such as "modern radio," "full service station," and "music and news" format had to be invoked for self-preservation by those who sold Top 40 Radio. Mr. Boyle's vivid account of the new WARM manager as his first visiting station client in Detroit in 1959 is a classic in the treasury of sales sagas.

A WARM Memory—Frank Boyle

I hadn't been in the business all that long to really know what "station relations" were all about. One of the first station men I met was Arthur Carlson. I was familiar with WARM's marvelous ratings and knew that it was part of the new strip marketing concept Susquehanna was initiating.

As Arthur and I were driving to the Campbell-Ewald agency in the General Motors Building, I turned my dial to 760, WJR, the station from whence I had come. I had expected I might hear a few compliments from Arthur about this station's magnificent programming. *Au contraire!* Arthur Carlson said he thought it was, "one of the great crappy radio stations. A lot of dead air, a geriatric approach!"

I made a quick decision to correct my client's view. I told him if he had as many adults as he had teens listening to his station, maybe then he could make critical appraisals.

After this less-than-enlightening discussion on the relative merits of WJR's programming, we arrived at the General Motors Building. Our first call at Campbell-Ewald was on a time buyer who had been program director at WSAI, Cincinnati. He was very familiar with the modern music art form called rock-and-roll, which Detroit viewed with total disdain. At this point, I required Art Carlson to do just one thing to get a 52-week, \$35,000 order for Chevrolet. All Arthur Carlson had to admit to the time buyer (who had in his possession a number of tapes of WARM given to him by WARM's competitors which documented WARM's music) was that WARM played rock-and-roll. All Arthur had to do was say out loud, "WARM plays rock-and-roll." For a kid like myself, on almost straight commission, this order was something I had an enormous interest in acquiring.

The time buyer took Arthur through his paces to get him to give some specifics on why WARM had such great ratings. Arthur categorically refused to reveal any details—only to say, "WARM was a full service radio station, more akin to KDKA than not." And that's all he felt the buyer was entitled to know.

I asked the buyer if I could take my client into the hall for a minute. I tried to suggest to Arthur that taking the "Fifth" was no way to get a \$35,000 order. Arthur said it was none of the time buyer's business what the program concept was that led to WARM's success. I suggested this was not really the way to make money in Detroit.

So back in the buyer's office, the agency guy said, "As long as you won't tell me the details of your music, I'm not going to give you an order." We walked out and that was the beginning of two traumatic days for me, because I could not understand how such a Scandinavian hardhead, apparently a bright radio guy, could be such a knucklehead in national sales. At the end of two days, Arthur and I were legitimately underwhelmed with each other.

I called Bob Eastman and said, "Is this what the business is all about?"

Bob said, "Yes, there are days like that. And remember, the client is always right."

I said, "Well, if the client is always right, then why are we so poor?"

Anyone who gave it a modicum of thought quickly grasped that Scranton and Wilkes-Barre would make an ideal strip market. Given the two cities' fairly isolated position in northeastern Pennsylvania, and given the dozens of adjacent towns and municipalities stretching through the valley from Nanticoke to Carbondale, the region *was* a single market. Art Carlson recalls giving a visiting friend the grand tour, after which he remarked, "It's not one market, it's one town!" Towns had sprung up, of course, wherever a mine shaft had been sunk and a mining company had built houses.

Combining the entire region into a single strip market was a WARM innovation of no small importance. After this groundwork had been laid, thanks in large part to the efforts of Congressman Daniel Flood in the mid-sixties, the U.S. Census Bureau bestowed official status on the singularity of the market by calling it "Northeastern Pennsylvania." (That name avoided the touchy proposition of having one city's name listed second if a hyphenated designation using both names were chosen.)

However, the area had already received a name from Susquehanna Broadcasting that would be far more familiar to far more people than any Census Bureau designation. Early on, the region became simply *WARMLand*.

As the 1950s wound down, WARM entered exciting days with the guiding Susquehanna credo that a profitable broadcasting enterprise can render a greater service to a community than an unprofitable one. With the approaching 1960s, Susquehanna could feel proud of its two "refurbished" radio stations. Although the Company knew that both had yet to realize their full potential, WSBA and WARM came out of the starting blocks like winners.

The radio industry, thanks to other innovative operators across the country, was showing its mettle as a strong information, entertainment, and advertising medium. Right before the nation's very ears, radio was reborn in the same decade that saw television's big surge.

The country itself had experienced quantum leaps in virtually every sector of life. America and radio were on the move.

"Hello, Ohio"

WHLO



Chapter 7

As the media world turned in the early 1960s, the dark cloud which hung over television gradually spread to envelope radio. Shocked by television's recent "Twenty-One" quiz show scandal, in which Charles Van Doren's isolation booth agonizing was proven to be nothing more than the performance of a skilled actor, the country soon witnessed the infamous "payola" hearings that rocked the radio industry. Conducted by the Senate Subcommittee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce under Chairman Oren Harris, the payola hearings concluded that 207 persons (not all disc jockeys) in 42 cities had accepted bribes totalling \$263,245. With 4,068 stations on the air at the time, and with an average of five disc jockeys per station, it was clear that only a minority were involved in the nefarious practice of accepting "pay for play." It should be noted that never has the taint of disc jockey payola wrongdoing ever touched a Susquehanna station.

As a result of the hearings, acceptance of payola bribes became a federal crime. Because of licensee responsibility under the law, Susquehanna and other respectable broadcasters instituted a payola affidavit as a condition of hire, with subsequent affidavits required of all employees at each station on a semiannual basis.

One of the factors contributing to the payola flap was the continued controversy Top 40 managed to generate. By the end of the 1950s, rock-and-roll records were dominating the nation's favorite-song lists. The radio world, it seemed, was aligned into pro- and anti-Top 40 camps. However, as far as Susquehanna was concerned, the Top 40 format had proved its mettle beyond question, and further expansion was eagerly pursued.

As 1959 drew to a close, the involved process of once again acquiring a new station had been completed and all was set for Susquehanna to sign on its newest station, located in Akron, Ohio.

Art Carlson described the constraints under which the search for and purchase of the new station had been conducted: "We were a relatively small company, looking for run-down properties with the best possible facilities that were located where there was not a strong Top 40 station, since we were rather committed to that line of work."

The station that filled that bill was WHKK, whose call letters were promptly changed to WHLO—letters which lent themselves to the promotional identity, "Hello, Radio!" Thanks to excellent ground conductivity, the outlet's choice 640 kc dial setting enabled it to produce one of the most powerful signals in the 1,000-watt class. Art Carlson described why Akron was one of the "very best" radio markets in the country:

"At the time, there were only four AM stations licensed to the city. (This was long before FM amounted to anything.) There was no morning paper, although the only evening paper, the *Akron Beacon Journal* (a Knight property), was a strong one. To all intents, there was no local television—only one UHF station. With WHLO's strong signal we felt we could introduce our strip market concept to include Canton, which was about 25 miles away and even less 'radioed' than Akron."

Another unusual sequence marked the Akron purchase as atypical. In any station transfer, a prospective licensee is forbidden by law to exercise any premature control. Until the FCC gives its final "OK," no matter how certain approval may appear, the planned owner cannot participate in any way in the affairs of that station. It so happened that WHKK was without a sales manager during this time. Since Ted Hepburn, salesman at WHGB in Harrisburg, had been designated for that post when Susquehanna eventually took over, he was hired by WHKK for six months before Susquehanna's stewardship began. Thus, as Mr. Carlson points out, "the Company was able to get a head start in terms of knowledge of the market, the people, and the sales situation—in general, the lay of the land."

FCC approval came and the Susquehanna flag began flying over Akron on January 13, 1960. The team that kicked off opening day at Susquehanna's newest station included Art Carlson, manager; Ted Hepburn, sales manager; Bob Shipley, program director; and Joe Stetner, chief engineer.

WHLO initially was housed in the annex of O'Neil's Department Store. In itself, this was of no special significance; indeed many early radio stations were even owned by department stores because of re-

ceiver sales tie-in possibilities. What made the O'Neil site arrangement unusual was the lease Susquehanna inherited. The document's terms called for the station to pay a significant percentage of its sales over \$350,000 to the department store. In addition, the lease required every station break to contain a non-logged reference that broadcasts originated in the O'Neil Building. Such a practice was in direct violation of FCC regulations at the time. Needless to say, Susquehanna renegotiated these provisos that threatened FCC problems, to say nothing of stifling station profitability.

The takeover of a station by a new owner becomes an instant mechanism for generating rumors, speculation, and competition. On January 13—when the call letters were still WHKK—one competitor, WCUE, was convinced Susquehanna's newest outlet would unleash its new format with special first-day hoopla. To blunt the assumed inaugural ballyhoo, WCUE launched a million-dollar stamp giveaway.

A WHLO Flashback—Bob Shipley

They broke their promotion on January 13, only we didn't do a thing that day. They were furious and called us all sorts of dire names because we hadn't done what they thought we would.

A radio/television writer for the *Akron Beacon Journal* (which owned WAKR, the top-rated station) had been calling twice a week to ask for the new program listings. I would tell him there was no change, which there wasn't. Then, on Thursday, January 21, he came on with Benny Goodman playing "The World is Waiting for the Sunrise," over which I read the required FCC announcement. By noontime, we were using the new call letters.

After I got back from lunch, the *Akron Beacon Journal* man wanted to know what we thought we were doing. He asked, "Does the Federal Communications Commission know about this?"

"Come, come," I said. "How naive can you be?"

"Don't you understand?" he asked me. "If you're going to act like this and not let me know what's going on, I just won't put your listings in my paper anymore."

I told him, "That's OK with me."

He did follow through—which, as it turned out, was academic, since the conventional hour-by-hour newspaper listings, a holdover from old-time radio, had little or no practical use when the modern Top 40 Radio came along.

Interestingly, it was several months before WHLO's call letters were mentioned in the *Beacon Journal*. Our big breakthrough in getting coverage in Akron's only newspaper did not come until that first summer, and by August we tied WAKR for first place in the afternoon.

When Susquehanna purchased WHLO in 1960, it inherited a unique two-tower transmitter constructed on leased land. In 1971, Susquehanna's lease on the transmitter site expired, necessitating the construction of a new tower on property located in nearby Copley, Ohio. Al Saunders, who succeeded Art Carlson as WHLO general manager in January 1961, remembers:

A WHLO Flashback—Al Saunders

The two towers, built just after World War II and during a steel shortage, were of differing heights. One, far too short for its purpose, was elevated on a cedar sub-base. Since the site was near the Cuyahoga River in a damp area, we lived in fear of an insect infestation. This tower, then, was one of the few in broadcast history that was the subject of regular termite inspections. We had to remove the tower when we vacated the site. So after years of anxiety over its condition, and daily gratitude that it was still standing, I suffered a real emotional experience when we put dynamite into those cedar posts to destroy it. It seemed to buckle at the knees and topple in a cloud of dust. And in contrast to our early problems with media coverage of our station, this tower-felling got 6 and 11 o'clock coverage on Cleveland television.

While the new antenna was constructed on Company-owned land, intensity measurements of antenna arrays were required from surrounding areas to gauge the station's signal strength. The new director of engineering's reception at one of the first checking sites was less than hospitable:

A WHLO Flashback—Glenn Winter

I remember vividly one instance where I needed to go back into a field by a farm lane. It usually only took a few minutes to make my measurements and get out. In a situation like that, we didn't get the permission of the property owner because, generally speaking, the measurements were made along the farm lane. You were not into any area where you could do any harm to the field.

So I'd drive back this farm lane, make the measurements, get back in my car, and in five minutes, be on my way. On this particular occasion, as I was driving out the lane, I saw a farmer. I stopped and explained to him that I was making radiation measurements for the new radio station. Well, when I said "radiation," the guy almost went berserk. He told me to get off his land and never come back.

As it turned out, an adjustment of the antenna system was necessary. I had to go back, hoping this farmer wouldn't see me. Well,

as I came back out of the field, there he was standing in the middle of the lane with a shotgun. So I ran up over his field in my car and scooted around him. And by gosh, if he didn't pick up a rock and throw it at my back window—smashed it, too. Needless to say, I didn't go there for measurements again!

Whenever a radio station changes hands and its new owners institute a different program approach, reaction comes from many quarters. One of the features dropped when WHLO installed its Top 40 format was a daily religious program sponsored by a large church, the Akron Baptist Temple. The Reverend Dallas Billington, pastor, did not take his removal lightly. During his final broadcast, in a scathing denunciation of the move, he characterized Manager Carlson as "the man who took God out of Akron."

Repercussions like those, top management learned early on, were sure to disappear with time. There was, however, a more profound concern which increased with each passing month—the station's limited hours of operation. Like its WHKK predecessor, WHLO was authorized to begin its broadcast day at 6:00 A.M. and end it at California sunset, which came at 7:45 P.M. during the winter months and at 11:00 P.M. in the summer. Nonetheless, the station showed magnificent rating increases each month through most of the first year, going head to head with WAKR by June 1960. Sales were showing correspondingly dramatic progress. As the winter hours approached, however, ratings and sales declined. The following year the cycle was repeated. Ultimately, the station's limited hours of operation and air time would, years later, lead to Susquehanna's decision to sell the station.

For its first five or so years, WHLO's profit picture was a bright one. However, in 1965, the FCC instituted a rule-making procedure that was designed to increase the number of radio stations on the air between 6:00 A.M. and local sunrise. Good for WHLO, right? No! Ironically, in changing the rules, the FCC eliminated the language from the Communications Act that WHLO had utilized to justify its earlier-than-sunrise sign-on. As a result, WHLO had to relinquish its 6:00 A.M. sign-on and conform to Akron's local sunrise, which in the winter could be as late as 7:45 A.M.

General Manager Al Saunders, who spent much of his 20-year managerial life in Akron, recalls the day when, after nearly six years of California sunrise sign-on, the station was ordered to trim its broadcast day to Eastern-time observance.

A WHLO Flashback—Al Saunders

Here was a station that had the best of both worlds: two full drive times all year long, with our 6:00 A.M. sign-on and our 7:45 P.M. December/January and 11:00 P.M. June/July sign-offs. You can imagine what a tragic day it was when I had to deliver the bad news: "Tomorrow morning, don't sign on at 6:00 A.M. Cut back to local sunrise."

The first assignment of the Company's new Washington legal firm, Cohn and Marks, was to intervene with the FCC to maintain WHLO's justification for its 6:00 A.M. sign-on. Soon after, station KFI in Los Angeles (which also operated on the 640 frequency) became sufficiently aroused and expressed their disapproval to the FCC. With this challenge, WHLO's relentless quest for a longer broadcast day began. Stanley Neustadt, a partner in the Cohn and Marks firm, still regards the WHLO case as a "very unusual one." The pursuit of more broadcast hours for the station stands out vividly in his memory.

A WHLO Flashback—Stanley Neustadt

We explored which various possibilities, if any, would be the best course to follow. I later consulted with George Davis, who was the head of the engineering firm Susquehanna had retained. He was one of the foremost broadcast engineers at the time—bright, articulate, and highly honorable. We spent the better part of a day reviewing all the possibilities and discussing each one at length. As time went by, we tried desperately to get more hours for WHLO. We repeatedly filed, making requests for pre-sunrise authorization, and participated vigorously in the proceedings, working toward a change in the clear channel rules.

The FCC's action set in motion the slow erosion of the station's audience and sales. Still, WHLO was a bane to its competition and a boon to Susquehanna.

Two important reasons for this were the strength of WHLO's signal, permitting the formation of the strip marketing concept for Akron/Canton, and the strength of its staff.

Historically, WHBC, licensed to Canton, had been consistently rated the city's leading station. Right behind WHBC came KYW, Cleveland, one of those 50,000-watt titans that covered half the United States. In less than two years, WHLO had edged the Cleveland powerhouse out of second place. In addition, numerous retailers had

stores in both cities, so the station's selling effort could thus take on a regional approach with the two metropolitan areas combined into one strip market.

"A very nice situation to be in," is how Art Carlson described the Akron/Canton broadcast life in the early to mid-sixties. "WHLO was number one overall in Akron/Canton. We were big in the afternoons and had sufficient morning audience so that we could be judged the leading station in the Akron/Canton market."

The other ingredient accounting for the "nice situation" at WHLO was personnel. New owners usually retain some players from the old regime, but, by and large, they like to build their own rosters. In most cases, this is a slow and painstaking process. At WHLO, however, the air troupe who played the leading roles for some years was in place in a relatively short time. Johnny Andrews, a native of Farrell, Pennsylvania, was a student at Youngstown State University and was employed by WFAR when WHLO came into his life. He joined the WHLO staff as an announcer and worked his way up to operations manager before leaving WHLO in 1972. Mr. Andrews returned to Susquehanna as WSBA/WSBA-FM operations manager in 1975. Eventually, he became vice president and general manager of one of America's leading all-news stations, KTAR, Phoenix. The day of his WHLO job interview, February 22, 1960, perhaps convinced him that in radio one should always expect the unexpected.

A WHLO Flashback—Johnny Andrews

There I was, sitting in the lobby of the O'Neil Building, waiting for my appointment. The receptionist, Helen Abraham, a mature, middle-aged woman, gave me my first impression of WHLO—a very mature and conservative kind of company. All of a sudden I heard the rustle of footsteps, and here was this guy dressed in a colonial outfit with a bag of coins! I said, "What's going on?"

And this very mature woman said, "Oh, we're doing a promotion, and he's going to throw some coins across the Cuyahoga River."

It was Bill Ridenour, WHLO's first morning disc jockey, dressed up as George Washington. That was my introduction to Susquehanna!

From then on for Johnny Andrews, it was one exciting—even bizarre—experience after another. For instance, the ghost of Christmas 1966 will haunt him as long as he draws breath.

A WHLO Flashback—Johnny Andrews

I was the only guy on the air staff who was married without children. It was customary for that guy to do the early Christmas morning shift from 6:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. We had a newsperson on duty only until nine, after which the disc jockey would read short newscasts. Bob Ancell was to take over for me at nine. So here I am at 6:00 A.M., starting the records with every third one a Christmas tune. About 7:30 A.M., Bob Ancell calls. In barely a whisper, he says, "I can't talk. I've got laryngitis. Can you cover for me?"

Well, it's Christmas Day. What the heck, I'll stay on till noon and cover for Bob. The newsperson leaves at nine and now I'm alone. At about 9:15, Peter Porter calls and says he's stuck in a snowbank outside Pittsburgh. Could I get someone else to cover for him? I told Peter I would take care of it.

Have you ever tried to call anybody on Christmas Day? I go up and down the list of full-timers and part-timers. No answers. I figure, oh well, I'll just keep playing the records. If worst comes to worst, Joe Cunningham will relieve me at four.

It's now 11:30 A.M. The phone rings and it's Joe Cunningham: "I've been trying to call, Johnny, but the lines have been out here in Scranton. We have a foot of snow, and I can't make it back."

To make a long story short, I did the entire day until sign-off at 7:45 P.M. I never want to hear "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" again. But wait—there's more.

Around seven, I look out in the lobby—the studio was glass-enclosed and faced the lobby—and see the cleaning people. I go out to wish them "Season's Greetings." I return to the studio as they leave through the front door.

As I am reading an announcement, utter terror crosses my mind again. Those cleaning people think I have a front door key! I don't. So I go through the announcement, and run out to the parking lot. They're gone!

I can't leave with that front door unlocked. I start calling the people who have front door keys. It comes down to a couple of part-timers. One is Dick Vineyard who lives near the station with his grandmother who can't speak much English. I get her on the phone.

"Grandma, Dick should call the radio station. Johnny Andrews." I patiently go over it with her several times.

Finally, at 10:00 P.M., Dick Vineyard returns the call. He has just come from a Christmas party. "What's the problem?" he asks.

"Look, Dick," I say. "Don't ask questions. Just get your tail over here right away with a front door key."

Dick Vineyard finally shows up. When I get home half an hour later and walk in the door, all I can say is, "Bah! Humbug!"

“Appreciation Day” at a number of Susquehanna stations in the 1960s had become a promotion staple. WHLO Appreciation Day, like its sister stations’ counterparts, included renting a large amusement park for the day, bringing in name entertainment, offering free rides, and awarding prizes.

A WHLO Flashback—Johnny Andrews

The first Saturday in May in northeastern Ohio is not exactly balmy Miami. On this particular WHLO Appreciation Day, the temperature only reached 40, but we still drew 65,000 to Chippewa Lake Park. For several weeks we had been promoting the “Great Ping-Pong Ball Drop.” The balls were numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, each ball being worth a prize. Balls marked 4 were worth \$100.

So here comes the airplane at 2:00 P.M., the park is jammed, the rides are going full blast and the P.A. system blares out the exciting news: “Look! The plane is hovering over the park. The Ping-Pong balls will now start coming down. And don’t forget—if you get a number 4 Ping-Pong ball, it’s worth \$100!”

Down they came. Hundreds of Ping-Pong balls. I am at the top of the hill looking at the balls dropping all over the park, inside the rides—everywhere, Ping-Pong balls. Here comes the Tilt-a-Whirl and kids are jumping over its tracks to go after the balls. “Someone is going to be decapitated!” I say, as the manager and I look at the scene below with utter horror. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

Naturally, when we decided to repeat the “Great Ping-Pong Ball Drop,” the rides would all be stopped. So there I am, a year later, with the park manager, same hilltop overlooking the park. The plane flies over, and, as can only happen in northeastern Ohio, a gust of wind blows the Ping-Pong balls and they start landing—half of them on the roof of the hotel near the lake, and the other half in the lake. And there go the kids, trying to climb to the hotel roof, and others wading out in the deep water. Again, we fortunately avoided a disaster. But that ended the “Great Ping-Pong Ball Drop” at WHLO Appreciation Day.

There was another Johnny at WHLO, named Mitchell. He had a multi-faceted career that could truly qualify him as one of radio’s Renaissance men. When Susquehanna purchased WHKK, Johnny Mitchell was a part-timer attending the University of Akron.

A WHLO Flashback—Johnny Mitchell

When we learned WHKK had been sold to some out-of-state folks, the implication was not a very positive one. All sorts of rumors blew around as to who they were. Then one day, Art Carlson, Bob

Shipley, and Frank Jaye came in, and I didn't think they looked all that intimidating. So I decided to cast my lot with Susquehanna if I were invited to stay.

I remember spending many hours one night at the station, putting together a 10-minute audition tape of what I thought the new format should sound like and what I would sound like in it. The next morning, I handed it to Ted Hepburn in a casual way, as though I had whipped it together in a few minutes.

Tom Sherwood was the first afternoon personality when the station became WHLO. He came on with this screeching, Tarzan-like scream to open his program, because he was Sherwood of "Sherwood's Forest." Tom fancied himself the great rock-and-roll guru of that time.

WHLO was the first station to put personalities out in the community, particularly with record hops at the local Ys, schools, etc. I can remember autographing girls' arms, and they weren't going to take a bath for two months because Johnny Mitchell had touched them!

All this was part of that period of time when what had been radio became television—soap operas, etc. This "new" medium was reaching out to the new generation—the baby boomers. WHLO came up with a format that was just right for that generation.

One of the many derogatory terms the competition used to describe the Top 40 format was the expression, "disc jockey journalism." It was a code word for a superficial, hyped-up style of news reporting, which unquestionably some less professional representatives of the genre pursued. In the early Top 40 years at Susquehanna, disc jockeys were involved in news—preparing it in the newsroom and reading it on the air. Company policy required a strict adherence to high journalistic standards, although that policy did permit an attention-getting device, such as a sound effect, to draw attention to the news. Johnny Mitchell was one of the more news-minded disc jockeys at Susquehanna; therefore, there was no question who should represent WHLO at a Washington briefing in April 1961.

A WHLO Flashback—Johnny Mitchell

The State Department held briefings for the out-of-town press. At this particular briefing, President Kennedy came to answer questions on the possibility of a Cuban invasion. I'll never forget Kennedy standing there, denying it—at the very moment the Bay of Pigs action was beginning.

I remember (U.N. Ambassador) Adlai Stevenson denying it at the same briefing. I heard later that Stevenson had not known about the invasion and how distressed he was that his integrity had been jeopardized.

During the blooming days of the Top 40 format the disc jockey achieved his high-profile status as an American original. Susquehanna had its share of America's most unique representatives of the breed. Certainly, any flashback to the Company's Akron adventure must include Joe Cunningham. "Uncle Joe," as he was later dubbed by Manager Al Saunders, came aboard in WHLO's first months and remained there for over 17 years.

Joe Cunningham got his first taste of disc jockeying at WHLM in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania. His next stop was at WLBR in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, where Al Saunders, who was WSBA operations manager at the time (1960), heard him. He was invited to audition, passed with flying colors, and joined WARM's air team. But Company expansion afforded him the opportunity to go to WHLO as a "temporary fill-in." The role lasted until 1977, when he left WHLO.

A WHLO Flashback—Joe Cunningham

As I think back, maybe WHLO represented the best era in radio. We had exciting personalities, rock-and-roll, Tunedex sheets, jingles, contests, and fun.

Another unique thing was the combining of Akron and Canton to make one market. We were as big in the Canton area as we were in Akron. The Company was forward-looking, moving ahead with the right people at the right time.

There would be kids standing in line maybe a mile long to get your autograph or a Tunedex sheet. It was the day of record hops, of our basketball team, the Akron Marching Band, football. Our coming to a school in Plymouth (Ohio) to play basketball or do a record hop was the biggest thing to hit that or any of the small towns we played. To me it was love, that people paid attention to WHLO and Joe Cunningham.

As WHLO's popularity continued to escalate, it became apparent the O'Neil facility was no longer a suitable place for this kind of station. A site at 2650 West Market in the Fairlawn section of Akron was chosen, and in 1966 the move was completed. Having worked at a number of Ohio stations, Carl Day says he had a pretty clear picture of Ohio radio. But when he accepted Al Saunders' offer to be WHLO's morning man, he was dazzled by the new facilities.

A WHLO Flashback—Carl Day

I walked in (the first time) and couldn't believe this was the station I had listened to. I was absolutely amazed that it was a 1,000-watter. Everything was there, top quality equipment and

everything else. I had always thought that WHLO was a 50,000-watt station, in a four-story building, situated on 25 acres of land. The image the station had in the field was interesting. If you were in Mansfield and (said you) worked at WHLO, you were considered a big deal.

Some of the things we did were amazing. The annual 64-hour "Radiothon" raised astronomical amounts of money for causes like Children's Hospital. We're talking about a station that wasn't even on the air at night. It's amazing, you could get hundreds of people to show up at a shopping center for an all-night deal when the station didn't even broadcast at night!

But it wasn't all fun and games at WHLO. News and information, a Susquehanna trademark, were always a priority. For instance, early in Al Saunder's WHLO stewardship, he created "Look Up To Learning." The feature (which was later adapted to each of the Company stations' local needs) came about in early 1961, Mr. Saunders recalls, "as a result of a plea made at the National Association of Broadcasters convention that year. One of the themes was that radio should do something, especially through education, to make the world better."

As the decade progressed, so did WHLO's emphasis on news and public affairs. Editorials and news specials became standard parts of the broadcast day. Radio itself was changing as stations zeroed in on one kind of pop music or another. "Narrowcasting" was pre-empting portions of the "all-purpose" Top 40 stations' turf in cities around the country. Hard rock and other musical variants posed new competitive considerations, as youthful tastes were turning in several directions. FM was starting to receive more recognition as a creditable medium—one which placed a heavy accent on music. Confronted with these developments, WHLO began an evolutionary shift toward a product with a more pronounced adult appeal.

By 1968, WHLO had achieved a decided news/information flavor in its program mix. No one typified this era more than Dave Lieberth. As a classical disc jockey at the University of Akron station WAUP, he won the first annual WHLO "Look Up To Learning" scholarship. His dedication and talent earned him a part-time job in the WHLO newsroom. Later, he became WHLO's news director.

A WHLO Flashback—Dave Lieberth

The first night I ever worked at WHLO was a July evening in 1968. Akron was in racial turmoil after a month of rioting. Six elders of black churches were standing in the newsroom, waiting to go

on the air to plead with the people to be peaceful. My news career began with one of the most dramatic stories Akron ever heard.

I had an awful lot of opportunities at WHLO. I set up our first real Ascertainment Survey. We started doing a lot of news. We established a series of mini-documentaries to emphasize our credibility as a serious adult radio station.

I did a series in 1973, "Inside the Grand Jury." We won an American Bar Association Gavel Award that year.

In the fall of 1974 when I started law school, WHLO made a dramatic change—we decided to do all news in the morning. We had Steve Fullerton as anchorman. We made him more of a personality and emphasized his commentaries. We hired a lot of newspeople and went after the news market aggressively. From then through the summer of '78, we were doing a lot of news. We were doing things live—with action all the time. It was great radio.

Unfortunately, we lacked an early sign-on and had an identity problem which severely limited revenue potential. We did win an award from the Associated Press for a documentary on Ohio's first death row inmate.

Besides the talented and hardworking program personnel, a dedicated sales squad covered the Akron/Canton area with a marketing blanket as far-reaching as the station's signal. Thus, Art Carlson's characterization of those first half-dozen years of Susquehanna's ownership as a "nice situation to be in" recognized the enormous contributions of WHLO's sales department.

Ever mindful that radio salesmanship was more than peddling a grab bag of spot announcements, the WHLO troops were often innovative. Some of the best evidence of this was in the sale of commercial remote broadcasts. Adapting a mainstay of early radio to modern needs, WHLO's on-location broadcasts worked like this: installing a special line at a client's place of business (or using one of the station's specially equipped mobile units), the station had one or more of its personalities at the site to be part of a sale or promotional event. Direct from the scene, the personality would then deliver live commercials and invite listeners "to come on out and join the celebration." "Cut-ins" were usually of regular commercial length and often projected the aura that the advertiser was sponsoring a larger program element than he actually was. Later on, remotes from business places became commonplace. But in the early sixties, the effort was a pioneering one.

Fred Greaves, whose 33-year history as an engineer with Susquehanna began in 1959 at WSBA-AM and WSBA-TV, moved to WHLO in 1961 as chief engineer. Ten years later, he expanded his re-

sponsibilities as chief engineer to include Susquehanna's newly purchased station WLQR in Toledo. In 1977, he returned to York as assistant director of engineering on the corporate staff. Mr. Greaves' recollection of one of the many WHLO remotes attests to the determination and resourcefulness of the Susquehanna staff.

A WHLO Flashback—Fred Greaves

WHLO in the sixties covered the American Golf Classic, as well as many other major PGA tournaments held at the Firestone Country Club.

I remember during one Classic, Program Director Warren Duffy had gotten Jack Nicklaus to come over to the remote truck for an interview. After completing the interview, which we were taping, Warren asked if Jack would be willing to do a promo for WHLO. Jack's response was "The *#%\$&! with WHLO." That was all we needed, Jack giving the call letters. After about 30 minutes with a razor blade and splicing tape, we had Jack Nicklaus on the air with a station promo!

Lending a special spice to WHLO's eager young selling contingent in the earlier years was its sales manager, Gordon Barnhart. Ace Shaheen (who was named 1977 Canton Adman of the Year) was perhaps the leading Barnhart watcher on the WHLO sales staff.

A WHLO Flashback—Ace Shaheen

Gordon was the funniest guy in the whole world. We had sales meetings on Saturday mornings, and he used to open the mail at that time. He used a letter opener shaped like a knife. When he got a cancellation, he took the opener and put it to his stomach. One time he actually punctured himself!

Gordon was in the Air National Guard and did a lot of solo flying. He loved to fly and would go on air searches—anything to fly that plane. One day he took salesman Steve Kelly along, and while they were in flight, Gordon faked a heart attack. His request for Steve to take over the controls almost gave Steve a heart attack!

Ted Hepburn, WHLO's first sales manager, was a gung-ho, "let-me-at-'em" type. His territory included Detroit, and he couldn't wait to begin making the obligatory trips there. Frank Boyle, who was the Eastman representative in Detroit at the time, recounts Ted Hepburn's initial encounter with Detroit's ad agency fraternity in early 1960.

A WHLO Flashback—Frank Boyle

WHLO had kicked off very quickly with its Rock format and moved up in the ratings. Rock stations had a tendency to generate high teen counts, and the kinds of accounts I was selling—high ticket automotive accounts like Chrysler and Cadillac—felt this was at cross-purposes with their search for an audience who could pay three or four thousand dollars for a car.

So it was decided Ted Hepburn and a couple of his guys should come to Detroit to tell automotive accounts why they should buy time on WHLO.

I had warned Ted that he and his guys were going to breakfast with the kingpin of Detroit time buyers, Woody Crouse of BBDO. He was a guy who set the trends; if Woody Crouse bought time on WHLO, others in Detroit would follow. Woody Crouse did not enjoy having group breakfasts, so we had a double degree of difficulty—with that, and with Woody's idea of a typical listener to a rock-and-roll radio station—a teenager in a leather jacket whose main job was stealing Caddie hubcaps.

I warned Ted and his guys they should not try to drink Detroit dry the night before the breakfast. Contrary to my suggestion, I understand they gave it a helluva good try. We met at 7:30 A.M. and sat at a round table, with the eggs, etc., while I did the amenities. Woody hadn't come to this party with any degree of fun in his soul.

I tried to set up the structure along these lines: "Woody, we believe it's time you start investing some of your Chrysler money on WHLO. WHLO has kicked off in its professional fashion because it's owned by Susquehanna—well known for the way it has initiated and executed the strip marketing concept. The guy who is responsible for executing those concepts is Ted Hepburn, who, although he looks young, is mature in the amount of time he has been in radio. And you'll note from his demeanor, he is a serious broadcaster."

As I was saying this, Woody looked at me with baleful eyes and started to smirk—something Woody does not do early in the morning—and he pointed in the direction of Ted Hepburn's chair. There was Ted with his face down in the middle of his scrambled eggs, a temporary wipeout!

While Mr. Boyle suggests the Woody Crouse breakfast "may have significantly set back our efforts to get automotive money on WHLO," the Eastman Company, working with station management, eventually landed a number of blue chip national accounts with the station.

But, as each year blended into the next one, WHLO's restricted hours handicapped the station's ability to compete effectively. The changing face of radio itself and the ups and downs in the Akron marketplace dictated format switches. In April 1977, Talk replaced Top 40

and was maintained until November 1980, when the format was modified to News/Talk. In May 1981, it was back to music with Memories/Big Band, which prevailed until the station was sold.

Terminating ownership is always a painful decision. The WHLO sale was even more agonizing because in 1979, the full-time authorization Al Saunders and Cohn and Marks had sought for so long became a reality. By then, however, it was too late. The "terminal illness" that Manager Saunders had described beginning in 1966 had taken its toll. In November 1984, WHLO was sold to Trans World Broadcasting Company.

Obviously, there were other factors that led to the sale besides the longstanding sign-on/sign-off brouhaha. One was the success of FM. Others involved changes in the marketplace. Akron/Canton had always been part of the Cleveland television Area of Dominant Influence (ADI). Over the years, such an identity meant Cleveland radio and TV stations got larger shares of national and regional advertising business because over those same years, Cleveland stations were winning larger shares of the Akron/Canton listening audience. Ironically, the final reason for disposing of WHLO was the very prize the station had pursued so vigorously—full-time operation. When that grant finally came, it was the denouement of the WHLO story.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

Strangely, this was the final nail in our coffin, the thing we had hoped and prayed for. We leaped immediately into a more expensive News/Talk operation, only to find other stations' positions were unshakable.

We reasoned that regional programming—even though we were 500 watts at night—would make more sense. We had zeroed in on the aging market. We were ready to roll with "The Music of Your Life" format, only to have another station jump in there first. We went in with our version, but there wasn't enough (audience) for two.

Art Carlson summed up Susquehanna's ultimate decision to sell WHLO: "Painful though it was, the sale of the station became inevitable. WHLO was one of the linchpins that helped build the Company, and it will always have a fond spot in my heart."

Akron would return those sentiments. In 1984, Al Saunders was voted into the Akron Radio Hall of Fame, and, in 1985, Art Carlson was inducted as well. Other WHLO staff members who were similarly honored included Donald Dempsey, Steve Fullerton, Joe Cunningham, Carl Day, Johnny Andrews, and Ace Shaheen, further expression of Akron's affection for the Susquehanna team at WHLO.

Northward to New England

WICE



Chapter 8

When 1961 began, 4,354 licensed AM & FM commercial stations were operating in the U.S. radio community. Compared to more than double that number licensed 30 years later, the 1961 competitive broadcasting scene might have appeared serene. This assumption, however, would be far off target.

While radio, with its redesigned, post-network programming and its reputation for ubiquity, was carving out a well-defined niche as the “everywhere medium,” TV’s domination as the main source of mass home entertainment was now readily accepted. No longer were radio and television considered any more uniquely competitive than, say, television and newspapers. In short, radio was now perceived as the “new” medium—thanks, in large part, to the professionally run Top 40 stations, of which there was now at least one in each of the top 100 markets.

In *Susquehannaland*, the Company’s three stations were perking right along. WSBA and WARM were generating encouraging sales and ratings, and WHLO celebrated its first anniversary by exceeding all projections for its success. When Al Saunders moved to WHLO as manager in early 1961, Art Carlson ended his year at the helm and came to York to open a Radio Division Central Office. Ongoing discussions regarding expansion centered on one undebatable item—the Top 40 format. After exploring several possibilities, an available outlet in New England met the Company’s basic criteria, and in the spring of 1962, the fourth station was purchased.

Providence/Pawtucket, Rhode Island, the country’s 36th largest market, represented a step upward on the expansion ladder, just as

Akron/Canton had after Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. One Top 40 format was already in place, at WPRO. But it was felt that, having "gone to school" with three operations of the same genre, WICE (5 kw day/1 kw night), at 1290 kc, could be next in the Susquehanna winners' circle.

Founded in 1947, WICE's call letters were chosen because the station's original location was in the Rhode Island Auditorium, which functioned primarily as a hockey rink. When Susquehanna purchased WICE from Providence Radio, Inc. on April 16, 1962, it was situated in the Crown Hotel. Later that year, the Company moved the facility to modern and more commodious quarters at 198 Dyer Street in Providence, where it remained throughout its Susquehanna proprietorship.

When a company opts to buy a broadcast property, one of the first persons on the scene is an engineer. Thus it was that Glenn Winter, Susquehanna's director of engineering, became involved early in the exploratory process with WICE. One evening, on a prepurchase investigation with Art Carlson and his assistant Bill Musser, Mr. Winter looked out over the capital of Rhode Island and observed the radio and television tower lights that blinked across the darkened cityscape. "Which tower belongs to WICE?" he wondered.

"Simple," said Bill Musser, "I'll just call WICE and tell 'em I'm from the FCC and that they should turn off their tower lights. That way we'll know which one is theirs."

In an instant, the visiting Susquehanna team got their answer.

A WICE Backward Glance—Glenn Winter

One immediate problem related to the antenna system. The station's three towers were built on a small lake, and the lake was subject to flooding. We had to have a small dam to keep the water from rising too high, because if the water rose above the base, it could short out the towers.

At the same time, if we opened the dam and allowed too much water to go downstream too fast, the stream would flow into the first floor of a factory located downstream. In addition, the stream was the source of power for the factory. So we had to be very careful that proper flow was maintained—we had to make sure our WICE engineers understood this unusually delicate situation.

Of the circumstances at WICE when Susquehanna took over, Art Carlson says, "The image of the station was absolutely rock bottom. For instance, when we transferred people in, local stores would not extend them credit. The stores had been burned by previous em-

ployees. The station's image wasn't good in the advertiser-business community, either. Listeners were upset because many had won prizes and had never been able to collect them. The list goes on and on."

Blow number two struck when, just before Susquehanna was ready to take the reins at WICE, WHIM switched to Top 40, making it three stations in Providence using the same format. Undaunted, the Company stuck to its original programming plan and promptly moved in its management team: James McInnery, general manager; Frank Orth, sales manager; "King Arthur" Knight, program director; and James Hines, news director (followed shortly thereafter by John S. Kennedy).

King Arthur Knight, from the original WARM troupe, was asked to go to Providence in 1962. Thirty years after he first walked into WICE, he still recalls the station's original less-than-elegant quarters.

A WICE Backward Glance—King Arthur Knight

When Susquehanna took over WICE, it was located in the Crown Hotel. The hotel was known for sleazy guys and dubious ladies, and we also knew a lot of horse players stayed there. Our studios were on both sides of the main hallway.

On one of those first days, Art Carlson and I were sitting in an office, when all of a sudden, we heard yat-da-da-da-datta-yat-da-da, oomp-pah, oomp-pah. We said, "What on earth was that?"

Well, what that was was a circus band practicing. Seems it was using a studio we shared with another tenant. Needless to say, we were happy to move to Dyer Street.

I still get a kick out of the May 4th holiday in Rhode Island. It's also the day—May 4, 1962—that Susquehanna put in its Top 40 format at WICE. A lot of people at the station didn't understand that everybody got May 4th off—not to mark the anniversary of Susquehanna's take over, but because it was Rhode Island's Independence Day!"

During the first few months, Art Carlson readily admits, "we were really losing money." This obviated the Company's pursuing the purchase of WIFE, Indianapolis, which for a while enjoyed greater success than WICE. But Susquehanna eventually did end up in the Indiana capital with WFMS, a far more valuable association than WIFE would have offered.

After a year, Jim McInnery resigned. Frank Orth was moved to sales development director and Lou Strittmatter relocated from Scranton to become sales manager. Thus began many months in which WICE had no on-the-scene general manager. During this pe-

riod, Art Carlson divided his work schedule between York and Providence, spending as much as two weeks at a time in the Rhode Island capital. In mid-1963, an influx of exceptional personnel began. Years later, Art Carlson could still heap praise on “the exceedingly creative people who went through WICE. No other station made a greater contribution to the Company in terms of people—both those that stayed with Susquehanna and those who went on to other important jobs in the industry.”

Jim Hackett, a former WICE manager, assesses one-time Program Director Jack Murphy: “Jack would come in every morning and say, ‘Let’s do bing, bang, boom!’ He had 10 things he wanted to do. Maybe two of them were pretty good, two of them needed work, and the rest were terrible. You’d say, ‘Hey, do this one, or think about that some more and get rid of those.’ He’d say, ‘OK,’ and that would be the end of it until the next day.”

On the news side, Providence native George Hyde had participated in school activities which involved WICE in the early sixties, so he can technically lay claim to being the Company’s first WICE employee. In 1965, Mr. Hyde joined WICE’s news department full-time, a post he held until 1970, when he became administrative assistant to the general manager. Assigned to the corporate staff in 1972, he remained there until 1979 when he became general manager of WRRM, Cincinnati. In 1982 he became Florida regional vice president and general manager of WQBA-AM/FM in Miami.

A WICE Backward Glance—George Hyde

WICE may have been the world’s best second rocker. There was always a stigma attached to such a designation back in the sixties. But there were a lot of things accomplished by second rockers in those days.

You can’t understand WICE unless you understand that our signal was vastly inferior to our major competitor’s. Back before FM, you could slug it out with a core of loyal listeners who might be willing to sandpaper their fingers to listen to you in the suburbs.

We were constantly harassed by WPRO and their larger signal. One of their pet phrases was “WPRO—The Station That Reaches the Beaches!” Beach recreation is very important in Rhode Island, and people going to Narragansett or Point Judith or the Newport area would be there with their radios, mostly listening to WPRO—because our signal was so weak in those areas.

One year in April, I got an idea. We *knew* WPRO was going to haul out “The Station That Reaches the Beaches” and start clubbing us with it again. So I went into the production room and I grabbed

the phone book and looked up 10 people whose names were spelled B-e-a-c-h or B-e-e-c-h. I called them and asked, "Is WICE the station you listen to?" And they said something like, "Oh, I listen all the time." Well, we got a bunch of promos on the air that went something like this: "Hi, I'm Charlotte Beach of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and I listen to WICE all the time. As far as my family is concerned, this is the station that reaches the Beaches."

We got the promos on before the summer season and WPRO never used that slogan again.

In a gesture of good sportsmanship, newsman Hyde agreed to ride a camel as part of a "WICE Evening" at a Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus performance. Whatever else his varied career may have included to that point, camel riding was not one of them.

A WICE Backward Glance—George Hyde

A camel gets all the way up in back before he gets up in front. So this one got up in the back and I started sliding down the camel's back, down his hump, and the next thing you know, the camel's got 200 pounds of me around his neck and he doesn't feel very good about it. So he turns around and chomps me right on the arm. The circus guy raps the camel on the head and I get off, trying to figure out whether the bite has broken the skin or not.

So I go immediately to the hospital close by the arena. I tell the woman I have an animal bite. "What kind?" she asks. I tell her, "A camel bite." Now this was primarily a Jewish hospital in a Jewish neighborhood. I think the woman had visions of an entire Arab legion coming from the Rhode Island Auditorium to lay siege to Miriam Hospital. Well, it so happens a doctor on the staff was one that was treating me for a minor problem at the time, and he comes charging into the emergency room. I tell him I was bitten by a camel and he says, "That's a little out of my line." So he goes out to check on camel bites.

Next thing you know, the emergency room is in an uproar. There were people who were stabbed, who had broken legs, who got hit by cars—all laughing at this schmuck in the corner who got bitten by a camel.

I go to process the paperwork—workers' comp, etc.—and on this long form it says, "Machine causing injury: be specific." So I type in "Camel." It then says, "Part of machine causing injury: be specific." So I type in "Teeth." I sent it to Bill Goodfellow at the home office, and I am happy to say the claim was paid.

At WICE, it seemed events happened in a cyclical fashion—from the ridiculous to the sublime and back again. For every circus or cir-

cus stunt there was a serious promotion. And so one summer, everyone at WICE was recruited for a project called "Clean Up the Providence River" (CUP).

A WICE Backward Glance—George Hyde

During one particular era at the station, we did no outside advertising. Hence, we had to rely on a fund-raiser to do public service, and at the same time get some promotional value. This one was to raise money for the Providence River cleanup drive. The river was filthy dirty, smelly, and contained all sorts of junk. It was also right in back of the station, so everybody on the staff knew how badly it needed a cleanup.

So Jim Pride and Gary Steele, two of our announcers, were outfitted in orange flight suits borrowed from the Naval Air Station. We put them on a Navy life raft, called it "Ecology I," to which we tethered a barrage balloon for communication. We put Jim and Gary in the middle of the Providence River and told our listeners the two of them were going to stay out on that raft in the middle of the filthy river until we collected \$1,290 toward the Providence River Cleanup Fund.

Within 10 hours we had \$1,290. We also had the Corps of Engineers on our back because they were unaware we were in the middle of the river. The police were upset because we were tying up traffic on the interstate that passed over the raft's location. Anyway, we decided we'd shoot to double the figure. I'll never forget the sight of 50 or 60 cars lined up at 11 o'clock at night with people yelling back and forth at our announcers on that raft.

We doubled the figure, and then some.

The Providence River-WICE spectacular became front page news for the *Journal Bulletin*. Mayoral candidate Lester Millman rowed out to the raft to make a donation. Gov. Frank Licht got involved. Chamber of Commerce members, many in work clothes, pitched in. Contractors donated trucks to haul away junk and debris. After the last truck had pulled away, "there were spots in Providence where kids could actually swim and fish," Rhode Islanders remarked in amazement.

WICE initiated many news and public affairs events. For instance, the station did the first locally produced black-oriented public affairs program in Providence, called "Black Talk."

On one occasion, salesman Dave Grady recalls bumping into the sales manager of WEAN, a station owned by the newspaper. When Mr. Grady commented on the despondent look on his competitor's face,

the sales manager remarked that he had been summoned to the *Journal Bulletin* publisher's office to be queried about the WICE-1290 Christmas Fund Drive.

"How come," the publisher had wanted to know after pounding on his desk, "we run AM and FM stations and this WICE is on the front page of my paper?"

The WICE news department was constantly on the lookout for a story or an angle that fit into the station's "we-try-harder" approach. One morning, when a bomb had been detonated at the Russian Embassy in Washington and details were hard to come by, newsman Dave Pearce, who had studied Russian at Brown, called the embassy, conducted an interview entirely in Russian, and translated it on the air. "We may have been the only station in the country that had such an interview," George Hyde said.

Susquehanna's Providence venture was inexorably linked to its chief competitor. Not only had WPRO mounted its own very successful version of Top 40, it also boasted a superior facility—5,000 watts at 630 on the dial—and 40 years of history. In the course of the 11-year "Battle of Providence," there was only one time when WICE landed on top of WPRO in the ratings. It was against this formidable foe that WICE's sales warriors launched their daily crusades.

During the station's colorful history, the sales squad that somehow prevailed more often than not included Lou Strittmatter, Herb Levin, Bob Dempsey, and Steve Trivers.

The late Lou Strittmatter was described by Herb Levin as "one of the great salespeople of our time." He had "that fire in the belly." Lou Strittmatter was superb in face-to-face encounters with prospects, and he could write sales letters in words that were often as disarming as if they had been spoken. Strittmatter had come from the "new WARM" in Scranton, where, early on, he had been made sales manager. When WICE joined the Susquehanna family, he transferred there as sales manager and later became general manager. He left WICE in 1966 to go to WSAI, Cincinnati. Later, poor health forced him off the job until 1971, when the following classified ad appeared in *Broadcasting* magazine: "I'm tired of looking at soap operas. . . ." It was signed "L. Strittmatter."

Kerby Scott Confer, then at WYRE in Annapolis, saw the ad and hired his former WARM colleague. In his few months at WYRE, according to Confer, Lou Strittmatter "inspired the station's sales department and helped ring up very impressive sales." While at the Annapolis station, he installed a bell which he rang whenever a salesman brought in an order. Today, long after the connection at

WYRE was severed, there remains the "Lou Strittmatter Memorial Bell." Kerby Confer claims, "Lou taught me selling at WARM, and I wasn't even a salesman."

Lou Strittmatter was sales manager at WICE when Herb Levin came aboard in 1963. Mr. Levin was later promoted to sales manager, and, in 1967, went to Miami as general manager of WQBA, the Company's new station there. Mr. Levin remained at WQBA until 1982, when he left to organize his own company.

Herb Levin called the Providence assignment "a crucible—either it melted you down or it made you hard as steel. A person who came out of Providence, I think, could survive in any market, in any place, in any kind of job."

A WICE Backward Glance—Herb Levin

WICE was a very difficult sell. You had to sell the sizzle, because the steak was lean and tough. We learned to sell promotions and "spec" spots. We had one very memorable promotion at the time the surfing craze was popular. I remember taking a young deejay and naming him Mike "Surfer" Sands. We created a tale that he came to us directly from the West Coast where he "surfed the big surf and found the ultimate wave." Talking this surfing jargon on the air was terrific.

One summer weekend, they invited him to Narragansett for the surfing championship. The problem was he had never been on a surfboard. So we were really in a quandary. We had billed this guy as "one of America's leading surfers," and now he was invited to put on a demonstration for listeners. We took him to a friend of mine, an orthopedic surgeon, and had his leg wrapped in a cast. "Poor Mike was hurt," we said, "and will be unable to perform, but he certainly sends his best regards to the listeners."

If there was one ingredient above all others that permeated WICE's sales operation, it was showmanship. The traffic report pitch to Midas Muffler is a typical example of a sales presentation that took flight and landed a big contract.

A WICE Backward Glance—Herb Levin

We flew a helicopter to Boston to sell our traffic reports. Lou Strittmatter had invited our prospects to lunch on the second floor of a place where we could land the helicopter. There were big plate glass windows with curtains overlooking the spot where the chopper was supposed to land. At the appropriate time, Lou was supposed to go over to the windows, pull back the curtains and say, "Here's our chopper!"

Well, first we fought terrible headwinds. A cold front had come in with a lot of fog. We bumped and bumped, and what should have been a 20-minute ride took over an hour. Lou kept getting up and down and peering out through those curtains. The client thought Lou was crazy. But the happy ending is that Midas Muffler bought the helicopter traffic reports and they lasted a long time.

The third member of WICE's sales all-stars was Bob Dempsey. His career started in the executive training program of Jordan Marsh in Boston. When he ended up in a Providence department store's radio division (WJAR), WICE Sales Manager Herb Levin took notice.

"Herb put a full-court press on me," Mr. Dempsey remembers. "WJAR had just cut the sales commission rate and taken away all the political accounts from the salesmen. It seemed like a good time to go over to Susquehanna."

Bob Dempsey remained a salesman for three years, then became sales manager soon after Jim Hackett succeeded Lou Strittmatter as general manager. Upon Jim Hackett's departure in 1969, WICE's managerial reins were passed on to Mr. Dempsey. He held that position until early 1973. Then, after two years at WPRI-TV, he rejoined the Company as vice president of Susquehanna Productions. In 1976, he returned to station management as the top executive at WKIS (an Orlando-based station acquired by Susquehanna in 1971). He left broadcasting in 1979, returning several years later to become sales manager of WOFL-TV, Orlando.

"Those years (at WICE) were the happiest days of my life," says Bob Dempsey. "They were sensational. We worked hard. Time didn't matter. Herb, Steve Trivers, and I started out kind of as adversaries and grew to be real close."

Unquestionably, one of the most memorable events in WICE's sales and promotion history occurred in the spring of 1971, when the Providence College Friars basketball team played in the National Invitational Tournament in New York's Madison Square Garden.

A WICE Backward Glance—Bob Dempsey

This was a thrilling experience for me. Falstaff was the sponsor, our biggest client. The promotion started some days before Providence College was scheduled to play the University of Pennsylvania in the deciding game of the NIT. We went up to the state house and Gov. Frank Licht passed the first basketball. A contingent of our disc jockeys, our "Double Dribblers," dribbled basketballs all the way from Providence, Rhode Island, to Madison Square Garden, New York. The deejays took shifts as a small mobile home accompanied

them. They took back roads through Connecticut and had police escorts the whole way to the Garden. The thing was timed so the rest of us who flew down could meet the Dribblers in a parade up Park Avenue and over to Madison Square Garden.

With the game set to start at 3:00 P.M., each of the WICE staff members, at 2:55 P.M., dribbled down center court for a lay-up shot. There we were on national television with "WICE Double Dribblers" on the back of the jackets and wearing the white hats that were part of the Falstaff tie-in.

But (sob) the Friars lost.

Rounding out the sales quartet that left footprints in Providence broadcasting history was Steve Trivers. Joining the WICE sales team in 1965, Mr. Trivers transferred to Susquehanna's corporate staff as administrative assistant to Arthur Carlson in 1969. While at the corporate office, he had a direct hand in upgrading WSBA-FM, helping to make it a viable ad medium (a development we shall examine more closely in Chapter 11). Mr. Trivers left Susquehanna in 1972 to form his own company, Fairfield Broadcasting Company, in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

"Great times!" That's how Steve Trivers describes his WICE years. He, too, claims that the only way to be successful selling at WICE was to "work three times as hard as the other fellows in the market."

Lest anyone think a sale is a straight-line progression from seller to buyer, let us ponder Steve Triver's rite of passage to what he calls one of the "great non-events of our time," the Crescent Park Battle of the Bands.

A WICE Backward Glance—Steve Trivers

We had been in a pitch, head-to-head against WPRO, to get the Schuler's Potato Chips account, working with Schuler's agency, Hutchens Advertising, in Rochester.

Peg Lefever, the buyer, told me at 3:30 one afternoon that she "had pretty well decided to buy 'PRO.'"

I went to Herb (Levin) and said, "Geez, I don't know what else to do. We've done everything. We've sent her pitches—blah, blah, blah, blah."

Herb said, "I'll tell you what to do. Get on a plane, fly to Rochester, and walk into her office tomorrow morning at 8:00 A.M., and you'll write the order."

He said, "Pitch her a Battle of the Bands. We'll stage a Battle of the Bands at Crescent Park, and Schuler's Potato Chips can be the sponsor."

So I did that. I flew to Rochester, and I walked in at 8:00 A.M. with two cups of coffee. Herb had taught us to have one container of coffee with milk, the other plain, and ask, "How do you like your coffee?" I walked in Peg's office and she was flabbergasted.

I said, "Peg, this business is so important to me I wanted to talk face-to-face about it. But first I wanted to share a cup of coffee with you." Well, she drank the coffee and bought the Battle of the Bands.

It really went well. We flew Peg Lefever into Providence for the finals in August. We met her at the airport with signs saying, WICE Welcomes Peg Lefever. When she got off the plane we gave her a dozen roses. As she was standing in the terminal holding the roses and waiting for her luggage, a guy comes up and says, "Peg, I've always loved your records and I'd like to have your autograph." He really thought she was a celebrity because of all the fuss we made!

The Schuler's Battle of the Bands order was a big one. It must have frosted the guys at WPRO who had probably already spent the commission.

If the local salespeople found WICE a challenge, the station's national representative, the Robert E. Eastman Company, could look back on its Providence partnership as a sort of "Vietnam experience": the more resources and selling effort the rep lavished on WICE, the more total victory seemed to elude Eastman's group.

One of the pieces of ammunition WICE developed was an attractive map, designed to illustrate a WICE sales premise—"90 percent of the people in Rhode Island occupy 10 percent of the land." Up and down the streets of the nation's buying centers the Eastman forces went with their maps proclaiming the WICE geographic/demographic facts of life in "little old Rhode Island."

A WICE Backward Glance—Frank Boyle

It was an uphill challenge. I don't know that we ever did a great job at WICE. It was just one of those stations that didn't work, no matter what efforts Susquehanna put into it. I know they certainly tried, but it was their first big market. WICE was up against a world class operation in the same format, WPRO. So WICE was sort of beaten by the WARM/WSBA/WHLO marketplace syndrome.

WICE was a significantly underpowered radio station. And when they called it the "Mighty 1290," I think that's the first time I really knew what an oxymoron was. We thought we had found a sales hook to this problem when one of the WICE executives came up with a land mass map showing the square mile between Providence and Pawtucket as having the heaviest population density of any piece of

real estate in America, so we used the sales line that 90 percent of the people in Rhode Island occupied 10 percent of the land.

We had a lot of fun trying, but we just never pulled off the same kind of success that we were accustomed to in other Susquehanna markets.

To say that the Eastman Company and WICE sales management gave it their best shot would be gross understatement. Susquehanna's letter files are filled with correspondence documenting both parties' fight for national business. There were triumphs, of course, but the misses on certain orders created a dismay that seemed to override the hits.

It was never a case of Susquehanna's top management sitting back and complaining about Eastman's failure to generate sales commensurate with the kind of station the Company knew WICE was. For instance, Art Carlson's proposal that the rep open a Boston office didn't help much. The WICE general manager and sales manager, whoever they happened to be at various stages, spent many hours in the trenches of Madison and Michigan Avenues, in client offices alongside Bob Eastman's tigers, trying to raise the station's national sales off its plateau. Despite Providence's population concentration and despite exceptionally talented personnel, Susquehanna lost in its first encounter as challenger-versus-the-incumbent.

Bowing to the inevitable, WICE was sold to Crohan Communications on November 15, 1973.

What, then, of the WICE experience? Susquehanna Radio Corporation President Art Carlson summed it up best in a candid retrospective.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

Our series of misfortunes started from the announcement date to the people. Louis and I arrived by train because the airports were closed due to a snowstorm. We had to wade through over a foot of snow from the train station to the radio station. Then came the unexpected WHIM change of format and the incredibly bad image of the previous (WICE) owners.

We also learned that, even though the market was compact—that “90 percent of the people living on 10 percent of the land” was no fabrication—just as in other markets, the suburbs were growing, and toward the end we were covering only a portion of them.

Many tried and gave their all. But success was always a fleeting thing in Providence—one step forward and two steps backward.

All this must be set against the backdrop of our Company's growth. As we were assessing the future in the late sixties and early

seventies, we had to consider what was going on in the industry. In our expansion plans, what was for sale that we might be interested in wasn't available for what we were prepared to pay. This was a time when some fairly large AM sales were recorded.

At the same time, we were trying to figure what was going to happen in FM. This led to a list of targets in bigger markets by way of FM.

But maybe our biggest mistake was that we waited a year too long to sell the station. The lessons learned may have been the best part of the station. We learned the value of facilities—that we couldn't just take any facility and make it work.

As the 1970s unfolded, WICE seemed an almost certain casualty. When we bought WKIS in 1971, we were up to seven AMs, which was the limit.

All of which led to the reluctant consensus to sell WICE as Susquehanna looked elsewhere for brighter prospects for future expansion.

On the Edge of the Big Apple

WGBB



Chapter 9

Since musical radio had clearly become the dominant choice of the nation's broadcasters in the age of television, few programmers were venturing outside that realm. By the mid-sixties, *Standard Rates and Data Service*, in its monthly update of station facts and figures, was listing information on types of music ("popular" and "serious," with unclassifiables—"religious," "gospel," "ethnic"—set apart). At this juncture, the industry was still preoccupied with music rather than format types. The format explosion was yet to come.

Some stations looking for alternatives to Top 40 and "Middle-of-the-Road" pop music turned to a Country Music format. But, other than these, a few in the Talk category and a handful of All-News operations, "Middle-of-the-Road" and Top 40 remained the leaders.

Within the Top 40 format, however, significant changes were taking place during the mid-sixties. The first involved content—the "British Invasion," an influx of English artists on the American pop music scene. In 1965, for example, out of the year's top 25 hits, 12 were by British performers. Another change was "Boss Radio"—brainchild of Bartell Stations' Top 40 alumnus, Bill Drake. "Boss Radio" was a streamlined version of Top 40—"more music, less talk."

Of all the media in the modern popular culture, none is trendier than radio. Where other media must usually spend indeterminate amounts of time and money for a new look, radio can make its changes quickly, often with a minimum of financial stress. Susquehanna, historically, has been watchful for the slightest indication of change from the trend indicators.

In the summer of 1964, even though its AM stations were committed to Top 40, the Company remained open to exploring other possibilities. That was important, because when the opportunity for the next acquisition arose, the new station's location in the world's largest suburb—where the nation's number-one Top 40 powerhouse, WABC, was already in place—precluded any thought of using that format.

The addition of Susquehanna's fifth station in WGBB (1240 kc, 1000 watts day, 250 watts night) stands out as quite unusual, in the Susquehanna family and perhaps in the entire registry of broadcasting.

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers It Well

One day I got a call from Joe Rosenmiller. Joe, a former Yorker, had been a classmate of mine all through school. He had gone to New York to work for rep firms before entering the station ownership business.

Joe wanted to visit because he had a proposition he wanted to talk to me about—the purchase of WGBB and WGSM—twin stations on Long Island. One company could not buy both because of duopoly rules. Joe proposed that we buy one and his company buy the other, and try to operate them as if they were co-owner stations. After some discussion, Art and I agreed to the proposition.

Rosenmiller's company, which he founded with Peter Bordes, was called Greater New York Media; it would later change its name to Greater Media. The Rosenmiller-Bordes partnership desired to form a "ring of stations" around New York City. When WGBB in Freeport-Hempstead, and WGSM in Huntington, Long Island, became available, they were one step closer to realizing their goal.

Art Carlson said there were reservations about buying WGBB since it sat under the "New York umbrella." What kind of niche could the station carve out for itself?

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

We made the decision based on the premise that WGBB was to be a sales-oriented animal. There was no way we could become a major audience factor, except to be the number one local station on Long Island. Our only competitor was WHLI, a daytimer, but a station with a very strong signal. WGBB, therefore, was envisioned as a sales project more than a program project, even though there would be emphasis on local news and involvement. We thought that we would be able to attract good announcers who would come to us with the intention of breaking into New York.

On the other hand, we felt that there were a lot of competent New York salespeople living on the Island who were tired of commuting, and, with the opportunity of making a decent living, would be happy to stay on the Island.

I selected Bill Musser as manager six months before takeover, so Bill would have an opportunity to think about little else for those months before he went to WGBB.

The quarters Susquehanna inherited on takeover day, May 15, 1965, dictated the station's first goal—find new digs. WGBB was located above a pool parlor. This created a number of problems as General Manager Musser moved in his team and department heads: Jim Davey, sales manager, and Bob Lawrence (who had been *Ray* Lawrence at WSBA), program director.

Bill Musser had come to Susquehanna and WARM as a salesman by way of WKVA in Lewistown, Pennsylvania. After a duty tour as corporate group program coordinator and assistant to Art Carlson, he was chosen as WGBB's first Susquehanna manager.

Bob Lawrence joined WSBA as a disc jockey in 1961 but left to join his father's business. However, he returned in 1965 to become program director at WGBB, where he remained for 13 years.

Jim Davey, who earned impressive credentials during six productive years as a street salesman in WARMland, describes the station's original building at 44 South Grove Street in Freeport.

A WGBB Trip Back in Time—Jim Davey

It was over a pool hall. When I arrived, Bill Musser came down and said, "Hi, good to see you. Don't worry, we're going to move."

I remember walking up steps that had no lights. I didn't quite expect this, having just left WARM with its new Avoca headquarters. The hallways were narrow, the sales area was one big room, and the studio where Bob Lawrence was doing his morning show was a little two-by-four.

"Don't worry," Bill kept telling me. "We're going to move."

You'd be sitting on the second floor and you'd hear a thump, thump, thump. At first we didn't know what that thump was. Then we found out. It was the fellows downstairs. When they got angry playing pool, they would hit the ceiling with their pool cues and give us that thump, thump, thump.

"If you were on the air," Bob Lawrence adds, "you had to talk fast or keep the music loud so you wouldn't get any of that background sound coming through the floor."

Mr. Lawrence, moreover, recalls an even more disquieting incident on Susquehanna's opening day at WGBB. Not knowing that the station had just changed hands, an unannounced FCC field inspector showed up to conduct an inspection.

"He found all sorts of offenses," Mr. Lawrence recalled. "Violations of transmitter regulations and other equipment, program, and transmitter log discrepancies and problems, and goodness knows what else." Obviously, Susquehanna was not cited for these violations.

The location was so poor that Bill Musser had trouble getting people to come to the station for job interviews: "They refused to stop in the neighborhood."

Such unpleasanties were forgotten when, less than a year later, the operation moved to modern, spacious quarters at 1240 Broadcast Plaza in Merrick, and the Company installed state-of-the-art equipment. Initially, the station occupied two floors of the new Merrick building, but the subsequent expansion of station activities soon required using the third floor as well.

Just because Company plans had blueprinted WGBB as more of a "sales-oriented animal" than a program one did not mean programming was relegated to a subordinate function. Musically, the format was a blend of "Middle-of-the-Road" pop and pop-oriented Rock.

Even if there was little or no chance of WGBB loosening the grip of WABC, still the sound needed to be contemporary. Although Long Islanders considered themselves a separate universe, culturally they identified with their sophisticated neighbors in Manhattan. The WGBB disc jockeys could by no means be second class entertainment.

Susquehanna's charge to disc jockeys ("What goes on *between* the records is the most important ingredient of your show") applied in extra measure at WGBB. "Localization" was stressed during the first moment of a deejay's or newscaster's orientation. Manager Musser summed up the programming philosophy in one short sentence: "We had to localize everything."

From day one, WGBB knew that a station competing with major New York City stations had to project a *local* image. During one promotional phase, WGBB's slogan was "The Key to Long Island." A symbolic gold key showed up in ads, station promotions, on the air, and in whatever tangible ways keys could be adapted to marketplace usage. Local governmental affairs, local civic activities, local service club doings—if it was provincially Long Island, WGBB tried to get involved. The station's longtime program director still marvels at what he calls WGBB's "distinctiveness."

A WGBB Trip Back in Time—Bob Lawrence

It was one of the most unusual radio stations you could experience in this business, especially in a metropolitan area. The people who listened to the station seemed to feel it was their station.

We had many occurrences through the years, where if we did something the audience liked, they'd call or send a card. At most stations, if you do something the audience doesn't like, they'll turn off the radio. At WGBB, they wouldn't. We were like members of their family. Our on-the-air people were always being invited to somebody's house for a christening party, a card club gathering, a fundraiser.

Announcers, who like newsmen are constantly in the public eye, frequently find themselves in this "fishbowl existence," but this was especially true at WGBB where a large window of the main studio overlooked the parking lot of the Long Island Railroad station at Merrick. There were benches where the curious could sit and watch the disc jockey in action. Just prior to WGBB's formal opening at their new facilities, a man in a white Volkswagen had been making a practice of pulling up to stoplights and firing a gun point-blank at the vehicles next to him, seconds before the light changed. Then he would get lost in the traffic.

A WGBB Trip Back in Time—Bob Lawrence

On Tuesday morning, this guy was sitting down there in a little white VW. I could hardly make him out because it was just before the sun came up at about 7:15 A.M. He sat there for the longest time. Keeping an eye on him, I noticed he reached down, pulled out a gun, and aimed it right at me up there in our second floor window studio.

I hit the deck and went crawling out of the studio, hollering for someone in the newsroom. The guy took off down the street.

I spent the next two days looking through police records of every VW in the state of New York with a license plate having the last three numbers that matched those we got before the guy disappeared. The next day the police followed me to work and said they'd park down the street. The guy showed up again and sat there for 45 minutes. I'm wondering, why aren't the cops putting the clamps on this guy? As it turned out, they had gone around the corner for a cup of coffee. So I picked up the phone to call the police and I ran out of the building and waved at the cops, who chased him down the block but never caught him.

The following Friday when we had our open house there were police everywhere—in the building, in the parking lot, all over the

place. Nothing happened that night, and we never heard anything from the guy with the gun again. I'll bet no other station ever had a grand opening with so many police in attendance.

In the media-conscious New York environment, the WGBB newsroom would obviously be expected to be a busy place. National and international news stories, while far from overlooked, were secondary to the local variety. During most of the Susquehanna regime, there were six full-time reporters in the news department, covering every aspect of life in the station's territory.

No trip down the WGBB memory lane would be complete without a short stop at the Calderone Theater in Hempstead. There each Saturday morning for most of the Susquehanna years, Ray Heather-ton hosted an audience participation show. An older generation might remember the irrepressible Mr. Heather-ton as the star of the 1937 Rodgers and Hart Broadway hit, *Babes in Arms*, and as radio's and early TV's "Merry Mailman." A later generation may recognize him as the father of Joey Heather-ton, the actress-dancer.

In addition to entertainment and news served up with heavy local seasoning, there was another ingredient in the WGBB program mix, local sports. The station featured an eclectic selection of sporting events. Most prominent in that passing parade were Hofstra and C.W. Post college football, Long Island Bulls pro football, St. John's University basketball, New York Nets pro basketball, and New York Islanders hockey. Bob Lawrence figured prominently in the station's play-by-play sports agenda. In fact, he was so closely identified with Long Island sports that when he left WGBB in 1978, it was to join the Islanders as the team's director of production services. With its diversified menu of sports attractions (which proved profitable sales vehicles), it may be that WGBB holds the all-time record for the number of different locally originated sporting events by a Susquehanna station.

The sales effort at WGBB, however, met with more complications than those experienced by any Susquehanna property.

First, there was the New York "Doughnut Group," which included Susquehanna's WGBB, Freeport/Hempstead/Merrick, Long Island; Greater New York Media's WCTC in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and WGSM in Huntington, Long Island; and the separately owned WFAS in White Plains, New York. These suburban stations formed a ring around New York City and could be sold as a single entity, with one rate and one billing procedure. The group's slogan was "Don't buy the hole, buy the doughnut." Unfortunately, the group pitch played well on paper—and in the marketplace—for only a

while. As the New York City stations mounted their counterattacks, the ploy became less effective and gradually disappeared.

Meanwhile, despite the staff's ability to cover the Long Island scene, there developed an administrative hitch involving a holdover concept from the pre-Susquehanna, pre-Greater New York Media days. It was the Long Island Network, the two-station "network"—WGBB and WGSM—created by the previous owner (at a time when single ownership of the two stations was allowed by the FCC), largely as an economy measure to have a single sales operation and a single news department.

Whatever success the original Long Island Network may have enjoyed with its single sales and news entities, it did not always play well in the era of the two separate proprietorships. Instead, the two station managements found themselves spending a great deal of their time refereeing disputes and interpreting policy about dividing sales credits and commissions. For this reason, throughout the last decade of Susquehanna's ownership, the Long Island Network existed solely as a news agreement.

A further impediment to the sales effort on Long Island was the stranglehold *Newsday* had on the Island's advertising. Ask any former WGBB general manager or sales manager to name his major competitor and the answer will invariably be *Newsday*. What WGBB set out to do in applying the doctrine of localism in broadcasting, *Newsday* was doing incredibly well in newspaper publishing. With a circulation of more than 500,000 weekdays and Sundays, *Newsday* was a formidable adversary. Jim Davey (Susquehanna's first sales manager at WGBB) was awed when he first encountered this advertising behemoth.

A WGBB Trip Back in Time—Jim Davey

You had to be impressed by *Newsday*. We used to say *Newsday* was thicker than the New York City phone directory and maybe five times as wide. You couldn't put the paper in a mailbox and you couldn't carry more than four at a time. Some people bought the New York papers, but *Newsday* was *the* paper—a Long Island newspaper read by Long Islanders. That's where many of the advertising dollars were going.

I remember one occasion when we did a promotion campaign. Painting our call letters on park benches near bus stops was part of the deal. We had a great idea that we should have a WGBB bench directly across from the *Newsday* building. After it was there a while, we got a call from the outfit that set up the deal. The guy said, "We

can't give you that bench anymore." *Newsday* didn't want us on that bench across the street. And in most ways, *Newsday* got what it wanted on Long Island.

Six general managers deserve mention for earning sales battle stars at WGBB: Bill Musser, Jim Hackett, Paul Abrams, Lou Faust (who spearheaded the founding of the Long Island Broadcasters Association in an effort to compete with *Newsday*), Bob Lawrence, and Marc Kaye.

Marc Kaye joined the WGBB sales team in 1973, proceeded to set a number of sales records, and finally served as Susquehanna's general manager on Long Island. Mr. Kaye served his sales apprenticeship under Murray Evans, a holdover from WGBB's previous owners.

A WGBB Trip Back in Time—Marc Kaye

Murray was the unofficial mayor of Freeport. He knew everybody in town. I remember going out on sales calls with him when I first started there. We'd get out of the car and Murray'd wave to everybody. "Hey, Murray," they'd say. "How are you?"

He pointed out every account, it seemed, and said, "It's mine! See that flower shop? It's mine! See that dry cleaner? It's mine! Stay out of it." I learned a lot from Murray, though.

WGBB was every little shop owner's station. I mean, 95 percent of the business we did was with local shop owners within a few miles of the radio station. I remember every weekend I had another remote, three or four hours each, from car showrooms, pet stores, flower shops, whoever would pay the freight for our "Package A" remote.

I remember sitting, sweating, and hoping people would come in. Sometimes I had my friends come in, I had my mother come in, I had my father come in. *Anything* to make things work.

Unfortunately, not enough things worked to the Company's satisfaction, and sales projections for the 1980s did not improve the outlook. Art Carlson says, "There was no one thing that prompted the decision to sell." A number of mitigating factors led to the sale of WGBB.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

First of all, in the matter of personnel, reality was just the opposite of our concept. We thought that program people would prefer to work on Long Island while climbing their career ladders and that experienced sales people would join us and stay. We were wrong. It

ended up the other way around. In the case of air talent, the people who were interested in working for us were the announcers who were tired of New York City. They usually wanted more than we were willing or able to afford.

Recruiting a sales force was a problem from the beginning, one that became more severe as the years went on. We wound up losing anybody who had any ability to New York City stations, many only a few weeks after they were hired.

Another sales problem was the confusion that existed in our working relationship with WGSM. The Long Island Network was sold by people from each station and separate representatives working on regional and national accounts, which resulted in more confusion and animosity than sales.

Once it got rolling, the New York "Doughnut Group" started putting significant dollars on all four stations; however, its very success carried the seeds of its own destruction. Each station had fairly strong rates. Combined, these rates were higher than all but the top tier of New York City stations.

If advertisers bought the concept, they cut budgets for second-level New York stations. These stations counter-attacked with a numbers pitch showing that they delivered 10 or 20 times as much suburban audience as the "Doughnut Group." The group was then faced with the need to sharply reduce rates in order to compete; but the resulting rates would be far lower than what the stations were getting individually from local advertisers. In this circumstance, sales success evaporated rather quickly.

Then, too, FM was starting its dramatic growth. Electronic noise was increasingly damaging to AM signals. Since WGBB was a 1,000-watt daytime and a 250-watt nighttime, it suffered from the effects of this technical problem more than stations with greater power.

Finally, Nassau County, which had long been basically populated by middle to high income families and was considered an economically wealthy county, started steadily to lose this part of its population as they moved farther away from the city. As a result, one of the key legs of WGBB's story started to crumble.

WGBB, in many ways, was operated out of the Susquehanna mainstream. It was not a station where we could easily move in new hires from around the country, nor were there many people at the station who would or wanted to move to our other stations. Eventually, it became a station that, in reality, did not benefit from group ownership.

In its 16 years of flying the Susquehanna banner, WGBB had some excellent years, a few lean years, and some in-between years. On October 22, 1981, WGBB was sold to 1240 Radio Associates.

A Place in the Sun

WQBA-AM/FM



Chapter 10

With the arrival of television's "Miami Vice" in the 1980s, Miami, Florida's image as a city of "sun, sand, sex, and sin" was heightened. But Miami's flashy rise to prominence had begun years earlier with the great 1920s real estate boom that centered on Dade County. During this time, Miami was the scene of unprecedented hotel, resort, and residential construction. In one year alone, \$100 million (more than \$750 million in 1992 dollars) was spent on such building. The "beautiful people," as well as the very private wealthy, began wintering in Miami. Earlier, Henry Morrison Flagler had made getting there easier when he extended the Florida East Coast Railroad south to Miami.

For much of America, the real interest centered on Miami Beach, that narrow Babylon-by-the-Atlantic, with its luxury hotels and wintertime population of one million people. The emerging media (movies, photo magazines, and radio) soon made it possible for Americans to follow the comings and goings of their celebrity idols, and no place held more fascination for them than Miami, Florida.

In the 1950s, the romanticized Miami enjoyed a renaissance of sorts when various entertainers originated their television shows there. Jackie Gleason moved his entourage to Miami Beach, replacing New York as the show's headquarters. Arthur Godfrey, the "Today Show," and others made one or two weekly Miami originations standard features of their winter broadcast schedules.

But on the day Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba in 1959, the Great Migration of his dissenting countrymen was triggered, and a new Miami was born.

The Cubans who arrived in Miami immediately after the Castro revolution began were the cream of Cuban society. A disproportionate number had been to college. Almost two-thirds came from Havana, rather than small towns and villages, and they included an extraordinarily high percentage of doctors, lawyers, teachers, and other professional people. The entrepreneurial middle class, meanwhile, opened cigar factories, boatyards, restaurants, gas stations, bakeries, cinemas, nightclubs, auto dealerships, and every other business one can imagine. The Cuban labor pool suddenly propelled Miami to third place in the U.S. (after New York and California) in garment manufacturing.

Following the October 1962 Cuban missile crisis, regular airline service from Cuba to the U.S. was sharply curtailed, and diplomatic relations were severed. For the next three years, those who wished to leave Cuba could not come directly to the United States, but had to go through Mexico or Spain. Others resorted to escaping by boat, and it was during this period that the first boatlift was organized by the Cuban exile community in Miami.

In 1965, with his economic policies faltering badly, Fidel Castro declared that those who wished to leave Cuba were free to do so. Within a year, Susquehanna Broadcasting Co. would assume a role in the drama unfolding in Miami.

In 1967, a reliable study revealed there were then 224,000 Spanish-speaking persons in Miami. In general terms, these were the aggressive middle and upper classes, perfectly suited to adjust to the challenges of American society.

To fresh arrivals, learning the English language and finding a job were of equal priority. Into thriving Little Havana (located on the south side of downtown Miami) they poured, often moving in with relatives. The extended family, a vigorous force in Cuban society, assisted relatives in finding employment in the growing service industry.

The Susquehanna Latin connection officially began on May 31, 1966, when the seventh Susquehanna station entered the fold.

"It would be nice," Art Carlson observed, "to tell people that when we bought the radio station, we had a clear-cut plan to make it the number one Spanish station in the market. What we inherited was a run-down, insect-infested studio and a rather peculiar program mix of 19 hours per day of foreign language brokered time and five hours a day of English language religion."

Christened WMIE at its inception in 1947, the property was located on the second floor of 1448 N.W. 36th Street. It was one of a group of stations owned by a former governor of Georgia, Edward L. Rivers.

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers It Well

Our WMIE introduction was through Tom Carr, a broker in Atlanta. He had called me on the phone and mentioned that he had this station in Miami, and would we have an interest? Since we were on the acquisition trail, I said, "Sure, I'll come down to Miami and we'll talk."

Tom gave me an introduction to the famous Governor Rivers, who at that time must have been, if not in his early eighties, certainly somewhere in his seventies. And the governor was just what you'd expect of a Southern politician. He was articulate, courteous, and spun one story after another—altogether, just a delightful person to be with. And since there was a tremendous disparity in our ages, I was happy to play the role of the attentive son to his benevolent father. I would sit and listen to his stories by the hour.

But the long and short of it was that while we developed a good rapport, the sale was on and off a couple of times. Finally though, we did agree on the purchase and that was the beginning of WQBA, then WMIE.

Jack Nobles, who was the WMIE manager at the time, recalls an unusual demand by the seller in connection with the sale. Whenever the subject of an imminent sale was broached, the governor's answer was always the same: "Everything is for sale. I get offers all the time, people wanting to pay a dollar down and a dollar a week. I tell them the first time somebody puts \$1 million cash money on the table, I will sell it; until then, I will not."

And that is precisely how the Company came to own WMIE, according to Mr. Nobles. He said, "On that settlement day in 1966, Susquehanna put into the governor's hands one hundred \$10,000 certified checks because that's the way he wanted to be paid."

When the station changed hands, WMIE's programming by any objective standard could only be described as a mishmash. Mr. Nobles says the kinds of programs WMIE did were not designed to produce much in the ratings, "but we made a pretty good living at it." A native Miamian, he had joined WMIE in 1955 and became its manager in 1956. After Susquehanna became the licensee, Mr. Nobles remained as station manager until he took up the unique challenge of developing national sales.

A WQBA Retrospective—Jack Nobles

In those days, WMIE and the other Rivers stations were programmed with what we called, in inside terminology, the "three R's"—race, rural, and religion. In addition, we ran a lot of "bro-

kered" foreign language shows (a show where a middleman, or broker, buys the time from the station and sells it to a third party), including Spanish, German, Hungarian, Italian, Yiddish, and others. When I came to WMIE, we were doing one hour a night in Spanish. We were, if not the first station to do Spanish language programming, certainly one of the first.

Before the Bay of Pigs, we carried a lot of brokered programs sponsored by revolutionary, anti-Castro groups. These were on the air ostensibly as news programs, but were truly on for their various causes, because we covered a great deal of Cuba. We charged those people the same rate that we charged for any other program. They paid us in brand new \$100 bills so freshly printed that you had to be careful they didn't stick together. Their consecutive serial numbers might give you an idea as to where that money came from.

There was no doubt, Art Carlson adds, that "this was not the way we would want to run a radio station." Still, before the Company rushed sweeping changes into its largest market to date, corporate management felt an assessment of the city and the radio picture was in order. Ted Hepburn, general manager at WARM, was brought to WMIE on temporary assignment with the title of managing director.

A WQBA Retrospective—Ted Hepburn

I was sent to Miami in 1966 to listen to the station, interview the staff, and recommend what the Company might do now that the FCC had given its approval of the purchase. After talking with Jack Nobles, it was apparent to me that one of the best options would be to convert the station into an all-Spanish outlet. At that time, there was only one all-Spanish station serving south Florida, and that station was being poorly run.

Jack convinced me on both the size and future growth of the Cuban-Spanish market. Further, it appeared that the best approach for a facility that didn't have a fully competitive nighttime signal would be to develop programming to a specialized segment of the market. During the second half of 1966, it was my job to work with Jack to oversee these changes, which included the elimination of station agreements with the brokers.

In March 1967, Ted Hepburn left Susquehanna and Jack Nobles succeeded him as interim manager. When Herb Levin came from Providence to take over the top management job later that spring, Mr. Nobles assumed the position of national sales manager.

The program housecleaning still had a ways to go when the ex-WICE Sales Manager Herb Levin joined this new Miami venture. His initial charge: continue the "program purge."

A WQBA Retrospective—Herb Levin

We continued removing the English language religious programs. Then we "picked on" all the foreign language programs. We threw out the Serbo-Croatian program; we threw out "The German Hour"; we threw out this one and that one.

I tried to have as many of these people as possible come to the station to tell them of the changes. The Black Muslims were a bit of a problem though. They sent three guys in black suits, eight-foot tall with shaved heads. They said, "Now what was it you wanted to see us about?"

I said, "I didn't want to see you guys at all. Jack Nobles, the man in the next office, wants to see you." I made Jack Nobles tell them!

The next guy—and so help me, this all happened in one afternoon—was a man named Dr. Jacob Schecter. He did a Yiddish program at 1:00 P.M., Sunday afternoons, which had been there for years. This visit took place, by the way, right before the Jewish Passover holiday.

Dr. Schecter, this small, frail, elderly man, comes in my office and says, "I'm so happy to meet you. I've heard a lot about you. I know you're new to the area, and since you have a family here and it's Passover this weekend, I'd like you to have two tickets to the Seder at the Roney Plaza Hotel. I want you and your wife to be my guests for the Passover dinner."

So he hands me these two tickets, and I said, "That's very nice of you but. . . ."

Then he said, "What was it you wanted to see me about?"

I said, "I just wanted to meet you and make sure that you're happy in your time slot, and make sure everything is OK."

So the whole station goes Spanish and in this sea of Spanish is this island of Yiddish. About the end of June, Dr. Schecter comes back and I'm cringing when I see him.

He says, "You've been very nice to me, but I want you to know I've found another station that is going to run my programs. Do you mind?"

By mid-summer 1967, WMIE was featuring 100 percent *programacion Espanol*. To help the targeted Spanish-speaking audience develop an immediate identity with the station, a thematic designation, Radio Continental (pronounced Con-te-nen-tal'), was adopted for use on the air and in the station's printed materials.

In August, Jack DeHaven, Susquehanna's new national sales manager, had come to Miami for a "first-hand look, listen, and feel." He hoped to glean insights that would help Susquehanna mount a promotion campaign aimed at national advertisers concerning this most uncommon sociopolitical and socioeconomic universe. When he returned to New York later that month, the memorandum summarizing his observations included, among others, his findings regarding one aspect of the "new" Miami culture and language.

A WQBA Retrospective—Jack DeHaven

Throughout the history of the United States, millions of people arrived here who could not speak English, but, through the generations, were gradually absorbed into the country and eventually learned the language. They had as their reward for doing this U.S. citizenship. This flow was controlled by quotas.

The difference in Miami is that this mass immigration came quickly and the refugees were, until very recently, Cuban nationals with no particular desire for U.S. citizenship. They felt they would be returning to Cuba in a short time. Nearly 80 percent of these people have been here less than eight years. This leads us to the first large misconception we Americans have. Since we look at these people as the cream of the Cuban nation (which they are), we smugly assume that since they are better educated, they are also bilingual and can be reached by general media.

Now we get to semantics. What is "better educated"? How much of another language must a person know to be "bilingual"? I spent five solid days with our Spanish sales and programming people in Spanish Miami and Hialeah and talked to nearly 300 physicians, tradesmen, merchants, factory owners and managers, restaurant owners, bank employees, newspaper publishers, and many other business and civic people. How many of these people were bilingual? By this I mean people with whom you can exchange ideas and hold intense, intelligent discussions. Get ready for a shock—less than 10 percent! And I was talking to the very successful people.

WMIE was by now "radio like radio used to be," as Jack Nobles put it—musical programs, soap operas (*novelas*), news blocks, discussion shows, commentaries and the like, all in Spanish, of course. The staff was comprised of original WMIE holdovers and new hires who dug right in to make WMIE a force in the Hispanic community.

Radio was by far the most important communication medium for Cuban émigrés in Miami. In Havana alone, there were 30 radio stations. Thus, when WMIE presented Spanish language programs 24 hours a day, it was natural for the outstanding performers who had

left their homeland to gravitate to such an operation. Many of the staff, according to Art Carlson, were "over-qualified."

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

It was a very interesting collection of people. Some, such as Norman Diaz, had been station owners and businessmen in Cuba. Whether it was in sales or programming, they were unique. There was Mariano Guastella, for example, who was a very special guy to have as a sales manager. He headed McCann-Erickson's (probably the world's largest advertising firm at the time) office in both Mexico City and Havana. That was kind of like having the president of Young & Rubicam as your sales manager. And right down the line, they were overqualified to be sales people for a radio station.

Our programming talent included for the most part people who had been stars of varying degrees in Cuba. Juan Amador Rodriguez, for example, was referred to as the "Arthur Godfrey of Cuba." The type of people we employed during those days was incredible in terms of the kinds of experience they had.

Julio Mendez, the longtime WQBA operations manager, who began his career at WMIE in 1963 (cleaning studios at age 14), remembers that until Susquehanna's arrival, Spanish radio in Miami was atrocious: "There was only one competitor, WFAB, 'La Fabulosa.' Their rates were low and so were their standards compared to Anglo radio stations. Production was terrible and so was the content of the news."

But with Susquehanna came a new approach. Mr. Mendez credits the Company with "beginning a trend not only in Miami, but all over the United States, of having good radio stations where the Spanish audience is more than 30 percent of the total."

Upgraded programming demanded improved equipment. Hence, it was during this time that then-Director of Engineering Glenn Winter and his assistant Charlie Morgan were regular passengers on Baltimore-to-Miami flights. State-of-the-art technology soon became standard, with on-the-scene supervision by the station's chief engineer, Russ Bennett.

General Manager Levin and National Sales Manager Nobles were truly putting together the all new WMIE with a completely revamped program schedule, state-of-the-art equipment, and an uncommonly talented staff. Nonetheless, there was an irritant that plagued station personnel and seemed to grow more annoying daily: WMIE's intended audience couldn't pronounce its name.

A WQBA Retrospective—Jack Nobles

We discovered the Cubans seemed to be having trouble saying WMIE. In Spanish, the letter “i” is pronounced “eee” and the letter “e” is pronounced “ay,” and that’s where the confusion arose. We never could get those call letters to catch fire.

One day, one of our staff members said, “Why don’t you change it to *Cuba* and have Q-B-A stand for Cuba?” In checking, we found those call letters were available. So we started plugging WQBA. But that didn’t seem to help either. We never really did become known to the Cubans as WQBA.

Then almost by accident a couple of years later, we started using a kind of artificial word for a slogan, which we called *La Cubanísima*. It means “the most Cuban,” or “the Cubanest of all.” Well, I want to tell you, that slogan hit like gangbusters. It was incredible. From that moment on, if you walked up to a Cuban and asked him to name the radio station, he wouldn’t say “WQBA.” He’d say, “La Cubanísima.”

Following the inauguration of its all-Spanish program schedule, WQBA “took on the concept of being a newspaper to the Latins.” Jack Nobles describes the station’s greening months: “To give you an idea of the depth of community service, you have to understand what an ethnic market is like. In those early days, for instance, listening to WQBA was considered to be *the* way for the Cuban community to know what was going on—who was born and who died and so on. So we ran the information on the air.”

But if being all things to all Cubans in south Florida played well on the radio, it did not always translate into optimum impact in the marketplace, particularly among Anglo advertisers.

There was little reliable data to go on. The 1960 census could hardly reflect the great influx of Cuban émigrés that poured into Miami through the ensuing decade. In 1967, Herb Levin took the lead.

A WQBA Retrospective—Herb Levin

I went to First Research (now called Strategy Research), headed by Dick Tobin. I asked him to do a study of the Miami marketplace from a demographic point of view.

Dick said, “I don’t do studies for radio stations.”

I said, “What do you mean by that? Our money’s good, isn’t it?”

“Yeah,” Dick said. “But you guys always want to tell us how you want it to come out, and I don’t work that way.”

I said, "I don't want ratings as to how we're doing. I just want to know how many Cubans are here, how many blacks, how many white Anglos, population forecasts, and so on."

"Gee," Dick said, "I thought you people were just interested in ratings. I didn't think you were after demographic data."

So Dick Tobin did the first demographic profile of Miami in 1967. At the time, government studies and work done by the *Miami Herald* had the market at 119,000 Hispanics, while Dick Tobin's research showed 244,000, which was certainly different. That really started the push to "legitimize" the Latin marketplace and establish it as a credible market.

Around the time WQBA was changed to an all-Spanish mode, it was estimated that only \$200,000 in national advertising was being placed annually in Miami Hispanic radio. "Even if we got every dime, we obviously could not live on that," Art Carlson said. It fell mainly to Jack Nobles to suit up for the hard battle ahead, which he did.

Both Art Carlson and Herb Levin give Jack Nobles the lion's share of credit for raising advertiser consciousness for both WQBA and the Miami Latin community.

A WQBA Retrospective—Jack Nobles

Although I spent a great deal of my time trying to convince the agency people in New York, Chicago, and other buying centers that there was such a thing as a large group of Latins in Miami, most of them chose not to believe it. The attitude of the time buyers at the time, for the most part, I guess, was simply indifference.

Many times I used to go through this routine: I'd talk to a time buyer and I'd say, "Look here, now. We're doing well. The numbers are good and the Spanish population is so and so. We want you to add Spanish to your buy. You're going to buy four or five (stations) deep. Buy a Spanish. Buy us."

The time buyer would say to me, "Well, we're not gonna buy Spanish."

Then I'd say, "Why? Did the client tell you not to buy Spanish?"

"No, the client didn't, but in the absence of a mandate of any kind from the client, we choose not to buy it."

So I'd come right back. "Wait a minute! You're talking a growing amount—25 to 30 percent of the market. Don't you want to serve your client? Don't you want to give him full coverage of the market? You need Spanish."

Early on, I learned that the local area sales managers are a real source of help because they are right down here on the firing line. They would see the Spanish influence and the gap that existed if

their companies were not going after that market. I was able many times to get them to send the word up through the pipeline to the national sales manager and ad manager of the company, who would then step across the line to the agency and give them the word. Then it would come filtering back down to the time buyer who would now "consider" Spanish radio.

It was a lot of fun, a great challenge, and great to succeed.

Mr. Nobles says that while he is "very happy to take some of the credit" for correcting the perception of Miami's Hispanic market, its existence was a "basic truth and truth stands on its own feet." But even then, he points out, it was necessary to keep a wary eye on the (oftentimes) nemesis of media salesmen, the ad agency buyer.

A WQBA Retrospective—Jack Nobles

The buyer would say, "I've got a Spanish budget."

But we had to watch that, because a lot of times, the Spanish budget would be miniscule. It was just a bone the agency would throw to placate the various people who were asking for it. You'd have to constantly be on guard because the first inclination would be to say, "that's good, they've got a Spanish budget," when too often that budget was too small.

After all, the Spanish-speaking population were good income earners, and therefore they had dollars to buy products. They were valid targets. They weren't people from Mars. They were into convenience foods, mortgages, and automobiles.

There was another obstacle, too. Not only was selling the advertising difficult, getting the commercials on the air in Spanish posed an additional dilemma. Jack Nobles estimates that only five percent of national advertisers were producing their spot announcements in Spanish. What to do?

A WQBA Retrospective—Jack Nobles

Right from the start we indicated we would reproduce announcements in Spanish at no charge. Herb Levin said, "We will never be a pain in the tail to do business with simply because we're a Spanish station. Whatever it takes to overcome an obstacle for advertising in Spanish, we will overcome it."

So we established a production unit. We took the commercial down on paper, translated it into Spanish, selected the right music (if any), and produced the announcement for airing. Gradually, as

the groundswell of attention to Spanish advertising grew, an increasing number of national accounts produced commercials in Spanish.

Despite linguistic and selling barriers on the marketing front, staff morale was high. Everyone at 1448 N.W. 36th Street (and in York) knew that if WQBA wished to serve its constituency in the grand manner it envisioned when it went Spanish, it had to have a solid economic base. National business, however, one of the two kinds of building blocks, called for one approach; local advertising required a second. Establishing a substantial foundation in the local Latin retail/service community was certainly one of the major reasons WQBA would become more of an institution than a radio station. Mr. Levin perceived early that WQBA should not be “just another advertising medium”; it would have to be a concerned partner and friend—to the fledgling business person as well as to the established merchant. The building process was slow, and did not come cheap.

A WQBA Retrospective—Herb Levin

There were several strategies we employed. The first was based on an understanding that we were dealing with a community that was very entrepreneurial. There were a lot of Latins who were starting up businesses, and we went after them. We extended a liberal credit policy to the new Latin businessman. Sure we took some losses. But many of them developed into major companies and never forgot that WQBA was there to help them get started. I used to say, “There are three things you should do to start a new business in Miami: (a) see your lawyer to incorporate; (b) get a good accountant; and (c) call WQBA—more or less in that order.” We were aggressive in going after the emerging businesses.

The second thing we tried to do was sell people on using radio on a long-term basis. We sold year-to-year and even longer periods. We talked long-term. “Let’s get you on and you’ll never get off.” WQBA would start the year with maybe 40 percent of its billing booked by December and January.

The third philosophy was worked out in the middle period of WQBA’s development: It was having one-third of our clients be national, one-third where the decision maker was a Spanish-speaking person, and one-third businesses where the decision maker was an English-speaking person.

Although both Herb Levin and Jack Nobles demur, their accomplishments (particularly in the rocky early years) deserve the highest

praise. Here were two Anglos moving into a completely new business environment, needing to understand the chemistry of Latin-American relationships and to adapt quickly.

Beginning with the first Spanish-speaking advertiser on WQBA and continuing as the Latin marketplace grew, there were pockets of animosity among Anglo business people. Such attitudes merely reflected the impact of the Cuban immigration phenomenon on Miami. Reactions ranged from open arms to open hostility.

"There was a lot of resentment on the part of some advertisers," Mr. Levin recalls. "They saw all these Cubans coming in, and while it may have been good business to do business with these newcomers, many people were personally resentful. You ran into prejudice and bigotry in many places."

A WQBA Retrospective—Herb Levin

I made a call on a large supermarket chain which was losing market share. When I opened my pitch, I said to the guy, "We'd like to talk to you about your Spanish budget."

He said, "I don't have a Spanish budget."

I said, "Well, you know with the size of the Latin marketplace, maybe it's time you guys did have a Spanish budget."

"Let me tell you," he snapped back. "If I had a Spanish budget, you know what I'd spend it on? Boats to take those *#%\$&! Cubans back!"

He meant it too. He got very hostile. "We don't want Cubans in our stores. They're gonna chase away our American trade."

Obviously, you couldn't exist in Miami with that attitude. That guy didn't stay in his job too long. Today they have a young, very aggressive marketing director, and the chain is a leading advertiser.

If the attitude of some advertisers was unenlightened, the manner of WQBA's competitors was one of benign neglect. By the early seventies, WQBA was the dominant Spanish language station in Miami; WFAB, the original Hispanic outlet, had lost its license in 1970. Since WQBA was the prototype for Spanish radio in south Florida, it is not difficult to appreciate how its Anglo competitors could miss what was going on in their broadcasting world. Even so, their curious reaction was somewhat perplexing to Jack Nobles. He marvelled at the competition's failure to grasp the history unfolding before their very eyes—and ears.

A WQBA Retrospective—Jack Nobles

The Anglo stations inexplicably did not seem to realize that we were going after these advertising dollars. They kind of considered us as something in a little gazebo over on the side of the lawn of the main house and, in fact, were very helpful in giving us leads. They simply did not view us as competitors. Yet, the ratings were there.

In those early years, they sort of adopted the attitude of, "Well, we're doing English over here, and there's WQBA over there. If the client asks me about Spanish, I'll tell him, yeah, go ahead and buy 'QBA and that will take care of your Spanish."

Only after our own numbers began to get massive and we began to take a chunk of the ad dollars, I think, did it gradually dawn on these Anglo stations that they should reconsider their position. If any agency is going to buy four (stations) deep and they buy one Spanish station, that means the fourth Anglo station is going to get clipped out of the ball game. I think that finally dawned on them, and as a consequence, we later got very few leads from Anglo stations.

The close of the 1960s found the Castro-inspired exodus to Miami had produced a coterie of 300,000 Cubans. It was estimated that there were already 6,000 Cuban-owned businesses in Dade County.

By correctly divining the growth and prosperity of the Latin marketplace, WQBA was in a unique position and began smashing time sales records month after month. In late 1969, the station moved to new quarters at 1301 S.W. 1st Street, enabling it to render even more service to its specialized audience. And there is simply no better word to describe what WQBA was doing than *service*. Its program structure may have been built on the old-time radio framework of talk, soap operas, commentaries, obituaries, birth announcements, etc., but if ever a station operated according to the FCC's maxim ("in the public interest, convenience and necessity"), it was WQBA. Art Carlson emphasizes that "the more we got involved, the more fascinating the station was. I don't think it's stretching the truth to say that by the early seventies we had a whale of a radio station. It probably was the most important station in America—maybe ever in America—to its listeners in its ability to serve, and its importance in touching daily lives and getting things done."

What made WQBA "one whale of a radio station," of course, was involvement. The following checklist of services can only hint at the multitude of ways La Cubanísima served its core audience. WQBA:

- Told its listeners where to find employment, when to register as alien residents, and whom to see for health examinations.
- Greeted daily refugee flights from Cuba.
- Broadcast refugee interviews and news from the homeland.
- Employed a 14-man news staff to cover all of Hispanic south Florida.
- Provided the only link with the outside world to those still living in Cuba.
- Showcased entertainment featuring the biggest Cuban stars.

“We strove, particularly in those early days, to become not just your ‘full service’ radio station in the Anglo sense,” Mr. Carlson remembers, “but in a special way, which meant for any problem that people had with any government, social, or business organization—and in those days, they were primarily Anglo-controlled—they called us, rather than the appropriate official.”

A WQBA Retrospective—Herb Levin

You and I take for granted our Social Security card. We sort of intuitively understand what benefits we have through Social Security, how it works, how the system evolves, etc., because we grew up here. The Cubans came in as adults; they didn't grow up here; they didn't understand the system. They didn't know how to get a card. Well, WQBA taught school on how Social Security works, what it's all about. I'm proud of the response from the community regarding our Social Security education program.

“Believability and power” were the epitome of WQBA in action. Art Carlson says, “That was the good side.” There was another side, as his observation implies, not necessarily a “bad” side, but certainly more complicated. It pertained to the always bubbling political cauldron in Latin Miami.

To understand WQBA fully, it is necessary to appreciate that much of the station's story must be set against a political backdrop. Jack Nobles describes the Hispanic political stance as unyielding: “No one in Miami can survive with a policy other than one that is 100 percent anti-Castro. The Cubans will accept no compromise. Occasionally, some more ‘liberal-minded’ groups will come down here, or an author will give a talk at the University of Miami, and that immediately sets up picketing and protesting.”

To newly arrived general manager, Herb Levin, 1967 was the most confusing year in his managerial life. “I didn't understand why

a commercial radio station was so politically inclined and why so many people on the staff had political, not economic, motivations.”

As La Cubanísima’s impact grew—and the departure of its main competitor heightened that impact—so did management’s concerns regarding the political climate, the day-to-day safety of its employees, and the FCC’s fairness doctrine.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

You had a number of highly volatile political factions in the Miami Cuban populace. Virtually a hundred percent had a common goal—to return to Cuba and overthrow Castro. A number of these organizations pursued their goals with violence. With the fact that so much of our programming was commentary, we rapidly became a focal point for it.

I can recall while we were still on 36th Street, Herb Levin came to work one Monday morning and found a large jardiniere standing there with bullet holes. He understandably wanted to know what caused this. And after a thorough investigation of all the people who were around over the weekend, no one seemed to know anything about it. It does appear a little incredible that the entire crew would have missed gun shots.

I recall that whichever news director or commentator was on the air, they would always be considered too soft or too hard—usually too soft—on Castro and communism. Then, on the other hand, there were continuing charges that so-and-so was really a CIA agent. But as far as the Cuban population was concerned, our position in their minds (no matter how we served the public) was a reflection of whatever political attitude we purveyed on the air. If we became in any way politically neutral, we were frowned upon.

The mercurial political drama that had been unfolding reached a crescendo on April 30, 1976. Although “The Emilio Milian Incident” was covered extensively in the national news media, the following account, for the record, stands as *la historia suprema*.

A WQBA Retrospective—Jack Nobles

At the time, our news director was Emilio Milian. He was a very strong-willed man, very outspoken, and approached things totally in black and white.

There were a lot of these shadowy anti-Castro underground groups. They were allegedly funding such things as speedboat raids on dock facilities in Cuba and filtering clandestine operators into the island. More than a few groups used this as an excuse to extort

money from the Cuban community in Miami. They would go to a merchant and say, "I'm from the Cause. If you don't give us money, that means you're a traitor to the Cause, and we punish traitors. So we'll just bomb your establishment."

The protection racket, in other words. So Emilio undertook to blast these groups editorially. He urged, in his own bombastic manner, not to give in to that type of thing. Then we began to get bomb threats. He began to carry a gun. There were times, too, when we hired armed guards at the station.

One afternoon, when Emilio started his car, a couple of sticks of dynamite went off under him. He lost both legs beneath the knees.

Emilio vowed he would never leave the hospital in a wheelchair. And sure enough, after a few months, he walked out of the place on artificial legs.

During his recovery, the station discussed with him what he would do when he returned to work. The Company said, in effect, we want you to be our news director and address yourself to other local issues besides the political situation.

But Emilio's attitude was, "We've just begun to fight."

The Company, of course, didn't want any more of the excessive, hard-hitting stuff for fear of what it might lead to.

"Well," Emilio said in effect, "if I can't say exactly what I please, anytime I please, I choose to say nothing."

So he never went back on the air during his three-month convalescence. He came back to his office for another three or four months, still refusing to go on the air. The station's attitude was one of, "We want you on the air. You can refer to this incident. You can be anti-terrorist. But we want you to be a news director, not a commentator."

Emilio insisted on his terms. After a bit more of the standoff, Herb asked him to resign. There was a bit of a to-do, but not much. By the time he had been off the air a year, even the Cubans with their idea that he had sacrificed for the anti-communist cause turned to other things.

Susquehanna offered a \$25,000 reward for information leading to the conviction of the terrorists responsible for the bombing, but no one was ever apprehended.

Other less turbulent political disturbances buffeted WQBA's airwaves over the years. In 1977, Rodriguez Quesada, a candidate for city commissioner, filed an FCC complaint alleging that the station had favored callers supporting his opponent on the station's call-in show, "You and the News." The charges were dismissed by the Federal Communications Commission. In 1981, when WQBA editorialized in favor of a mayoral candidate, the victorious opponent, Mayor

Maurice Ferre, urged Miami's city attorney to file a complaint with the FCC against WQBA for "using the public airwaves to incite tension and unrest in the community." The threat was eventually dropped.

The interlocking relationship between WQBA and the politics of Cuban immigration to south Florida continued, as did Miami's incredible growth over the next several years. As the Hispanic population grew in numbers and in affluence, WQBA kept pace with its thriving audience by expanding its staff, news-gathering capabilities, and general technical facilities. In 1975, the station moved to new quarters in the Royal Trust Tower, 701 S.W. 27th Avenue. La Cubanísima's enlarged facilities afforded the opportunity for expanded service. For instance, in March 1975, WQBA listeners (at the urging of Emilio Milian) raised \$62,000 in cash and an estimated \$2 million worth of clothing and supplies for Honduran hurricane victims. Four years later when Hurricane David struck the Dominican Republic, WQBA joined hands with WRHC and WOCN, two other Spanish-language stations, in a drive for money, food, clothing, and medicine. After the Castro takeover, many Cubans had fled to the Dominican Republic. Then-WQBA News Director Jorge Luis Hernandez told the *Miami Herald*, "The Dominicans accepted them with open arms and so now we must repay the favor."

As Miami's established Cuban community matured and new groups of émigrés arrived monthly, the symbiotic association between the political climate in the Cuban expatriate settlement and WQBA's audience grew.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

I think there is a kind of overlay here of Cuban opinion (or a Cuban view of what has happened in the Cuban population) and what has happened at WQBA. They are not perfectly aligned, and I think some of the mismatches are part of the story. Certainly in the late sixties and early seventies, anyone who was not outspoken about returning to Cuba was considered a traitor and was lucky not to be beaten up or worse. By the mid-seventies, something like 60 percent of the gasoline stations in Dade County were owned and operated by Cubans or other Latins. Then, slowly but surely, it wasn't just 60 percent of the gas stations, it was 60 percent of virtually every business, including many whose primary markets were the Anglos in Miami.

While it was very impolitic by the mid-1970s for a Cuban to suggest that he wanted to stay permanently in Miami, more and more people at least were comfortable there. And the prevailing opin-

ion was that, if indeed Cuba were freed, a lot of Cubans would continue to live in Miami. Of course, WQBA's campaign plugging American citizenship had helped tremendously.

Yet, the desire to free Cuba still exists and is incredibly strong, considering decades have passed since the Bay of Pigs. But, with the second generation now growing up as Cuban-Americans, the majority, I think, would express little or no desire to return.

WQBA's influence with all that first came to my attention when we started beating WFAB (then the only other Spanish station) in the ratings, and we became the leader. I can recall many conversations with the people at the station, where the desire was to program the way things were programmed in Cuba. Havana had something like 30 radio stations and in Miami there were two, eventually four, Spanish language stations through the 1970s. I kept arguing that you don't program the same when there are only two of you as you do when you're one of 30. Probably, the debate about doing things the way things were done in Cuba versus the technique of American radio will go on and on.

This Cuban approach affected even WQBA's news/commentary. Besides being very ideological, Cubans are very news-oriented, and the distinctions between news and commentary are blurry. For example, as Art Carlson notes, "you could not use the word, 'Castro,' on a newscast without an unflattering adjective." Thus, WQBA's audience expectations, as far as news and commentary were concerned, would always favor the Cuban, rather than the American, standard of objectivity.

As time went by, WQBA attempted to moderate its voice. But, Art Carlson stresses, "We were not moderate by normal standards." The situation required constant monitoring.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

After the Emilio Milian tragedy, we tended to play down the anti-Castro stuff. We may have referred to him as, say, "that yellow dog, Castro," in a news story, but that was bland compared to our competitors. By their standards, we were "soft on communism!" This perception hurt us at first, but we were able to change that perception.

The elder Cubans were interested in local politics and a lot of things that went on in Miami. But, on the other hand, there was still this strong feeling about Cuba. So as far as radio listening was concerned, if you didn't maintain pretty much the same attack on the air, you were out of sync with the perception of your audience. It was almost a "Catch 22" that we couldn't move toward more "normal"

coverage of local events—that is, local events taking precedence over the obligatory four hours a day of yelling at Castro.

Measuring radio listenership in any large city has always posed a perplexing challenge, but determining ratings in Spanish-speaking Miami posed an even greater dilemma.

In 1985, Arbitron, one of the two leading radio research organizations, published a four-color brochure in its *Radio Today* series entitled, "The Hispanic Listener." The study, produced in both English and Spanish, documented radio listening characteristics of Latins in eight markets with significant Hispanic populations, including Miami. The importance of this study was not its comprehensive analysis (from the listening habits of working and non-working women, to those of age/sex groups, to radio tune-in out-of-home/in-car/other places), but rather that the study was done at all. For if any segment of society has been overlooked or misrepresented in this age of research, it is the Hispanics. Since fates and fortunes in most broadcast markets are tied to ratings, accurate audience data was critical to the success of WQBA.

Art Carlson harks back to a Miami meeting of Company salespeople in 1970 to illustrate the strange orbit in which Latin listening studies have traveled. At that meeting, one of the speakers was Bob Atkinson, an executive with the audience measurement company C.E. Hooper, Inc.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

At the time, WQBA and our chief competitor were showing poorly in Hooper. During the question-and-answer period, someone asked Bob how Hooper handled factoring in the Spanish audience.

Bob said, "Well, if they speak English and say they are listening to WQBA, we give them credit. But, if they speak Spanish, we thank them and go on to the next call."

As a direct result of that question, Hooper developed a new process in Miami: whenever they had a person who spoke Spanish, they said, "Thank you, someone else will call you." They hired some Spanish interviewers, and in 30 or 60 days, WQBA became the last of the "overnight wonder" radio stations. We went from a three share to a 20 share in Hooper in a couple of months.

This not only turned the Hoopers upside down, but incurred the wrath of the Anglo stations whose share had plummeted. Inasmuch as they were the primary financial base in Miami for Hooper, Hooper quickly dropped the new procedure.

Art Carlson remembered there was much the same problem with Pulse (another broadcasting ratings organization, now defunct). And when Arbitron became the industry's primary rating source in the late 1960s, similar problems arose. Dave Kennedy, Susquehanna's director of research, and, later, senior vice president, has tracked the zigzag path of Latin radio listening preferences. He pinpoints some of the problems, long a source of difficulties for Arbitron, given the unique cultural characteristics of Cuban-Americans, as distinguished from other Hispanic groups.

A WQBA Retrospective—Dave Kennedy

Typical of such troubles was the series of on-air announcements run by one Hispanic broadcaster during the 1970s offering instructions on how to complete an Arbitron diary. Such flagrant violation of Arbitron policy and general disregard for established survey practices was not uncommon in Miami.

Beginning in 1967, Arbitron instituted a new methodology for measuring Hispanic listening. Hispanic diaries were placed and then retrieved by personal interviewers who went door-to-door in the pre-designated, high-density Hispanic sample areas. This technique was, however, subject to significant sources of sampling and response error—for example, in the selection of households to be approached for participation in the survey—thus preventing a true probability sample. Workers could also alter the completed retrieved diaries to influence the survey results to the benefit of one station over another. Instances of both types of infractions were identified while this technique was in use.

Following a series of research studies in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Arbitron replaced the personal placement and retrieval technique in 1983 with a methodology more directly comparable to their standard, nationwide telephone/mail approach. Because of the problems with measuring Hispanic listening, however, Arbitron elected to provide larger monetary incentives for Hispanics and to increase the number of follow-up calls to encourage greater participation.

This technique clearly eliminated the sampling and response error problems of the prior method, but it also raised the new problem of the influence of the differential survey treatment (larger monetary incentives, more follow-up calls, etc.) on reported listening, and the question of survey representativeness which accompanied the elimination of non-phone households, unusually common among Hispanics, from inclusion in the sample. These issues have been researched and declared relatively insignificant by Arbitron, but debate in the Hispanic broadcast community continues.

Mr. Carlson maintains, "To this day, there is a lot of 'political voting.' When a Miami Latin gets a listening diary (to fill out), and thinks such and such a commentator is 'right on,' whether they listen to that station as their primary news and entertainment source or not, they sometimes overstate their listenership to wherever that commentator is."

In 1982, Arbitron compounded the problem of audience measurement in Miami by "hyphenating," or combining, the Miami (Dade County) and Ft. Lauderdale (Broward County) areas. This became the 11th Arbitron market.

But despite research and political obstacles, WQBA could point to one artistic and financial success after another throughout the 1970s.

The opening of the 1980s once again saw the Cuban-Miami story making the front pages. WQBA, as expected, would not only be reporting the event, but also be one of the participants.

Known as the Mariel Bay Boatlift, the episode brought 127,000 Cubans to the United States. When the Boatlift unfolded in Miami, the refugees were processed at headquarters set up in the Orange Bowl. During this period, WQBA read names of arrivals on the air, dispensing with regularly scheduled programs to help friends and relatives of the new arrivals find their kin. While the "freedom flotillas" continued to arrive, the station set up an employment clearinghouse, attempting to find jobs for people who needed them—"not just for Cubans," Herb Levin said in announcing the emergency measures, "but for anyone needing a job, particularly the fast-growing Haitian population."

The next big news did not make the newscasts or front pages; it did, nonetheless, create quite a stir in Susquehannaland.

One hot August day in 1982, George Hyde, who had been managing WRRM in Cincinnati, received a call from Art Carlson. Could he come to York as soon as possible?

"Normally, in the corporate culture, that means only one of two things," Mr. Hyde said. "Either you're going to be patted on the back, or perhaps, as happens more frequently, you're going to be kicked in another part of the anatomy."

When Mr. Hyde returned to Cincinnati, not only was his entire anatomy intact, he had been offered the manager's job at WQBA. Herb Levin, who had run the station for 15 years, was leaving to form his own company in Miami. Mr. Hyde accepted and enrolled in a Berlitz course in Spanish.

George Hyde's arrival in Miami coincided with an important event at WQBA. Normally, a power increase is an occasion of note

limited to radio station staff whose members look forward to expanded coverage. But in WQBA's case, the power boost had political ramifications. WQBA's new vice president and general manager has no trouble remembering the day before Thanksgiving, 1982.

A WQBA Retrospective—George Hyde

Prior to and throughout Susquehanna's ownership, WQBA had been jammed by Castro because the kind of information we presented was detrimental to the control of people still in Cuba. Our government finally recognized such unlawful interference was continuing. So we were authorized to go from what had been 10 kw days/5 kw nights to 50 kw days/10 kw nights.

The cut-over was the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. We borrowed a big transformer switch box from our friends at Florida P&L, had the thing painted orange and stuck our logo on it. At 12 noon, Senator (Paula) Hawkins, Catholic Bishop (Augustin) Roman, Miami Mayor (Maurice) Ferre and I joined hands to "pull the switch," inaugurating our new power. One of the first things we did was have a news anchor take calls from people who wanted to say "hello" to their relatives in Cuba. This really dramatized the idea that we were stronger than ever and more capable of being heard in Cuba than any other radio station.

But our focus was here, and our mission was to serve the people of south Florida. Prior to the power change, we had never satisfactorily covered the city of Hialeah. Now Hialeah was the fifth largest city in Florida. It was about 80 percent Latin, and 90 percent of that was Cuban. So the city was important to us. And of course, we needed higher power to overcome the jamming in areas of south and west Dade where the population was increasing.

It was not long before George Hyde was thrust into another Cuban radio controversy, one that was to have far-reaching ramifications. The controversy revolved around Radio Marti and its journey to become an airborne reality, a fascinating chapter in international political communications.

Radio Marti, an idea that emerged in the Reagan years, was conceived as a broadcast service whose goal was to counter the Castro government's news monopoly in Cuba. Its name was derived from the Cuban poet and patriot, Jose Marti (1853-1895), founder of the Cuban Revolutionary Party.

In the Miami Cuban community, the Radio Marti concept was accorded immediate approval. Some U.S. broadcasters, however, viewed the idea with alarm.

In Congress, the Florida delegation led by Rep. Dante Fascell (chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee) and Sen. Paula Hawkins, obviously pushed hard for Radio Marti. While the rhetoric in Washington was heating up, George Hyde (who realized the concept had been “very warmly embraced by our constituents here in Miami”) had gotten deeply involved in the issue. He assumed an important leadership role.

A WQBA Retrospective—George Hyde

It was necessary to create a base of support among the Florida broadcasting community. Through the Florida Broadcasters Cuban Interference Committee, a lot of broadcasters, including the Anglo operators throughout Florida, were very concerned about the prospect of retaliatory jamming (if Radio Marti came to pass).

We managed to have resolutions passed by the South Florida Broadcasters Association and by the Florida Association of Broadcasters supporting the Radio Marti concept. We did it through people like Matt Liebowitz (general counsel of the two broadcast associations), and Senator Hawkins and Representative Fascell, who were able to impress upon Congress that the interference issue was not new.

Out of this came the concept that stations which had been adversely affected by Cuban jamming would be entitled to special treatment by the FCC in finding ways to improve their facilities. The United States Information Service (USIS) would reimburse a significant portion of the expense incurred by stations compelled to make technical changes.

Once the interference hurdle was cleared, broadcaster and political pressure forced the administration to operate the station under the Voice of America (VOA) rather than under the Board of International Broadcasting. In so doing, Radio Marti would have to adhere to VOA standards “to insure the broadcast of programs which are objective, accurate, balanced, and which present a variety of views.”

Unfortunately, unexpected behind-the-scenes static delayed the inaugural broadcast from the January target date until later in the spring. Paul Drew, the station’s director, resigned in early 1985 and Kenneth R. Giddens, a former VOA official, was appointed interim director.

Finally, at 5:30 A.M., May 20, 1985, Radio Marti beamed its first program to Cuba.

In May 1986, on Radio Marti’s first anniversary, columnists and commentators up and down the political spectrum praised the USIS’s

newest program service beamed to foreign shores. Perhaps the outstanding byproduct was the change in the output flowing from Cuban presses and loudspeakers; according to subsequent arrivals from Cuba, news programs improved their objectivity.

Obviously, while George Hyde was deeply involved in the Radio Marti issue, he also had his own busy WQBA shop to worry about. High on his agenda was the station's proposed new quarters. The Company had purchased an 8,000-square-foot, two-story building on Coral Way. Then, a suggestion was made to Susquehanna to purchase an adjacent building, raze both structures and, in their place, erect a 63,000-square-foot, high-rise office building to house WQBA and its sister FM station, with the remaining space available for lease. This is precisely what happened, and on June 26, 1985, WQBA moved to 2828 Coral Way, second floor.

Not only had Dade County's population grown since Susquehanna came to town, but the expanding number of Hispanic residents meant increased broadcasting competition as well. When George Hyde arrived in 1982, there were five radio stations and one television station that featured Spanish language programs exclusively; by the mid-eighties, there were 11 and five, respectively.

In response to this heated-up marketplace, WQBA adopted a very aggressive and creative promotional posture, fully aware of its remarkably influential stature in the region. The TARJETA CUBANISIMA card promotion was introduced with much fanfare and success, and evolved to the point where a condominium was awarded as first prize in a card-related contest. The excitement over such efforts generated goodwill and respect for WQBA both here and abroad.

A WQBA Retrospective—George Hyde

The many letters we received from Cuba either cleared the censors or somehow made it through. This one letter went something like this:

"I need your help in trying to locate my brother Julio. He came to the U.S. in the Mariel Boatlift in 1980 and lived in Miami for a while. We know he then went to California and then came back to Miami. We haven't heard from him in nine months. We don't know if he's sick or well. But we know if you at La Cubanisima put a message on the air asking for help in finding him, you'll find him because somebody will recognize him and call in. And, secondly, if you put it on the air when you find him, we'll be able to hear it back here in Cuba, because we put all our faith and trust in La Cubanisima and your ability to do this."

Another one involved a young woman, a Mariel refugee, who was attending Dade County Community College. She had won a car in one of our contests. We awarded it to her in the studio one afternoon. A couple of hours later, she called our evening talk show and said, "I just want you to know I got a phone call from Cuba. My cousins in Havana heard on WQBA that I won a car and they are having a party in the neighborhood right now to celebrate my good fortune in this free country."

I get goose bumps just talking about it.

Few challenges for public service are so uniquely woven into the cultural mosaic as those of WQBA in Hispanic Miami. For instance, following the Popayan, Columbia, earthquake in 1984, a WQBA fund-raiser produced over \$250,000. During the Christmas season that same year, an appeal was aired to aid Cubans stranded in "third countries" because of visa problems. George Hyde described them as "men and women without a country." Donations of food, clothing, and toys spilled over two lobbies in the WQBA building, while a massive traffic jam tied up Coral Way. "It was the kind of thing that made you feel proud of what this station could do," Manager Hyde mused.

Coping with the initial phases of Cuban influx meant WQBA was involved with a phenomenon unlike any other immigration in U.S. history—a large number of immigrants arriving in such a short period of time. The record of effective public service and attractive bottom line results attest to the station's eminent success in both sectors. But when it came to pondering the future, the demographic dynamic probably affected WQBA more than any of Susquehanna's properties.

"Miami offers all the material and technical advantages of American society and the ambiances of Latin culture," Adolfo Leyva, coordinator of the Latin American-Caribbean Center at Florida International University, told the *New York Times*. He continued, "For Latins, it is a dream. For cosmopolitan Anglo-Americans who discover it and adjust to it, it can be just as beautiful."

Miami's ability to assimilate disparate groups was discussed by the *Wall Street Journal* in late 1985 in a five-year-after story on the 127,000 Marielitos, which recognized (as WQBA had known from the start) that "the great majority were blue collar or middle class Cubans," not too different from those who had come in the 1970s. Commenting on this assimilation, Miami's district director of the state health department said, "It has worked out miraculously well."

The status of language in Miami's bicultural milieu would seem to augur no special problems for WQBA in the years ahead. George

Hyde had his own way of assessing the language situation: "You didn't have to speak English to get along in Miami. But if you were going to be in business in Miami, you had better speak Spanish if you wished to maximize your revenue."

With an ever-thriving marketplace and a competitive media, top management recognized that it would always be important to seek the best talent available for WQBA. In the 1980s, many new people became part of the WQBA scene, due in part to the rapidly growing and changing Latin Miami environment. Both sales departments were expanded with the addition of a number of experienced people, virtually all fully bilingual. In programming, major news personalities such as Tomas Garcia Fuste and Tomas Regalado were added. WQBA's news operation was always unusual in its size, scope, and even location. The station employed, on a contract basis, an extensive network of stringers, most of whom were based throughout the Latin world. One such newsman was WQBA's special reporter in Spain, Armando Valladares. Mr. Valladares is the best-selling author of *Against All Odds*, a first-hand account of his 27 years in a Castro prison, and has been the official U.S. representative at international human rights conferences around the globe.

News and commentary, as stressed earlier, occupied a role unlike that on any other station in America. And, when even "responsible" commentators could engender controversy, the task called for an enlightened management sensitive to the heartbeat of the community and to the FCC's mandated requirement for balanced presentation. George Hyde summed up La Cubanísima's *raison d'être*: "WQBA was constantly involved in controversies and tended to be at the center of any significant dispute. That was our role in the community—to present the issues."

Of all the media, radio is most subject to fads, fancies, and the fast-changing tastes of a public which has access to a score or more of signal choices. Moreover, a commercial radio station must function simultaneously as a service forum, an entertainment vehicle, and an advertising medium.

For those reasons, the successful operator must at once be a pragmatist, an idealist, and a futurist. The trendy business of radio (where formats are jettisoned overnight and stations change hands almost as quickly) is a field in which entrepreneurial skills undergo severe testing.

Take Miami. As the 1970s were drawing to a close, WQBA could look back over a decade of artistic and commercial successes. The outlet's unique position in the south Florida Latin market meant,

quite simply, that it had earned the status of a Miami institution. But just as in the station's genesis, when sensitivity to the demographic and cultural forces at work in the growing Hispanic community played a vital role, corporate management would a dozen years later respond to the inevitable dynamics of change.

Consider, for example, a Cuban émigré family that had left Cuba in 1961 with two young children. As these children approached adolescence, they straddled a bicultural, Anglo-Latin world. Susquehanna had to deal with this most unusual phenomenon, best described by Jack Nobles: "The odd thing about this second generation was that they spoke fluent English, but they also spoke fluent Spanish. When you listened to them talking among themselves, they shifted, absolutely without effort, from Spanish into English and back again."

Aware that what appealed to the parents would not necessarily attract their offspring, Susquehanna was on the lookout for an FM station that could be programmed with youth appeal to complement WQBA and its adult approach. That station was located, and Susquehanna took possession March 2, 1979.

WQBA-FM (Super Q)

The Company acquired WWOK-FM, 107.5 mHz* (100,000 watts) from Mission East Company. Exactly one week later, the Susquehanna flag was flying over WQBA-FM, or "Super Q."

Super Q was designed directly for younger Latins, one of its chief architects, Herb Levin, recalled. The station's format was fashioned for the new generation, "proud to be Latin," yet able to function well in the American environment.

A Super Q Retrospective—Herb Levin

We could see the demo group WQBA (AM) was serving was getting a little older. We were concerned about the continuum of the marketplace of young Hispanics getting on through high school and growing up without a radio station of their own. They wanted to listen to a Spanish station, and we felt the existing ones didn't play the music they preferred to hear. Our new FM (programming) was intentionally planned not to take listeners away from WQBA.

The young were listening to—but not feeling entirely comfortable with—the American Rock stations. We were afraid that they

* In 1965–66, the United States radio broadcasting industry converted from the term "cycle" to "hertz," the accepted international unit of frequency.

would grow up with (those stations) and be lost to Spanish radio. Out of that developed the format we called "Super Q."

WQBA-FM was America's first bilingual/bicultural station to play a mix of English language pop music and Hispanic pop music.

With a target audience of 18- to 34-year-olds, Super Q introduced a musical fare that consisted of Spanish and American hits—tunes heavily flavored with salsa and music of the danceable genre.

The station's first disc jockeys represented the target audience in that they were young, Hispanic, and fully bilingual. Originally, the existing sales staff sold both stations. However, Super Q soon had its own sales staff, which also mirrored this target audience.

When Super Q came on the air in 1979 with its bicultural/bilingual potpourri, there were five Spanish language stations in search of an audience. By 1985, that number had risen to eight. Clearly, *more* fine tuning was called for.

The station decided to shift the target audience age to 25 to 44, and the station's appeal was altered somewhat to attract those Latinos who were beginning a reassociation with their Hispanic roots. George Hyde explained it this way: "Age 25 was an important touchstone in the life of young Latinos. We found there was a re-acculturation that occurred when this group married, had children, bought homes, and reestablished ties with their parents."

With its blend of Spanish and American popular music, Super Q pegged its appeal to those young adults to whom Spanish was the first language and English a well-spoken second, and who appreciated the Latin music of their heritage—yet were brought up on American pop.

The English language portion of Super Q's playlist featured danceable music and ballads by artists who had proven crossover ethnic appeal, such as (in mid-summer 1986) Madonna, Lionel Richie, El DeBarge, and Whitney Houston, as well as mass-appeal pop and soft rock artists such as Genesis and George Michael. The station's Spanish language playlist was diverse, ranging from danceable salsa to Latin artists such as El Gran Combo, Johnny Ventura, and Wilfredo Varas; to the upbeat Latin pop of Jose Feliciano, Julio Iglesias, and Willie Chirino; and to the romantic Spanish ballads of Iglesias, Jose Luis Rodriguez, and others.

Music director and morning deejay, Maria Cristina Ruiz, described Super Q as "a format that reflected our culture. We are Latin, which is why we spoke Spanish on the air. But we played American programming as well as Spanish because that was the music we grew up with. We pioneered bringing the appeal of Spanish music to

young Spanish-Americans. Not the old-fashioned Spanish music, but the more modern salsa, danceable music.”



Radio stations project their own special images. George Hyde feels that no matter how you say it, in Spanish or in English, Susquehanna's Miami image was never in doubt: “When you said Super Q, people knew we were Spanish and English. With our combined AM and FM, we had the potential to reach more Hispanics than any other medium in the market. We were in a leadership position. And we planned to stay that way.”

And stay that way “La Cubanisma” and “Super Q” did until April 15, 1990, when the stations were sold to Spanish Radio Network.



The Spanish radio business that WQBA pioneered in the late 1960s had, over two decades, grown into a major radio format with hundreds of Spanish-language stations existing throughout the country. This growth had obviously been fueled by the dramatic increase of Spanish-speaking people in America. With this growth, a number of group operators had emerged with stations in the major Spanish markets. This specialization had changed the sales landscape and created a different operating environment for a company programming Spanish in only a single market.

Thus, the decision was made to sell the stations to one of these groups, inasmuch as Susquehanna harbored no desire to become a specialist in Spanish radio. The success of WQBA-AM and FM will always remain one of the most satisfying chapters in Susquehanna history.



The Pioneers Revisited

WSBA/WARM-FM



Chapter 11

From radio's infancy years, through its network period as America's mass entertainment medium, it was not unusual for listeners to "dial for distance." When radio was very young, this practice was born of necessity, since it was in the larger metropolitan centers that the first stations were launched. Even after smaller communities had their own stations, many listeners still sought out the network powerhouses in the major cities. In the York area in the late 1940s to the early 1950s, while WSBA and WORK were going head to head, many listeners wanted also to pick up stations in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and Chicago. But with television's rising popularity and the decline of network radio in the early to mid-fifties, new radio concepts and programs evolved. Soon, local radio became the only kind of radio.

By the early 1960s, WSBA-AM was successfully established in the Top 40 format, and a leader in the Harrisburg/Lancaster/York market. But three factors threatened to erode this position of strength. First, at 1,000 watts at night, WSBA had a relatively weak signal which undermined its ability to compete with the increasing number of local stations. Second, the dramatic growth of television, which had been interpreted as the death knell for radio, continued. And, third, the threat that FM would replace AM loomed ever greater.

Susquehanna's decision to re-enter the FM market with the re-activation of WSBA-FM in 1962 stands as a turning point in the Company's history. From that time on, Susquehanna's growth and expansion in the radio industry spanned two fronts—AM and FM.

WSBA-AM

When Top 40 first arrived on the scene, some big-coverage outlets adopted the format. But at its inception, Top 40 was just as viable for a station licensed to the bottom 50 markets as it was for one in the top 50. When the “new WSBA” started rolling in the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was no need for listeners to go up and down the dial to find a “big city Top 40.”

As WSBA began spreading its new format wings, its attention to detail was obsessive. This evolved from the Top 40 catechism of putting product (that is program) considerations before sales considerations. The WSBA directive was to give listeners a constant stream of new ideas, something to make people talk; the station should bubble and sparkle with originality. To accomplish this, announcers were asked to sound alert and happy on the job (but not phony), and demonstrate pride in being on the air with WSBA. This enabled WSBA to achieve preeminence in its market and separated it from imitator stations.

WSBA's transition from old-line, network-affiliate programming to Top 40 caused little occupational shock for the announcing staff. Out of the seven airmen (who now had to become “air personalities”), five were “re-treads” who had made their entrances in conventional style radio. Gil David, Ed Lincoln, Al Saunders, Bob Shipley, and Wayne Trout quickly learned the Top 40 way of disc jockeying, and they were joined by newcomers Warren Duffy and Tom Smallwood. Thus was born the “Sensational Seven.”

The desire to become part of WSBA's Sensational Seven beat stronger in the hearts of many aspiring disc jockeys in those days than did the beat of the music. Paul Roberts, a jock at a small Harrisburg station, remembers the day in 1960 when a WSBA scout beckoned.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Paul Roberts

I was working nights in Harrisburg for \$65 a week. My wife and I were living in a third-floor apartment. I got a phone call about 9:15 A.M. My wife answered and said, “Paul, there’s a Mr. Saunders on the phone.”

Al said in that magnificent voice, “Is this Paul Roberts? We were in Harrisburg on Friday night and heard you on the radio. We wonder if you’d be interested in coming to work for us?”

I said, “How about in five minutes!” Actually, it was a couple of days later that I went to the interview and was hired for \$85 a

week. My first paycheck was for \$90. So I went to Al and told him there'd been a mistake in my paycheck.

"No," Al Saunders said, "\$90 is correct. I decided \$85 wasn't enough."

The WSBA disc jockey was the vital ingredient that made the station work. The WSBA deejay was his own producer, his own director. He was at the controls with his turntables and console board. He set the levels of loudness and softness and spun the records. He was the pilot of the WSBA airwaves.

But a deejay's life at WSBA extended well beyond his time behind the microphone. It included a potpourri of public activities ranging from public service fund-raisers to fun-and-games, good-time happenings. But of all WSBA's off-the-air activities involving the sometimes mercurial air talent, probably none matched the "Double Dribblers"—the WSBA basketball team—for enduring popularity. The players were mainly disc jockeys, with an occasional salesman or newsman involved. Outfitted in authentic basketball uniforms (call letters prominently showing), the team intermingled clowning around with "serious basketball." The Double Dribblers provided a unique means to accomplish public service and station promotion simultaneously.

No matter how stunning these WSBA events in the public arena turned out to be, the FCC was more concerned with what went on the air. Balancing government requirements with the modernity inherent in Top 40 was an enduring challenge throughout the format's heyday. Gradually, however, short (30- to 60-second) public service spots were accepted as substitutes for the longer program units that prevailed in an earlier radio era.

Much as product advertising must sell the product, public service announcements must sell the service. Thus, beginning in the early 1960s, WSBA's public service announcements reflected selling techniques similar to those used in its regular advertising. Few were the citizens whose lives were not touched by one of the following public services performed by WSBA:

Operation Snowflake—A service activated during winter storms whereby schools, churches, businesses, and community organizations could phone in cancellations and delays for relay to WSBA's listeners. The service has become a standard fixture on most radio and TV stations.

Pet Patrol—What, next to human disaster, can produce more anguish than a lost pet? Recognizing this, WSBA since the early sixties has reunited a veritable animal kingdom of pets with their owners.

Public Service Bulletin Board (PSBB)—The WSBA community events calendar has publicized the activities of thousands of religious, fraternal, and service clubs as well as health and social services.

These and similar drawing cards enabled WSBA to establish a reputation for public service early in its Top 40 years. Even the format's most outspoken critics were known on occasion to ladle out grudging praise for such good works.

In the early flowering of the Top 40 format, several management changes took place at WSBA. Art Carlson, who had left York to run the newly acquired WHLO in 1960, returned a year later to establish the corporate office in the WSBA Building. In addition to heading the fledgling Susquehanna Radio Division, he was responsible for managing WSBA. Late in 1962, Sales Manager Phil Eberly was made general manager, and Jack Herr moved up to sales manager.

WSBA's popularity, meanwhile, was growing rapidly. Each rating book showed increases over its predecessor, a pattern that would prevail throughout the 1960s. But the commercial success that followed was not automatic. Aware that great popularity does not necessarily translate into spontaneous sales combustion, management put together a cracker jack selling team. The WSBA sales squad broke Company sales records month after month until the early seventies, when WQBA in Spanish Miami entered its prime.

What made the WSBA sales crew so effective? Among other things, they were motivated by their belief in and understanding of the product they were selling. They also grasped the subtleties and nuances of selling, and it would be remiss not to illustrate the ingenuity that churned in their lively imaginations. The innate sense of showmanship displayed by Chris Huber (successful member of the 1960s sales team, and later, vice president and general manager of WSBA-AM & FM), served him well throughout his selling years. One Chris Huber effort orchestrated early in his career shall henceforth be known as "The Great, Undaunted Umbrella Man Caper."

A WSBA Instant Replay—Chris J. Huber, Jr.

I discovered there were a lot of ways to get WSBA call letter exposure, which got people talking, which in turn would help my sales efforts. One of the first things I noticed was that the police who worked in Harrisburg's Market Square had to stand out in all kinds of weather. So I talked to Phil Eberly and we purchased a large umbrella, had the call letters painted on and placed it where the police would benefit—and where the call letters would be seen by thousands of drivers and pedestrians.

Well, after a week, I got a call from the Harrisburg mayor. To make a long story short, the other stations up there cried foul, and the mayor had to “reluctantly ask WSBA to remove the umbrella.”

We discussed it at the station and decided we’d give them the umbrella anyway, without the call letters.

Jack Herr had tried various techniques to sell advertising to a Cadillac-Oldsmobile dealer. He knew if he landed this one, despite the perception that “only kids listened to WSBA,” other hard-to-convince automotive dealers would fall in line.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Jack Herr

After any number of calls, I wasn’t getting anywhere and had to do something dramatic. The dealer kept telling me, “Your station with all that hype and rock music has no appeal to the kind of customers we must appeal to—especially Cadillac prospects.”

I asked his permission to go down and check the radio dial setting of the cars on his parking lot, as well as those in the service bay. If WSBA wasn’t punched up on at least 50 percent of those Cadillacs, I’d buy his lunch that day. On the other hand, if half the cars *did* have their dials set on 910, he’d have to buy a schedule from me.

Well, as I expected, WSBA went quite a ways over the 50 percent figure. The guy became one of my biggest clients.

In the national sales field, WSBA began its long-running association with Eastman Radio in 1959. Until then, national advertising hadn’t been a significant part of the WSBA sales picture. Not only did the Eastman charges know how to sell radio, they understood the special requirements of selling Top 40, since some of their leading station clients were programming in the modern idiom. A station’s national representative may well be “an extension of its local sales staff,” but without prodding from the local level, a station is often only a name on a rep’s list. WSBA did not invent the practice of “keeping after the rep,” but they certainly made it work for them. Beginning with the adoption of the strip market concept, a selling postulate had been chiseled in granite for the Eastman Company: “There is no such thing as a Harrisburg-only buy.” The station never claimed a superior signal over Harrisburg, but there was enough coverage to justify the claim that “York/Lancaster/Harrisburg is one market when you buy WSBA.”

Frank Boyle’s eyewitness account of working with Phil Eberly to land the LaRosa pasta products account constitutes another Great Moment in Advertising History.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Frank Boyle

It had been drummed into our heads that “there was no such thing as a Harrisburg-only buy.” Not all agencies, however, accepted this whole-hog. Hicks and Greist was one of them. It seemed there was only one thing standing between us and an order: did WSBA cover certain parts of Harrisburg as well as a couple of other stations? I had set up a call with Len Solio, the time buyer, and his boss, Vinnie Devio, who knew Harrisburg like the back of his hand, and he just did not buy our coverage.

“I do not believe WSBA has the Harrisburg coverage that we require,” Vinnie said. “If we buy time for our client for 52 weeks a year in flights, and your coverage has blind spots, we wouldn’t have everything going for us—regardless of your strength in York and Lancaster.”

At this point, I gave Vinnie a blank check from my personal checking account and said, “If you can document that WSBA doesn’t have adequate coverage to these areas, you can fill in the numbers up to \$1,800, which is all I have in my account, and it’s yours.”

As Phil and I went to the elevator, his face was the color of early papyrus. I said, “Phil, why are you so white?” He said, “Well, we sort of have some coverage deficiencies in some of those areas, and it may not be as strong as you suggested.”

I then suggested that that point could have been made clear to me *before* I put my personal funds on the line. As it happened, though, WSBA did have adequate coverage and we enjoyed the business from that account for some time to come.

There was barely time to savor the La Rosa victory that fall before the assassination of an American president presented a challenge to Top 40 stations. How does a “snappy, happy” radio station react at a time like that? In WSBA’s case, it was with dignity: news coverage that dark November weekend was increased, musical selections were carefully screened, and commercials were cancelled from Friday afternoon, November 22, until after the funeral on Monday.

The Kennedy assassination would be the first in a series of events that would help nudge WSBA into expanding its news operation. Entertainment values would not be neglected, obviously. But the local and national news for the rest of the tumultuous 1960s would loom, along with competitive concerns, as considerations in shaping the WSBA product.

Heightened listener and management interest in news was reflected in the disassociation of air personalities from news. A separate team of reporters was responsible for all aspects of news around the mid-sixties. State-of-the-art equipment was added to further enhance

news gathering and broadcasting. In addition, the newsroom itself was revamped as part of an overall WSBA building remodeling, and a new news director signed on to replace Wayne Trout, who was resigning.

Mr. Trout, who had been a deejay prior to taking the news director assignment, was replaced by Gene Burns, a former colleague of Steve Trivers who had come to WSBA from WGVA in Geneva, New York. No other story during Gene Burns' WSBA newsroom tenure equalled the drama of the Peggy Ann Bradnick kidnapping. On May 11, 1966, near Shade Gap, Pennsylvania, a hamlet in the Tuscarora Mountains, a masked man carrying a rifle stepped from the woods and took 17-year-old Peggy Ann Bradnick hostage after she disembarked from a school bus. In his hideaway cabin, 44-year-old William Diller Hollenbaugh, a mental patient, held the Bradnick girl for one week. Before Peggy Ann Bradnick's seven days of terror were to end, an FBI agent would be killed by a blast from Hollenbaugh's shotgun. WSBA News was present when Hollenbaugh (who had commandeered a sheriff's vehicle) was shot and killed by a sharp-shooting Pennsylvania state trooper as the kidnapper opened a car door. Peggy came out unharmed and became the central figure of a tune played on WSBA, "The Ballad of Shade Gap."

Gene Burns recalls convincing Phil Eberly to rent a helicopter to cover the story—the first of many such rentals the station would make. "We were able to maneuver the 'copter between the electrical wires on the station grounds out on the Susquehanna Trail. By shuttling newsmen back and forth between WSBA and Shade Gap, we always had someone in the camp with the state police and FBI," he remembered.

Other factors, features, and feats aided the station's maturation. Jack Nagle was hired to open a Capital News Bureau in Harrisburg for WSBA and WARM. The station's first private weather service, Traveler's Weather, was hired to tailor forecasts and reports specifically for WSBAland. "Viewpoint," a half-hour weekly discussion program, was inaugurated; it would include on its guest roster many local and national newsmakers. In late November 1968, newsman Bob Black was sent to Vietnam, representing Susquehanna's six stations. In addition to feeding news stories, he recorded greetings from servicemen for playback during the Christmas season.

In the spring of 1968, the station was notified it had won the Sigma Delta Chi Award for Distinguished Editorializing for the series, "Who Gets the Ax in Taxes?" It was written and researched by General Manager Eberly, with assistance from Jack Nagle. A probing study of waste in state government, this award-winning series re-

sulted in the appointment of a "Little Hoover" blue ribbon commission to effect savings in the state's bureaucracies.

Before the decade ended, WSBA would also win an American Bar Association Award for its series on drug abuse, a Freedoms Foundation Award for a "Look Up To Learning" series aimed at generating greater public interest in education, and a Pennsylvania Medical Society award for general reporting on medicine.

Meanwhile, WSBA was proving that radio news can combine reporting and public service better than most other media. By January 1966, "Operation Snowflake" had built a reputation as the listening headquarters for school, industry, church, and organizational closings; highway conditions; and other news connected with snowfalls large and small. But nothing could match the blizzard that struck in late January 1966. It was one of the worst snowstorms in WSBAland history. Snow fell from Saturday afternoon through Monday afternoon. Phone calls during the three-day "Operation Snowflake" marathon averaged 500 per hour. At the height of the storm, industrial shutdowns alone numbered over 300.

As WSBA's news operation matured, the station's sales team was breaking one record after another. The "your station appeals only to kids" stigma gradually diminished by the end of the 1960s. The sales team lined up an imposing roster of central Pennsylvania advertisers. In 1966 alone, 336 different local and regional clients included WSBA in their advertising mix. Late that same year, the first edition of the *WSBA Marketfact Book* was published; it would become the standard by which similar sales tools were to be measured.

As the station moved into the 1970s, additional emphasis was placed on overall entertainment value while news continued to receive increasing attention. FM was beginning its climb from obscurity, AM stations were becoming more competitive, television was swathed in color, and newspapers were cranking up their considerable resources to cope with the electronic age. One of WSBA's first major decisions in the new decade was to acquire a large motor home, which was remodeled and outfitted with the necessary gear for remote broadcasting. Its predecessor, the Funmobile, had limited capabilities in this regard. The new vehicle was a sleek, custom, Airstream unit. The name was changed to the "910mobile," since the unit would double as a news resource as well as a promotional vehicle. The 910mobile would henceforth be a permanent part of WSBA's fleet, which by now included several news cruisers as well.

Weather, which had long been a *pièce de résistance* for radio, continued to be a pivotal force in WSBA News. In 1971, following

WARM's "discovery" of the fledgling AccuWeather service, WSBA became its third client.

Although continuous analysis is given at Susquehanna, an enlightened management steps back periodically and takes a long hard look at its listening fare. The mid-seventies was the occasion for one such look. Much of the reexamination had to do with the growth of FM. Most U.S. markets had reported at least 70 percent FM penetration by 1970. Stereo, introduced a decade earlier, had become standard household listening equipment, and sales of FM radios zoomed skyward. Long-dormant FM stations were now being reprogrammed, and the clear technical advantage of frequency modulation came resoundingly to the fore. Radio's format explosion was underway. To respond to this industry-wide development, WSBA began discarding some Top 40 vestiges, modernizing its format, downplaying the music, and upgrading the information and entertainment concept.

What had begun a decade ago as a gradual veering toward more informational services was now a WSBA hallmark. Johnny Andrews became the first person to occupy the new position of operations manager. With corporate input, new features were added and old ones dropped. WSBA's format was Information and Entertainment.

The most noticeable addition was play-by-play sports—Penn State football and basketball, Philadelphia '76ers basketball, Baltimore Colts and later Philadelphia Eagles pro football, and expanded high school basketball coverage.

The news department was expanded with additional reports and equipment, a production department headed by Dusty Reese was established, and contests and promotions were chosen for their adaptability to a yearly theme ("I Believe in WSBA" was one). In 1976, the nation's Bicentennial was the programming motif: the 910mobile was painted red, white, and blue; bumper stickers were fashioned into an American flag design; and Susquehanna Productions' "An American Idea" program added luster to the occasion.

Perhaps symbolic of the "new WSBA" that emerged at this time was the new AM/FM building, occupied on February 22, 1975. Situated midway between York and Lancaster, its modern facilities, outfitted in state-of-the-art equipment throughout, included AM and FM main studios, production studios for both stations, a super studio for special production, a news center, and strategically placed offices.

At the close of the 1970s, a story that was to have international repercussions presented itself. WSBA News' handling of the story was to earn National Headliner and Edwin A. Armstrong awards. The story: the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident. Few news

organizations were prepared to cope with the TMI story. Obtaining the facts (particularly during the first three days following the accident) required a level head. When things had settled down, Manager Eberly asked Ed Wickenheiser, who was news director at the time, to capture in a memo how WSBA handled the TMI story.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Ed Wickenheiser

When the story first moved on the wire, I notified my general manager. We decided then and there to move cautiously, and to stay away from sensationalism—which meant careful word choice.

There was only a pay phone near the site. So we assigned all our two-way equipment to TMI. I ordered a broadcast line into nearby Middletown Borough Hall because that's where Harold Denton of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission gave his daily briefings.

In the early going, it was difficult to reach the right people. The governor (Richard Thornburgh) became inaccessible. State emergency data was handled by junior staffers. All the while we were coping with the arcane terminology of nuclear science.

When I arrived at the site (right after the accident), Metropolitan Edison P.R. people kept promising statements, but kept us out of the Visitors Reception Building. They clammed up at the sight of a tape recorder or camera. It was total confusion.

We rewrote AP copy, toning it down when we felt it was too sensationalized. One of the most overplayed aspects was the alleged evacuation of the area on Friday following the Wednesday accident. There was no way of knowing how many residents left the area, but it was nowhere near network and national media estimates.

We were cautious on the possibility of the bubble explosion. This was played up by the networks, triggering phone calls to our station. Other stations around the country called our newsroom continually. They were amazed at the calmness of our news presentations.

Fortunately, there was no catastrophic meltdown at TMI. I wouldn't want to travel down the road to TMI again, but I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

For WSBA, the early to mid-eighties brought an even greater emphasis on news and information. "Where news comes first" was adopted as a basic slogan for on-air and print purposes. The news staff was expanded and Ron Corbin replaced Ed Wickenheiser as news director. For the first time, an hour-long newscast appeared in the form of an expanded "5 O'Clock Report." A major sports call-in show was installed on weekdays, and traffic reporting was increased.

Diversifying still further in the public affairs field, WSBA introduced the Budweiser-WSBA Open. It has been called "one of the premier one-day tournaments for pros," by *PGA Magazine*. With \$10,000 and two automobiles in the purse, the annual June event turns its proceeds over to the Shriners' Crippled Children's fund.

Just as changing times required different approaches in fundraising for charity, so did the changing demands of the 1980s marketplace call for new "game plans." In May 1981, a concept was introduced that combined all the elements modern marketers could hope for: the Radiocard promotion. The Radiocard became one of those rare on-air/off-air instruments that could offer advertisers and listeners a three-fold benefit: a quarterly newspaper mailed to club members which included dozens of coupons; special on-the-air offers which afforded splendid tune-in opportunities; and Radiocard Days at malls, fairs, etc.

Throughout the 1980s, WSBA enjoyed a mixture of new and old management personnel. When Operations Manager Rod Burnham left in 1985, he was replaced by Jim Horn; Tom Ranker was appointed AM/FM sales manager, and Christina Heim, local sales manager. Among many key sales executives were Ron Chubb, who started his career as driver of the Funmobile; Ed Benovy, who spent more than 20 years as a top Company biller; Todd Toerper, number one sales record setter who left in 1989 but returned in 1991 to sales management; and Bill Bitzer, whose extraordinary promotional flair earned him the nickname "the P.T. Barnum of WSBA." Mr. Bitzer's efforts in developing the Lancaster marketplace contributed greatly to the growing dual market focus (in Lancaster and York) of WSBA's sales operation. In 1983, Chris Huber assumed the managerial reins of WSBA when Phil Eberly was made corporate vice president/special projects.

Every successful team, of course, has an indispensable support arm, and this one was no exception. Judy Smith, who had joined the WSBA staff out of high school in 1949 and had performed various administrative tasks, moved up to the newly established office manager position in 1964. Norma Craumer signed on as traffic director in 1960. The loyalty, longevity, and dedication of Judy Smith and Norma Craumer are typical of key employees at all Susquehanna stations.



As WSBA moved out of the eighties and into the nineties, its emphasis on news and information continued, but packaged in a new and exciting format. One man, Ralph Lockwood, added a significant

dimension of humor, energy, and promotion to WSBA's morning show. Mr. Lockwood entered the 1990s with nearly 30 years of radio to his credit, much of it with Susquehanna. First joining the Company at WSBA in 1963, and moving to WHLO from 1966 to 1968, his inimitable style and personality attracted a devoted following. While newspaper coverage of radio happenings has typically been indifferent at best, his return to WSBA in 1988 was heralded by a York paper with an extensive article entitled, "He's BAAAAACK!!"

At WSBA, marketable personalities are not only key to programming, but important to sales as well. A regular weekly remote feature is "Breakfast with Ralphie."

A WSBA Instant Replay—Tom Ranker

With "Breakfast with Ralphie" we could sell from two sides—a vendor side to subsidize expenses, and the retail side from the location where the appearance would be held. The first thing we did was get some sponsor tie-ins, which quite obviously with a breakfast promotion, were coffee and doughnuts.

So, an account person and I went to Maple Donuts and secured them as a 52-week advertiser where they would be mentioned in all of the promos. Then I went to Esskay Bacon, another natural tie-in, and got bacon to give away in return for underwriting the cost of the promotion. Then we started selling it to retail locations for the event every Thursday morning. This March it will be two years solid. Virtually every breakfast in two years has been sold, and every one has been successful.

WSBA-AM's full-service format mix had provided news, weather, community information, and sports to its listening audience for many years. But missing from its extensive coverage of Penn State football, NFL football, and high school basketball and football was major league baseball. In 1988, this glaring omission was corrected when the WSBA affiliation with the Baltimore Orioles began.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Jim Horn

Well, the fact of the matter is that there are very few full service AMs anywhere that have a modicum of success without major league baseball. It solidifies the station's image as a sports-oriented radio station. It gave us six-to-eight months of the year when we could say to the York community, which always supported the Baltimore Orioles, that WSBA is responsive to what you want out of radio. From my perspective, getting the Baltimore Orioles on board

was the last major piece of the programming and marketing pie that needed to be addressed.



As a noted community activist, and the first recipient of the Chris J. Huber Service to Mankind award from the White Rose Foundation in 1989, Vice President/General Manager Huber set high standards of civic involvement for the station and its employees through his own example of community leadership.

A WSBA Instant Replay—Chris J. Huber, Jr.

The commitment of both stations to community involvement has, since the start, been extremely strong. All of our people are encouraged to serve on various charitable organizations. We have long prided ourselves, especially at the AM radio station, on being a key ingredient for just about every major fund-raiser that comes along.

One public service program that has struck a special chord with WSBA listeners is the Christmas Wish appeal. Since 1986, the Christmas Wish program has run from Thanksgiving through Christmas Eve. During this time, listeners are encouraged to send in requests, either for themselves or friends, relatives, or other people in need, for wishes that would help them have a better Christmas.

One wish is granted each weekday. Wishes have included arranging for a 12-year-old leukemia patient to meet the country music band Alabama; ceiling fans for a church; new uniforms for a Cub Scout pack; and food, clothing, and presents for an unemployed worker. In true Christmas spirit, the giver often receives far more in return. "Over the years," Chris Huber notes, "this may have been the most emotional, heart-tugging promotion of any that I can think of."

Just as WSBA's activities in public service have been acknowledged, so, too, has WSBA been recognized for excellence in programming. Through the talents of its creative services director, Bob Innerst, and others, the station has won awards on the local, state, and national levels for news and sports reporting and commercial production. Awards have consistently been won from the National Association of Broadcasters, the Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters, United Press International, and The Associated Press.

Justifiably proud of the evolution and accomplishments of Susquehanna's first station, Art Carlson looks back over WSBA's growth from a Top 40 station in the early sixties to the present time:

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

WSBA evolved from a traditional Top 40 station with its zany promotions and rapid-fire, over-produced newscasts, into a steadily more mature, or adult, station. But with its ever-greater emphasis on news and information came an ever-greater emphasis on community service.

The station's image as an industry leader and as a uniquely powerful force in its market grew over that now 30-year period. Often cited for excellence in news coverage and community service, WSBA's reputation for producing high quality promotional materials has established the station as an industry model in this area as well.

WSBA became one of the most decorated stations in the country, and continues to win awards and recognition today.

But the final word on WSBA-AM belongs to Chris Huber, a man whose heart truly belongs to AM radio: "WSBA personifies the belief by many from the old school of radio that AM radio is *complete* radio, whereas FM is more of a jukebox. AM radio not only allows more creativity, but requires it. The real challenge lies in programming—in bringing listeners to the AM band when there's so much FM penetration."

WSBA-FM

Perhaps the most difficult obstacle for early FM to overcome was the 1945 FCC ruling that pushed FM "upstairs" to the upper frequencies of the radio dial. By reserving the lower frequencies for use by governmental, educational, and other groups, FM stations were forced to compete with fledgling television and expanding AM stations. The reallocation brought waves of protest from FM's inventor, Edwin Armstrong, who said it would cost \$75 million for conversion expenses and set the medium back for years.

FM's problems in the early years were compounded by the shortage of FM receivers in the average American home. Getting FM receivers into listeners' homes was a monumental task—and a classic "Catch 22" dilemma for marketing strategists. Without an audience, an FM station could hardly convince advertisers to come aboard, so, in turn, there would be no funds to develop the programming that might attract the listeners in the first place.

When Susquehanna put WSBA-FM on the air in 1947, the station was one of only 140 commercial FM licensees nationwide. But no sooner had WSBA-FM begun broadcasting, than the FCC, in order to encourage wider acceptance of FM, began urging AM licensees to simulcast their programming, since most FM operations were in the

hands of AM proprietors anyway. While such a ploy would not have developed audience parity with the older AM channels, at least it could have showcased FM's technical advantages. Nevertheless, WSBA-FM continued separate programming.

Over the next two years, the number of FM stations increased fivefold. However, during 1949, when the industry reported the smallest total radio revenue increases since 1938, 212 commercial FM stations went off the air. The 1949 recession, television's ever-glowing prospects, and the FCC's approach to FM all added up to a bleak outlook for the fledgling medium. Small wonder that in 1952 WSBA-FM was one of 96 stations that turned back licenses.

Until that license was reactivated, the FM idea wasn't lost completely in the onrushing flood of AM and TV expansion. A growing number of college stations on FM frequencies and AM/FM simulcasting were positive developments. In addition, the availability of high fidelity playback equipment stimulated the desire in listeners for the same quality sound reproduction from their radio receivers that they got from their phonographic equipment. Stereo albums were on the market by 1957, and word of that development spread quickly through the audio world.

In 1961, the FCC authorized FM stereo broadcast. Americans were developing more perceptive ears for music, and more sophisticated standards meant consumers were installing "sound systems" rather than buying "record players." AM/FM transistor radios began to appear around this time, and in May 1962, the FCC ordered a freeze on AM license applications. By 1960, there were more than 800 FM stations on the air and nearly two million FM receivers had been sold.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

Even in the late fifties, we were wondering what would become of FM. A lot of people had projected enormous growth for FM. However, very few people had done much with it.

Set manufacturers had tried to make some good money with FM, but that was basically in terms of large stereo units purchased for the living rooms of homes. At the same time, radio was becoming more and more portable and that meant more radio listening was being done away from that center of the house. So I think the questions everyone faced were: *When* is FM going to take off? Or *is* FM going to take off?

We had been pretty busy buying AM radio stations. We showed such an overall disdain for FM that we turned back a construction permit for an FM station in Providence when we bought WICE. But,

despite that blunder, we still had enough interest to check to see what was available at our home base.

Fortunately, the frequency WSBA-FM had yielded 10 years earlier was still available, and in 1962, 103.3 mc once more became Susquehanna's York address on the FM dial. This dictated the need for an FM studio and a total interior renovation of the WSBA Building. It was now necessary to house two radio stations rather than just one in the same space.

Format considerations were also addressed. "At this stage," Mr. Carlson remembered, "there were very few successful FM stations that weren't in the Beautiful Music business in one way or another—and maybe a few Classical operations."

The question was, what kind of music should WSBA-FM play? For several months, Bob Shipley, who had rejoined the WSBA team after two years at WHLO, was given the assignment of studying various alternatives.

"I went to Allentown, Reading, and to several other areas," Bob Shipley recalled. "After all, there weren't that many FM stations. On one of my trips, I went to Wilmington, Delaware. Over lunch with the people from WJBR-FM, they mentioned the possibility of our picking up their programming for a fee. I brought the idea back, and since the cost was reasonable, we decided that might be the simplest way to approach the problem."

So for \$100 a week, beginning in September 1962, WSBA-FM launched a Beautiful Music format in the first incarnation of its rebirth. WJBR-FM's programming represented a "safe" choice at this time, and the Wilmington station was out of range for direct reception by most central Pennsylvania listeners. Technically, WJBR-FM was well groomed, and its management was compatible with the WSBA-FM team.

WSBA-FM signed on daily at 6:00 A.M. and duplicated WSBA-AM for three hours; at 9:00 A.M. the WJBR-FM pick-up began and continued until 1:00 A.M. the next day. Newscasts were WSBA-FM's own. Commercial breaks came every 15 minutes, and although no concerted sales effort was mounted, WSBA-FM was generating some marketplace awareness. Despite the AM salesmen's intense involvement with traffic on WSBA's busy commercial airwaves—this was, after all, at the height of the Top 40 era—they occasionally ferreted out advertisers who preferred the FM route.

WJBR-FM's brand of Beautiful Music, vintage 1962, was mostly instrumental and artists were generally unrecognizable.

After a year of re-broadcasting the WJBR-FM programming, it was determined that WSBA-FM should chart its own musical course. Beginning in September 1963, the station originated all programming except for the 6 A.M. to 9 A.M. period, where it continued to duplicate WSBA-AM.

Over the years, WSBA had accumulated a large record album library, but the vast majority of its contents had never been played since WSBA's Top 40 format featured 45 rpm single recordings. From this collection of mint-condition disks came WSBA-FM's own version of Beautiful Music. There were some notable variations from the WJBR-FM format. Although many of the same artists were retained, up-tempo cuts were added, as were Broadway and Hollywood show tunes. Vocal selections also made their appearance, a departure from the previously all-instrumental regimen. WSBA-FM now had a "more foreground sound." The change was not dramatic, but it was the first step in building Susquehanna's block of FM properties, one which would ultimately include 11 independently and uniquely programmed frequency modulation stations.

A WSBA-FM Instant Replay—Bob Shipley

In September of 1963, when we started doing everything ourselves, we played all our own records. We scrounged around and used whatever the (AM) station had. There was no need to go out and buy anything.

I guess you could call what we were doing a variation of Beautiful Music/Easy Listening. There were very few vocals—maybe one every half hour.

We played individual selections. That is, we did not put on an album and let it track, a practice which, at that particular time, was not an unusual method of programming at many FM stations. But we went the single-cut route. I had a rotation system I worked out to keep albums and cuts from being repeated. You could go for days before the same selection would come up again.

Now that WSBA-FM was originating its own music, personnel requirements took a quantum jump. The station had to build its own announcing staff and bring on additional engineers.

The post-WJBR period lasted until early 1967 when Bob Shipley transferred to the Corporate Radio Division. Succeeding him as FM program manager was Reuel Zinn. An engineer by training, Mr. Zinn started his radio career in the classic odd-job manner, sweeping floors at WHVR in Hanover, Pennsylvania, while he was still in high

school. In 1963, he joined Susquehanna, where he remained until 1969. Soon after, Mr. Zinn joined the international broadcasting system of the Voice of America, where he continues to this day. When Reuel Zinn moved into the top WSBA-FM program slot, the Company was still not completely certain into what mold its music should be placed. Working with a relatively free hand in music selection, Reuel Zinn developed programming that would soon light up the Susquehanna constellation.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

I've always given credit to Reuel Zinn. Louis (Appell) and I heard certain periods of programming that we felt sounded excellent, particularly as a bridge, if you will, between Top 40 and the other things happening in AM.

We thought that rather than simply going out and buying FM stations, we ought to have some idea of what we were going to do when we took them over. You could call WSBA-FM our "experimental station." The format sounded good and made great sense to us. I don't think we ever gave this format a name.

What was it that Reuel Zinn was doing to elicit these glowing observations?

A WSBA-FM Instant Replay—Reuel Zinn

We had at the time been mildly successful on FM with the presentation of music for young adults. Everybody had been saying, "Put FM on the back burner for a while." I felt FM was on the threshold of breaking through, and I foresaw that FM broadcasting for Susquehanna was going to have a major impact in the future. The technology was there, and it was just a matter of time.

I programmed to keep the sound bright and modern, integrated to hold listeners of varying tastes interested for longer periods of time—a lot of brass, a lot of big band. We tried to get a flow to the music, and I think we did. You didn't have a lot of abrupt changes. You didn't have a fast up-tempo tune followed by a slow ballad. Personalities were not featured, and we drew the news from the AM side.

Because of the technical improvements coming into play at the time, we were reaching for higher standards. Stereo was really starting to grow. We wanted the quality of our sound to match the engineering advances.

I guess the biggest thing at this time was to convince people that FM was *radio*.

Some of the artists who passed musical muster for Reuel Zinn's "bright modern sound" included Enoch Light, Ray Conniff, Ted Heath, Tony Mottola, Henry Mancini, Bert Kaempfert, and Anita Kerr, among others, with an occasional Hollywood and Broadway cast album cut folded in.

To help get WSBA-FM going, Mr. Zinn and his staff created promotional announcements to encourage car buyers to insist on FM radios when they bought a new car. The first FM car receivers had made their appearance in the 1963 model year, but it was to take several years to alter the notion that an FM car radio was "optional." It was also during Mr. Zinn's tenure that WSBA-FM acquired its first sales manager, John Concino, who had moved over from the AM sales side.

By the time Reuel Zinn left WSBA-FM in the late summer of 1969, FM was receiving more attention at the Susquehanna corporate level with each passing week.

Toward the end of the 1960s, a confluence of technical, governmental, and social forces were contributing to the growth of FM, fast becoming a medium in its own right. In addition to the technical advantages that gave special lustre to FM broadcasting, an action in 1964 by the FCC provided extra stimulus to its growth. At this time, the FCC decided to require licensees with AM and FM grants in cities of 100,000 or more to originate separate FM programming for at least half of their broadcast day. Gordon McLendon (who with Todd Storz was co-designer of the Top 40 format) admitted that "almost single-handedly the FCC forced the development of the FM spectrum. If not for the FCC, FM might not have come along for another 10 or 15 years." By 1970, there were more than 2,000 FM stations on the air and nearly 25 million receivers in homes.

Clearly, a forward-looking enterprise such as Susquehanna Broadcasting Co. realized that FM stood for, among other things, *future medium*. And so, on a hot August afternoon in 1969, the following people attended a meeting to plan the next important step for "our experimental FM station": Art Carlson, WSBA-AM Program Director Barry Gaston, National Program Manager Jack Murphy, Phil Eberly, and Steve Trivers. Out of that meeting came a blueprint that would help map FM's future and aid in charting the Company's soon-to-be-expanded roster of FM stations.

A WSBA-FM Instant Replay—Steve Trivers

It was through that meeting that I got involved with FM. I had come from WICE to be Art's administrative assistant—handling a lot of odds and ends.

There were a lot of ideas at that meeting on what to do about WSBA-FM. What eventually came about was a refined version of the Beautiful Music format—using some of the music that was being played and adding new artists. We kicked it off October 1, 1969. The new format was programmed and balanced, structured like the movement of a symphony. Much attention was paid to tempo and the placement of vocals in the instrumental flow. The music was on tape but it was more than taped—it was *programmed*. The music was selected by Bill Wertz, who sequenced it and also did some of the announcing. We had one tape recorder in the studio and Bill had to record the tapes while he was on the air.

We continued to simulcast WSBA-AM until 9:00 A.M. through November 1970. In December of that year, to make room for Christmas business, we dropped the simulcasting and had our own schedule completely. In March 1971, we went stereo 24 hours a day. The next year we got our own tower located on one of the highest elevations in York County.

WSBA-FM was on the way to fashioning a product that would soon give it an unmistakable identity on the FM dial. Meanwhile, other FM stations in central Pennsylvania continued to track entire album sides when they weren't duplicating their AM sister stations.

WSBA-FM had produced a hybrid, more "hip" version of Beautiful Music, an attractive alternative to AM radio. The music appealed to employees at service stations, machine shops, garages, and factories, yet was not too obtrusive for offices, lobbies, and stores. All this was showcased in uninterrupted quarter-hour segments. On this fertile ground of away-from-home listening sprang up an entire new crop of possibilities whose harvest would include additional listeners, more public service opportunities, excellent sales leads, and an incalculable marketing advantage.

WSBA-FM soon capitalized on this out-of-home, out-of-car untapped audience in a most unique way with its "Listening Post" concept.

Taking advantage of the fact that many listeners were tuning in to WSBA-FM at work, the plan was simple in design but offered an unusual variety of benefits. To help launch it, the station issued on-air invitations for people tuned in at their workplaces (i.e., their *Listening Posts*), to write to WSBA-FM and be on the official "Listening Post" registry. The response was immediate. Mail poured in from as far away as the station's signal reached. A sampler from the earliest "Listening Post" mailbags was reminiscent of fan mail that poured into stations when radio networks were new, 40 years earlier:

From AMP, Elizabethtown: “We all enjoy your music so much. Our working hours go so much faster. . . . We like the type of music you play, plus we are kept informed of the latest news.”

From Penn-Jersey Harvestore Systems, New Holland: “We enjoy your music selections very much. The day seems a little brighter with some music in the air.”

From Manheim National Bank: “We here at Manheim National enjoy listening to your station while we work.”

Two decades later, WSBA-FM’s “Listening Post” family was still growing. While mimicked by countless FM stations, “Listening Post” remains an exclusive, registered service mark of Susquehanna Radio.

So, WSBA-FM was a hit, but the spring 1970 Arbitron was the official report card. “Lo, and behold,” Steve Trivers said, “the station was right up there behind WSBA-AM in the important 25–49 age group in the April/May 1970 Arbitron.”

A WSBA-FM Instant Replay—Steve Trivers

We felt WSBA-FM should be separated in both its selling approach and in terms of its air talent. We had guys working on both stations—one was one of the most successful stations in the state of Pennsylvania, and the other one had been struggling. The problem was they took the AM station more seriously, and when it came to FM, they felt discouraged and unloved.

So we split the air staff, and we recruited an all-FM sales team. We found Tom Ranker, who was selling business forms. We were fortunate that Don Heckman didn’t want to be “The Real Don Steele” (a WSBA-AM personality) anymore. He wanted to learn a new trade and grow in the business. Our third salesman who started from scratch was Mark Woolley. When John Concino left to accept a job outside broadcasting, we hired Mike Henderson, a Gettysburg College student.

After we got the things going, there were improvements in each rating book. From time to time, there were rate increases. It’s hard to believe, our first basic spot rate was \$4.00!

Although WSBA-FM was well on the way to making it on its own, the proximity of WSBA-AM made it easy for WSBA-FM to avail itself of the resources of its sister station. More than one AM graphic (market research, promotion piece, etc.) ended up transferred verbatim bearing the WSBA-FM logo. Indeed, the WSBA-AM tradition of professionalism rubbed off on the FM operation in many ways.

Still, WSBA-FM had, at last, established its own identity. The next step in the upgrading schedule was the installation of equipment to broadcast in stereo. In the hectic preparation for the changeover, it was not only necessary to remaster all of WSBA-FM's music for stereo, but a complete duplicate library also had to be prepared for the newly acquired WSPD-FM in Toledo (soon to be WLQR), the Company's second FM station.

March 1971 marked the beginning of Susquehanna's FM group operation. Between then, when WSBA-FM went stereo, and the spring of 1972, when the new tower was erected over the Hellam Township landscape, a behind-the-scenes innovation was attracting attention. Two announcers, Bernie Witkin and Bruce Werner, students at Gettysburg College and Lehigh University, respectively, devised a computer program to schedule WSBA-FM's music tapes. So remarkable was their model that when an article describing it appeared in an engineering trade paper, Bonneville Broadcasting System adopted the plan and continued to use it for years. Says Steve Trivers, "This was absolutely, positively the first computerized music selection design in the country!"

In March 1972, Mr. Trivers resigned. Succeeding him was Chris Huber, WSBA sales manager, who retained his AM sales manager responsibilities while assuming the top job. In making the decision, Art Carlson said, "In his dual role, Chris was able to help the FM station maintain its separate identity, while at the same time maximize sales of both stations by having the sales operations working more closely together."

Few on-air changes took place at WSBA-FM through the 1970s. When the Company established its syndication division in 1974 and marketed the WSBA-FM Beautiful Music concept, it was called "The Sound of Your Life," and became the format at all of the Company's FM stations. "The Sound of Your Life" on WSBA-FM prevailed until early 1983.

Enter the Listener Service Representative (LSR). In simplest terms, the LSR became WSBA-FM's public relations emissary. However, as the scope of the station's influence grew, so did the range of that representative's responsibilities. Once hired, the LSR, who reported directly to the station manager, spent little time behind a desk. Working from a list of locations to be called on—office buildings, retail establishments, and industrial/professional offices—prepared under the manager's supervision, the LSR truly had a "territory." Armed with a two-part questionnaire and an Instructions and

Procedures Guide (a detailed how-to manual), the LSR called on listeners to gather valuable promotional and marketing information.

As far as WSBA-FM was concerned, attention to listener tastes and marketplace changes never ceased. Since Susquehanna had made a commitment to an extensive research program, WSBA-FM would certainly be involved. Thus in 1979, the first special research project was launched under the direction of Dave Kennedy, Ph.D. candidate at Bowling Green University and WLQR air personality. The study, conducted by the Elizabethtown College Social Research Center, sought to determine how listeners perceived certain elements of WSBA-FM's programming.

Even before formal research began, Program Director Marshall Passmore began wondering if "The Sound of Your Life" format was becoming somewhat frayed. The WSBA-FM program director placed his thoughts in a memo for the corporate office, calling attention to what he considered a "growing and serious problem."

A WSBA-FM Instant Replay—Marshall Passmore

The regular "Sound of Your Life" tapes generally are less than a match for the inserts (fresh, contemporary musical selections that were inserted between songs on the tape reel). Consider the contrast between the quality sound of "Feels So Good" by Chuck Mangione and some of the Susquehanna Strings' cuts on our tapes. Or match up "How Deep Is Your Love?" by the Bee Gees with a "Hard Day's Night" by the Hollyridge Strings. Here you'll find a contrast that may begin to throw a bad light on the mainstream of the "Sound of Your Life" stations.

As to a general statement of purpose where the insert system is leading us, I'd have to suggest that we are slowly evolving into a hybrid of MOR (Middle-of-the-Road) and Soft Rock, with considerably more appeal to the lower (younger) part of the Susquehanna audience target.

Through much of late 1980 and periodically in 1981, Marshall Passmore kept raising the issue of the need for a major overhaul of both the music itself and its delivery system. By February 1982, the automatic cartridge system Mr. Passmore so strongly championed was in place and ready for phasing in during weekend programming. Also introduced at this time was a slight modification of WSBA-FM's basic music approach. Weekends found the addition of vocal renditions by artists who had never appeared as "Sound of Your Life" performers—artists such as the Beatles, England Dan and John Ford

Coley, Barry Manilow, Lionel Ritchie, and Kenny Rogers. Their inclusion on Saturday and Sunday music lists gave the station a more Adult Contemporary tone.

After approximately nine months of experimentation with the weekend music mix, there was no appreciable change in WSBA-FM's audience position. By the fall of 1982, though, ratings had declined to a new low. As National Program Director Rick McDonald wrote at the time, "WSBA-FM offers three distinct music blends: traditional Easy Listening, modified Easy Listening, and a Soft Contemporary weekend mix, making it difficult to determine what the station stands for."

Soon after the New Year's holiday, a meeting was called to discuss how to position the station clearly. Rod Burnham, operations manager of the WSBA stations, had a key role in WSBA-FM becoming "WARM 103."

A WSBA-FM Instant Replay—Rod Burnham

Marshall and I were certain, and Chris backed us up, that we had to move to something different. A meeting was in order. Present were Art Carlson, Marshall Passmore, Mike Robbins (corporate marketing manager), Rick McDonald, Dave Kennedy, Chris, and I. Once we decided we were going to convert the station to a Soft Rock music format, we had to go shopping for a name. Mike Robbins suggested we call it "WARM." After that, we coined other terms, the selling slogans: "soft rock," "less talk—more music," and so on.

In order to insure brevity and that the music would be the number one message, every announcer break was scripted on big format sheets. Once the announcers were used to it, by about the sixth month, we pulled back on the scripting and allowed more creativity.

Musically, we already had weekend and nighttime selections of the Soft Rock variety. We added approximately 500 new titles for the start-up library. We had some sort of music recording going on day and night for four weeks. By March we had a working library of about 800 cuts. Marshall picked all the music.

On March 28, 1983, what amounted to a new radio station went on the air in central Pennsylvania. Gone were "WSBA-FM" and "FM-103," and in their place came "WARM 103"—the result of significant research and long hours by many staffers. An entirely new sound had emerged.

When the results of the Spring 1983 ratings sweep came out, the numbers showed encouraging increases. However, it was not until the Fall Arbitron ratings were released that the dramatic escalation in audience that management had hoped for was realized.

After the Soft Rock format had been in place for two years, the WARM 103 library was inventoried on software to better control the music flow. Early in 1985, the library was transferred to state-of-the-art cartridges.

The same spring in 1985, just as the full impact of his efforts were being realized, Program Director Marshall Passmore died unexpectedly. No eulogy can do justice to his contributions to Susquehanna. His dedication, wit, and ability to “roll with the punches” are legacies cherished by all who knew him.

Even as WARM 103 underwent a program change in 1983, so, too, were major changes made in the organization of its sales structure. In this year, the selling efforts of WSBA-AM and WARM 103 were combined into a single sales staff. A reversal of the separation of the AM and FM sales forces implemented 13 years prior, this combined sales approach not only recognized greater sales potential with less duplication of effort, but also reflected the strengthening of FM's marketability.

To Tom Ranker, the advantages of the combined selling strategy were clear.

A WSBA-FM Instant Replay—Tom Ranker

The combo sales staff allowed one contact per account to sell two products. With this system, we could take advantage of where a particular salesperson for one station was strong with an account, but where we weren't getting any revenue for the other station. I mean, it probably meant a million dollars difference in the first year in revenue that we didn't have before. I'm not talking about any increased ratings or any increased performance in the market, but just the benefit of going from separate sales staffs to combo selling.

During this same time, management positions in the sales organization were revised to include two local sales managers and the general sales manager. Tom Ranker describes the motivation for these changes.

A WSBA-FM Instant Replay—Tom Ranker

We viewed the position of local sales manager or assistant more as a training director for our entry-level salespeople. At that time we had lost one or two senior people, and we never had any kind of training or development program for entry-level people. We just kind of recruited as we needed them. At that time we decided to formalize our sales training.

Well, ever since then we've always had different people undergoing various stages of the training and recruitment programs. Since then we've never had a problem of filling an account list if somebody left or if somebody became sick. We've lost key people, but others have been in place with the ability to move up.

Those two items—the combo selling and the serious attention to people development—have, without a doubt, made a difference today.

In 1986, a new tower doubled WARM 103's antenna height, and program refinements continued as announcers/hosts became more important to the format. Long-time morning personality Kelly West became FM program director, adding these duties, as well as a partner, Rick Sten, to her successful morning show. All announcers were chosen for their ability to be "WARM" and to relate to the audience.

In addition to on-going, subtle format changes, WARM 103 has become increasingly active in promotions, both on and off the air. For close to a decade, WARM 103's annual bridal show, "Wedding Wonderland," has been highly successful, as have craft shows that are held six or seven times a year. On-air promotions, such as the year-long "Payoff Song," have become an integral part of the station.



In the more than 40 eventful years since the first sounds from 103 FM poured out, there have been what modestly may be called several communications revolutions. Susquehanna's faith in FM, demonstrated at WSBA, led to the formation of a successful FM group in the 1980s and 1990s. The dedication of the people who made it so—beginning back in the hot August days of 1947—may be matched only by the Company's pride in its pioneer FM voice.

Blazing New Trails in the Northeast

WARM/WMGS



Chapter 12

When the *Scranton Times* (not always noted for bestowing praise on WARM through the years) did a 25th anniversary piece on the station in 1983, its writer chose a familiar metaphor, the television show “Dynasty.” The article opened, “If the family on that drama is a dominating group, it has little, if any, edge over radio station WARM which has been serving Scranton/Wilkes-Barre . . . for the past 25 years.” The article ended, “The bottom line? For 25 years, no one—not anyone—has been able to garner more listeners than WARM. And that, indeed, is a dynasty.”

But there was irony in this tribute from a traditional competitor: by the time it was published, WARM’s long-held position as the dominant audience leader in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area had begun to erode. Although the erosion was slight—and other leading AM stations around the country were experiencing a similar rating slide—there was considerable cause for concern. For when a medium’s audience lags, sales cannot be far behind.

Despite the continued success of the regionalization approach and the ever-greater acceptance of the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre strip market concept, the proliferation of radio signals and steady growth of FM within northeast Pennsylvania during the seventies and eighties compelled Susquehanna to reevaluate the “stand-alone” position of WARM-AM. The enticing potential of adding a strong FM station to its already dominant, albeit weakening AM, led to the purchase of WMGS-FM in 1985. Together, the powerful combination of WARM-AM and WMGS-FM have enabled Susquehanna to continue its leadership position in northeast Pennsylvania.

WARM

In the early Top 40 days, WARM (along with WSBA-AM) was one of the pioneer stations of the genre, not just in Pennsylvania, but in the entire eastern region of the United States. But even as WARM was pressing confidently ahead into the 1960s, industry controversy over the Top 40 format had not subsided.

Although WARM had by now been using the format long enough to expect criticism to die down, such was not the case. In advertisers' offices, at PTA meetings, and at coffee counters throughout the listening area, the station and its format were still hotly debated topics of conversation. What helped fuel much of the anti-Top 40 sentiment was the increasing number of rock-and-roll songs on the hit list. The arrival of Elvis Presley, Chubby Checker, Bobby Lewis, Dee Dee Sharp, and a host of rock-and-roll performers added verve to the already high energy Top 40 format.

But WARM weathered these storms and sailed into the sixties with continued resolve to please the majority of listeners. As Art Carlson said at the time, "Nobody likes us but the people."



If your fate had pointed to an announcing career in the late fifties, and you had heard about WARM, chances are that's where you wanted to be. But Mr. Carlson (and the managers who succeeded him) didn't wait for starry-eyed prospects from smaller stations to call them; instead, they constantly scouted for voices that would fit WARM's demanding requirements. The experience of WARM personality Harry West is representative of the talent search that marked the building of a crack air staff. He came to the "Mighty 590" in 1959. The veteran morning man recalls one hot August day that year:

A WARM Memory—Harry West

I got this phone call from an Art Carlson, who said he was general manager of WARM. He said he had heard me on WHUM, in Reading, and asked me if I'd be interested in working at WARM. I said, "Are you kidding?" But he said I'd have to audition, which I did. The next couple of days were maddening. Finally, a call came from Art asking me if I wanted to join the WARM staff. What a question!

The Bowman Building was on Linden Street. It was incredible. My attic was in better shape. I was ushered back to Art Carlson's office where he asked me to spend the next few hours learning about Top 40 radio.

Next thing you know, they told me to go have some pictures taken—they had set up an appointment. When I came back, I told Art I'd take the job.

The contributions of Harry West and his colleagues in WARM's early years should never be underestimated, for it was those initial performers who set the standards. While the less-than-complimentary description of the Top 40 format as "formula radio" may have had some merit at the bad imitation stations, such was not the case at big-time Top 40 outlets such as WARM. The Susquehanna air personality was regarded first and foremost as a person—and an integral part of the Top 40 format. This philosophy was one of the building blocks of WARM's success.

"On-the-job" for a disc jockey meant more than "on-the-air." In the Top 40 glory days at WARM, personal appearances went with the territory. The much-sought-after, in-person shots could include emceeing duties at fire company carnivals, union rallies, and store openings, but mostly they meant record hops. At its peak, the record hop was a Top 40 spinoff that benefited the disc jockey (extra money), the station (extra promotion), and the sponsoring organization (extra publicity). For three hours the deejay spun the 40 records the station featured, and the kids danced à la Dick Clark's "American Bandstand." Hops became such a phenomenon that "At the Hop" by Danny and the Juniors earned a permanent place on the all-time golden oldies list.

In the heyday of record hops, few stations could match WARM's involvement in this uniquely Top 40 phenomenon. Because the station's influence extended beyond any artificial county boundaries, WARM personalities roamed far and wide, carrying their hop boxes into roller rinks, fire halls, armories, and school gymnasiums.

In addition to spending time preparing for a record hop, the deejays faced another occupational hazard in the form of travel time. Harry West, who estimates he may have logged "over 3,000 record hops," recalls one particularly treacherous event.

A WARM Memory—Harry West

It all started on a Friday morning around Christmas time. I had to work my regular shift, get home, rest for an hour, eat dinner, shower, and get underway for a four-hour record hop that started at 8:00 P.M. So getting home late, I didn't get much sleep, and on Saturday morning I had to do my WARM show at 6:00 A.M. After I got off the air at ten, I traveled around WARMland on one of our big trucks to gather toys for our Toys for Tots program. I did that all

day, rushed home and got ready for a Saturday night hop in Waverly, New York, which was two-and-a-half hours away.

Well, coming home that night, I fell asleep. The next thing I know, I woke up and felt the car rumbling and heading off the side of the road. I had hit a rough spot in the road. Had that section of the highway been repaired, I probably wouldn't be here to tell the story.

One record hop crisis loomed ominously in the life of young disc jockey Kerby Scott Confer. It was only the second hop Mr. Confer had ever played, and he was only a few years older than the kids he was entertaining. He says, "I wasn't even accustomed to handling myself in public."

A WARM Memory—Kerby Scott Confer

I started off pretty well. People were dancing, having a good time. The next thing I know this big kid comes up to me. Now I was kind of overweight myself, but alongside some of these guys I looked pretty small. Anyhow, this guy steps up inches from my face and says, "Hey, where are the walsuns?"

Now I knew they talked a little funny in parts of the coal regions. I stammered and swallowed hard, and said, "Walsuns? I'll check on it." I had no idea what he was talking about. I thought maybe he meant Len Woloson, one of our personalities. But no, he wasn't talking about Len. So when that wasn't it, I thought he'd give up and go away.

But he didn't. This time he puts a firm hand on my shoulder and wants to know, "What about the walsuns?" I told the guy I'd make a phone call and see about the "walsuns." I called the station to see if there was something I was missing. There wasn't.

On the way back to the stage, it occurred to me he might mean Jerry Wallace, who was a big singer at the time, or a girl group, The Wallaces. But when I mentioned these artists, he got more insistent: "No, dat ain't what I mean! Now I asked you three times, when are we going to get the walsuns?" This time he had three of his big buddies with him.

So here I am saying "sir" to a 17-year-old kid: "Sir, I have to apologize. I just don't know what you're talking about."

"Come on, come on," he says. "We wanna dance with the girls. You know, *walsuns*, one-two-three, one-two-three."

Now it dawned on me. He was talking about *waltzes*, which in Old Forge meant "slow songs"!

Record hops appealed mainly to the younger audience segment, but the station's fare was designed for all age groups. Contests and

special events were devised for general family consumption. WARM pioneered the blockbuster prize contest—major prizes in medium-sized markets. These have since become commonplace, but in the mid-sixties (when the station awarded trips to Hawaii), they were unheard of except in the larger cities.

WARM Day at Rocky Glen Park was tantamount to a legal holiday in northeast Pennsylvania. A festive air pervaded the area that day, but for management it was nail-biting time, with two major worries: the *weather*, and *whether* all the details would fall into place.

From the time the first crocus peeped through the soil and station management began preparations for the annual event, until park employees turned off the Day's last light at Rocky Glen, WARM Day required logistics worthy of a military operation. But no part of the planning could match the ritual of negotiating for the park itself. Ben Sterling, Rocky Glen's owner, was a shrewd, battle-seasoned showbiz veteran—an impresario of the amusement arts, wily and unflappable. The focal point of the yearly negotiations, according to Ted Hepburn, was "to see how much you could convince Ben Sterling to spend during the year in return for having WARM's major promotion at Rocky Glen Park." Al Kornish recalls that, as part of the official transition in succeeding Ted Hepburn as general manager of WARM, he participated in the annual Ben Sterling bargaining process.

A WARM Memory—Al Kornish

The only way to do business with Ben Sterling was to accept his invitation for lunch—in his office. He would have one of his workers come in, put a tablecloth on his desk and then serve up the blue-plate special. You'd sit there, eat lunch, and then for two hours or more, discuss the problems of the world. This always came before the hard negotiating. During my first encounter, he told me he had written a book and its title was *What I have Learned About the Amusement Business in 40 Years*. He asked me if I'd like to have a copy, and of course I said yes. He said, "Good, I'll send you one."

I didn't really expect him to send me the book. But a few days later the postman came with a C.O.D. for \$14.95! I opened the package and it was the book with the title on the cover, *What I Have Learned About the Amusement Business in 40 Years*, by Ben Sterling. I opened it up and it was filled with blank pages!

WARM Day featured entertainment acts, free rides, refreshments, prizes, and, naturally, traffic jams. Ted Hepburn says, "I can still picture traffic being snarled for over 25 miles in all directions." Disc jockey Paul Roberts' recollection of one WARM Day is just as vivid. His third career stop found him on stage in 1962 at the Rocky

Glen amphitheater. He says not even emceeding the Beatles live show when he was at WCAO in Baltimore could match the thrill of being part of WARM Day.

A WARM Memory—Paul Roberts

I can tell you who the acts were: We had Bobby Vinton, who was on top with number one, "Roses are Red"; we had Bobby Greg, a drummer who had a record, "The Jam"; we had Brian Hyland, who did "Sealed With A Kiss"; we had Dee Dee Sharp, who did "Mashed Potato Time"; we had the Orlons, who did "Don't Hang Up"; and we had 21 other acts in that funky amphitheater.

I really felt overwhelmed to be part of it. I was 21 years old and I thought, "This is fabulous, man."

What made WARM Day (and its sister station equivalencies) unequalled on the musical level was the heretofore unheard of manner of booking the acts. So influential were the Susquehanna stations that most of the artists performed gratis. Only in rare cases were artists compensated, and then usually just for travel expenses. Most instrumental in helping line up acts was Matty "The Humdinger" Singer. Colorful, fast-talking, borscht-belt hip, Matty was a record promotion representative whose labels usually occupied a healthy chunk of the Top 40. Ever ready with a quip or aphorism ("Behind every successful musician stands a surprised mother-in-law"), Matty swam against the high-pressure tide of hype unleashed by many record promoters. When Matty plugged a record, it was usually what he said it was. Straight as an arrow in the sometimes sleazy music business, when Matty Singer said he'd deliver an act for WARM Day or WSBA Day, management could depend on it. The irrepressible Humdinger recollected one particular WARM Day.

A WARM Memory—Matty Singer

I brought up to Rocky Glen for a WARM Day the number one act in the country—Brian Hyland, with "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini." But there was a hassle. The Dovells came up there like real big deals. They said to (disc jockey) George Gilbert that if the Dovells didn't close the show, they wouldn't go on. So George, being very upset, came to me expecting me to be furious. Which I was. I said, "You know what? Let 'em go to hell! You put 'em on any time you want. Don't worry about me. I have the number one act in the country, and they're idiots for talking like that. Being a pro like I am, let 'em be jerks."

Although the highly visible WARM disc jockeys—whether called the Sensational Seven, The Good Guys, or just plain air personalities—meant the spotlight shined brightest on entertainment, there was a more sedate side to WARM's broadcasting. News, information, and public affairs were an early WARM preoccupation, although critics often failed to recognize it amid the barrage of anti-Top 40 sentiment. The delicate balance in being a news and information medium, and, at the same time, an entertainment source, called for careful monitoring. At no time was this more apparent than on November 22, 1963. Harry West remembers reading the bulletin announcing that the president was shot. For the next three days, music played a subordinate role at WARM. Whenever news stories of great national or local importance were unfolding, the audience had no need to dial another station; it could count on WARM to "break format" to cover the news.

On the news/public affairs side, WARM can point to a number of important firsts. It was the first station in northeast Pennsylvania to editorialize. WARM also led the way in acquiring a private weather service and in subscribing to an audio news service. Other features that should have dispelled the "5,000-watt jukebox" label included "Sound Off," "Look Up To Learning," "Flashback," "Operation Snowflake," and "Operation Contact."

But nothing on the news and information side prompted as much audience reaction as did editorializing. Terry McNulty, who has gone back and forth from disc jockeying to news reporting, describes the first listeners' reactions: "They were used to newspaper editorials, but then someone actually expressed a glaring opinion on the radio on some major topic or other. That was just unheard of! The phone calls and letters started piling in."

It was WARM that helped set the tone for using private weather services for radio stations, first with Travelers Weather in the mid-sixties, then with AccuWeather, which has served the area since 1971. Jack Herr was general manager when WARM became the first AccuWeather charter member.

A WARM Memory—Jack Herr

We contacted a fellow by the name of Joel Myers, who was already doing weather for a few municipalities. Other than that, he had no commercial connections. We asked him to do a few test feeds, then we did a month's worth without airing them. We compared Joel Myers' weather forecasts with those of the National Weather Service and found his were more accurate. So we elected to sign up with Joel.

We had to come up with a name, but what to call it? I have a habit of taking my wrist watch off and laying it in front of me. During one of those watch-on-the-desk meetings, I was talking with George Gilbert and looked at the word "Accutron." Suddenly a bell started ringing. Why not call our private weather service *AccuWeather*?

We started using that name on the air. However, we never gave a thought then to copyrighting or getting trademark protection. A couple months later, we learned Joel had beaten us to the punch.

AccuWeather took off from there. Every time I look at that watch, I think of the scores of weather services AccuWeather spawned.

But all weather and news stories in northeast Pennsylvania pale beside the flood that swept over the Wyoming Valley in June 1972. A remarkable chronicle of that flood comes from a documentary produced by WARM News. The demand for copies prompted the station to create a two-disc-long album, *River on a Rampage*, which contained highlights of the events of June 23 and 24, 1972.

Radio's unique ability to serve is never more apparent than when a shattering natural disaster, such as the one triggered by Hurricane Agnes in June 1972, strikes. With a facility offering wide area coverage, and with manpower and equipment geared for such emergencies, WARM went into action. Phil Condron was on the sales staff at the time. He remembers the mounting tension that reached a crescendo the night of June 22, 1972.

A (Not So) WARM Memory—Phil Condron

I had been at WARM only three months at that point. Nobody expected the (Susquehanna) river to overflow its banks since the rain fell primarily north of us, around Corning, New York. On the night of June 22, around three or four in the morning, the civil defense in Wilkes-Barre realized the dikes were not going to handle the river. They started driving through the area, telling people, "Get out now! Don't worry about taking anything along!"

Most of the stations that covered Wilkes-Barre were off the air, so it fell to WARM to carry the ball. WARM had a total station effort—everybody was involved. We gave updates, including lists of evacuees and where they were located. It was straight-through public service broadcasting—civil defense advisories, Corps of Engineers' reports, U.S. Air Corps involvement, and so on.

I remember our sales manager, Dick Bolin, who had a brother involved in civil defense. He came with a Jeep and drove Dick through waist-high water to give reports as to which landmarks were still under water.

After things settled down, we had two of the busiest months in WARM history—companies announcing they were going to reconstruct, clients with temporary location spots, companies coming in from the outside, carpetbaggers who set up furniture and carpeting sales operations. We were going from early in the morning till late at night to take care of the advertisers in July and August. But we'd have gladly foregone the windfall for less rainfall.

Like Phil Condron, Terry McNulty cannot erase the memory of Hurricane Agnes: "I will never forget the mud and disease . . . the people who lost everything. It's one thing to cover a story like that when you're miles away, but when you're in the middle of it, you're really with these people."

Fortunately, no other public service that WARM provided in its long and colorful run in northeast Pennsylvania matched the grimness of the 1972 Hurricane Agnes tragedy. But through the years, WARM and its staff have performed countless civic and charitable events for the benefit of the entire community. There was afternoon drive personality Bill Kelly's March of Dimes walk between Scranton and Wilkes-Barre in 1973, a function which raised \$26,000. In the early seventies, Harry West was a prime mover in revising state legislation involving the education of handicapped children. In honor of his efforts, Mr. West won the prestigious "Brace for an Ace" award from the Pennsylvania Easter Seal Society in October 1985.



In the American broadcasting system, it often follows that the station that does the most public service is also the one that does the most advertising business. A profit-oriented company, Susquehanna offers no apologies for its emphasis on sales. Few radio sales departments have been so favored. Still, as any WARM salesperson will be quick to point out, this did not mean you could drop by a prospect's place of business and pick up an order just for the asking. When Top 40 re-established radio as a viable medium in the television age, it also created special challenges for the people who sold it. WARM's large audience share did not mean advertisers were standing in line to get on the air. Many potential advertisers who grew up in the era of traditional radio programming judged public tastes by their own. The great change in American popular music that had begun in the mid-1950s was reflected on WARM.

In addition to the objections on the artistic level, there was resistance to WARM's advertising rates, over and above the standard customer objections that are all part of the selling process. Because

Susquehanna has always insisted on a superior air product, WARM salespeople were indoctrinated to understand that this, plus WARM's wide coverage, meant higher rates. But how did you convince a jeweler with one store in Wilkes-Barre to advertise on WARM? Phil Condron found this problem one of his earliest challenges when he joined the WARM sales staff in 1971.

A WARM Memory—Phil Condron

The guy kept telling me, "Your rates are too high and I can't use all your coverage. I've only got one location." I'd show him our national rate card and point out what national advertisers were paying for full area coverage. Then I'd tell him, "We're not asking you to pay this higher rate."

If that didn't work, I'd take him to the WARM conference room. There we had a map of northeast Pennsylvania. It had switches we could use to light up various sections, towns, and so on. "Let's turn on this light," I'd say. "This is where your business is." The lights would show him that he could not only pull from around his immediate area but from the wide trading area we covered.

Creating general acceptance of the WARM strip market concept was a lonely battle at first. But, eventually, "WARMLand" became a generic term for northeast Pennsylvania. By focusing equal efforts in news, public service, and marketing, WARM's market definition was gradually accepted. By the mid-sixties, the use of the term "WARMLand" had extended well beyond station announcers and salespeople. Kerby Scott Confer says he recalls the day when, for him, the separate towns and villages of northeast Pennsylvania came together in a single entity. He had gone to the bus terminal on an errand. "I saw this soldier get off a bus and his wife or sweetheart was there to greet him. She put her arms around him, gave him a big hug, and I heard her tell him how great it was to have him home. Then I heard him say, 'Yeah, it's great to be back in WARMLand.'"

With the 1964 opening of the new WARM building in Avoca, midway between Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, the station's pivotal position to serve both cities was dramatized further.

As WARM moved toward the 1980s, more emphasis was placed on news and information. Although the station had always stressed these aspects of programming, its paramount concern was its traditional pop music image. Where WSBA had begun quietly to beef up its news coverage in the mid-sixties and quicken the musical tempo considerably by the mid-seventies, WARM's shifts in that direction came several years later.

In the 1980s, more radio stations, more TV signals, smarter newspaper competition, and a proliferation of smaller media contributed to stronger rivalry for listener attention and advertiser dollars. To maintain WARM's leadership role, local management, with corporate participation, began reshaping its product. In early 1983, Rod Burnham, chief program executive at WSBA/WSBA-FM, was asked to fill the same role at WARM, and for two years he divided his time between York and Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. Rebuilding the newsroom and other upgrading initiatives were on the corporate agenda Mr. Burnham was chosen to implement. When "operation facelift" and the Burnham mission were completed, John Hancock joined the staff as WARM program director. After stints as local and general sales manager at WARM, Phil Condron became assistant general manager of the station in 1983. Charlie Morgan was appointed supervising executive in 1985 to provide corporate supervision of the station. He also acted as general manager before appointing Mr. Condron to the position of station manager the following year.

WARM's strengthening of its news and information services and de-emphasis of music brought many program changes. These changes included the introduction of play-by-play sports (Phillies baseball, Philadelphia Eagles football, Penn State football and basketball, NFL Games of the Week), one-hour news blocks (5-6 P.M.), nighttime network talk shows (including Larry King and Bruce Williams), and the like. News coverage was expanded by lengthening some newscasts and adding new ones. A team of seven full-time reporters was put in place to strengthen local coverage. A Mutual Network affiliation was acquired, mainly for its news and sports. These, added to existing features like "Operation Snowflake," "Traffic Watch," "AccuWeather," and the "Merrill Lynch Stock Report," enhanced WARM's redirected program focus. Recognition of the increased emphasis on news and public affairs came with awards from the Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters, The Associated Press, and United Press International.

While WARM was broadening its news/sports/information base, its entertainment format was changing, too. The "new" WARM continued to be a showplace for the blockbuster promotion, an unusual contest, an off-beat happening. More shows were produced on the road rather than in the studio. A WARM personality could pop up practically anywhere in a stepped-up effort to gain visibility. Ron Allen's call-in sports talk show originated from various spots around WARMland and from baseball spring-training sites in Florida. Harry West broadcast a week of shows from Disney World. Program Director John Hancock remained suspended aloft on a billboard over In-

terstate 81 for 59 hours during an Easter Seal drive. The addition of the Radiocard helped to provide unusual marketing and promotion opportunities.

On March 15, 1992, WARM's gradual emphasis on news and information went full circle with its change to All Talk. Harry West's morning show, which over the previous years had focused more on information and less on music, became even more "listener active" with phone calls and interviews. The remainder of the day became strictly All Talk, with programs hosted by local personalities such as Ron Allen with his venerable "Sports Line" show, and network talk programs through the night.

WMGS

The erosion of AM listening due to competition from FM was not as dramatic in northeast Pennsylvania as elsewhere in the country. The key to this was the mountainous terrain that impeded the line-of-sight signals characteristic of frequency modulation. (AM signals follow land contours.) In addition, WARM's dominance so overshadowed the field that northeast Pennsylvania did not experience as much of the evolutionary reshaping of the radio universe as did most other markets. By the mid-1980s, Arbitron studies showed 66.5 percent of listening Americans chose FM stations. For Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, it was 57.7 percent. Still, changes that were taking place throughout broadcasting also affected WARM—the deregulatory actions in Washington and the technical advantages of FM and its alternative program choices—and WARM's traditional position of dominance in the market began to slip.

"It was really no secret," Art Carlson said, "that WARM had steadily tailed off in the ratings by the early eighties, and sales had remained basically flat over the years. But expenses never remain flat. We were very concerned about northeast Pennsylvania."

Enter the possibility of an FM partner. There was one station that seemed to be the best property in the market; it had a good dial position and delivered excellent coverage. That station was WYZZ-FM, Wilkes-Barre, located at 92.9 MHz and operated with an effective radiated power of 50 kw. WYZZ-FM had been established in 1946, at 156 Prospect Street. It was the pride of its founder and sole owner, Dick Evans, who housed the station at his residence. But, in 1984, Mr. Evans was already past 80 and had decided it was time to sign off as owner-operator of WYZZ-FM. Word had circulated around Scranton/Wilkes-Barre that the station was for sale, and some of the people at WARM thought the time was right to approach its unconventional

owner. WYZZ-FM, of course, was an extension of Dick Evans, and whoever approached him about selling needed to understand not only the dynamics of negotiation, but also what made Dick Evans tick. The one person who fit that description was Susquehanna's vice president of engineering.

A MAGIC Memory—Charlie Morgan

Dick has been described as “eccentric, a maverick—different.” But he was also a very nice person. His station call letters were WYZZ-FM, which he pronounced “whiz.” He put the station on the air before there were FM receivers.

Dick Evans loved music. He played classical and nostalgic music—what Dick Evans wanted to play. He had his own program, “Remembering,” which he emceed until the day he sold the station. This regular show was made up of real old stuff—Rudy Vallee, Al Jolson, that kind of thing. Dick was very knowledgeable about his favorite kinds of music and claimed to have a million dollar personal record collection—which was excluded from our purchase agreement.

He had gotten into transit radio when it first came out. There were receivers in all the buses in Wilkes-Barre, and riders were, in effect, a captive audience. Dick made some money by using his main channel for transit before people thought of sidebands.

When we heard WYZZ-FM was for sale, I went to see Dick. He had had another offer from a company in Ohio, but he had known me over the years and respected Susquehanna. He was quite a talker, and when you sat down to talk to him, you had to plan on several hours as he reminisced about the days of yesteryear. If you didn't do it his way, Dick Evans would drop you. He was a very unique person and felt strongly about his radio station. He built it and ran it as if it was his life.

A sales agreement was signed in late 1984, and the ritual filing for license transfer was duly posted with the FCC. Riding the new wave of deregulation from Washington, the wait would not be long. In January 1985, research was launched in northeast Pennsylvania to guide the Company in its music approach. Basically, that research centered on “format opportunity” studies, with choices narrowed down to these musical bills of fare: Adult Contemporary (AC); Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR); Golden Oldies; and Country. What emerged as the winner after in-depth research was an Adult Contemporary format, with emphasis on hits from the sixties, seventies, and eighties.

Much of the music was already in the WARM 103 system, so it was a logistic certainty that the music would be dubbed in York. A

master studio at WSBA and WARM 103 became a beehive of activity in February 1985, as that station's library was duplicated in round-the-clock shifts. A corporate task force of Art Carlson, Dave Kennedy, Rick McDonald, Charlie Morgan, Rod Burnham, and Marshall Passmore worked with regular WARM staffers for the debut of Susquehanna's newest station. After FCC approval came, the call letters became WMGS, with the slogan tag line, "Magic 93." In a characteristic memo, the late WARM 103 program director laid down the essentials for the newest station in his spare, direct style.

A MAGIC Memory—Marshall Passmore

This format is not intended to provide the listener detailed information. An attempt to do so would only confuse the image of a "mostly music" position. In all dayparts except for morning drive, information plays a simple, "up-to-date" role, so that listeners will not feel isolated from important happenings. . . . People choose this format for its comfortable companionship. Contrary to popular belief, it is not background! They are listening and will react when necessary. The secret of the format is to avoid demanding their reaction unless it is in their self-interest. By maintaining a casual, conversational delivery of all nonmusic elements, you will enhance, not detract from the music. . . .

A second important element is consistency. These listeners don't like surprises. . . . The final critical element in this format is preparation. At its best, this format will include no more than two minutes of non-commercial talk per hour. Each talk element must be prepared for maximum communication in minimum words. Ad-libbing generates wordiness. Avoid it. Prepare each talk element so that it *sounds* ad lib. But isn't. . . .

WMGS would be housed in the WARM building. Charlie Morgan had given his assurances that the equipment and all supporting hardware would be ready when the FCC's official telegram arrived. A timetable was drawn up with the expectation of commission approval sometime in early March. On the last day of February 1985, as "Magic Day" drew nearer, a sudden hitch arose.

A Not-So-MAGIC Memory—Rod Burnham

I received this angry call from Dick Evans concerning the transmitter site. The engineers were going back and forth between the transmitter and WYZZ's studio location at his home on Prospect Street, preparing for the switchover. What enraged Mr. Evans was that we had not returned the keys to the transmitter site when we

finished up the day before. In his direct fashion, Dick Evans made a very rude suggestion as to what Susquehanna could do with the WYZZ agreement of sale.

At this point, I thought perhaps things might get out of control. So Gary Sharpe, the station's chief engineer, and I made a quick trip to see Mr. Evans in person. For nearly three hours he led us around his "million dollar music library" while he described in excruciating detail his background-foreground music format. Gary Sharpe and I, unaware at the time that Evans couldn't back out of the deal, spent the rest of the afternoon wondering how to tell four newly hired announcers, "We're sorry, but the deal fell through. Could you possibly get your old jobs back?"

On March 8, 1985, with the Susquehanna takeover only three days away, Dick Evans strode up to the WYZZ microphone and delivered the first section of a two-part valedictory. (Part II would come on March 11.)

A MAGIC Memory—Dick Evans

This is Dick Evans, Sr., president of the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Fine Music Broadcasting Company, Inc., licensee, owner, and operator of radio station WYZZ. In response to many listener inquiries concerning the proposed sale of certain assets of the present licensee corporation to Susquehanna Broadcasting, I'd like to give you a clarification. . . . Many of you listeners have been kind enough to go beyond the word "professional" and have characterized WYZZ as a "class operation." . . . I'll always treasure that assessment of my stewardship. . . . In surrendering the reins of WYZZ to Susquehanna Broadcasting, I take comfort in the fact that they are, in every sense of the word, "professionals." I trust you will join me in wishing them well.

My relationship with you, our listeners, has been both happy and rewarding. . . . I refuse to say, "Goodbye." As General MacArthur said, "I shall return." Thanks for the memories. May God bless you, each and every one. . . ."

And so with the benediction of its founding father, 92.9 mHz on the FM dial in Scranton/Wilkes-Barre broadcast its final WYZZ-FM audio identification on March 11, 1985. The following day, WMGS "Magic 93" was riding smoothly over northeast Pennsylvania airwaves. Another Susquehanna station, number 15, was in the fold.

Initially, key WARM personnel assumed tentative management roles: Jim Davey was vice president/general manager, and Phil Condron served as WMGS station manager (in addition to continuing as

WARM general sales manager). When Mr. Davey resigned in September 1985, Charlie Morgan, in addition to continuing as supervising executive for WARM and Magic 93, assumed the responsibility of general manager for these stations. In late 1986, Phil Condron became station manager, WARM/WMGS. In October 1990, Manager Condron left the stations to pursue a different career. Once again, Mr. Morgan assumed the responsibilities of the position until Jeff Frank was hired in early December 1991 from Allentown's WAEB-AM/FM, where he had been manager and a long-term employee.

Under the programming guidance of Chris Norton, who joined WMGS upon Susquehanna's takeover, Magic 93's on-air product was refined to a brighter sound, particularly in its music approach. The 1988 addition of air personality Frankie Warren, a man of many voices and talents, further enhanced the morning sound. Chris Norton was promoted to operations manager of both stations in 1987.

Magic 93 continues to evolve musically, but maintains a high profile with an annual bridal show, semiannual fashion shows, and other promotional activities. As a mostly music station, WMGS presents a limited menu of contests. The station's tag line, Magic 93, has afforded some unique play-on-words promotion. "The Magic Show," for example, features a magician's appearance at nonprofit events. A traveling affair, it has its own props. Tie-in devices such as a brochure, "Twelve Amazing Magic Tricks You Can Perform," add zest to a sprightly entertainment event for children of all ages. Regular billboards and TV campaigns also highlight Magic 93's around-the-calendar promotional efforts.



For every institution, change is a law of existence. But whatever the changes that took place at WARM—whether influenced by technology, competition, or demography—they have served only to enhance its role in its community. When the *Scranton Times* compared the station to the television show "Dynasty" in 1983, its central theme was the tremendous impact WARM has made in northeast Pennsylvania. Today, nearly 10 years since the publication of that article, and with the support of its sister station WMGS, the sentiments expressed by the *Times* still hold true.

Molding a Corporate Identity



Chapter 13

As the 1960s opened, the visionary outlook that prevailed at Susquehanna Broadcasting was one of optimism. The Company had correctly divined that the healthy economy, particularly during the first half of the decade, would be a fortuitous building block as top management planned and implemented expansion.

With faith in the country, in radio, and in its own potential, and with a breadth of vision, the Company was poised to move ahead as the new decade began. At 53 North Duke Street in York, the corporate staff consisted of Louis J. Appell, Jr.; Philip Kable, secretary-treasurer; and Mrs. Madeline Fleming, a full-time secretary. By 1960, when the radio group had grown to three stations, WSBA, WARM, and WHLO, President Appell felt "it was necessary to develop some kind of central organization for control, so top management at the stations could feel confident that organizational matters were being taken care of in the proper manner."

Art Carlson had spent 1960 in Akron as the first manager of the newly acquired WHLO. His appointment to vice president, Radio Division, signaled a move to York—the forming of a corporate staff was underway.

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers It Well

When Art moved to York to take over full responsibility for all the radio stations, I was out of a job, so to speak; that is, in terms of the day-to-day and week-to-week activity. My role now changed. I strongly believe that people can only have one boss, and that it was

inappropriate for me to enter into the management of the stations in any significant operational way. Certainly, I reserved for myself the role of ultimate policymaker, and the one who, with Art, would make the decisions dealing with station acquisitions and sales.

The role I assumed was as a sort of maker of overall policies and decisions; I also made sure they were carried out the way they should be, and that certain standards were upheld. I remember, for instance, insisting that our station's sales promotional material present a professional appearance. Further, it would be my job to make sure that the stations, to the best of our ability, were run in a businesslike fashion. Radio people are not always noted for dedication to such matters, since they are caught up in the daily activities of creativity and selling. So, in short, I was cast in the role of critic, the upholder of standards, if you will.

The new Radio Division of the corporate office made its home in the WSBA Building on the Susquehanna Trail. The south wing of WSBA's original building became the Radio Division's habitat until November 1969, when the corporate headquarters of all Susquehanna-Pfaltzgraff units moved to 140 East Market Street in York.

Louis Appell, Jr., remembers that this restructuring at the onset of the 1960s evoked some poignant moments. In assuming his new role, he says, "I could look back then to some of my most enjoyable times in the radio business, when I was working full-time at WSBA, dealing with people on an hourly basis, opening the mail, seeing what people had to say, and checking the orders in the afternoon. For me, more fun lay in being an innovator, a creative person and a cheerleader, rather than the one who concerns himself with overseeing a group of stations." Nonetheless, he emphasizes, he had few reservations about turning over the radio reins to Art Carlson.

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers It Well

It was easy for me to relinquish my day-to-day activities to Art because he and I enjoyed a very strong mutual understanding and appreciation of how a radio station should be run, and, more than that, how a company should be run. Consequently, it was a rather natural thing to turn the day-to-day matters over to him. We shared a sense of what the goals and objectives should be, and a sense of what you should do and what you should not do in running a business. So, with that kind of affinity, I had very few qualms in stepping aside and giving Art the day-to-day responsibility.

It was timely, too, that this happened the way it did, because it gave me the opportunity to concentrate on two other aspects of the Company. I could now turn my attention to developing what I envi-

sioned as a tremendous future for Pfaltzgraff, if we could organize ourselves to take advantage of some of the opportunities. Secondly, cable television was becoming more and more feasible as it moved from the more rural and mountainous areas (where off-the-air reception was poor) to markets where reception was reasonably good. But cable also offered certain other advantages over off-the-air television. With Art in charge, I now had the opportunity to pursue the development of cable and devote the attention necessary for eventually acquiring the cable franchise in York City and surrounding areas.

In the meantime, Art Carlson was assembling his corporate radio staff, and important technical and organizational changes vital to the operations of the growing company were instituted.

Amid the hustle of business operations, one concern hovered over all levels of Company management: compliance with the many federal regulations which governed the broadcasting industry. Some of these rules were mandated by Congress, others by Federal Communications Commission fiat. Although many broadcasters have felt that the basic concept of the original Communications Act of 1934—prevention of conflicting signals—had been lost in a tangle of bureaucratic red tape, Susquehanna always expended extra effort to “go by the book.” But the burden of conforming to the FCC’s dicta consumed many staff hours.

In this regard, a radio or television station is a “public utility” licensed for the “public interest, convenience, and necessity.” A station is, at the same time, an advertising medium and an entertainment vehicle. The larger a broadcast entity becomes and the higher the stakes, the more meticulous it must be with FCC matters. Further, the “warfare” between Top 40 operators and the traditionalists had created the impression that the former group was not fulfilling its public service covenant. Susquehanna, as a Top 40 operator, was sensitive to the public service issue, and, at the same time, ready to defend its performance in that connection. Much of the stepped-up scrutiny resulted from the payola scandals in the radio industry and the rigged quiz shows in television. As a direct result of these two situations, the FCC instituted its “ascertainment” process in 1960. From then until it was phased out in 1983, each licensee was required to *ascertain* the primary needs and interests of its service area. Radio and television stations were expected to devise their own forms and guidelines for determining the needs of its audience. Further, if called upon, the station needed to be able to produce evidence that its programming had met those needs. The community ascertainment survey became an annual rite on the broadcaster’s yearly agenda.

License renewal also occupied top management's attention in the early 1960s. Elaborate FCC forms had to be filed every three years. Particularly at issue was the form requiring the licensee to elaborate on its public service performance. Measuring the merits of a station's public service efforts by a 1934 yardstick seemed grossly out of touch with the realities of the 1960s. For example, a station could be presenting numerous program features of one to two minutes duration, effectively addressing important community issues throughout its broadcast day. Yet there was little or no "credit" given such segments because the official FCC forms favored half-hour and 15-minute time frames, a holdover from "old-time" radio days.

So great were the objections raised by stations to these outmoded standards that the FCC agreed to consider making changes. The commission's proposed revision was designated "Docket No. 13961, Amendment of Section IV [Statement of Program Service] of Broadcast Application Forms 301, 303, 314, and 315." The amended form in the FCC's proposal included some improvements, but several unwieldy portions of the license renewal process remained.

As is customary in proposed rule-making procedures, interested parties may file comments in support or in opposition. Among those who felt strongly about the FCC's perceptions of contemporary radio was Louis J. Appell, Jr. In comments submitted to the commission, he laid out in clear, concise language the modern broadcaster's reaction to the proposed amendment. He praised those sections that made sense and questioned the parts that had become obsolete. In the following excerpt from his comments, Mr. Appell addresses a matter that obscured a key part of a station's public service performance.

Louis J. Appell, Jr.
Before the Federal Communications Commission

May 1, 1961

That the commission is still hopelessly bound by the outmoded program unit concept of radio broadcasting became painfully apparent when the completely illogical and unrealistic program interruption requirement cropped up in later pages of the proposal.

At one point in the form the applicant is asked to indicate the number of public service announcements broadcast during the various "composite," "selected," or "proposed" weeks. This information is elicited in a manner to suggest that the number had better be formidable. Later, however, when the applicant is required to list the number of "program interruptions" in each hour of broadcasting,



Louis J. Appell, Sr.,
founder of Susquehanna
Broadcasting Co.



The Appell family, c.1940. From left: George N. Appell;
Helen P. Appell; Louis J. Appell, Jr.; Louis, J. Appell, Sr.;
Helen Pfaltzgraff Appell.



A driving force behind the formation of WSBA, multi-talented Otis B. Morse IV contributed greatly to the station's success.

Now on the air

WSBA

York's own Radio Station

900

The Mid-point on your dial

WSBA—YORK'S OWN RADIO STATION—NOW ON THE AIR AT 900, THE "MID-POINT" ON YOUR DIAL.—PROGRAMMED TO SUIT THE TASTE OF OUR OWN LISTENING AREA—COMPLETE NEWS COVERAGE BY OUR OWN LEASED WIRES FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE.

WSBA's on-air debut was announced in this September 1, 1942 advertisement in the York Dispatch.

This Is The Tower Which 1000-Watt WSBA 240-Foot Brings The Signal To You!

This is News Editor Saraleo Deane, whose job it is to tell you what is happening as it happens.

This is Program Director Otis Morse, whose job it is to know what you want to hear on WSBA.

This is the WSBA transmitter and studio control room with the most modern RCA equipment.

This is the main studio at WSBA with Producer Neil Robinson rehearsing a radio theatre cast.

This is your radio dial set at the Midpoint to hear your station — WSBA

All This is WSBA to Serve You
We Hope YOU Like It

The first sales brochure produced by WSBA, fall 1942.

 Your Blue Network Station
 Through The Day. It's
WSBA
 900—MID-POINT ON YOUR DIAL
 A. M. Tuesday, April 17, on WSBA
 7:15—First Edition—News
 7:2 —Just About Time
 7:30— Rev. Rittenhouse
 8:00—World News
 8:05—Music (Just About Time)
 8:30—101 Ranch Boys
 8:53—News Review
 9:00—Breakfast Club (Blue)
 10:00—My True Story—Blue
 10:25—Aunt Jemima (Blue)
 10:30—Music For Morale
 10:45—The Listening Post (Blue)
 11:00—Breakfast in Hollywood (Blue)
 11:30—Gil Martyn News—Blue
 11:45—Victory Farmers
 12:00—Glamor Manor—Blue
 P. M.
 12:30—World at Mid-Day News
 12:45—Symphonic Swing
 12:50—Musical Show Hit Tunes
 1:03—Baukhage Talking News (Blue)
 1:15—Radio Chapel
 1:30—Mid-Day Melodies
 1:45—OPA Reporter
 2:00—News at Two
 2:05—Matinee Varieties
 2:30—The Jerry Wayne Show
 3:00—World News
 3:05—A Gay Melody
 3:10—Ten Time Tunes
 3:30—101 Ranch Boys
 4:00—Thine Views The News (Blue)
 4:15—Larry Miller
 4:30—Report from Abroad (Blue)
 4:45—Terry and The Pirates (Blue)
 5:00—Five O'Clock Final—News
 5:05—Strictly Off The Record
 5:15—Dick Tracy (Blue)
 5:30—Jack Armstrong (Blue)
 5:35—The Rose Bar
 5:50—Serenade
 6:00—Kierman's News Corner (Blue)
 6:15—Rolling Rhythm
 6:25—Sports Final
 6:30—Lucky Listening
 6:45—Peggy Mann Sings
 7:00—News—That Man With the Band
 7:15—Raymond Swing—News (Blue)
 ROYAL JEWELERS—TIME
 SIGNALS DAHLY.

WSBA program log for April 17, 1944.



Managing director of Sinking Springs Farms, Herman Stebbins displayed a natural talent for broadcasting. From 1942 to his retirement in 1979, Mr. Stebbins entertained and informed listeners with his show, "On the Farm, with Herman Stebbins."



WSBA Program Director Otis Morse with the 101 Ranch Boys, early 1940s.



Announcer Wayne Trout (left) interviews band leader Stan Kenton in the late 1940s. Student intern, Virginia Shope, looks on.

"Boston Blackie," the popular Frederic W. Ziv-syndicated show, was introduced on WSBA in the early 1950s. Pictured in front of the original WSBA Building are (from left): Pat Bubb (receptionist), Ethel Grey (women's director), Lavonne Breighner (traffic), Charles Snyder (show sponsor), and Walter Rothensies (WSBA general manager).



Borden's
PRESENTS

The **BING CROSBY SHOW**

MON. thru FRI.  4:00 to 4:15

WSBA

IF it's Borden's it's got to be good!

For several years, beginning in 1949, WSBA produced "The Bing Crosby Show," which was sponsored by Borden's.

Four of WSBA's "Sensational Seven." From left: Ed Lincoln, Wayne Trout, Warren Duffy, and Bob Shipley.



WSBA staff, May 1965. Left to right, front row: John Concino (sales representative), Mike Rooney (engineer), Gil David (personality), Chuck Frederick (personality), Bob Shipley (FM director), Larry Shaffer (newsman). Second row: Gerry Reichart (receptionist/secretary), Diane Rudnick (Saturday receptionist), Jo Jacobs (evening receptionist), Judy Smith (Secretary), Norma Craumer (traffic director), Helen Gotwalt (continuity director), Donna Lind (copy/books). Third row: William Bitzer (sales representative), Wayne Stambaugh (engineer), Ray Ensminger (chief engineer), Chuck Wagner (FM sales representative), Jack Herr (sales manager), Mike Ernst (engineer), Bob Janis (program director), Ralph Lockwood (personality), Jerry Dyer (news editor), Pete Sayers (inter-office liaison), Philip Eberly (station manager). Fourth row: Dave Pettrow (newsman), Bob Young (engineer), Chris Huber, Jr., (sales representative), Harry Haverkamp (engineer), Keith Waltman (engineer). Back row: Johnny Mitchell (personality), Dave Bernstein (sales representative), Ed Lincoln (personality), Carl Eckels (newsman), Ed Coles (personality), and Wayne Trout (news and public affairs director).



WSBA's "Double Dribblers," 1963. From left: Ed Lincoln, Bob Janis, Carl Eckels, Ralph Lockwood, Johnny Mitchell, Bill Notopolis, and Chris Huber.



Former President Dwight D. Eisenhower accepts a donation for the new Eisenhower College from WSBA Station Manager Philip K. Eberly, as News Director Gene Burns records the June 1966 meeting. The contribution was made as a tribute to General and Mrs. Eisenhower's fiftieth wedding anniversary, on behalf of Susquehanna's "Look Up To Learning" program.



Home of WSBA and WARM 103 since February 1975, the new station building is located midway between York and Lancaster, Pennsylvania.



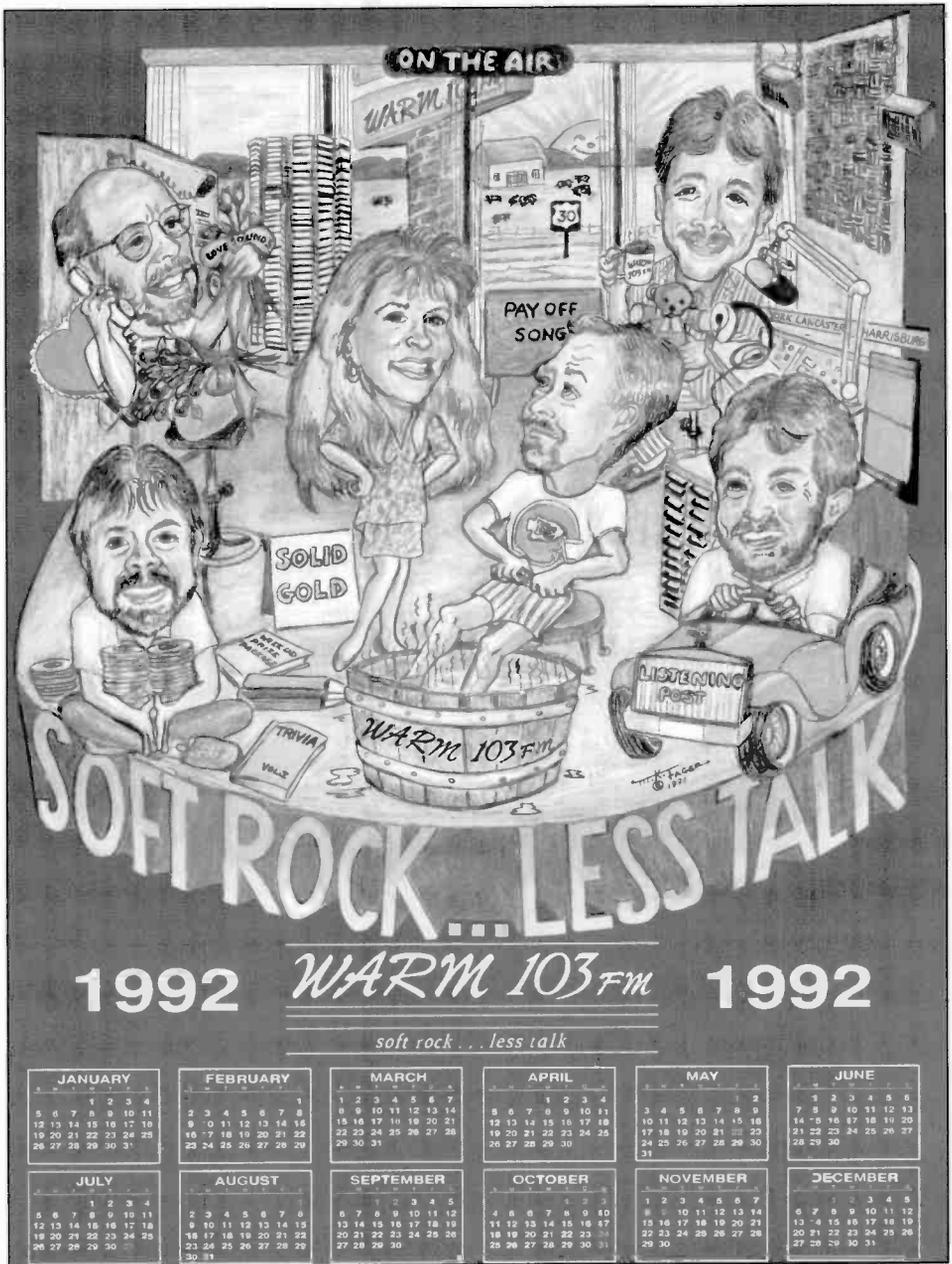
News Director Ron Corbin (center) is surrounded by the WSBA newsteam, 1980. Behind Mr. Corbin, from the left, are: Penny Moore, Tony Romeo, Barry Ford, Rick Mattioni, Leonard Roberts, Bob Markham, Bob Shipley, Judy Brandt, John Beakley, and John Summers.



WARM 103's programming staff (1991) displays the station's new logo and jackets. From left: John London, Leigh Breen, Larry K. Scott, Kelly West, Dennis Wagner, and Rick Sten.



WARM 103's annual Payoff Song contest drawing held at the Eden Resort Inn, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. (1991)



A most successful WARM 103 promotion involved the placement of WARM 103 calendars in "Listening Posts". If the calendar was displayed and a radio was tuned to 103, a prize of \$103 was given.



The WSBA-TV studio as it appeared in the mid-1960s.



In June 1962, "American Bandstand" host Dick Clark (far right) visited the WSBA-TV studio and met with Station Manager Bob Stough (left) and Program Director John Eisenhauer.

The New **WARM** The Mighty 590

TELEVISION
TOP 40
 WEEKS
 BARRAGE

June 6, 1959

Rank	Artist	Title	Label
1	THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS	Johnny Horton	Columbia
2	LOONEY BOND	Ray Jaky	A&C
3	PERSONALITY	Ullad Low	A&C
4	FRANCE	Camie France	MGM
5	QUEBEC	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
6	KANSAS CITY	Whitney Houston	Mercury
7	DRAGONS	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
8	LET'S GO TO THE STORE	Camie France	MGM
9	CROCODILE	Johnny & The Hurricanes	Mercury
10	TALKING WITH A GIRL	Camie France	MGM
11	MY MANDOLIN	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
12	YOUNG COOPER	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
13	TEMBLER IN LOVE	Don & Jimmie	Mercury
14	GOOSE	Johnny Horton	Columbia
15	LOONEY FOR YOU	Ray Jaky	A&C
16	ROBBY BOB TO STOCKING	Frankie Ripston	Charolette
17	LET'S GO TO THE STORE	Camie France	MGM
18	JUST KEEP IT UP	Don Clark	Mercury
19	YOU MADE ME LOVE YOU	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
20	STRINGS OF EMERALDS	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
21	THE BEAT	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
22	GRANDMA'S HOME	The Everettes	Mercury
23	A BOY WITHOUT A GIRL	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
24	THE HAPPY ORGAN	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
25	THE BRASS	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
26	WATERLOO	Johnny Horton	Columbia
27	GARY'S GOT TO GO	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
28	INDISSEY	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
29	ALONG COME	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
30	LET'S GO TO THE STORE	Camie France	MGM
31	MY MANDOLIN	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
32	YOUNG COOPER	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
33	LET'S GO TO THE STORE	Camie France	MGM
34	WOLF	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
35	WINDY	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
36	ON WHAT I'VE SEEN	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
37	GOING BOGA	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
38	LET'S GO TO THE STORE	Camie France	MGM
39	THE GONNA CHANGE	Bob DeLoach	Mercury
40	THE GONNA CHANGE	Bob DeLoach	Mercury

Pick Hit of the Week
 ONE LOVE ONE HEART — Four Cases — Epic
 Pick Album of the Week
 HALF A BILL — Bob DeLoach — A&C

WARM "The Mighty 590" Top 40 sheet, June 6, 1959.

WARM land's "7" MOST WANTED MEN

BOB DELOACH, BOB DELOACH, BOB DELOACH, BOB DELOACH, BOB DELOACH, BOB DELOACH, BOB DELOACH

LOOK for these WARM land personalities at KEYSER OAK PLAZA

FIST FULL OF "CASH"!
 LISTEN TO "WARM", the Mighty "590" for DETAILS

WARM publicity poster, 1961.



Newsman Jack Doniger (right) and Operations Manager Don Stevens in the WARM studio in the late 1960s.



Disc jockey Harry West emceeing one of the many record hops sponsored by WARM air personalities during the 1960s.



WARM announcers present a key to WARMLand to the Fifth Dimension, February 26, 1970. In addition to members of the Fifth Dimension, from the left are: (kneeling) the Fifth Dimension's road manager (unidentified) and disc jockey Tony Murphy; (second row) disc jockeys Len Woloson, Joey Shaver, and Jim Drucker; (third row) Program Director George Gilbert and announcers Pete Gabriel and Steven Allen Scott (Cannon).



Over 5,000 participants attended the 1992 WARM Easter Egg Hunt.



WARM and WMGS annually host Halloween parties in shopping malls in Scranton and in Wilkes-Barre. Shown kneeling are Magic 93's all-night announcer Fran Patuso (left), and morning announcer Frankie Warren.

WHLO
RADIO 640

A Susquehanna Station
SERVING *Alton • Canton*
252.7101 455.7101

August 13, 1966
6:15 A.M.

Dear Jim:

Welcome to the rigors of station management. (Note the date and time.....no baloney.)

This week my program director resigned, one of my newsmen made an excursion west to look for a new job, the phone company goofed-up, two \$300 remotes, the station was picketed by anti-Beatele sympathizers, some nut keeps calling about what he calls our immoral practice of taking money for saying nice things about our advertisers (who are a bad influence on the community), and a new Hooper will be in next week.

I know you'll love the job!

Best Wishes,



From the desk of ALLEN SAUNDERS

Memorandum from Al Saunders to Jim Hackett, welcoming him to his new position as WHLO station manager in 1966.

Program Director Johnny Andrews in the WHLO on-air studio in 1967.





WHLO Program Director Johnny Andrews (right) reviews the playlist for disc jockey Don Kelly. (1967)



WHLO disc jockey Joe Cunningham spins a 45 rpm record in 1967.



Air personality King Arthur Knight is the first to sign the "WICE Christmas Card" in December 1965. From left: announcers Pat Patterson, Bill Corsair, John Kennedy, Dave Pearce, and Arthur Knight.



Newspaper advertisement featuring WICE air personalities in the late 1960s.



One of the many parades in which WICE personalities were featured. From left: George Hyde and Dave Pearce.

1966 SRMC held at WSBA-TV studios:
 From left: Jack Nobles, WQBA; Ted Hepburn, WARM-AM; Jack Murphy, corporate radio; Arthur W. Carlson, corporate radio; Jack DeHaven, national sales manager; Bill Musser, WGBB; Phil Eberly, WSBA-AM/FM; Jim Hackett, WICE; and Al Saunders, WHLO.



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Music Industry
FROM: The Susquehanna Stations
DATE: April 17, 1967
SUBJECT: Your POOR Taste

We thought we were alone with the problem. So . . . our hats are off to The McLendon Stations for publicly airing their concern in BILLBOARD.

We too, spend too much time with the evidence of your bad taste Lyrics, song titles, offensive vocal sounds, and even names of the performing groups have moved from the clever and creative to the crude and outrageous.

If you are trying to find out if you can get away with it you can't. We along with other responsible broadcasters, are blowing the whistle.

We join with The McLendon Stations in

- 1 **REQUIRING**—a lyric sheet with records submitted for air play.
- 2 **CONTINUING**—to refuse records if either side offends public morals by title lyrics, or group name
- 3 **URGING**—all responsible broadcasters to publicly set the same standards.

Yours is a great industry. So is ours. We plan to keep ours that way by respecting the dignity and taste of the people who have made us great our listeners.

How about you?

THE SUSQUEHANNA STATIONS
 WBSB-TV YORK, PA. WQBA-TV YORK, PA. WARM-TV YORK, PA. WICE-TV YORK, PA. WGBB-TV YORK, PA. WSBA-TV YORK, PA. WHLO-TV YORK, PA.

Susquehanna's admonition to the music industry concerning the issue of questionable song lyrics.

Susquehanna's corporate headquarters moved to 140 East Market Street, York, PA, upon the completion of its new building in 1969.





WGBB sales meeting, 1967. From left: Carl Crawford, Vince Cassano, Hal Gotta, William Musser, Jim Davey, Murray Evans.



WGBB and neighboring WGSB combined sales and news resources through the formation of the Long Island Network.



WQBA reporter Oscar Angulo covers the arrival of one of the many boat-lifts carrying Cuban refugees in the late 1960s.

WQBA general manager and sales team, 1969. From left: Roberto Darias, Guillermo Mota, Enrique Landin, Jack Nobles, Juan Amador Rodriguez, General Manager Herbert M. Levin, Mariano Guastella, Tony Segredo, and Roberto Creus.



Director of Engineering Charles Morgan and his assistant, Fred Greaves, inspect the Super-Q on-air studio construction. (1979)

To celebrate the major Cuban holiday, Three Kings Day, enormous crowds gather to view elaborate floats and attractions in this annual Miami parade.





WKIS Program Director Larry Shannon greets contest winners to Walt Disney World, Orlando, Florida. Disney World employee Bob Poe (who later became general manager of WKIS and the Florida Network) portrays Pluto. (1972)



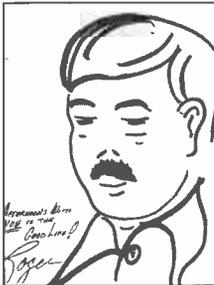
Dave Kennedy



Coleen Cook



Rick McDonald

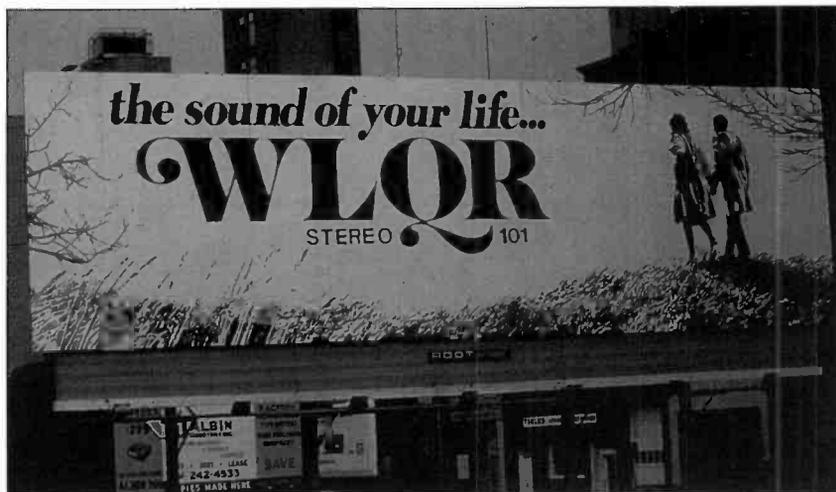


Roger Carter



Bob Sery

WLQR air personalities as drawn by disc jockey, Roger Carter. (1974)



In 1975, this WLQR billboard campaign featured prototype graphics and logo style used by other "Sound of Your Life" stations.

An American Idea*
"1776 • 1976"

1927

Charles Lindbergh's transatlantic flight. . . a meat packer named Uncle Sam. . . and man landing on the moon. All unique American ideas. Listen to the unusual and exciting events in our past that made our country great on "AN AMERICAN IDEA". This new series is heard four times daily exclusively on WHLQ Radio.

*a trademark of the
Susquehanna Broadcasting Company **WHLQ-FM107**

Advertising piece for "An American Idea,"
Susquehanna's 1976 highly successful Bicentennial
promotion.



First held in 1987, WRRM's popular Baby Expo attracted over 20,000 participants in 1992.



Cincinnati's New Year's Eve "Countdown," held at Fountain Square, is sponsored by WARM 98.



This popular poster was designed and sold by WRRM to augment its 1983 “rain-bow” campaign.



Susquehanna disc jockeys across the country include hospital visits among their many public service activities. Shown here is WARM 98's afternoon announcer, Jim Smith, at Cincinnati's Children's Hospital.



A WARM 98 free “Jazz on the Square” concert featuring jazz artist Lee Ritenour at Fountain Square in Cincinnati, July 1990.



WRRM's 1992 water park day, King's Island Amusement Park, Cincinnati.



The three most recent WRRM general managers. From left: Gordon Obarski (1982–1987), Joe Schildmeyer (1987–present), and George Hyde (1979–1982).



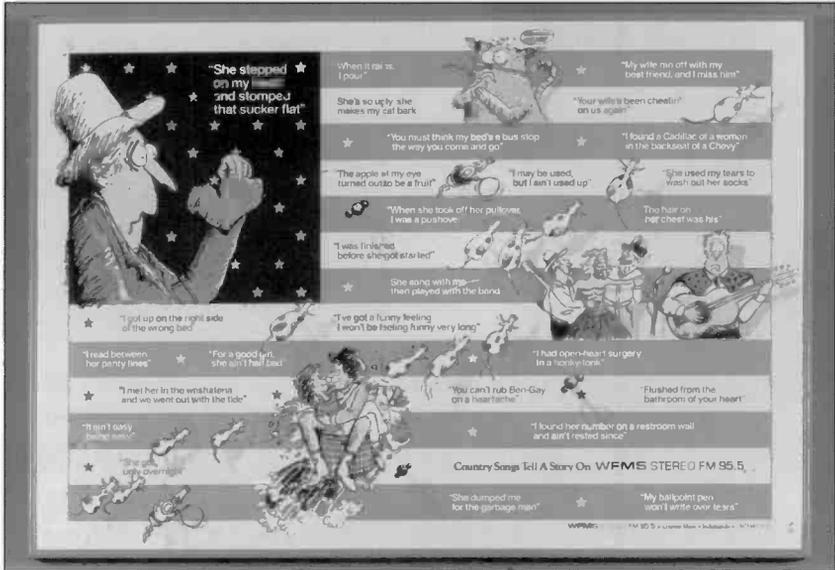
The Indy 500 race is one of the most enduring promotions WFMS has sponsored.



A WFMS listener fishes through a vat of green jello for the keys to a new car in the station's 1977 St. Patrick's Day promotion.



The 1978 WFMS remote van.



WFMS' Country format was successfully advertised through its fall 1986 billboard campaign. Although each billboard featured a single slogan, the most popular were compiled for this publicity poster.



A crowd of more than 75,000 fans enjoyed the Judds at the annual WFMS Fourth of July celebration, 1990.

A spectacular display of fireworks is always a part of the annual WFMS Fourth of July celebration.



The Super Tractor Pull at the Indiana State Fair is co-sponsored by WFMS.



WLTA in 1982 introduced its robot, "DJ-100," to its listeners as it traveled to promotional events and shopping malls.



Power 99's spectacular seven-story tomahawk, built in honor of the Atlanta Braves' 1991 pennant win, was featured in many victory celebrations.



Power 99's staff and singer Michael Bolton's "Bombers" compete in their second softball match, cosponsored by Domino's Pizza and Coca-Cola, with proceeds donated to the American Red Cross Relief Fund. (1991)



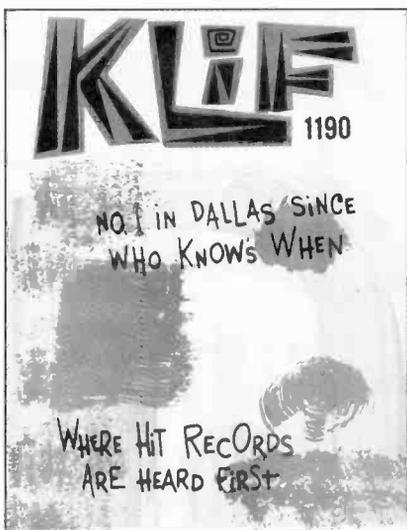
Power 99 fans help Turtles, a large record store in Atlanta, open its new Rhythm & Views location. (1992)



The Power 99 personalities greet runners in the largest annual run in Atlanta, the "Peachtree Roadrace."



The Power 99 team broadcasts July 4 activities at the Georgia Dome from its remote vehicle, the "Master Cruiser." (1992)



Early KLIF promotional literature. (1968)



In a KPLX sweep of the 1990 Country Music Association and *Billboard* magazine awards, Dan Halyburton was named General Manager of the Year, Mac Daniels Music Director of the Year, (Steve) Harmon and (Scott) Evans Personalities of the Year, and Bobby Kraig Program Director of the Year. Not pictured is KPLX's Susan Fine, *Billboard* Promotion Director of the Year.

Norm's Big Pitch!
570 KLIF AM
 "TalkRadio"

Norm Hitzges 6-9 am
He's got a "Nose" for Sports!

- ★ GREAT RADIO!
- ★ GREAT PRIZES!
- ★ A SHAMELESS BRIBE INSIDE!

Listen for Dallas Texans Arena Football on KLIF!

Journalist turned KLIF broadcaster Norm Hitzges hosts a popular morning sports talk show.



KLIF Listener Party, Fort Worth, Texas. (1992)



The KPLX Memorial Day Weekend Street Dance is held in the Fort Worth stockyards. (1992)



The KLIF/KPLX traffic watch helicopter travels to a local elementary school for safety programs.



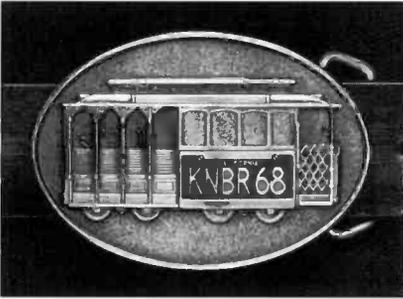
KFOG's "Home of Quality Rock 'n' Roll" media kit, created in 1986, was an artistic representation of the station's format and features.



KFOG air staff, 1985. From left: Rosalie Smith, Bob Acton, Dave Morey, Trish Robbins, Dave Logan, Bonnie Simmons, Sky Daniels, M. Dung, Andy Rush (seated), Scoop Nisker, Bill Keffury.



A finalist in the "Show Us Your KFOG" contest, 1987.



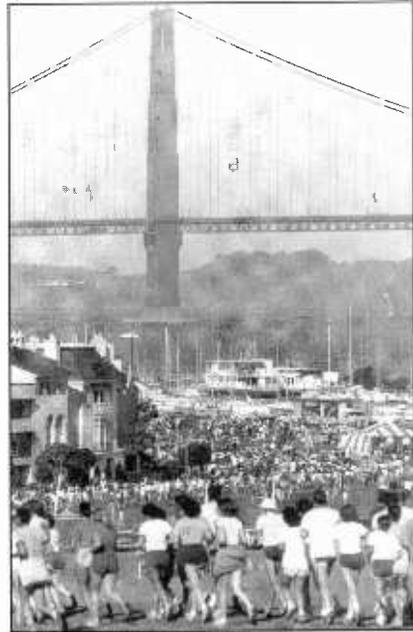
The KNBR "cable car" belt buckle, sold nationally by KNBR after being featured on the "Today Show," helped KNBR raise \$50,000 in 1982 to save San Francisco's cable cars.

A 30-foot, KNBR 68 "Giant" baseball salutes the 1989 World Series between the San Francisco Giants and the Oakland Athletics.





KNBR's Ralph Barbieri (left) and Leo LaPorte (behind check) present a check for \$115,000 to Dave Dravecky and Dr. Rudolph Brutoco for Life Savers of America. KNBR's "Pledge Per Pitch" promotion ultimately raised \$130,000 to benefit leukemia victims. (1989)



The annual KNBR 68 "Bridge to Bridge" run raises funds for Big Brothers and Big Sisters of San Francisco.



KNBR's popular morning team, Frank Dill (left) and Mike Cleary, of the "Frank & Mike Show."



WHVE's 1988 billboard promotes the station's jazz programming.



Houston Oilers' quarterback Warren Moon with KRBE Vice President/General Manager Nancy Vaeth, afternoon drive disc jockey Scott Sparks, and DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince at KRBE's Powerhouse VI, December 6, 1989.



In June 1989, Power 104 KRBE customized a Cadillac hearse to resemble "Ecto-1," from the movie, "Ghostbusters."



Local Sales Manager Jim Reilly enrolls listeners for the 104 KRBE Card at the Great Taste of Houston event, September 1992.



Spring Break on Galveston Island features concerts and beach activities promoted by KRBE.



To celebrate Mother's Day in 1991, KRBE invited the mothers of the disc jockeys to take over their son's show for the day.



Eagle 97 broadcast live from four different locations during the March 1991 homecoming of the aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy from the Gulf War.



A "Welcome Home, Troops" celebration was hosted by Eagle 97 at the Yorktown Battlefield, March 1991.



Arthur W. Carlson, President, Susquehanna Radio Corp.



Susquehanna Radio Corp.'s General Managers at the annual Susquehanna Radio Management Committee Meeting held in Cincinnati, October 10-13, 1992. Left to right: Tony Salvatore, vice president/general manager, KFOG/KNBR, San Francisco; Nancy Vaeth, vice president/general manager, KRBE, Houston; Chris Huber, Jr., vice president/general manager, WSBA/WARM, York; Monte Maupin-Gerard, vice president/general manager, WFMS, Indianapolis; Tom Ranker, assistant general manager, WSBA/WARM, York; Dwight Walker, station manager, KFOG, San Francisco; Dan Halyburton, vice president/general manager, KPLX/KLIF, Dallas/Ft. Worth; Joe Schildmeyer, vice president/general manager, WRRM, Cincinnati; Bill Whitlow, general manager, WGH-AM/FM, Norfolk; Charles Morgan, supervising executive, WARM/WMGS, Wilkes-Barre/Scranton.



Susquehanna Radio Management Committee, 1992. Left to right, first row: John Finlayson, vice president/administration, Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff Co.; Dwight Walker, station manager, KFOG, San Francisco; Tony Salvadore, vice president/general manager, KFOG/KNBR, San Francisco; Nancy Vaeth, vice president/general manager, KRBE, Houston; Rick McDonald, vice president/programming, Susquehanna Radio Corp.; Sue Krom, vice president/administration, Susquehanna Radio Corp.; Joseph Barlek, vice president/controller, Susquehanna Radio Corp.; Tom Ranker, assistant general manager/general sales manager, WSBA/WARM, York; Bill Whitlow, general manager, WGH-AM/FM, Norfolk.

second row: Dan Halyburton, vice president/general manager, KPLX/KLIF, Dallas/Ft. Worth; Bill Scott, vice president/corporate human resources, Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff Co.; Peter Brubaker, vice president/finance, Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff Co.; Louis J. Appell, Jr., president, Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff Co.; David Kennedy, senior vice president, Susquehanna Radio Corp.; Larry Grogan, executive vice president, Susquehanna Radio Corp.; Chris Huber, Jr., vice president/general manager, WSBA/WARM, York; Craig W. Bremer, vice president/general counsel/secretary, Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff Co.

third row: Joe Schildmeyer, vice president/general manager, WRRM, Cincinnati; Charles Morgan, senior vice president, Susquehanna Radio Corp.; Arthur W. Carlson, president, Susquehanna Radio Corp.; Monte Maupin-Gerard, vice president/general manager, WFMS, Indianapolis.



Susquehanna Radio Corp.'s Executive Committee, 1992. Left to right front: Joseph Barlek, vice president/controller, Susquehanna Radio Corp.; John Finlayson, vice president/administration, Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff Co.; Louis J. Appell, Jr., president, Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff Co.; Arthur W. Carlson, president, Susquehanna Radio Corp. Rear: David Kennedy, senior vice president, Susquehanna Radio Corp.; Peter Brubaker, vice president/finance, Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff Co.; and Larry Grogan, executive vice president, Susquehanna Radio Corp.

the question is put in a way to suggest that the number had better be small. When he realizes that the heretofore highly regarded public service announcements of the first questions now become the suspect program interruptions of the second question, his gamble is clearly laid before him. Shall he jeopardize his standing before the commission because his public service count was low, or his interruption count was high? A good report on one page of the application will necessitate a bad report on the other. If the proposed application form is meant to lay down guidelines for conscientious broadcasters (a concept which in itself seems highly dubious) the lines at this point have tangled.

Given the perspective of more than 30 years, the foregoing may seem like much ado over nothing. Yet, without such efforts, the clarification of time-consuming regulatory demands would never have occurred.

As the sixties continued, the Susquehanna stations were beginning to gain an identity in the broadcast world. Managers, sales managers, chief engineers, and program directors were exchanging ideas, tapes, gossip—even gripes.

To further the team/group concept, President Appell, in the spring of 1963, proposed that station managers and corporate personnel meet on a regular basis to share mutual concerns and enhance the spirit of camaraderie. Thus the Susquehanna Radio Management Committee (SRMC) was born.

The first meeting took place in mid-June 1963 in the WSBA-TV conference room. Art Carlson enumerated the major purposes of the committee:

- To elaborate on overall station and corporate policies.
- To discuss day-to-day operation problems and to anticipate new ones.
- To address special projects.
- To promote cooperation among the stations.

The agenda of the first meeting included these major items:

- The station manager. How much authority does he have? His relationship to the corporate office? To accounting? To the director of engineering?
- The latest FCC pronouncements.
- Unveiling of a new feature, "Look Up To Learning," to be launched on all stations. Its purpose: "To lead audiences to greater cultural heights, to 'sell' the concept of 'the Educated American,' to 'glam-

orize' education, and to open doors that otherwise might be closed to us."

- Reports from each conferee.

The heartbeat of the SRMC was loudest in the WSBA-TV conference room, where sessions were held every 30 days until 1968, when meetings were held quarterly. In 1970, the SRMC meetings became annual events.

The monthly deliberations were intensive work sessions. No subject pertinent to the Radio Division failed to come under scrutiny. The information flow, vertically and horizontally, was, without a doubt, a key to Susquehanna's establishment of a solid management base for future expansion. Hiring and firing, purchasing policies, liability insurance, Company benefits, wage-and-hour information, libel, FCC matters, expense control—all these and more occupied the agenda, as did the ever-present topic, programming.

Moderator Carlson enunciated corporate policy on the fundamental concepts of radio programming à la Susquehanna:

- **Music**—We play popular music with the greatest appeal for the largest segment of the audience. Music is the greatest reason people listen to radio. Long interruptions of music drive away listeners. Competitive stations often have great influence on the music playlist. Assuming the Classical music stations are on the right of the scale, we attempt to stay on the left of the biggest competitor in our market. Music permits our stations to offer understandable and enjoyable entertainment. When our stations properly handle and showcase popular music, they produce a mature adult sound. The course to the greatest music audience is to establish a direction of policy and stick to it.
- **News**—"First News First" means Susquehanna stations should be the first to broadcast news of first importance—in a manner our listeners understand. We must create the impression in the listener's mind that if he wants the news, our stations have it.
- **Personality**—The overall station personality is most important. It, as well as the individual air personality, must be (a) fresh, (b) friendly, (c) informative, (d) imaginative, (e) creative, (f) interesting, (g) exciting.
- **Promotion**—Continual promotion is an important ingredient of the entertainment value of a station. It forces listeners to stay tuned and makes the station interesting.
- **Service**—Susquehanna stations are the most effective carriers of vital information to the public in their markets. There is no limit to the amount we can put on the air, but stations should beware of "becoming talky."

Although the SRMC meeting format changed over time, these sessions helped define Susquehanna Radio. The show-and-tell, the policy pronouncements, the problems, the guest speakers, the Harvard case studies, the impromptu tension breakers—all made those early SRMC meetings unique.

There were other innovations that contributed to the corporate melding of the Susquehanna Radio group as well. Since 70 to 80 percent of national spot revenue originated with New York advertising agencies, the decision was made to open a New York sales office at 509 Madison Avenue in May 1964. Ted Hepburn, WARM general manager, suggested Jim Hackett, a well-known executive with the agency that handled Robert Hall, as the ideal person to manage the office.

A Susquehanna Keepsake—Jim Hackett

The concept of the New York office was to work with the national rep for all four Susquehanna stations, the Eastman Company—to be on their backs, to push them, and together, get 110 percent of our rightful amount of time out of them. The secondary objective was to work with accounts like Robert Hall who wanted to deal directly with stations, rather than with reps.

As I recall, the concept was not met with a great deal of enthusiasm at first, because Eastman's guys figured, "who needs a police dog?" Somewhere along the way we conceived our philosophy: "I don't care how many orders you win *with* me, first don't lose any *without* me."

It worked. They were a good bunch, and I learned a lot about selling and the business from them.

Mr. Hackett, subsequently appointed manager of WGBB, was replaced in New York in 1966 by Jack DeHaven, a native of Pittsburgh. Formerly a salesman at WWSW in that city, Mr. DeHaven left Penn State Reps (a regional sales representative firm) to join Susquehanna.

A Susquehanna Keepsake—Jack DeHaven

My first couple of years in the New York office were spent on almost a day-to-day rushing from one agency to another with a rep salesman, or on my own. Gradually, the patterns of successful management developed, and I stopped going on the calls we were going to win and started concentrating on the ones we had a good chance of losing. I had the advantage of being able to go above the buying level at the ad agencies since I was a station person and could discuss individual markets in much more detail. Account executives were reachable, especially if they wanted extras like merchandising

and market support. In fact, I wrote a manual on national selling to help our general managers and sales managers understand the circuitous routes a radio buy takes from client to station.

As the sixties closed and the seventies arrived and Susquehanna began its stepped-up, growth-and-acquisition phase, the New York national sales manager's function became more complicated. There were more stations, more reps to work with.

The arrival of the seventies suddenly legitimized that "funny sounding" Spanish language station, WQBA, when Madison Avenue discovered there really were a lot of Cubans in the Miami area. It took until the 1970 census to prove what we had been saying since 1966. During this period, Jack Nobles set the standards for station national sales management.

The increased tempo of the busy mid-sixties was marked by the appointment of a new Washington law firm, necessitated by the passing of Philip Loucks, founder of Loucks, Zias and Jansky. Mr. Loucks, a York native, had represented Susquehanna since 1945.

Marcus Cohn, senior partner of Cohn and Marks, was introduced to the SRMC on January 12, 1966. From that day forward, every station manager or corporate person felt assured that the Company's best interests at the FCC would continue to be well represented by learned counsel.

Stanley S. Neustadt, a Cohn and Marks partner, recalls his years representing Susquehanna before the FCC:

A Susquehanna Keepsake—Stan Neustadt, Esq.

It has been a very interesting relationship. There were many times when how to proceed was questionable because the rule might literally permit a certain sort of behavior by a station, when you felt that really the commission wouldn't permit that kind of activity, if it had thought about it when the rule was enacted. Then sometimes the rule permits things which, in the marketplace or in the real world, were not very nice things to do. Starting very early in the game, there were innumerable conversations with the managers and corporate people where I'd say, "you could probably get away with it, but I don't think it's the kind of thing Susquehanna wants to do. Let me know." In most instances (and I don't exaggerate this), the answer would come back "Susquehanna does not want to do it, whether we could get away with it or not." It was always a very easy relationship for us in that sense.

As the number of Susquehanna stations grew and station operations became more complex, management instituted additional sys-

tems of control. The internal audit was introduced and conducted at all stations beginning in the early 1960s. Managers had no advance notice when an auditor chosen from corporate or other-station ranks might show up. The audit was a 32-page document covering every phase of station operation. It usually lasted three days, after which the auditor made his report and sent it to the corporate office. Shortly thereafter, the station manager received his copy—with “interpretive” comments from Art Carlson.

Covering 525 separate items in 30 sectors of day-to-day operation and administration, the audit was a study in perfection. Some sample items:

- Are required transmitter meters working accurately?
- Are logs on file and available for inspection?
- Who is responsible for pre-sequencing the music?
- What steps are taken to assure the legality of contests?
- How often is the weather forecast updated?
- What public service campaigns are currently running?
- Are sufficient numbers of persons on duty in the newsrooms to assure satisfactory coverage?
- Is the *Program Director's Handbook* updated?
- Are all commercials limited to purchased lengths?
- Give a general statement concerning the appearance, attitude, interest, and enthusiasm of the salesmen.

There were additional mid-decade indicators of Susquehanna's coming of age as a growing, unified organization. “Group thinking” had become one of Art Carlson's battle cries. Tape exchanges became standard practice. Station jingles, printing, and related functions were combined for price benefits. One such activity launched simultaneously at all five AM stations in 1965 was a sparkling promotion, the “Song of the Cities.” Written by Al Saunders, each song's lyrics highlighted attractions, landmarks, and towns located within the station's coverage area. Susquehanna's celebratory hometown anthems, recorded in the PAMS Dallas studios, were mixed in with the stations' regular music rotation throughout the broadcast day. Like so many concepts originated by the corporate office, this one developed a life of its own. The songs were pressed into 45 rpm records and became a merchandising tool for the sales departments. As a result, thousands of listeners throughout northeast Pennsylvania, central Pennsylvania, northeast Ohio, and southern New England, thanks to their local Susquehanna station, could transform provincial pride into a unique sing-along. These lyrics, for example, celebrated northeast Pennsylvania, better known as WARmland:

"The Ballad of WARmland"

Let me tell you 'bout where I live,
Here in the Keystone State.
Vacationland for the great northeast
Where the livin' is really great.
WARmland Pennsylvania
Is great we all agree.
Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, the spot to be.
Wilkes-Barre, Scranton, that's home to me.
The Endless Mountains, Poconos
Bring friends from far and wide
On great new highways winding through our countryside.

There's Kirby's Park and Maugaug Zoo,
They're why I say
Scranton, Wilkes-Barre are sure OK,
Pittston, Plains, and Forty Fort,
Avoca and Factoryville,
Clarks Summit, Kingston, Hazelton,
Back Mountain and Edwardsville.
From Carbondale to Nanticoke
They're great, we all agree.
Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, the spot to be,
Wilkes-Barre, Scranton, that's where I'll stay.

If popular music, the *sine qua non* of Susquehanna's stations, lent itself to notable promotions such as "Song of the Cities," it was also capable of stirring up mischief. Specifically, the lyrics of some pop songs, with increased frequency in the mid-sixties, became a source of major concern to Susquehanna. This was a time when many long-held standards in society were being challenged, and in many cases relaxed. These behavior patterns were reflected in the performing arts.

As the 1960s wore on, the manifestations were everywhere. Movie producers introduced a rating system to forewarn parents of films that contained objectionable material. Broadway introduced the hit musical *Hair*, and magazine stands displayed *Penthouse* alongside the *Ladies' Home Journal*. That pop music was part of this milieu was a fact of management life. Indeed, as we have seen, Top 40 Radio itself, from its inception, had drawn criticism for allegedly pandering to the lowest common denominator.

The Susquehanna stations, with the exception of WQBA, were pop music outlets programmed for family audiences and strongly committed to the Top 40 format. These stations had always followed a

policy of screening recordings before they went on the air. But by 1967, enough double entendres, scatological terms, sexual innuendos, and the like had crept into lyrics to raise the musical question, "If you're a popular music station and more and more tunes are of dubious taste and must be kept off the playlist, isn't that a radio industry problem?"

As Louis Appell, Jr., recalls, "this was a subject on which we spent a lot of time." The dilemma was one of those wrenching issues with which every conscientious chief executive must deal.

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers It Well

You were in one of those situations where you were "damned if you did, and damned if you didn't." If you didn't, you of course ran the risk of losing the competitive edge. If you did, you had your conscience to live with, as well as a fair-sized element in the audience violently opposed to that sort of thing.

Susquehanna's president was so concerned that the Company placed an ad in the form of an open memo to the music industry in the April 1967 issue of *Billboard* magazine. The ad called attention to a recent article in the publication in which McLendon Stations' management voiced its disgust with certain aspects of the current pop music scene. The copy read, in part: "Lyrics, song titles, offensive vocal sounds, and even the names of performing groups have moved from the clever and creative to the crude and outrageous."

Such sensitivity was not limited to the music realm. The Broadcasting Division had grown through the 1960s to include six AM stations, one FM station, a TV station, and a cable television franchise. In October 1969, President Appell put on paper "The Susquehanna Philosophy." Its tenets would set the tone for all future endeavors:

1. Our first concern is long-range growth. Short-term considerations must always be evaluated with this objective in mind, and today's gains must never be at the expense of the long-term future. This principle is especially applicable to moral considerations. Short cuts in this area cannot be tolerated.
2. We are unalterably committed to a high level of moral and ethical standards in all our dealings. This reflects not only the personal philosophy of Company management, but also is a requirement for any company desirous of orderly financial growth, as well as growth in stature and reputation within the business community and the public eye. In practical terms, everything that goes on the air must, to the best of

- our knowledge, be accurate and in good taste; nothing in our sales efforts may be false or misleading.
3. Just as in the case of individuals, the progress of any business is marked by a commitment to success plus a pride in the Company, its products, and its people. Pride causes one to put forth his best efforts, and without it, work becomes dreary, uninteresting and of poor quality. Success tends to become a habit—a pattern—and winning is a desirable way of life, provided that the victory is achieved within the framework of the paragraphs above. In this connection, goal setting as a management technique is effective because it provides a means of indicating victory or defeat.
 4. It is our objective that each Susquehanna station be considered by the general public and the business community as a leading corporate citizen in the community. The adherence to the precepts stated herein, plus the involvement in civic activities will help accomplish this. Station management as well as all employees are expected to involve themselves in local affairs within the limits of time and aptitude.
 5. Part of the total formula for success demands that we provide the best equipment available. Extravagance is neither condoned nor necessary, but since we expect the highest level of performance from our people, they in turn must be given the proper tools for the job. Management must be constantly alert to the availability of new equipment and techniques which will improve our product or reduce operating costs.
 6. We expect dedication and hard work from our people. They, in turn, have the right to expect and receive fair and equitable treatment, and a recognition of their dignity and worth as individuals. Our employees are our most important asset and all consideration must be made with this fact foremost in mind. Management is expected to set a proper example in all respects and to encourage employees at all levels to contribute to the success of the Company. Management must be alert to anticipate and correct situations which cause employee discontent and inefficiency, but likewise must not hesitate unduly in removing someone who lacks the ability, interest, or motivation to accomplish a normal level of performance.
 7. The quality of our on-the-air product is the keystone of our success. Every effort must be directed toward a high standard of performance geared to accomplishment of specific program goals. In keeping with overall Company policies, our

broadcast product must never be offensive to public tastes. Questionable lyrics, comments, or copy will not be aired, and when in doubt, should not be broadcast.

8. A major part of Susquehanna's commitment to responsible corporate citizenship is our objective of fair and equal employment regardless of race or creed. It is management's responsibility to ensure that non-discrimination is practiced at all levels of the Company.
9. The above statements provide all personnel with broad guidelines to be applied to specific problems and situations. A conscientious effort to use these precepts can significantly help all decision makers in the performance of their duties and materially aid the growth and progress of the Company.

In November 1969, as a fitting symbol for the close of one decade and the beginning of another, various corporate divisions began moving to 140 East Market Street in York. In a larger sense, perhaps, the new corporate headquarters signaled the passing of one era and the opening of a new one, for ahead lay expansion that would one day embrace 19 radio stations, cable systems in 11 states, and the fast-growing Pfaltzgraff Co.

Frances Parkman, one of the nation's earliest chroniclers, described the indomitable American spirit as "a boundless vision that grows upon us." In Susquehanna, that vision has never stopped growing.



Neighbor to the Magic Kingdom

WKIS



Chapter 14

When broadcasting companies choose to expand, considerations include the market size and economic health of the target location and the radio competition. Susquehanna's purchase of WKIS in Orlando, Florida, also was motivated by the desire to capitalize on the certain success of a new, neighboring enterprise.

The gleam in Susquehanna's eye for a central Florida station dates from 1965, when Walt Disney personally set in motion plans for an entertainment complex modeled along the lines of his California Disneyland.

With each formal announcement (or leak) about the project called Disney World, through the rest of the decade, the appeal of a Company station in Orlando grew stronger. Disney World promised to dwarf California's Disneyland, and it would be more than an amusement park. The prospectus called for Contemporary, Asian, Polynesian, and Venetian hotels; three golf courses; bridle trails; picnic grounds; lagoons; a lake; beaches; campgrounds on a 2,500-acre vacation kingdom; and a 100-acre Magic Kingdom with six fantasylands, ranging from Frontierland to Tomorrowland.

The search for an Orlando station was on. In late 1969, when it was announced Disney World would probably open in fall 1971, the investigation was intensified and some distinct possibilities presented themselves.

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers It Well

For a long time, Art had been promoting the idea that we ought to acquire a station in Orlando. He had been a long-time follower of

the Disney organization, and when it became known that Disney World would be built there (adding to Orlando's already substantial growth), Art became even more insistent.

We looked at those stations that were available. I remember one meeting with the late Garvice Kincaid, the owner of WHOO, and one of the great characters in the radio business. We had looked at his station because it was one of the premier facilities in the market. Our meeting was interesting, but inconclusive.

Another station which also had a good facility was WKIS. It was owned by Tom Cassell, Bo Mitchell, and Sam Booth. Now Sam had been an owner in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and he had known my father. He was certainly one of the most interesting and affable people in the radio business. So when the decision was made to seek an Orlando station, I got on the phone with Sam.

Initially, these talks were not very productive. But as time went on, it became more and more evident that there was a possibility of making a deal. I ultimately went down to Orlando and we had a very nice meeting around Tom Cassell's swimming pool and arranged the framework of the deal. The most memorable part of that trip, besides the swimming pool meeting, was that I had an opportunity to have a VIP tour of Disney World when it was under construction.

After the obligatory wait for FCC approval, the license transfer from WKIS, Inc., to Susquehanna Broadcasting Co. was completed on February 24, 1971, the same day on which the Company took over WLQR, Toledo—the first purchase in the FM expansion. Why did it make an AM-only purchase in Orlando? Art Carlson says the answer is a sad one: "At that time, the owners did have an FM station, but we were limited by the existing rule that you could only purchase one facility in a market, and we opted for the AM. This rule was repealed in less than a year. As I recall, the FM was sold for \$25,000. Possibly we would have been better off if we had bought the FM and sold the AM. But we sure would have missed the many years of excitement with WKIS."

That excitement virtually began on day one. Herb Levin, WQBA general manager, was appointed supervising executive. None of the on-site management team—Jack Murphy in programming, Gene Burns in news, or Bob Keith in sales—would nominate the first WKIS building as the ideal radio facility of all time. Nevertheless, WKIS, which had been established in 1947 as Orlando's third radio outlet, did have a good dial location (740 kHz) and a good signal (5,000 watts).

Art Carlson, while stopping short of calling the inherited WKIS quarters "ramshackle," admitted they left much to be desired: "The

interior design looked like a gerrymandered political district at its worst. We then compounded the problem by expanding the sales department and closing in the garage for the sales office. We stayed in that building for many years, and a lot of very talented people in sales and programming went through there.”

The first of the program talents at Susquehanna’s newest property on Old Winter Garden Road was Gene Burns. He had come to WKIS from WCBM in Baltimore, his radio home after he left WSBA in 1967.

Gene Burns’ Orlando profile was high, beginning with one of his earliest evening talk shows on WKIS. “He made the rather ill-chosen selection of words that came out as, ‘Christ was a Communist,’” Art Carlson remembered. “All of which started a great deal of commotion and picketing. This had a somewhat negative effect on our sales. On the other hand, Gene reached the point of getting something like 30 percent audience shares for his shows.”

But if Gene Burns fueled some controversy at WKIS, he also engendered an extra measure of goodwill. The hoopla surrounding the imminent opening of Disney World had begun to build throughout Florida and the Southeast in the summer of 1971. Gene Burns recounts highlights of two events at which he was accompanied by Doris Ashwell, WKIS director of women’s programs.

A 'KIS Keepsake—Gene Burns

I had never been involved in anything of such magnitude as that lavish grand opening—celebrities, concerts, receptions for three days. One night there was a luau on the beach for 1,000 guests. I was there covering the event with Doris Ashwell, who was a social type and well known about town. I was in black tie and Doris wore a gown in her traditional “Ashwell Pink.” This coverage may even have been a pioneering venture—man and woman anchor.

Doris and I were sitting at a table on the beach with Richard King of our news department and his wife. The only lights were the candles at each table. The chairs were placed right on the sand and shifted rather easily. All around us were celebrities. Fess Parker came over to say hello, and at that instant, Doris pulled out a cigarette. When Fess went to light it, Doris swooned something like, “Oh, how tall you are!” Well, as he was lighting her cigarette, Doris leaned too far back, and she and the chair landed in the sand!

The assignment of Herb Levin, WQBA general manager, as chief WKIS executive, represented an early attempt to regionalize management. “It was a time,” says Art Carlson, “when we were starting our

extensive expansion, and we were understandably management-thin.” In October, WSBA’s Phil Eberly was named interim WKIS manager. By December 1971, an on-site manager, Dale Moudy, had been appointed. A Storz Stations alumnus, he had gone from ABC Radio to WONE in Dayton, and then to KNBR in San Francisco. Among the highlights Mr. Moudy engineered in cooperation with Disney were these early seventies promotional showcases:

- **WKIS Vacation Kingdom Gold Classic**—Held on the Magnolia Course in early March, the tournament was an annual event for several years.
- **Grad Nite**—Seniors from high schools throughout the area virtually took over all attractions within the Magic Kingdom’s theme lands. WKIS disc jockeys emceed live remotes from the plaza of Cinderella’s Castle.
- **Mother-of-the-Year**—On the Saturday preceding Mother’s Day, the winner lunched with WKIS personalities. The next day, she and her family were transported to Disney World for the awarding of a 1963 Volkswagen, an exact replica of Herbie, star of the Disney movie, *The Love Bug*.

Obviously, there was much more to WKIS listening fare than Disney World-related events. The early commitment to news and public affairs lent credence to the newly adopted slogan, “Orlando’s most important radio station.” When Johnny Mitchell replaced Program Director Jack Murphy in late summer 1971, his reunion with Gene Burns signaled a resumption of the kinetic programming that had characterized their earlier WSBA collaboration.

It didn’t take the innovative pair long to team up on a piece of enterprising journalism. In New York, the United Nations General Assembly was locked in a major debate over the seating of communist China and the proposed expulsion of the Nationalist Taipei regime.

A 'KIS Keepsake—Johnny Mitchell

No Western news agency—nobody—had gotten word out of China on anything for three or four days. The last guy heard from was a Canadian correspondent stationed in Peking. Well, we decided to take a shot at trying to reach him. So we got on the telephone with the international operator, and what do you know, we got through to his hotel, tracked him down, and got a 20-minute interview with that correspondent.

We were the first outside medium, as far as I know, to make that kind of contact. So we called Washington and the State Department desk officer on China, and he didn’t believe it. We said, “We

had this conversation with the reporter in Peking. Would you like to have it fed to you?" He was overwhelmed.

There were many accomplishments in the news/public affairs sectors in Orlando that would bear the Susquehanna mark. The 1972 presidential election afforded an opportunity to do a series, "Perspectives '72," which, according to its creator Gene Burns, "was the kind of thing that sold WKIS' image of involvement before it had ratings. The talk show and the controversy it stirred up helped us to sell our image and attract guests from all parts of the political spectrum. Then, too, with our good coverage of all kinds of news, we began a tradition of developing good news sources."

Gene Burns concedes, however, that no story gave him more satisfaction than the Youth Hall affair—a large feather in the WKIS hat.

A 'KIS Keepsake—Gene Burns

The *Orlando Sentinel* had run a couple of stories about some allegations of mistreatment of youngsters at Youth Hall. Then the stories seemed to peter out. I went over to Youth Hall after some people had called the show anonymously about conditions there. I did indeed find the place in an absolutely deplorable condition. Bob Poe, the show producer, and I went to the American Civil Liberties Union. We asked Jerry Bornstein to come over and take a look at Youth Hall. Then, if he was negatively impressed, we might take further action. He was horrified at what he saw and immediately went to Federal Court.

The judge, without waiting to make a decision to close the place, issued a decision imposing severe limitations on the number of youngsters admitted to Youth Hall. This led to constant news coverage. Next, the state legislature acted to bring about construction of a brand new facility.

When I went to the dedication ceremony, District Director Irene Bernett of the Department of Health and Rehabilitation Facilities said to me, "My only regret on this happy occasion is that they didn't name it after you, because without you, there would be no new Youth Hall." WKIS had that kind of clout in the community.

After he established an identity in Orlando, Gene Burns enjoyed a higher recognition factor than any other personality—radio or television—in central Florida. The *Orlando Sentinel* columnist Charlie Reese, who espoused conservative causes, took an occasional shot at Gene Burns, whose ideological leanings veered in another direction, and Orlando television quickly picked up on the "feud." The ABC outlet, WFTV, presented the duo in a regular point-counterpoint ex-

change. In addition, Gene Burns spoke regularly before numerous civic bodies, service clubs, and in various college and business forums. His regular newspaper column appeared in several central Florida weeklies. Gene Burns' various activities and excursions added zest to Susquehanna's presence in Orlando.



The first years of a station's new ownership are particularly crucial in establishing an image. During the Dale Moudy era, WKIS' emphasis on promotion was made apparent to residents of the Orlando area. Culled from the files are these early standouts: World's Largest Garage Sale, Secret Sound, and Pet Patrol. A variety of contests, special events, and "exploitations" that made for maximum call letter exposure included the WKIS Wine and Cheese Chart, Lucky Window Stickers, theater parties, the WKIS Cookbook (written by Gene Burns), and "Flyaways."

WKIS also was committed to sports. Thanks to the station's inherited NBC network affiliation plus regional hook-ups, an impressive array of sporting events graced 740 kHz on the dial.

Behind-the-scenes players were important at WKIS. The quiet, unflappable chief engineer, John Loving, is a splendid example of the low-profile technician who was an indispensable resource at a radio station. Chief Loving enjoys describing the morning the Susquehanna takeover team came through the building.

A 'KIS Keepsake—John Loving

I was apprehensive about these new owners from Pennsylvania, when I walked Gene Burns, Jack Murphy, and Herb Levin. My first impression was something like, "Gosh! With all these sharp dressers and briefcases, maybe the underworld has just purchased WKIS!" Of course, they turned out to be nothing of the kind.

Neither John Loving nor Glenn Winter will forget one of their first telephone conversations. The occasion was a bizarre engineering incident of the sort that happens at least once in every station's life.

A 'KIS Keepsake—John Loving

It was quiet one weekend when the announcer called me at home.

"John," he said, "the tower fell."

I said, "Really?" I'm accustomed to having people call me at home for all sorts of things, like, "We're off the air" or "What but-

ton do I push to do this or that?" So, I said, "Sure, Frank. Now what's on your mind?"

"John, that's it. The tower fell down!"

"Come on, Frank," I said, "I'm in no mood to play around."

Well, the more he went on, the more I realized the guy was serious. And sure enough the east tower *had* fallen.

"Actually," says Glenn Winter, "it was a Saturday night. We had some friends in when I got this call from John Loving down in Orlando. Not knowing what to expect, here comes this soft Southern drawl, 'Mr. Winter, I ain't kiddin'. The east tower fell down.'"

While many memorable events in the radio world involve technical misfortunes, one particularly unusual occurrence in WKIS history offered a touch of the macabre.

A 'KIS Keepsake—Bob Poe

Early one Sunday afternoon (date unknown), the man mowing the (WKIS) tower field spotted the body of a dead man near the base of one of the antennas. Due to the state of the corpse, he quickly determined that since the body wasn't going anywhere and that when he called the sheriff's department he would probably be involved in a long investigation, he would be better off finishing his mowing before he called the authorities.

About 7:15 P.M. he called Gene Burns to tell him what he had found earlier in the day, and that he had just called the sheriff. Gene then notified Jack Herr.

The next day, about mid-morning, after word had gotten around the station about the body in the tower field, a homicide investigator was in the lobby waiting to talk to station officials. WKIS salesman (Dave Seibert) walked in the front door and said to the receptionist, "I told that guy not to cancel!" The deputy failed to see the humor.

The investigation and autopsy determined that the unfortunate man was under the influence of drugs and committed suicide by climbing and jumping from the tower several days before he was found.



The early 1970s, as noted elsewhere, marked a time of transition in radio. Thanks to FM, new approaches in presenting pop music had arisen. By 1974 Susquehanna itself was licensee of six FMs. For stations around the country, it was a time of increased experimentation.

Between 1973 and 1975, two-way talk was dropped at WKIS, but news and information continued to be essential ingredients of the station's program. Musically, it was a Middle-of-the-Road (MOR) station.

In 1975, Bob Dempsey was appointed general manager, replacing Dale Moudy. The following year saw the return of two-way talk, and Gene Burns moved into the 7 P.M. to 11 P.M. time slot. A year later, Barbara Waters became the first woman to do a WKIS talk show, running in the 11 P.M. to 1 A.M. period, Monday through Friday, and in daytime hours over the weekends.

Newscasts were expanded and new informational features added. A single sentence in the WKIS license renewal filing for 1978 records this trend: "The station's increased emphasis on PA (public affairs) programs resulted in the composite week PA programming exceeding the proposed amount by over 500 percent."

With the resumption of talk programming, WKIS added a new dimension to "involvement." Guests who appeared on the Gene Burns program before the decade ended would include Jimmy Carter, Carol Channing, Alexander Haig, General William Westmoreland, Gov. Reuben Askew, and Senators Lawton Chiles and Richard Stone of Florida.

The WKIS news reach sometimes extended far beyond Orange County boundaries. News-gathering missions saw newsman Jim Phillips in Cuba when it appeared a thaw between Castro and the United States might be underway, and Bob Poe led a three-man team to report on the muddled Middle East situation. Poe's role was to handle the technical aspects of the Middle East trip and then package the reports fed back to the States.

A 'KIS Keepsake—Bob Poe

Our trip came about through the Gene Burns-Charlie Reese point-counterpoint television program. Since Charlie worked for the *Sentinel*, the newspaper picked up a third of the cost, and 'KIS and Channel 9 the other two-thirds. We arrived in Cairo around Thanksgiving and went from there to Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. Our main objective was to make an assessment of the sentiments in that region regarding the peace negotiations between Egypt and Israel. We met with the countries' leaders and talked with people on the streets.

Some of those experiences seem as vivid as if they happened yesterday. For example, we were stopped any number of times by members of various "peoples" armies (citizens have their own armies in parts of the Middle East), we had late night meetings with

the P.L.O., we were awakened at night in Beirut by gunfire, and I'll never forget the first glimpse of Russian tanks and other Soviet hardware in Syria.

In every country, guards or the military went through my box of recording gear and supplies, piece by piece. At one checkpoint in Jordan, they insisted on impounding our equipment. Fortunately, Gene knew a guy in Amman who was with a moving company. This fellow knew the customs authorities and helped us get out of that complication.

But I guess the most harrowing episode was when we were ready to come back to the States. We were leaving from Jordan because of Gene's friend. The Israeli customs officer scrutinized my passport, pulled the plastic apart, and cross-examined me like I had never been before.

"You're Arabic," he said.

"No, I'm not."

"Then you speak Arabic!"

Well, it took me a long time to convince him I was not Arabic. The reason I was checked so carefully was they were after a terrorist suspect who fit my description—blonde, six-foot tall.

Bob Dempsey always said those reports from the Middle East represented one of the high-water marks of his managerial days at WKIS.

Bob Dempsey's reign as station manager from 1975 to 1979 was a time of transition, as WKIS moved further from music and "pure" entertainment to greater emphasis on news and information.

One memorable event of Bob Dempsey's tenure was the "3-K Episode." In 1977, a leading WKIS promotion involved placing random calls to listeners and asking them to identify a special jackpot amount in order to win the jackpot. The money giveaway—one of the most popular contests in radio—was entitled "Cash Call." Because the idea was somewhat prosaic, corporate management regularly implored station managers to guard against staleness. Accordingly, in order to add a dash of verve to its cash call interludes, WKIS named its version the "KIS KASH KALL." All well and good, but inevitably the penchant for concocting snappy shorthand codes took over and "K.K.K." seemed like a breezy way to tag it. Imagine the consternation when a display ad in the November 1977 *Orlando-land* urged listeners to "Join the K.K.K.!"

When Sales Manager Larry Kindel succeeded Bob Dempsey in 1979, the new manager found himself and his staff deeply involved in plans for moving WKIS to larger quarters at 3500 West Colonial Avenue in the Flagship Bank Building.

That same fall there was also a new look to the WKIS program schedule. It began with a switch from NBC to CBS. The following station profile from that autumn depicts how yet another AM station was adjusting to the realities of FM by de-emphasizing music:

- 6-10 A.M.—Clive Thomas** “Prime Clive Time.” Clive Thomas offers mature leadership of central Florida radio’s largest news and information team . . . Angler Bill Barnes . . . Sportscaster Frank Vaught . . . News Journalist David Elliott, balancing local news with CBS national news.
- 10 A.M.—2 P.M.—Tom Haley** Midday personality involves his audience with special reports, interviews, features on subjects like spouse abuse, consumer reports, education, recreation . . . plus the WKIS “News Connection” . . . spiced with midday music.
- 2-6 P.M.—Gene Burns** Two-way Talk Radio gives drive-time listeners the hotline to newsmakers . . . calls from around the world . . . fascinating guests . . . listener opinion, coupled with reporting from Jim Phillips, Frank Vaught, Tom McCloud, Traffic Reports, and CBS News.
- 6-7 P.M.—The News Hour** Anchored by Jim Phillips . . . “CBS World News Tonight” . . . local and state news . . . CBS and local sports . . . business reports . . . Gene Burns’ commentary, Walter Cronkite, and Harry Reasoner.
- 7 P.M.—Midnight—Bud Brewer** Bud packs five hours with the most refreshing talk in radio . . . From sports to politics to consumer affairs.
- Midnight-6 A.M.—Dave Lawrence** Comment line gives all-night listeners an open line to controversy or friendly conversation . . . news on hour and half hour . . . ag reports for citrus growers and other farmers.

By the fall of 1981, the shift to a non-music, all news and information program was complete. WKIS, now Orlando’s (and Susquehanna’s) first and only 24-hour News/Talk station, came to be known as “WKIS NEWSTALK.”

In the mid-1980s, significant changes at WKIS took place. In 1983, CBS was dropped and replaced by NBC, and ABC Talkradio was

added. In 1984, Mike Gaier replaced Larry Kindel as general manager. The next year, Gene Burns left to go to WCAU in Philadelphia as a talk show host. Bob Poe, who had moved to WKIS sales and then to general manager of Susquehanna's Florida Network (see Chapter 22), in 1986 replaced Mike Gaier as WKIS general manager, and continued as head of the Florida Network.

A significant rise in ratings by mid-1986 was an indication that WKIS' commitment to All News and Talk had won it a unique position in the increasingly competitive Orlando market. In 1975, there had been 16 stations showing measurable audience in Orlando; ten years later the figure had increased to 23.

Much like WICE, WKIS was a spawning ground for many talented people in sales and programming. In sales, the challenge was to create a dynamic radio market to match Orlando's dramatic growth from a once-sleepy Southern market into a booming modern city of international prominence. Key sales and sales management personnel included Bill Kirk, Jim Tillery, Truman Conley, and, in later years, Karen Kjos, Dave Seibert, and Patty Nicholson. Program Directors Buzz Lawrence, "Possum" Reilly, and Clay Daniels, as well as personalities Al Dunaway, Pete Forgione, Jerry Gordon, and Clive Thomas, all contributed to the overall efforts.

In the national field, Eastman Radio represented WKIS as long as Susquehanna owned the station. This longevity alone is noteworthy. Frank Boyle of Eastman recalls the negotiations when Susquehanna and Eastman first made their central Florida alliance.

A 'KIS Keepsake—Frank Boyle

At the time Susquehanna acquired WKIS, Eastman represented WHOO in Orlando, owned by Bluegrass Broadcasting, a group with stations in five markets. At this same time, Eastman represented the Rounsaville Stations in Miami (WFUN) and in Tampa (WDAE). Rounsaville also owned WLOF in Orlando. Eastman had made a promise that if we ever made a change in Orlando, we would take on WKIS. Well, at this time, Rounsaville was buying other radio stations—including one in Jacksonville—and wanted us to represent them in all four markets. If we did not do that, said the Rounsaville people, they would fire us in Miami and Tampa—where we were doing quite well.

The end of the story is this. To confirm Eastman's belief in (and loyalty to) Susquehanna, we resigned WHOO and took on WKIS. Bluegrass then canceled us in Lexington; Rounsaville canceled us in Miami and Tampa. It may have cost Eastman somewhere in the neighborhood of \$1.5 million in early 1970 dollars to make

this change, but it was a confirmation of how Eastman felt about loyalty to Susquehanna.



No Susquehanna market grew so much between 1971 and 1986 as Orlando did. Thanks mainly to Disney World, metropolitan Orlando has become one of the top tourist destinations in the world. In addition, the area is third only to New York and Los Angeles in numbers of hotel rooms in a single metropolitan area. At the same time, the mid-Florida region experienced remarkable growth in new industry, annual income, real estate sales, and population. The area welcomed nearly 450,000 new residents and experienced a 114 percent increase in high-tech employment.

Ironically, this growth did not guarantee success in the volatile media business. FM's sweeping and surging preeminence had by the mid-eighties severely limited the potential of stand-alone AM stations in most markets. In addition, the adverse business climate created by a newly enacted Florida advertising tax threatened to pose greater problems for stand-alone AM operations. Since the search for a sister FM station to WKIS in Orlando had proved futile, another solution needed to be found.

The matter was resolved through a station swap whereby Susquehanna traded WKIS to Guy Gannett Broadcasting for Gannett's WPLP (570 kHz, 5 kw) station in Tampa/St. Petersburg. By adding WPLP to its 1986 purchase of WAVE (later WHVE), Susquehanna established an AM-FM combo in the Tampa Bay area, while Gannett, by acquiring WKIS, now had an AM facility to go with its existing FM station, WSSP (Cocoa Beach), in the Orlando area. Despite the bittersweet nature of such a swap, decisions as to whether to stay in a market must be made on the basis of realistic business evaluation. Such was the case as Susquehanna turned its attention westward to the Tampa Bay region, demonstrating the Company's continuing confidence in Florida, the nation's fastest growing state.

Two More in Ohio

WLQR & WHLQ



Chapter 15

The acquisition of two Ohio FM stations by Susquehanna in 1971 represented the first step in the Company's FM expansion strategy and its response to FCC regulations that were limiting its growth in the Akron market.

The arrival of WLQR in Toledo into the Susquehanna fold signaled the growing company's recognition that frequency modulation was the wave of the future. The purchase of WHLQ in Canton offered a means of coping with the limited operating hours the FCC imposed on WHLO, Akron. The rationale went like this: WHLQ, as a full-time FM facility, could duplicate WHLO until the AM station's early sign-off; then WHLQ, because of its unlimited-hours license, could continue Top 40 programming through the evening and post-midnight hours, thus providing 24-hour service to the Akron/Canton area. Although long-term goals eventually necessitated spinning off both FM stations, the contributions of WLQR and WHLQ to Susquehanna's growth should not be underestimated.

WLQR

In the rich, colorful history of American communications, broadcast franchises often began as small, family operations. One such family, the Storer clan, at one time owned a clutch of AM, FM, and TV stations, most of which were in major markets. In Toledo, Ohio, the Storer flag flew over WSPD, one of America's first stations (November 1921), and WSPD-FM, one of the first post-World War II FM stations (August 1946).

In the spring of 1970, as part of its radio station divestiture/cable TV expansion plan, Storer placed the "for sale" sign on WSPD-FM. It was around this time that President Appell had a memorable lunch in New York with Frank Boyle of Eastman Radio. He calls this encounter a "key episode" in the Company's commitment to FM.

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers It Well

From time to time, when I went to New York, I would stop to see Frank and talk over the state of the radio business. I had a great deal of respect for Frank's wide associations in the industry and his wisdom and forthrightness. On this particular occasion, as we got on the subject of FM and its future, Frank pulled out of his desk drawer a survey which I believe was taken in Dayton, Ohio. It showed an FM station, virtually for the first time, having a substantial audience.

I thought more and more about our conversation as I took the train home. And the next day when I got to the office, I sat down with Art and we talked about FM. It was at this time that we as a company first made a decision to investigate the advisability of making a major commitment to FM, one of the watershed decisions in the history of our organization.

A list of target FM markets was subsequently drawn up, but as Art Carlson says, "that list did not really include Toledo."

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

When we decided to expand in FM, we felt we should first look for a format that we could "travel" with from market to market. Secondly, we felt that we should buy in "safe" markets where there were only a small number of stations. It was also at this time that Storer was eliminating their FMs, and despite Toledo not being one of our targeted markets, we looked at it anyway.

"Hey, here's a market," we said, "with only three or four FM stations, virtually no decent AM facilities, and an FM available at a real attractive price."

It's probably the only station we ever purchased with a minimum of analysis. The only person I can recall who went out there was Glenn Winter to check the signal. And even that would have probably been unnecessary since all the evidence pointed to Storer's top notch technical reputation. We also knew we could improve WLQR's signal because Storer owned a station in Detroit and therefore deliberately had to limit its Toledo signal not to overlap in Detroit.

Being unfamiliar with our company, Peter Storer was constantly concerned, much to our amusement, as to whether or not we could come up with the money. Broker Ted Hepburn had to keep assuring him that we were solvent.

A sales agreement was signed in May 1970, and, after FCC approval, WSPD-FM became the Company's eighth station, in February 1971. Located at 101.5 mHz, it was initially licensed with an effective radiated power of 11,000 watts, later boosted to 15,000 watts.

Toledo, as it turned out, was an ideal spot for Susquehanna to begin its FM expansion. Medium in size, the fourth largest city in Ohio was not overpopulated with radio stations. It had a single newspaper and the conventional three-television network parlay. Situated on Lake Erie, the city could boast of its status as a leading grain exporter and one of the world's largest shippers of coal. The companies which helped it earn the designation "Glass Capital of the World" included Owens-Illinois, Owens-Corning Fiberglass, and Libby-Owens-Ford. In addition to its own Chrysler assembly operation and a Jeep plant, Toledo offered proximity to Detroit, which made it an early supplier of machine tools and parts for Motown automotive factories. This same closeness would also spell unemployment problems by the early 1980s.

Whatever Toledo's mixed bag of pains-and-progress since 1971 might have brought to the rest of the media market, for Susquehanna, success came relatively early at WLQR.

When the Company acquired the WSPD-FM license, two changes were deemed immediately necessary. The first involved the call letters. They would henceforth be WLQR—for *Local Quality Radio*. The FM suffix was dropped since frequency modulation stations were beginning to use four-letter-only identifications.

The second realignment was more complicated. It concerned moving the entire operation to a different location in the shortest time possible. The fully automated WSPD-FM originated its programming from a small studio in the main WSPD facility on Superior Street. For WLQR, of course, this would never do. A bona fide radio station in the Susquehanna context meant ample studios, news and production facilities, offices, a lobby—in short, the form and substance of an enterprise. Remarkably, within one week following the takeover, WLQR was ensconced in its new headquarters at 300 Madison Avenue in downtown Toledo. Fred Greaves, WHLO chief engineer (with assists from Glenn Winter and Charlie Morgan, who were also involved that same week with the newly purchased WKIS in Orlando), lent the main engineering expertise to the installation. Everyone on the staff was pressed into service.

Leading the charge was WLQR's new manager, Sandy Goldberg. When Midwest Vice President Al Saunders recruited him to be manager of WLQR, Sandy Goldberg was a salesman at WDOK in Cleve-

land. WLQR's first, and only, manager portrays the business of providing a new home for Susquehanna's Toledo station in those seven hectic days:

A WLQR Remembrance—Sandy Goldberg

The engineers built our studios and newsroom in a week. It wasn't exactly the highest budgeted construction job of all time either. You'd open up the racks and inside it looked like spaghetti. Unbelievable! But it worked. We built our own shelves for the air studio to hold several hundred of the seven-inch tapes.

We asked the evening announcers if they would paint the shelves and let them dry overnight. By morning, we would load the tapes in them. When the all-night guy came into the studio the first night and headed through the newsroom, then through the door to the studio, he saw a pair of trousers and a shirt hanging on the studio doorknob! So he crawled over to the door, squeaked it open a little bit, and crawled in to take a look at what was going on. And there was the evening guy in his underwear painting shelves!

Thus, direct from the smartly appointed WLQR studios high atop the Colton Building in downtown Toledo came the first strains of Susquehanna's Beautiful Music to Ohio. This was 1971, and with the format explosion still several years down the road, Beautiful Music on FM was considered to be the best alternative to the more aggressive rock music that dominated much of AM. Therefore, WLQR joined three other Toledo FM stations who were already cranking out Beautiful Music.

But there were variations of Beautiful Music, or Easy Listening, as it was also called at the time. Since sister station WSBA-FM had just gone stereo, it was a simple matter to process identical tape reels for use on both stations. Susquehanna's Beautiful Music, soon to be called the "Sound of Your Life," was more foreground, more upbeat than most versions at the time. In WLQR's first days, this changeover produced "at least 40 complaint letters," according to Sandy Goldberg. He says he will never forget one complaint: "I just bought a new radio. You ruined my favorite radio station, WSPD-FM. Either sell your station, or buy my radio."

The ratings for WLQR began a slow but steady ascent until the station moved into the number one position. Except for a drop in 1974, WLQR was either first or second (to WIOT) in the ratings race throughout the 12 years of Susquehanna stewardship.

The best explanation for WLQR's rise comes from Rick McDonald, Susquehanna's national program director. He had joined WLQR

as program director before the station celebrated its first anniversary. Holder of a master's degree from Kent State University, Rick worked in various on-air roles for the Regional Broadcasters Group prior to taking a teaching position at Northern Illinois University in 1968. Two years later, he rejoined Regional as program director of WYFM, Youngstown, from which Susquehanna enticed him to move to Toledo. In 1984, he joined the Company's corporate staff as national program director and established an office in Atlanta. Within two years, he was appointed vice president in charge of programming. Rick describes what Toledo radio was like shortly after he arrived at WLQR.

A WLQR Remembrance—Rick McDonald

When I first met Sandy Goldberg, he was particularly adept at producing audience graphs to show the percentage of audience WLQR had. He was so adept that I went into the job thinking the station had somewhat more audience than it did. But we eventually did catch up to the audience that Sandy implied we had.

There were two fundamental differences between our Beautiful Music and that used by our competitor, the syndicated format from Jim Schulke. His approach restricted the use of live announcers to reading very limited announcements. In many instances, Schulke relied on automation. Our Susquehanna approach was to use live announcers, not necessarily as personalities, but allowing them some freedom so the result sounded more like radio than just a music box. Of course, we did news, time checks, weather, and so on, so that the radio basics were there 24 hours a day, and you didn't have the feeling you were listening to Muzak.

Although music comprised the dominant element of each WLQR hour, Rick McDonald always stressed that the nonmusical elements required very special handling, since there were fewer of them. The station slogan, "WLQR keeps listeners in touch with Toledo and the world 24 hours a day," was backed by this ingredient mix: news on the hour, weather on the half-hour, 20 drive-time traffic reports per day, stock reports, ski reports, summer lake condition reports, and six sportscasts.

When Rick McDonald signed on as WLQR's program director, Sandy Goldberg told him, "I'll worry about the sales and management. You're supposed to worry about the programming." Rick had heard that many times before from managers, but this was the first time that he found it to be true.

Aggressive promotion backed the programming. Paid media promotions and contests were carefully matched to the station's im-

age. "All the promotions had to be 'socially correct,'" Rick McDonald recalled. "They had to be aimed at either our listeners or the kinds of persons our listeners would like to be, those in the upper income brackets, better-educated, who appreciated a sort of 'quiet hype' approach to radio, as opposed to noise."

By 1977, when WLQR moved to new quarters in West Toledo at 4230 Secor Road, the quest for more knowledge about those listeners led to a pioneer research project. WLQR's first study of consequence was a Listener Profile, conducted by National Family Opinion, Inc. It revealed these important facts supporting WLQR's positioning:

- 54 percent of WLQR listeners were women.
- 50 percent of WLQR female listeners and 48 percent of WLQR male listeners attended college (versus 32 percent of all Toledoans).
- 37 percent of WLQR listeners had professional or managerial occupations (versus 21 percent of Toledo residents).
- 64 percent of WLQR listeners owned two or more cars less than three years old (73 percent of them had FM in their cars).

From WLQR came some of the most imaginative promotions and contests in northwest Ohio radio. These included:

- **90 Percent Off Sale**—On Thursdays, the station offered to the *n*th caller, at 90 percent off, luxury items such as sterling silver money clips and gold golf tees. On the preceding day, an ad in the *Toledo Blade's* entertainment section highlighted the featured item.
- **The WLQR Caribbean Cruise Crossword Puzzle**—A station-referenced crossword puzzle was made available to listeners at RCA Victor dealers. Additional across and down words completely spelled out were given throughout the broadcast day. From correctly completed entries, winners of a cruise and other prizes were drawn.
- **The WLQR "Listening Post"**—Same as run on WSBA-FM.
- **Fair Lady of the Day**—Each day a selected listener received a bouquet of roses. When reverse chauvinism complaints were raised, the designation became **VIP of the Day**, and an appropriate gift was awarded.

Former Toledo Station Manager Sandy Goldberg remembers two favorite promotions from the array presented throughout the years. Interestingly, both had a uniquely Ohio flavor.

A WLQR Remembrance—Sandy Goldberg

We kicked off "The Ohio Pay-Off" about eight weeks before the official Ohio State Lottery began. We printed tickets, window banners, signs, and the other symbols carrying the shape of the state

of Ohio. These materials were green, white, and black, just like the real ones that were soon going to break. Unfortunately, we had people going into stores demanding to buy lottery tickets, when all we had going, of course, was *registration* for prizes.

The other one was "Take Stock in Toledo." Here we went to the major industries in town and asked them to donate one share of stock. These shares were then awarded as prizes on the air.

Within the memory of many WLQR listeners are those who deserve credit for making the station one of Toledo's all-time listening favorites between 1971 and 1983. A solid crew manned both sales and programming operations, many of whom were at the station during the majority of the 12 years of Susquehanna's ownership.

The WLQR honor roll also includes Dave Kennedy. A native Toledoan, he may have been the youngest operator in the city's broadcasting history.

"When I was 13, I built a 100 milliwatt transmitter, although I was probably running about 5 or 10 watts with a 6L6 as my final tube," he recalls. "Then I hooked the transmitter up to a ham radio dipole antenna and sent my father chasing around town to see how far my signal carried. I positioned my signal on the dial somewhere between the two Top 40 stations—and, believe it not, actually took some requests!"

In early 1973, he found himself in the lobby of an office in the Colton Building, corner of Madison and Erie Streets.

A WLQR Remembrance—Dave Kennedy

Rick McDonald was on the air when I arrived. Sitting in the lobby listening to this man with the booming voice, I imagined its owner to be over six feet tall, weighing 240 pounds. The break ended, the studio doors opened, and out came Mr. McDonald, all five-feet-seven of him. I must confess seeing him eased my tension because 'LQR was the "big player" in Toledo.

Rick evaluated my audition tape, hired me on the spot, and gave me my assignment.

My first week I did two shifts, Friday night to Saturday morning, and Saturday night to Sunday morning, without incident. My paycheck came the following week, and it was for 50 cents an hour less than Rick and I had agreed upon. So I had a choice: Do I blow this job and tell the guy he's paying me the wrong amount of money, or go ahead and just let it pass? I did have a wife and daughter to support so I opted to risk the job. Rick readily recalled agreeing on the higher figure, found the clerical error, and changed it. Since that bold confrontation, Rick and I never had any squabbles.

Holding down on-air, programming, and operations management positions until he established Susquehanna's research department in separate West Toledo offices in early 1981, Dave Kennedy pursued his B.S. at the University of Toledo and obtained his master's and his Ph.D. from Bowling Green State University. In 1984, he and his assistant, Paul Ernst, moved to the corporate office in York; shortly thereafter Mr. Kennedy was appointed vice president, and later, senior vice president of the Radio Division. His master's thesis, "The Relationship Among Audience Image Perceptions of Identically Programmed Radio Stations," is very much about WLQR. In lay terms, his thesis explores why the "Sound of Your Life" format was more successful at WLQR than at sister station WLQA, Cincinnati.

The sales team that carried WLQR through most of its Susquehanna years under Sandy Goldberg's leadership included Larry Jacquemotte, Ed Allen, Jim Lorenzen, Gordon Obarski (who was to become WRRM and WHVE/WTKN general manager), and Joel Speiser. "With such names," said Mr. Goldberg, "we made comparisons to the Pittsburgh Steelers' 'Front Four.' The Steelers were winning like crazy then, and so were we. Only thing is after a while, the Steelers started losing and we didn't."



Larry Jacquemotte, who began his career at WLQR as announcer on the midnight to 5:00 A.M. time slot, had an unorthodox introduction to Manager Goldberg. It seems Sandy Goldberg had occasion to return to the station after midnight soon after the new all-night man came aboard. When the manager knocked on the door for admittance, Larry Jacquemotte asked who it was. "Sandy—Sandy Goldberg," came the reply. The dialogue continued. Larry: "Show me some kind of identification." Sandy: "I don't have any, but I *am* Sandy Goldberg!" Larry: "Sorry, can't do it." Whereupon WLQR's manager deferred his entrance until the next morning.

Larry Jacquemotte conceived of and guided two of WLQR's more memorable public service projects. The first was the WLQR Tennis Tournament. By convincing the local cable company to provide live coverage, WLQR's inventive salesman turned the media event into a fund-raiser for the Toledo Ronald McDonald House.

Larry Jacquemotte was also the driving force behind "Christmas Cheer." This promotion began with an on-air call for Christmas cards during December. For each card received at the station, three area orphanages each received one McDonald's hamburger and a cola. It was not uncommon to receive 5,000 cards each year.

Despite WLQR's attractive sales and profit performance, it became a necessary pawn in the overall Susquehanna strategy. The Company had been looking at expansion opportunities in larger markets. When KFOG in San Francisco became available in 1983, one of Susquehanna's existing FMs had to be sold in order to stay within the FCC's seven-station limit. "We 'traded' a profitable station in Toledo for an unprofitable one in San Francisco, but it is a trade that turned out rather well," Art Carlson said. "Further, the Toledo market had peaked." Perhaps Dave Kennedy best summed up Company sentiment when WLQR was sold: "We feel good about what we left behind in Toledo. It was a solid radio station."

WHLQ

In the spring and summer of 1970, while the Company was waiting for FCC approval of the Toledo purchase, Louis Appell, Jr., Art Carlson, and Al Saunders got together. Their goal was to devise a battle plan to attack the WHLO limited-hours problem head on. A blueprint for action emerged from these thoughts: "What if we found an FM station in Akron or Canton that could be an extension of WHLO after the AM signed off? Wouldn't such an acquisition be an especially wise move since FM as a medium is on the way up? Wouldn't it make sense to expand in Ohio anyway, since we'll soon be in Toledo? Wouldn't the established Susquehanna name and WHLO reputation carry over to an FM? Why couldn't we have the best of both worlds—the WHLO kinship and, at the same time, an FM property with its own identity?"

The hunt began. In mid-summer 1970, Al Saunders found an FM station for sale, a 27,500-watt property at 106.9 MHz, licensed to Canton with the call letters WNYN-FM.

The deal to purchase the station did not progress smoothly. At that time, competing stations quite often lodged complaints with the FCC, objecting to the intended license transfer on any number of grounds, capricious or otherwise. Often the intent was simply to delay the sale. A protest lodged on behalf of WINW, Canton, alleging economic hardship, delayed the takeover. The objection was subsequently denied by the FCC, and, in August 1971, Susquehanna licensed its tenth radio station.

Susquehanna changed the call letters to WHLQ, and moved the operation from 120 Cleveland Avenue to 1452 Cleveland Avenue, in Canton's northwest section.

Although designated as a Class B facility (an FCC classification that relates to power and height), WHLQ was not operating at its full

capacity. In the Susquehanna tradition of purchasing stations it could improve, Susquehanna intended to upgrade station coverage by building a new tower. But these plans were thwarted. Art Carlson explains: "A significant area of undeveloped land existed between Akron and Canton where it was technically feasible to build a tower that would thoroughly cover the desired listening area. We assumed this land would be easy to acquire. Unfortunately, we had not checked into the ownership of this land and found it was owned by a prominent Canton family which would not allow the construction of a tower under any circumstances. All other efforts to improve the coverage failed."

At first, the Company's newest outlet duplicated WHLO's programming until that station signed off, after which WHLQ in the Top 40 mode rounded out its 24-hour daily schedule. This program was in effect for eight months. In the spring of 1972, the recently developed "Sound of Your Life" format was installed in the WHLO post-sign-off hours. Within a few months, WHLQ, FM 107, dropped the WHLO duplication and became a full-time "Sound of Your Life" station. WHLQ's nonmusical fare was much the same as that of WSBA-FM and WLQR: headline news on the hour, a private weather service, occasional contests, and select public service features.

Soon after the "Sound of Your Life" format made its debut, WHLQ pegged its music-and-news pitch on these themes:

- **Music**—"WHLQ is one of the few adult music stations operating after dark. And our unique blend of instrumental and vocal music, our 'Bright Album' sound, is an exclusive for this area."
- **News**—"WHLQ Radio offers Stark County's only 24-hour live news coverage. Local, national, and international events are reported every hour on WHLQ Radio. Weather updates every 15 minutes."

Ed Allen, who along with Joel Speiser was one of the two station managers who led WHLQ during its lifetime as a Susquehanna station, recalls the rather delicate problem in positioning WHLQ: "We did not want to appear divorced from WHLO, and still we desired a separate identity for WHLQ in Canton."

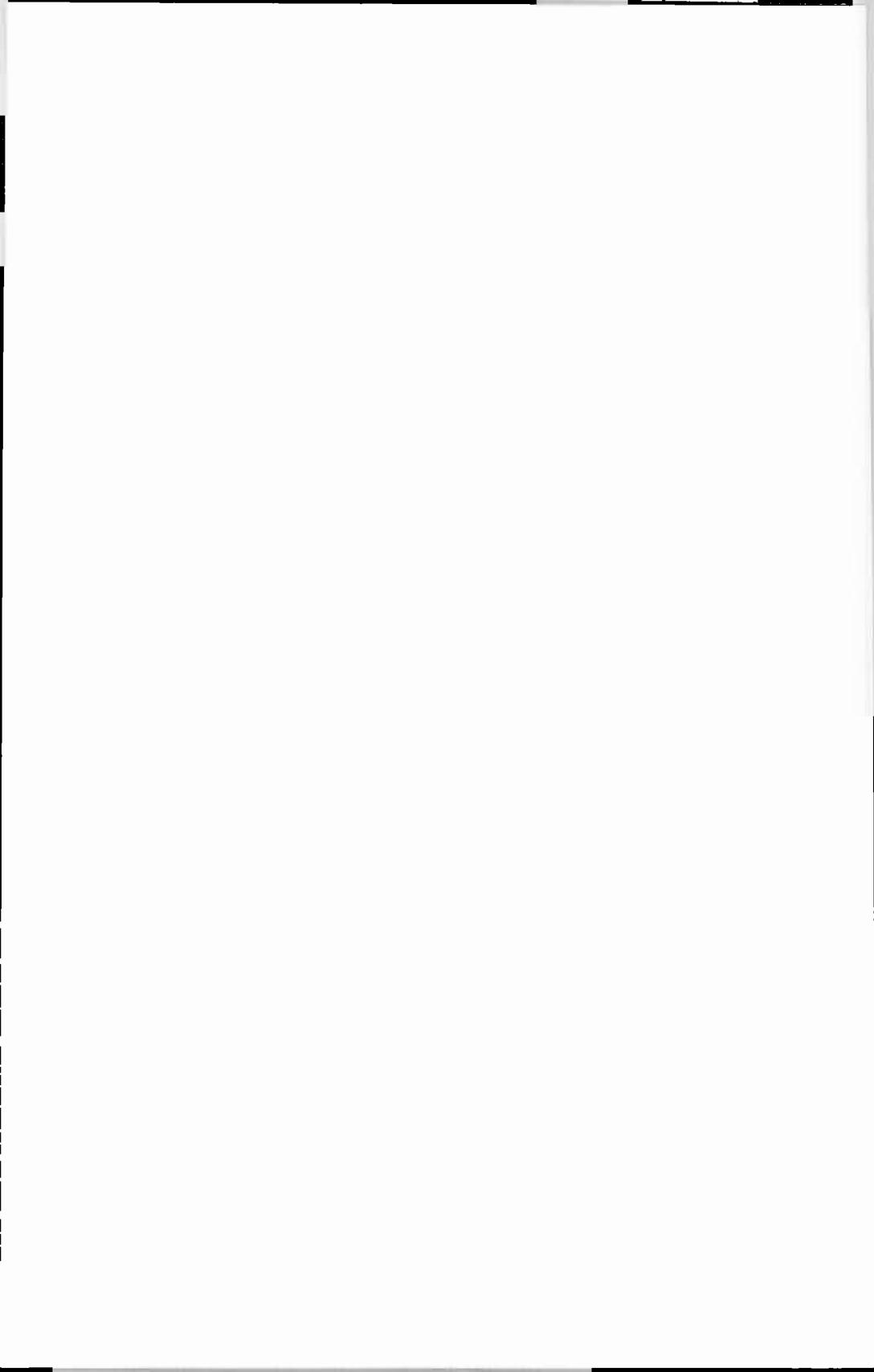


By late 1976, it became clear WHLQ was not fulfilling its intended mission. Although the station was showing modest sales and profits, its coverage problems (putting an adequate signal over Akron) persisted, despite engineering attempts to overcome them. While these problems alone may have warranted the sale of the sta-

tion, there was an even more compelling reason to dispose of WHLQ. The FCC's "7 and 7" Rule (limiting one licensee to owning seven AM and seven FM stations) was still in effect. Susquehanna had by now reached its limit of FM licenses. And since FM figured importantly in the Company's long-term goals, options had to be left open for the possible acquisition of a seventh station in a larger market.

A prospective buyer, John Bayliss, was found. But, alas, WINW once again filed a protest, citing "economic hardship." At this point, despite the frivolous nature of the complaint, Susquehanna and Bayliss cancelled their tentative sales agreement.

The WHLQ story ended with an ironic twist—WHLQ's eventual purchaser was none other than WINW.



A Queen City Jewel

WRRM



Chapter 16

From the beginning, Susquehanna thought highly of Cincinnati and placed it near the top of its list of target markets. So, when the opportunity arose to purchase a station in what Henry Wadsworth Longfellow dubbed the “Queen City of the West,” it represented a fortuitous development in the Company’s expansion plans. In addition to its consistently thriving economy and the natural endowments created by its Ohio Valley location, Cincinnati historically has been a “good radio town.” Much of the credit for this must go to station WLW, together with its Crossley radio receiver manufacturing connection, and WKRC, owned by the Taft broadcasting family, pioneers in the industry.

In the matter of competition, the local AM & FM spectrums were not overcrowded. There were competitors, to be sure, yet the opportunity to find a seat at the fast-filling FM table still remained. Indeed, at the beginning of 1971, FM station authorizations across the country showed a narrowing gap between AM and FM—4,383 AM and 4,323 FM. Late that year, Susquehanna signed an agreement of sale to buy WAEF (FM), owned by North Cincinnati Broadcasting Company. Its principals were Albert and Edward Fishman (thus WAEF) and Charles Arrighi, owner of Parkview Food Markets. WAEF, at 98.5 mHz on the dial, had been established in 1959. In March, 1972, WAEF became Susquehanna’s fourth FM station.

Just as with Susquehanna’s other purchases, WAEF’s facilities left much to be desired. The tower was only 100 feet high, thus impeding its ability to deliver maximum coverage. A converted two-story garage at 6004 Wiere Road housed the station. Salesman Bill

Harkness said, "I didn't even have a chair to sit on or a desk to put that chair in front of."

The WAEF program image was blurry. Art Carlson defined it as "sloppy good music, and a mixture of a lot of other things." There was never any doubt the new acquisition would become a "Sound of Your Life" station like its stand-alone FM sister station WLQR in Toledo, Ohio, or like WSBA-FM, then also riding high with that format.

The perception of the station on the street was not much better than its facilities or format. Bill Harkness remembers "the close ties Charlie Arrighi arranged between WAEF and his food markets. He stressed to the grocery products people that advertising on his station would be beneficial to them in the Parkview stores. When Susquehanna took over, spots were selling for 50 cents to two dollars."

In selecting new call letters, the choice was unanimous: WQCR for Queen City Radio. However, in those days, a competing station could argue that an applied-for set of call letters sounded somewhat like existing ones. (The FCC has since rescinded that ruling and will no longer entertain protests.) And so, under that rule, the Taft Broadcasting Company lodged a protest, claiming WQCR posed a conflict with their WKRC. Rather than have the issue tied up in prolonged FCC litigation, it was decided to choose another set.

"Based on the success of WLQR, it seemed like it might make sense to follow the call letter pattern established there," Art Carlson recalled. "So WLQA sounded good and followed the WLQR mold. There was certainly nothing scientific in our selection process."

Chosen to be manager of the new WLQA was Perry Frey, who left a successful radio sales career to join Susquehanna. Manager Frey's first priority was to supervise the move to new quarters at 7505 Reading Road. The set-up there was less than ideal, according to Art Carlson: "The problem was that you walked into the second floor of an office building where we had a group of individual offices. Fire laws prevented us from closing off the front and the back. It seemed funny to walk out of the station and encounter a lawyer or an obstetrician in the next office, but we did like the inexpensive rent."

Despite the drawbacks, Susquehanna's ninth station was off and running. Bill Harkness remembers the reaction of one member of the community to the change: "It was really amusing. I don't know if Charlie Arrighi forgot the purchase date, but he seemed to think he was still part of the station. He'd call up and register his complaints about the music. 'What the hell do you guys think you're doing? Why are you playing that song?' he'd ask."

On WLQA, FM 98 Stereo, the "Sound of Your Life" was present— "today's bright great music over the Queen City, 24 hours a day—

at home, at work, in car, at play," by such artists as the Fifth Dimension, John Denver, Frank Sinatra, Andy Williams, Olivia Newton-John, Perry Como, Henry Mancini, and Burt Bacharach, among others. The blending of 30 newscasts and 96 Pinpoint weathercasts daily, sports and traffic reports, and hourly stock market updates prompted this explanation of the station's format approach in an early promotion piece:

Unlike a background music station, WLQA's "Sound of Your Life" commands the right amount of the listener's attention. Our middle ground sound provides the bridge between our listeners' active lifestyles and their need to be entertained . . . and informed.

There were promotions in the Susquehanna mode. The "Gift of Love," WLQA's Valentine contest, drew 4,610 entries in only 12 days. A beef-and-freezer contest attracted 14,041 contestants in a four-week period. "Listening Post" mail mounted daily.

In the meantime, the ratings were disappointing. WWEZ, which was programming the Schulke-syndicated package, by virtue of being the first in the format, was riding the crest of the Beautiful Music airwaves in Cincinnati. Then, too, as Bill Harkness put it, "WLQA got thrown in the Beautiful Music hopper with other stations doing their versions, such as WZIP, WLYK in nearby Milford (since changed to WAQZ), and the Cox station in Dayton, WHIO-FM. But I will give Susquehanna credit for consistency. I watched stations jump from one format to another, which keeps the market off balance. With Susquehanna, you could go out and sell a client a 52-week contract and know at the end of that period, the format was going to be the same."

When Perry Frey resigned as WLQA manager in 1974, WARM Manager Barry Gaston was selected to replace him. Manager Gaston's first task was to work at increasing the station's visibility. He explained how this need was made painfully apparent to him: "You'd walk into an agency or a client's place of business and say, 'Hi, I'm from 'LQA,' and they'd ask, 'Are you a local radio station?'"

Not long after this, Art Carlson hit on the idea of contacting listeners in person since "we know where they are—in stores, offices, and other workplaces ("Listening Posts")." Thus was born the Listener Service Representative (LSR) concept, still in use at many of Susquehanna's FM stations.

Another opportunity for raising the WLQA profile came in 1975. It involved the return to the air of Stan Matlock, veteran Queen City morning air personality. His base for years had been WKRC, but he had relocated to Florida following early retirement.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

This was the first time we had seriously attempted to vary from the "Sound of Your Life" format. By then we also had our syndication division in operation, and it was felt that if we could convince Stan to come back to radio, we could syndicate his "Magazine of the Air" bits. So it was my assignment to go down to Florida and sell Mr. Matlock.

I will immodestly say this was one of my more creative sales jobs—going down there to Melbourne and sitting down with Stan and his wife to discuss his return to the air on WLQA. Stan really hadn't been ready to retire and he wanted to return to Cincinnati. But one thing he didn't want to do was get up early every morning.

We struck a deal with Stan that he would only have to come to the studio and be "live" on certain mornings, on a staggered basis. We recorded thousands of his "Magazine of the Air" vignettes. They were essentially a mixture of trivia and self-help—the kind of thing you'd find now in *USA Today*. Steve Drake, our regular morning man, played the music, and we tried to create the impression that Stan was there every morning. It was really a two-person morning show, whether Stan was live or on tape.

The bottom line was the ratings went up a bit, but we were unable to transfer Stan Matlock's popularity from 'KRC to 'LQA.

In 1976, WLQA moved to new quarters at 1223 Central Parkway. Here the station shared a building with Channel 48 (WCET), the oldest public television outlet in the nation, and WGUC, the National Public Radio station run by the University of Cincinnati. (This unique grouping prompted Art Carlson to remark as he walked around the building, "this could be the only building in America that houses three nonprofit broadcasting stations.") As time went on, WLQA departed more and more from the basic tenets of the "Sound of Your Life" format. Bob Beasley, another popular Cincinnati air personality, was brought on board to do afternoon drive. Barry Gaston's solid grounding in programming at WSBA and sales at WARM were challenged, and promotions, advertising and other concepts that were succeeding at WLQR in Toledo were imported to Cincinnati. Still, success remained elusive.

In 1979, Barry Gaston left WLQA to become co-owner of a station in Topeka, Kansas. He was succeeded by Frank Nicholson that same year, and shortly thereafter by George Hyde. If Mr. Hyde had reservations about moving to Cincinnati, they may have been prompted by a letter of complaint he had recently received in his

York, Pennsylvania, office. This letter, from the unlucky *winner* of a WLQA promotion, truly represents the rule that if anything *can* go wrong, it will.

March 13, 1979

George C. Hyde, Jr.
Vice President/Marketing
Susquehanna Broadcasting Company
York, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. Hyde:

To get the proper perspective on our continuing frustrations with your WLQA's "give-away" promotional, please read first the two enclosures to refresh your memory on the "lucky" winners of your April 4, 1978 pool drawing. Almost 11-1/2 months later, our lives have been changed by one nightmare after another—all relative to our name being drawn to win a pool.

Let me bring you up-to-date on the events. . . . Our pool was finally completed August 28. . . . Please note . . . that the winning cover letter projected that by June 30 our pool would be operational.

We used it about a week and it became apparent that the bottom of the pool was not adequately covered with sand. . . . The presence of rock ledges that were not properly smoothed or sculptured (during installation) began to push at the liner. . . .

(The pool installer) was very nice. He said that if we'd drain it that they would come back out and redo the bottom. We felt that the additional cost to us to refill the pool was a small price to pay when these sharp edges could someday cause the liner to rip—an eventuality most certainly not covered by our warranty. They did come out and resmooth the surface, but by the time that the pool was partially filled the ridges were evident once again, protruding at the liner. We filled it once again and closed up for winter (with approximately four to five weeks usage). . . .

We actively watched the pool and syphoned the water out twice to keep the water level down to what we were advised was a safe level. The last time we pulled the cover off to syphon, we saw that the liner had detached from its track, and water was between the liner and sides. . . .

Let me give you further information as to what else happened due to our "free" pool. Since we faced the pool perpendicular to the house with no professional counseling from (the installer) as to its disadvantages from a drainage standpoint, our entire yard's drainage was affected. While away on vacation, our entire downstairs flooded with three inches of water. . . . We had to pay \$30 to rent water extractors

and heaters and even then had to get a carpet firm out to save our wall-to-wall carpet (\$200) from total ruin. We lost many belongings in our storage area, none of which is covered by our insurance. . . . We have had to dig temporary trenches in our back yard to prevent this reoccurrence and are now facing an immense landscaping bill this spring to permanently correct the aforementioned problem.

So, 11-1/2 months from the drawing date we have spent \$2,800 on fencing, electrical hookup, pool covers, chemicals, sod, grass seed, etc. We spent \$200 to dry out our carpet, lost an inestimable amount of personal belongings due to water spoilage. After all these expenses, we are faced with a pool of which we have had four to five weeks of use that is no longer usable without spending even more money and a back yard with open trenches and mud everywhere. . . .

It is ironic. The same contest had a second drawing—someone won a Thunderbird. He actually expressed regret that he didn't win the pool. He didn't realize how lucky he was. . . .

Sincerely,
(names withheld)
Cincinnati, Ohio

At about the time George Hyde was settling in to his new post in Cincinnati, Gordon Obarski, WLQR sales manager, was transferred to WLQA to fill the sales manager position there. With Sandy Goldberg now serving as regional executive of the midwest stations, the Goldberg-Hyde-Obarski team determined to tackle the Queen City dilemma.

The centerpiece of their effort was a major audience promotion and media campaign. It was also during this spring of 1980 that the decision was made to broaden the scope of the Company research effort. Thus Dave Kennedy and Rick McDonald went to WLQA while the massive promotion campaign was underway and supervised the research. The objective was to learn as much as possible about WLQA, especially the ways in which the station was perceived by listeners. Also included in the Kennedy research projects was a study of how an entirely different format might fly.

A WLQA Memoir—George Hyde

We did tests of a prototypical format, which scored successfully. We did focus groups where we talked to people about WLQA and WWEZ, the competitive station that had been chafing us for years.

The critical moment in the focus groups came when we discussed our billboards. Our slogan for the "Sound of Your Life" was "Bright and Beautiful." The "bright" was supposed to set us apart from the "dull and beautiful," which we implied of the Schulke-WWEZ competition. The color of our billboards may best be described as "Goldberg Chocolate"—essentially a brown background with white lettering that said "Bright and Beautiful" and "WLQA—STEREO 98." These same billboards had been used successfully in Toledo by WLQR. We thought the message was fairly clear, and, with the goodly number of boards around Cincinnati, felt anyone interested in Beautiful Music would quickly determine that ours was different.

The first focus group, made up mostly of WWEZ listeners, had never heard of FM 98—which upset us somewhat. The second group, mainly our listeners, said all the right things. Everything we wanted to hear. The last group was made up of a mixed group of listeners. We asked them to evaluate our billboard campaign and showed them a copy. A couple of responses went like this: "Oh yeah, we've seen that one around town. It's for WWEZ, 'bright and beautiful.'"

It became clear that we had a real problem. We were trapped as the second Beautiful Music station in a market that didn't need a second choice. It was time to explore.

But if the same billboards, same promotions, and same format worked so well at WLQR, why did they fall short in Cincinnati? Dave Kennedy, who built his master's thesis on this question, had noted it is wrong to believe that a format's rating (or level of acceptance) within its market is determined solely by its competition. This narrow method of analysis overlooks a number of other perceptual factors that could be pertinent to a format's success. He found that audience perceptions of a format, which may or may not be shaped by the competition, are critical to its acceptance in a given market. In addition, countless market-specific factors can significantly alter listener perceptions of a format. Such factors might include the cultural, ethnic, or economic diversity of a particular market.

If the Kennedy thesis and the later focus groups were the diagnosis, then a new format might be the cure. But first it had to be researched and then submitted to the corporate office. Sandy Goldberg, Dave Kennedy, and Rick McDonald took the focus group and format test results in presentation form to York. Later, during a trip from Cincinnati to Toledo, the threesome formulated their proposal for a new format at WLQA.

A WLQA Memoir—Sandy Goldberg

All the way, Dave had the back light on in the car, sitting there with a yellow pad. He was doing decision analysis, assigning values to the various points for courses of action. In his inimitable style, Dave developed a system to help assign weights to the multitude of factors that had to be considered. This way we wouldn't simply be counting each factor to see which list was longer. We assigned values of zero to five to the various factors that influenced our decision between the (modified) "Sound of Your Life" and, as we called our format prototype then, "Soft Adult Contemporary." When it was all totaled, the advantages of changing formats outweighed the disadvantages. That's how we built the case that we should get out of the Beautiful Music business in Cincinnati and get into "Soft Rock."

In the meantime, stakes were high in the Cincinnati media market. A new owner had taken over WYYS in Cincinnati and opted for "Contemporary Hit Radio" (CHR) when they unveiled their new format in August 1980—thus going after the other CHR station in town, WKRQ.

Art Carlson "bought" the new format idea, and a select number of WLQA staff members began preparations for the early November Soft Rock debut.

A WLQA Memoir—George Hyde

In trying to change the format in secret, we bought all the records from the Soft Rock Contemporary and Adult Contemporary libraries of Radio Source International, located in Cincinnati. We brought them across the river and stashed them away at my house. The only people who knew about this were Gordon, myself, and the program director, Tom Walker. The all-night guy spent six to eight weeks dubbing music on to cartridge while somebody else did his show.

As for a call letter change, we wanted something close to WARM; we chose WRRM (WARM 98). We had to do this in advance of a format change, targeted for November.

As soon as we applied for a call letter change (late September), I got a call from the radio/TV writer for the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. He said, "We understand you're changing format."

I said, "Absolutely not. We have a commitment to this kind of music."

He came right back. "Well, somebody said your new call letters, WRRM, stand for 'Rock-and-Roll Music.'"

I said, "that's pretty inventive," and off the top of my head pointed out, "WRRM could also stand for 'We Radiate Religious Melody.'"

He and I went back and forth on that one, as I swore undying loyalty to Susquehanna's "Sound of Your Life" format.

The kick-off date chosen for the new call letters and the Soft Rock format was election night, November 4, 1980.

*Three WRRMemoirs—
Sandy Goldberg, George Hyde, Gordon Obarski*

Sandy Goldberg

We had this guy who had been dubbing for weeks, *still* dubbing. We were there until about four that morning. We also had this old-time Cincinnati engineer in the studio cutting holes in the console to replace the old equipment with new. It was an exciting night.

George Hyde

We were very thinly staffed at this point, so we had assigned Tom Walker to go down to the Board of Elections to cover the election returns, and I think it was about 6 P.M. we decided we needed Tom at the station to put the right color labels on the cartridges. We had Rick McDonald typing the labels for those songs we still hadn't gotten in the system. Somebody else was making "clocks" (clock-hour charts). I went down to the Board of Elections, replacing Tom. Then, at midnight, we pulled the plug, and away went the tapes. The first song we played was "Cool Change."

Gordon Obarski

Besides being election day, November 4 was also the day WYYS was to give away a half-million dollars. They had bought a three-minute commercial on all four television stations to do the giveaway. It was run at 11 P.M. because they figured everybody would be watching the returns. Well, three things happened: first, the half-million dollars was won by a 13-year old who said she was going to buy records and clothes with all that money; second, Ronald Reagan had already been declared the winner at 7:30 that night; and third, WLQA switched to WARM 98. It's a day we will remember. And I'm sure the manager—I mean the *former* manager—of WYYS will remember it, too.

Reaction was mixed. While negative comments are rarely withheld, positive response to major changes can be difficult to discern. In developing an explanation of the new format to business clients, a straightforward approach was taken. A section of WRRM's first sales presentation put it this way:

Why WARM 98?

For eight years we have had moderate success with WLQA-FM as a bright, good, music station. We never really failed, but we were never fabulously successful.

Recently Susquehanna Broadcasting invested heavily in market research to determine what the Cincinnati market wants to hear. We found that there is a place between background Beautiful Music and Rock. Today's 25- to 45-year-old listener defines "good music" as contemporary vocalists with the hard rock removed.

How well agencies and advertisers accepted this explanation would mean little until the first ratings came out. Still, an experienced media person can often read the community pulse without relying upon statistics. One such individual was Judy Anzig, media director for Northlich-Stolley, a leading Cincinnati advertising agency. Following George Hyde's "New WRRM" pitch to Ms. Anzig, her reaction was, "The first day you switched (to the new format) someone in this office turned it on, and the next thing you know, everybody did. I think you're on to something."

The first statistical validation of success came, of all times, on the first day of baseball 1981. Opening day in Cincinnati is traditionally accompanied by pomp and circumstance. Because legend has designated them baseball's first major league team, the Reds open the season a day ahead of the other National League clubs. Following custom, a parade winds around downtown, through Fountain Square, and ends up at Riverfront Stadium, after which everybody who can file into the ballpark to relax and root for the Reds. WARM 98 had entered a vehicle in the procession and received "a smattering of applause along the parade route," according to George Hyde, "but it was enough to get us psyched up." He was hardly relaxed, however, since he knew the first ratings for WARM 98 would be released the very next day. Mr. Hyde left his seat several times to place a call to the rating company. On the third trip, he got the good word—"a dramatic improvement" over the station's past ratings, according to the Birch ratings service.

Coincidentally, the now-euphoric manager and his right-hand selling arm, Gordon Obarski, had planned a New York sales trip following the game to apprise their national rep of the format changes—and the latest good numbers. In all of Susquehanna's markets, great emphasis has always been placed on national business and on the sales rep firms that pursue it.

A WRRMemoir—George Hyde

We were hot and ready, anxious to talk about our “opening day” to our national rep. We were in a rep combination at that point, where we and another station were being repped by the same firm. Neither the other manager nor I were very satisfied with this relationship. Everytime Gordy and I would finish conducting a sales meeting in the rep’s New York office, instead of saying, “Tell us more about what you are doing,” they would say, “Tell us more about WEBN.”

When we made this particular trip, bringing news of our new format (and now the latest numbers), one of the rep salesmen stood us up for an appointment. This really upset us. We were (and are) a freestanding FM station in a market with a lot of good AM/FM combinations and some really good track records. But after we got stood up on this appointment, I said, “That’s enough! I’ve had it with these people.” So we went downstairs to the street—in the rain—to the corner of Fifth Avenue and something. I put a dime in the phone booth and placed a call to John Boden, president of another rep firm, Blair Radio.

That phone call started what became a nine-month project to put a deal together with Blair. We became their only station in Cincinnati, and our association became a very productive relationship.

WARM 98 now became an ever-brightening star in the Susquehanna constellation. As billings and ratings increased, so did the station’s influence. Promotional activities ranged from the light-hearted—the Ohio Valley Frisbee Championship—to the more profound—The Mount Adams Art Festival. Regarding the tie-ins to cultural activities, George Hyde observed, “We felt that’s where some of our audience was involved, and it did not seem incongruous at all for a radio station that played rock music also to be involved in opera and ballet. It added a nice classy edge to us.”

George Hyde departed for Miami in the summer of 1982, and was succeeded as general manager by Sales Manager Gordon Obarski. Mr. Obarski was greeted in his new position with one of those inevitable thrusts a competitor takes at a successful station.

A WRRMemoir—Gordon Obarski

WYYS elected to change its call letters to WLLT, and with this change came a full frontal assault. The station, also known as W-LITE or LITE 95, spent an enormous amount of money in outdoor advertising and television. They tied us in the spring 1983 ratings. I had a formidable competitor in my first six months as manager.

We held on and ran a campaign of our own for the following fall. When those ratings came out, they showed that we led by a mere .3—hardly a significant statistical edge. But our track record had been good; our demographics were always good. Keeping even slightly ahead was perceived as a real win for WARM 98.

Having weathered the WLLT attack, WRRM maintained a consistent first, second, or third place in the important 25-to-54 age group. This choice demographic cell, wooed fervently by every newspaper, TV and radio station, cable adnet, and magazine in every market, is as important in Cincinnati as it is anywhere. To be successful in Cincinnati, a medium must mirror the wide range of interests this group pursues.

Many events WARM 98 produced or participated in from the early to the mid-1980s hint at the station's well-rounded, never-ending public affairs agenda. Two outstanding examples which continue to this day include "98 Ways to Enjoy Cincinnati," a brochure that lists area activities, and WARM 98's sponsorship of concerts that have featured artists ranging from the Cincinnati Pops to Linda Ronstadt.



In the summer of 1986, WARM 98 moved to more commodious quarters at 205 4th Street, West. In mid-1987, when Gordon Obarski was named supervising executive of the newly acquired WHVE in Sarasota, Florida, Joe Schildmeyer was moved from sales manager into the position of general manager of WRRM.

Concurrent with Mr. Schildmeyer's arrival in the manager's chair was a significant rise in the intensity of radio competition in Cincinnati. Not to be outdone, the new manager, "street smart" from his years in the Queen City sales wars, welcomed the challenge. Under his guidance, WARM 98 took on a new promotional aspect and began to aggressively pursue promotions.

The "Baby Expo" has been WRRM's greatest success. This weekend extravaganza, held once each year, brings together thousands of expectant parents, new parents, grandparents, and kids with scores of merchants vying for their attention and dollars. Events such as the "Diaper Dash" and the "Cutest Baby Contest" add to the charm and excitement of this delightful family promotion.

Also high on the list was WRRM's creation of the "Great Inland Seafood Festival." Originated in 1987, the event has become a Cincinnati tradition as 25 area restaurants present their finest fresh seafood

dishes during this gigantic festival. Each August, over 250,000 seafood lovers converge on Cincinnati's waterfront to savor the seafood delights.

Another annual August event instituted in the late 1980s was the "WARM 98 Fan Club." As rising summer temperatures bear down upon America's mid-section, the Fan Club goes on the alert, then springs into action when the mayor of Cincinnati declares a heat emergency. By soliciting funds, fans, and air conditioners, the WARM 98 Fan Club has provided much-needed relief from the heat for the area's underprivileged.

On the lighter side is another weather-related promotion that began during the drought of 1988. During times of droughts, WRRM periodically mounts a "What-Do-You-Do-To-Make-It-Rain?" campaign. Incredibly, the station actually received credit from some people for ending the Great Drought of 1988—a great kick-off to a successful campaign.

As WARM 98 distinguished itself through its community involvement, the station became the first in the industry to receive the prestigious Patricia Corbett Award. Named after the matriarch of the Corbett family, founders of the famed Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, the accolade is awarded annually for outstanding contributions to the appreciation of the fine arts. WARM 98 received the award for its promotional efforts on behalf of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and the Cincinnati Ballet Company.

WRRM's classical music connection might be regarded as an anomaly for a pop music station. Yet every Sunday there is a morning of serious music hosted by Carmon DeLeone, conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. As host of the "Sunday Morning Music Hall," Maestro DeLeone contributes perceptive and authoritative comments to the program between the classical selections. Moreover, Manager Schildmeyer, in singing the praises of the "Sunday Morning Music Hall," points to its financial as well as its artistic success: "Not only is the program rated the number one Sunday morning program for the 25–54 age group, its support by many Cincinnati companies is positively extraordinary."



Few radio stations can draw from a more remarkable confluence of assets—a vibrant economic environment, a rich cultural heritage, and a great diversity of activities—than can WARM 98. The Susquehanna-Cincinnati marriage has been highly successful.

Into the Heartland

WFMS



Chapter 17

In a word association game featuring American cities, mention "Indianapolis," and chances are the reply will be "500." This famed pinnacle of auto racing was begun in 1911 when motor vehicles were still a novelty. So it is perhaps fitting that Indianapolis would eventually be the hub of six converging major interstate highways, and located within a day's drive of half the U.S. population.

Following the acquisition of WRRM in Cincinnati early in 1972, Susquehanna's search for expansion opportunity shifted to Indianapolis. Not only was Indiana's capital city an attractive market, a station there would blend well with Susquehanna's "Ohio cluster" of stations.

An Indianapolis outlet soon became available, and during Thanksgiving week 1972, WFMS began flying the Susquehanna flag. This acquisition marked the close of the Company's 30th anniversary year, and as the fifth FM station in the Susquehanna group, was further evidence that the FM butterfly had broken out of its cocoon.

Indeed, there were now any number of indicators that FM had, at last, become a serious contender in the radio marketplace. Nationally, FM penetration had grown to 80 percent, with many cities showing even higher ratings. Five years earlier, the figure stood at 50 percent.

An upbeat FM mood pervaded the broadcasting industry in 1972, and a similar feeling was apparent in the Indiana capital. The Indiana Consolidated First Class Cities and Counties Act, passed in 1969, had made Indianapolis the largest American city with a county-wide government. A powerful stimulant to the local social, political,

and economic picture, this act proved to be the catalyst for the “Indianapolis Renaissance.” The time was indeed right for Susquehanna’s entry into the Hoosier capital.

The Indianapolis stereotypes (glowering war memorials, “good ol’ boy” Indy 500 types, and the American Legion Headquarters) were giving way to a new image, one which would prompt the *Wall Street Journal* to call the city “the star of the snowbelt.” Indianapolis, as a national crossroads, had long enjoyed a reputation as a good location for business. It also offered a highly skilled, productive, and diversified labor force, a full complement of business support services, and an attractive quality of life at moderate cost.

WFMS, at 95.5 mHz on the dial and with an output of 50,000 watts, was Indianapolis’ first commercial FM station, established in 1957. Tower, transmitter, studio, and offices were all located at 2255 North Hawthorne Lane. WFMS was owned by Martin Williams—thus the call letters representing Williams Frequency Modulation Service.

WFMS’ programming prior to the Susquehanna purchase consisted of airing the entire sides of long-play albums. When Art Carlson quizzed the WFMS founder about this, he replied, “That’s the way the record companies put albums together, and they know more about music than I do. If they feel theirs is a good sequencing of music, it’s good enough for me.”

Rhonda Downs Hall, who had been hired by Martin Williams as office manager and stayed on in the same capacity for Susquehanna, recalls that Mr. Williams “devoted all his time to the radio station and even slept on a cot in the transmitter room most nights. . . . He was also the only salesperson.”

But whatever Martin Williams’ programming and sales idiosyncracies, the whimsicalities of his Hoosier independence almost caused the WFMS sale to slip through Susquehanna’s fingers. Al Saunders, in charge of the Company’s Midwest operations at the time, recalls this embarrassing incident.

A WFMSouvenir—Al Saunders

Ted Hepburn (former WARM manager and by then a broker) introduced us to Martin Williams, an unusual old codger. He really didn’t want to sell his station; he had put it on the air and nursed it along himself. He knew the financial gain of selling but was reluctant to say “yes.” My assignment was to see him every so often and talk. We had some things in common, such as similar musical backgrounds and tastes. During our conversations, I was trying to get him to sell his station.

In those days, the FCC was taking its time approving sales contracts. Williams' attorney drew up a poorly conceived contract and the agreement expired almost at once. In the meantime, Williams had changed his mind. Bill Simpson (corporate counsel at the time) and I rushed off on a Friday and spent the weekend there, talking him into renewing the contract.

Bill Simpson says, "I kept thinking, 'This guy is looking for someone else to sell it to for more money.' This was one of the scariest events of my career, and I felt my whole future was riding on Al Saunders' shoulders. Except for the rapport Al established with Martin Williams, I hate to think what might have happened."

With the Williams signature finally on the dotted line and the FCC approval granted, the newly hired manager, Ron Voss, and his crew were ready to do battle in Indianapolis. The WFMS building represented the best physical facility so far of the Company's various acquisitions. Al Saunders says, "It was a nice colonial brick building—a bit cluttered, but nice. We spent some money on renovations, including the installation of an additional studio."

More improvements, however, would have to wait. At 1:53 P.M. on Friday, February 2, 1973, fire swept through WFMS, gutting the entire interior, throwing the station off the air, and setting into motion a heroic effort that was to become Susquehanna engineering's finest hour. Rhonda Hall remembers the fire starting in the storage area. (It was later determined that faulty wiring was the cause.)

"The fire spread to the heavily insulated ceiling where it smoldered two or three hours before flames erupted," recalls Ms. Hall. "There were only three of us in the building at the time—the announcer, program director, and me."

Armed only with fire extinguishers and garden hose, Ms. Hall and her two fellow firefighters soon proved inadequate to subdue the blaze. Firemen required more than three hours to save the rest of the building.

Getting WFMS back on the air within 57 hours and into a new building within 13 weeks gave new meaning to the term cooperation. For a select few, this baptism by fire signified the ultimate in teamwork.

Glenn Winter recalls how he went into action when he heard the bad news: "I immediately contacted Charlie Morgan and asked him to get an engineer from Scranton and head for Indianapolis at once. By 6:00 P.M., on the very day of the fire, we had a new transmitter on its way to Indianapolis."

Meanwhile, back at the ruins, staff members salvaged what records and files they could. A motorcade formed to take everything to Program Director Rick Bernard's apartment, newly designated as

the temporary office. At a meeting that evening, the staff's resolve to get WFMS back on the air as quickly as possible was intensified. The next day, as engineers and other corporate people converged on Indianapolis, new equipment was rush-ordered. Susquehanna stations in Ohio and Pennsylvania began reproducing the WFMS music tape library. Many offers of assistance, such as loaned office furniture, poured in over that weekend. On Saturday, two portable buildings rounded up by Al Saunders arrived—one for the transmitter and the other for operations. On Sunday, the new transmitter arrived from New Jersey. WFMS Manager Voss flew to Chicago to pick up a new audio console, while Rick Bernard re-taped commercials and production materials at WLQA, Cincinnati.

On Monday morning, an ad was placed in the Indianapolis newspapers. Its headline read, "WE EXPECTED A WARM WELCOME TO INDIANAPOLIS. . . . BUT THIS IS RIDICULOUS." That same day, merely 57 hours after the fire, WFMS was back on the air.

But getting into a permanent new facility remained a big problem. Sounds of demolition penetrated the temporary studio walls, and nearby train tracks did nothing to enhance the musical luster of the "Sound of Your Life" program. Since a radio station requires special construction in terms of acoustics and electrical wiring, Company engineers opted for a custom-built, modular configuration. Created by Structures of America in Elkhart, Indiana, the six units that comprised the new WFMS came together within 13 weeks. As soon as the staff moved into the new building, the sales promotion got under way. Some of its punch lines: "WFMS is carrying the torch for Indy"; "Stereo 95.5 has crossed burning bridges to bring you the sound of the good life"; and "Too hot to cool down." A public service fire-prevention campaign was a by-product.

Unfortunately, ratings didn't rise as quickly as the new facility. The Hoosiers were not buying the "Sound of Your Life," although the station was to retain this format for the next three and a half years. During that period, a succession of managers followed after Ron Voss' resignation—Doug Brown, Bill Kirk, and Stan Barrett.

Whatever degrees of success or failure the "Sound of Your Life" format experienced in other Susquehanna markets, its Indy run was the most dispiriting. Contests and promotions that worked elsewhere failed in Indianapolis. Art Carlson remembers one incident in particular: "We called it the 'World's Greatest Giveaway,' with the prize being a 747 airplane, model version. It was well-promoted, but nobody seemed to talk about it except our own staff."

The failure of the 747 contest to take off was surely an apt metaphor for the entire station in those early years. Art Carlson

notes: "If there was ever a radio station that was completely rejected by the listening audience, it was WFMS with that format." Still, by 1975 no one had come up with anything better.

But in November of that year, an event occurred that would mark the beginning of a turnaround; it was the arrival of a new player on the WFMS stage, Lawrence W. Grogan.

A native of Buffalo, Larry Grogan had spent most of his working life in that city. After a decade at WBEN and helping to organize a group which bought WEBR/AM and FM, the energetic Larry Grogan needed a new challenge. Mr. Grogan remembers, "The manager's job in Susquehanna's Indianapolis station was open, and it sounded just like the kind of challenge I wanted. Besides, Indianapolis was comparable to Buffalo. I had always been comfortable in a market somewhere around a million, an area that I could 'get my arms around' and where I could make an impact."

And make an impact he did. The entrance of Larry Grogan on the WFMS scene injected a much-needed shot of enthusiasm and signified a new era in the station's development.

A WFMSouvenir—Larry Grogan

I walked into the place, being the fifth manager in four years, and they hardly raised their heads. So I went back and sat down and kept quiet for a couple of days. Finally, somebody said, "What was your name again?" I don't think anybody believed too much in the station. It was a place for disc jockeys to get started, and there certainly weren't any salespeople around. It was the best place for me to go because I could start at ground zero.

We were doing the "Sound of Your Life"—and we were violating the format. We were the third Beautiful Music station and virtually ignored by eight counties. There was nothing that we were giving them that somebody else wasn't doing. Consequently, we were doing things like a German show on Wednesdays that was sold to a German sales manager of a Lincoln-Mercury dealership. We did team tennis in the late evening. These things were marketable and were producing sales results, but it was totally destroying the expectations of the format. As a result, we were never building anything.

Not long after Larry Grogan arrived in Indianapolis, he felt a Country format had good possibilities for WFMS. WIRE, a major AM station in the market and one of Indy's top-rated stations, had been in that format for some time. Still, Grogan felt there was a place for an FM Country station in the Hoosier state's largest city. To aid him in his lobbying of top management for the switch, he en-

listed George Hyde, who was involved on a corporate level with the FM stations. There was no better time than 1976 to make this change, from several standpoints: first, country music had finally entered the pop music mainstream; second, FM had come of age; and third, it fit the nature of Indianapolis itself. Each factor had a bearing on Susquehanna's decision to make WFMS its first Country outlet, a move that contributed immeasurably to the Company's success.

George Hyde was, like Manager Grogan, convinced WFMS should go Country. With no research to back them up, Art Carlson wasn't so sure. Nonetheless, the Hyde-Grogan team continued their lobbying blitz until they "made their sale." Art Carlson remembers this precise moment, and how his resistance weakened: "George and I had been on the phone with Larry as they were going through one of their now-regular pitches to go Country in Indianapolis. I excused myself to go to the bathroom and George followed me right down the hall, sensing I had finally weakened. Just before I opened the men's room door, I said, 'OK, damn it. Go ahead!'" The decision was made in the late summer of the nation's Bicentennial year.

While Larry Grogan had no formal research to support his argument, he felt certain the time was right for the move.

A WFMSouvenir—Larry Grogan

In our analysis of the marketplace, we were aware of the tremendous interest in country music in central Indiana—"the top of the Bible belt." Certainly enough Southern influence from Tennessee and Kentucky seeped up into Indiana and brought the rural religious spirit that country music addresses at times. Also, Indianapolis is the home of the American Legion and a very staunch flag-wrapped city, which represents another part of country music. Add to that the "Urban Cowboy" thing going on at the same time, just to the north in Chicago. WMAQ, an NBC owned-and-operated station, had just gone Country, bringing country to the city.

As for WIRE, it was one of the leading Country stations in the nation. It was on AM, but we felt there was a place for stereo FM in Country. Don Nelson, WIRE's manager at the time, reportedly said it would be a waste of money putting country music in stereo because the country listener couldn't afford the stereo equipment.

Of course, as I look back, our move to Country might have been a bit crazy. FM was still considered to be upscale with English-accented announcers. Some stereo units, as I recall, were going for four or five thousand dollars, and FM car radios were not standard. Yet, we had nothing to lose with the move.

Altering the format from the "Sound of Your Life" to Country was done in much the same clandestine manner as the changeover at WRRM. Few staff members were let in on the covert operation. Elaborate studio modifications were required for the conversion from reel tape reproduction to cartridge capability. Larry Grogan remembers the reaction of Chief Engineer Rick Martin, who had been with the station through four previous managers and had known about such quirks as the German show. When told about the change to Country, he turned ashen white and said, "Does York know this is going to happen?"

There was one problem, however, that stood out: no one in the Company knew anything about country music—no one, that is, except Mike Hoyer, the news director at KPLX (Susquehanna's station in Dallas-Fort Worth). Mike was brought up to WFMS to act as consultant. As soon as the new music and new equipment were in place, it was time to inform the rest of the staff. Since the changeover was set for 6:00 P.M. on a Friday, briefings began the day before.

A WFMSouvenir—Larry Grogan

We had our meeting with the air people Thursday evening. Bear in mind, these were all "Beautiful Music people." We had upgraded the announcing staff earlier, and as it turned out, we didn't lose any of them except the program director, who was too much into Beautiful Music to make the transition.

Next we told the sales department they had to be in the station at 9:00 A.M. on Friday and we were going to have a two-day sales seminar, all day Friday and Saturday. On Friday, when we brought the salespeople in, they panicked because they could just see what little business we did have fly right out the door. And a bunch of it did, because we had a lot of small antique shops, quality camera stores, some funeral homes. No clients knew about the pending change. In fact, that weekend there was a golf tournament we had sold, but we didn't carry it. There was hardly anyone listening anyway, so we didn't get much reaction.

We made the changeover Friday night. It was at the time of the Indiana State Fair and George Hyde was in town. We made a trade deal with the Powers Modeling School. We got these models to wear T-shirts that we had printed in a very covert way by a guy in downtown Indianapolis. So we had these gals with T-shirts distributing leaflets on the fairgrounds, which is an illegal operation. But we did it anyway and were able to get the model crew out before they got caught. That was the birth of the format. We began taking requests, and when we didn't have what the listeners were asking for, we went out and found it.

It would be pleasant at this point in the WFMS chronicle to report an overnight success. But such was not the case. Hard work and fine-tuning, as with every product and service, is mundane and undramatic. Yet Manager Grogan and his staff felt they were on the right wavelength. WIRE continued to stick closely to its rural-flavored version, with what Grogan calls “golly-gee, down-home, foot-stomping” country music, mixed with heavy doses of farm news, commodity and stock prices, and special agriculture reports. WFMS chose a different approach.

A WFMSouvenir—Larry Grogan

We went slick right away, which caused an awful lot of reaction in the marketplace. People would come to us and say, “You know I don’t like country music, but I like your radio station.” So consequently we began to play down the word “Country” and called it “Great American Music.” We caught the tail end of the Bicentennial year and wrapped ourselves in the flag. Our initial logo was an interstate sign in red, white, and blue. Interstate signs are very prominent around Indianapolis. More interstates intersect in Indianapolis than in any other major city in America. So the logo was recognizable, it was American, and it gave us some slant in the direction we wanted to go.

We pounded away on the “Great American” aspect, while WIRE chose to tie themselves even more to Nashville and all the concerts. We didn’t have a prayer with the concerts. That’s one good thing about country, the artists and listeners are very loyal. They tend to gather around their old partners, and we were shut out. But we stayed with it. Country music was in transition, and we were on the cutting edge.

Now that WFMS had crossed a musical frontier, it became apparent to Larry Grogan in late October 1976 that a skilled hand was needed for day-to-day program direction, and Mike Hoye was anxious to return to KPLX. The trail led to WTZR, Huntington, West Virginia, and Dan Halyburton. The once and future Country programmer was born in Miami and began his radio career at WOCN, in that city. He got his first taste of Country programming at WWOK in Miami, and his move to Huntington was preceded by stints at WTVR and WEET, Country-formatted outlets in Richmond, Virginia.

Mr. Halyburton’s first tour of duty with Susquehanna was a year at WFMS. He claims his “crazy ideas” and Larry Grogan’s “ability to convince anyone this or that was a great concept” got the station into high gear.

A WFMSouvenir—Dan Halyburton

We set out on a very promotional course to go up against WIRE. Of course, we didn't have a lot of money to do it. Creative ideas were the important thing. We needed a vehicle to get out and do things. Well, we decided a van wasn't big enough, so Larry went out and traded for a mobile home. It was a 17-foot-long recreational vehicle that gave us a way to do a lot of promotions.

Some of these were "fly-by-the-seat-of-the-pants" things. One time Elvis Presley was coming to town and interest ran high. It was winter and people were lining up for tickets. We decided on the spur of the moment to get big canisters of coffee and donuts and give them some refreshments while they were standing in line. We did live reports on the air from the location, and allowed people to use the bathroom in our RV, called "The Country Music Box."

We did a lot of "short hits" promotions; "guerilla radio," you might call it. But it was great stuff at the time.

Whatever you call them, these promotions were the right stuff. Larry Grogan says the goal was to make the promotions compatible with the format. "The Country listener," he observes, "is usually fun-loving, honky-tonking, dancing, beer drinking—a person who likes to party. That opened all sorts of avenues. For instance, we organized a kazoo band made up of WFMS listeners. They played with the house band at Market Square Arena basketball games at half-time."

Kazoo bands and the "Country Music Box" notwithstanding, the "Great Jello Jump" was the quintessential promotional stunt in WFMS' first Country year. The affable station manager's account of that media event of St. Patrick's Day, 1977, catches its flavor and essence.

A WFMSouvenir—Larry Grogan

We had to go to the Army facility at Fort Benjamin Harrison. They were the only people who had cooking facilities large enough to prepare the jello we needed. We used this hot tub about six feet in diameter and had it filled waist high with green jello. In the bottom of that jello were the prizes people would have to fish for.

But there were logistics involved. That much jello is extremely heavy because a lot of water is used to make it. So the Army made it in big plastic bags that we put inside four-gallon plastic milk cartons. We had all these bags of jello and had them trucked from the Army base to the mall. We got the jello from Knox for the mentions, and suggested to the Army guys that we could put a little recruiting display up at the van and give them a plug.

"Oh, my God, no," they said. "If the brass ever found out we're making jello for you, we'd all go to the brig. They'd go crazy knowing the Army was making 16 tons of jello instead of defending the country."

We had a big turnout. People showed up in outlandish outfits to go diving for prizes. A guy came up to me and said, "Are you the manager of the station doing this?"

I told him I was and he said, "You gotta be a little crazy to do a thing like this."

"No," I said, "I'm not crazy. The people getting into the jello are crazy."

When Dan Halyburton received an offer he couldn't refuse, he left WFMS for the Storz Stations, but he later returned to Susquehanna at KPLX, where he rejoined his erstwhile mentor, Larry Grogan. Meanwhile, Herb Allen moved from Wheeling, West Virginia, to take over as WFMS program director.

WFMS' growth in Arbitron ratings was dramatic as the station moved from 1.4 in the spring of 1976 to 9.0 in the fall of 1980. Particularly impressive was the fact that WFMS' audience gains occurred at the direct expense of its competitor.

By the start of the eighties, WFMS had consolidated its position. Top-notch air and sales staffs and the leadership of its sparkplug manager had made the station a winner. In one of the most unusual radio advertising coups that had been seen in years, WFMS landed a large Colgate contract. Soap companies had flocked to television when that medium's soap operas replaced radio's. So, the Colgate campaign on WFMS broke the TV soap chain, while it enhanced the station's reputation as a central Indiana marketing force.

Not only was WFMS scoring well on the sales and audience fronts, it was also becoming an important cog in the country music wheel. Where once WIRE had a lock on concerts and tie-ins with country promotions, WFMS' growing renown in the industry enabled the station to loosen WIRE's tight hold.

"By the early 1980s we had matured, and WIRE began to slide a bit," Larry Grogan emphasizes. "Some of the newer talents that didn't have the relationship with WIRE, and the old promises to fulfill, began to come to us. WIRE felt they needed more than music, and they began to promote themselves as 'music and more,' calling themselves an 'information station.' At this point, we felt it was time to dump the 'Great American Music' handle and pick up the line, 'WFMS is Country Music.'"

The first years of the eighties also saw other changes. In May 1981, WFMS moved to new quarters at 8120 Knue Road in Indianapolis. By this time, Susquehanna had instituted regional management, and in early 1983, Larry Grogan moved to Dallas to become regional vice president supervising KPLX, KLIF (the Dallas/Fort Worth AM station purchased by Susquehanna in 1979), KFOG (the San Francisco FM station purchased in 1983), and WFMS. His successor as manager at WFMS was National Sales Manager Kevin Aufman.

In November 1985, KPLX Sales Manager Nancy Vaeth transferred from Dallas to Indianapolis to replace Kevin Aufman as general manager. Following the death of long-time Program Director Herb Allen, Russ Schell was hired to fill this role. Mr. Schell later became operations manager, and eventually, a group program executive.

Meanwhile, the creative staff at WFMS continued to produce many typical, and many not-so-typical, public service programs and station promotions. But no "outside exposure" captured the Hoosier capital's imagination more than the WFMS fall 1986 billboard campaign. Borrowing the idea from its Dallas sister station, WFMS saturated the area with 24-sheet outdoor posters. Each billboard was emblazoned with the line from a country tune, together with the "WFMS IS COUNTRY MUSIC" slogan placed discreetly but carefully for maximum readability. (The Associated Press moved a feature article about the campaign on its national wire.) The gritty directness and sly humor of country music lyrics made them an ideal motif to grab motorists' attention:

"My wife ran off with my best friend, and I miss him."

"She's so ugly she makes my cat bark."

"When it rains, I pour."

"The apple of my eye turned out to be a fruit."

"The hair on her chest was his."

"She dumped me for the garbage man."

"I found her number on a restroom wall and ain't rested since."

When WIRE discarded Country in favor of the Adult Contemporary format in 1985, beefing up news/sports/information, Indianapolis' Country terrain became the sole domain of WFMS.

With numerous format and ownership changes among the competition (in 1986 alone, there were five license transfers in Indianapolis), WFMS, after more than a decade in the Country mode, could claim to be the most stable station in the area. WFMS was the exclusive FM Country-formatted station in central Indiana. It had a loyal

audience, an excellent signal, and first-rate air personalities, such as Charlie Morgan, Jim Denny, J.D. Cannon, and others. Current Program Director Charlie Morgan was the recipient of the 1989 Country Music Association Large Market Air Personality of the Year award.

One of the most fascinating developments with regard to Susquehanna's policy of strategic planning was a VALS study conducted in Indianapolis and underwritten by WFMS in the mid-eighties. The VALS program (VALS is an acronym for "value and lifestyle"), offers a unique approach to marketing research and advertising. Here's how the VALS segmentation of the American population into eight groups (according to their values and lifestyles) compares with those of Indianapolis and with those of WFMS' audience:

VALS classifies "belongers" as traditional, family-oriented people who seek security rather than status. Nationally this group makes up about 39 percent of the population; in Indianapolis it accounts for 37 percent, and for 31 percent of the WFMS listening audience. "Achievers" are successful, self-confident people who usually hold professional or managerial positions. They make up 21 percent of the national population, 30 percent of the Indianapolis population, and 34 percent of the WFMS audience. Two other groups, "Emulators" and "Societally Conscious," make up 13 percent and 10 percent of the WFMS audience, respectively.

Studies such as VALS can provide a better understanding of a market's dynamics, not only for a radio station, but also for government, civic, and social service bodies. In Indianapolis, WFMS shared its VALS research with such groups.

Short-term visitors and long-term residents agree there has been no diminution of the optimism that began permeating the Indianapolis air in the late 1960s. Downtown development has continued, and the mood of the city is upbeat. The Hoosier Dome, Indianapolis Sports Center, Indiana University Natatorium, Indiana Track and Field Stadium, Market Square Arena, and the Velodrome are attracting professional teams and major national sporting events. Indianapolis scored a significant coup by being selected host city of the 1987 Pan American games in the face of spirited competition.



In 1988, when the country selected its new political leaders, added attention was focused on the Hoosier state and its capital, as Republican presidential nominee George Bush selected U.S. Senator Dan Quayle of Indiana for his running mate. At WFMS, the station had its own change of leadership in 1989, when Monte Maupin-Gerard

succeeded General Manager Nancy Vaeth, who was selected to return to Texas and manage Susquehanna's KRBE-AM and FM stations in Houston.

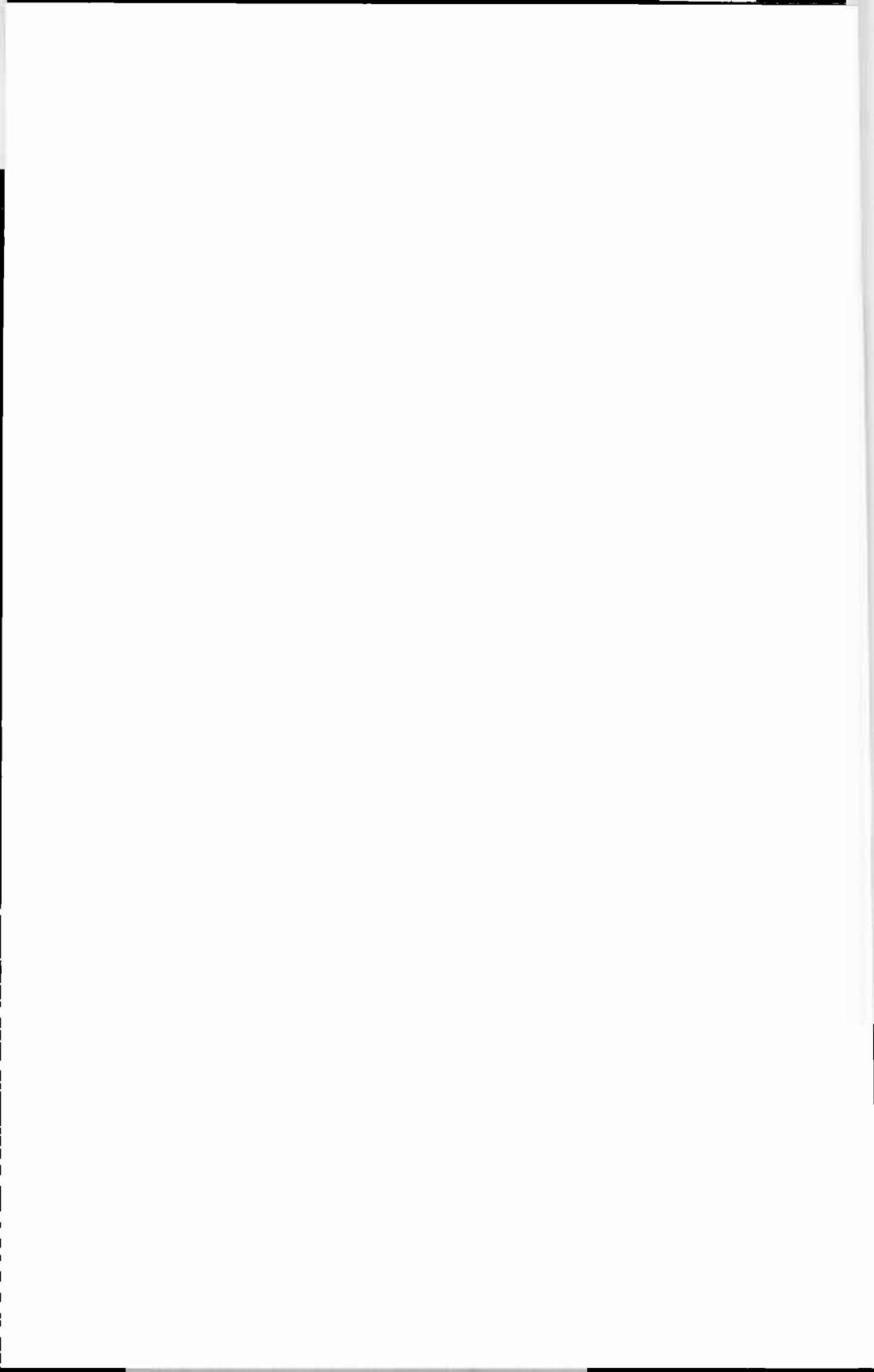
Any new manager entering an established enterprise must decide which traditions will stay, and which will go. Manager Maupin-Gerard had no thought of "fixin' what ain't broke," and among the promotions that were selected to continue was the now-legendary "Fourth Fest." Thanks to WFMS, patriotism and country music—a potent combination—unite each Independence Day to produce one of the Midwest's biggest country events, a concert on the steps of the downtown Indianapolis War Memorial. The WFMS "Fourth Fest" grows each year, attracting big names in country music and culminating in the area's largest fireworks display.

In the areas of public service and promotion, Manager Maupin-Gerard added her own touches: "Basically, I've changed the marketing of the station to a more 'event-driven' approach. We are going out and shaking hands. If there are a thousand people out there, I want to be out shaking their hands, because I think if people meet somebody from the radio station, whether it's me, or an air personality, or any other employee, they're going to try the station—if they haven't done so already. In that way, we've changed from an outside advertising approach (or off-the-air), to a very on-the-street approach. So instead of advertising the station heavily on TV and in direct mail and newspaper—which we haven't dropped entirely—we concentrate on what I call 'on-the-street marketing.'"

As WFMS moved into the 1990s, the station has continued its rating dominance under Ms. Maupin-Gerard's direction, consistently ranking one, two, or three in the Indianapolis radio audience race.



The arrival of this century's final decade has found many observers concluding that country has replaced rock as America's mainstream popular music. Interestingly, Susquehanna launched its first Country Music station—during the nation's Bicentennial year—in what is truly the "heart" of America's heartland. As the country's most centrally located major metropolis, Indianapolis' designation as the "Crossroads of America" has more significance than a mere Chamber of Commerce slogan, and WFMS has clearly claimed the heart of its middle America home.



Sweet Georgia Sound

WAPW



Chapter 18

Anyone who has ever landed at Hartsfield International Airport knows the joke: "If you die in the South, it doesn't matter whether you're going to Heaven or Hell, you have to change planes in Atlanta." Behind that one-liner is the unassailable fact that Atlanta is the transportation and communication hub of the Southeast. The city's preeminence in this vital sector is rooted in the Georgia legislature's decision in the early 1830s to build a rail line connecting the American interior with the sea. The legislature chose the site in the forest where Atlanta now stands as a terminus, or end station, for its railway. (The city's earliest name, in fact, was Terminus.) Atlanta became the gateway to the West, as well as a natural destination for the flow of trade and migration from the central Atlantic states.

At no time in Atlanta's young history did its natural advantages and solid economic base present such appealing prospects for business as in the 1960s and early 1970s. As Susquehanna's search for expansion opportunities went forward, and studies for new markets became more intense, Atlanta became the number one target for three very good reasons. First, Atlanta was enjoying incredible growth, both in its work force and new construction. With this growth, Atlanta's former lukewarm business image was transformed into a shimmering, high-rise vision of the New South. The proliferation of tourism and high tech and service-related enterprises helped draw further attention to Atlanta.

Second was the general attractiveness of the Southeast. With the WQBA-Miami beachhead already established in the Southeast

Sunbelt, an Atlanta station would strengthen the Company's regional presence. So the geography made sense.

The third magnet that attracted Susquehanna to Atlanta was simply stated by Art Carlson: "There were few FM stations there." With other broadcasters equally aware of the city's many advantages, finding a station for sale would take time.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

Long before our purchase in 1974, we had targeted WLTA, owned by Eathel Holley. I recall sometime in 1971 coming back after a meeting with him and suggesting to Louis that we offer him a million dollars for his radio station—which, incidentally, would have been the first million dollar FM transaction in the country. I had visited and negotiated with Eathel for over two years, and by then (1973) the world of FM was starting to take off. It was also evident prices were escalating. We continued to negotiate and arrived at a deal for \$1.75 million, which was far more than we had paid for any of our stations to that point.

At that time a lot of people like us were trying to buy FM stations. The prices were going up fast. One party had told Eathel, "Whatever offer you get from anyone else, I'll meet it." So in three or four weeks we wound up closing the deal for two-and-a-half million. I should point out that, a couple of months earlier, Southern Broadcasting purchased an FM in Houston for around three million. This was the highest price ever paid for an FM radio station at that time. Our purchase represented the second biggest dollar transaction.

"Eathel Holley had built his station for under \$35,000 and ended up making a lot of money," says Charlie Morgan. Mr. Holley had established WLTA at 99.7 MHz, 100,000 watts, in 1963. It was located at 1070 West Peachtree Street, with the transmitter building and tower a few steps east. WLTA's antenna was mounted on a tower belonging to WTCG-TV.

Eathel Holley went on to do something no former owner of a Susquehanna property had done—he bought another radio station in the same city. That AM station, WGKA, came under Holley's proprietorship when First Media Company, which had bought it from General Cinema, spun off the AM station and kept its FM sister, WZGC. WGKA became Atlanta's Classical station, and, interestingly, is located on the same street where WLTA eventually moved.

To call WLTA a "shoestring operation" when Susquehanna acquired it was to stretch the meaning of a favorite cliché. According to Charlie Morgan, "WLTA had one small studio and an automation sys-

tem. There was one office with a secretary, a part-time engineer named Harvey, and that was it.”

The move to more commodious quarters at 1459 Peachtree Street took place soon after the FCC approved the WLTA license transfer. The format would be “Sound of Your Life.” And as for the new manager, “There was never a shadow of a doubt who that would be,” Art Carlson emphasized.

“Jack DeHaven, who had been hired as our national sales manager, had indicated as one of the conditions of his employment that he only wanted to stay in New York until his kids were ready for high school,” Mr. Carlson explained. “Jack’s managerial qualifications were perfect for the situation. Obviously, he had worked for us long enough that we knew his integrity. He had the ability to operate by himself, and he had a very serious concern for the Company’s dollars.”

For a transplanted Northerner like Jack DeHaven, managing a radio station in the South (and a major market at that), if not intimidating, was at least formidable. He was a seasoned radio professional, but this was a very new piece of turf for him.

A WLTA Recap—Jack DeHaven

When everyone left after the station settlement—and for the first time I stayed behind—it was an empty feeling. I sat alone at the Atlanta airport with the responsibility of a \$2.5 million radio station which was housed in about 400 square feet of studios and office.

In the months to come, as a new staff was built, a strong group spirit started to emerge. There were a lot of Northern transplants in the Atlanta area, so we didn’t feel out of place. And, while people up North were fighting the FM vs. AM battle with a quality FM audience just beginning to position, the listener in Atlanta was already in transition from AM to FM. People would only ask, “which dial is your station on?” Having an AM-only radio in the car meant it was either an old car or a company car. A new “Sound of Your Life” format was introduced as soon as we moved the station from 1038 West Peachtree to its new location at 1459 Peachtree at Pershing Point.

Early in 1975, Atlanta was finally affected by the recession and real estate investments turned sour, with the resulting pullback in financial institutions’ lending efforts. However, momentum of growth in Atlanta’s other sectors was so strong that the period passed in a relatively short time. Dozens of companies were moving into the area, not with manufacturing plants, but with white-collar district and regional offices, bringing along computer and data processing units, as well as sales and sales-support teams. The financial strength of Atlanta was banking, retailing, and real estate. It was

Southern-owned and managed, and they wanted to get to know you before they did business with you.

About the only adjustment I had to make was my patience. After the intense fast pace of New York City, I had to adopt a slower, more personal attitude in business and socializing.

One of Manager DeHaven's first tasks was launching the "Listening Post." In each Susquehanna market where the Carlson brainchild was introduced, the station added its own special touches. At WLTA-FM 100, it became the engine that drove the station's sales promotion. In a series of display ads (which were also adapted for use as handout "slicks"), the long-term "Listening Post" campaign was designed to stress to advertisers the importance of reaching working women, a group who by now comprised over half the U.S. work force. "Atlanta's On-the-Job Radio" was adopted as the theme.

Tied in with each broadside's graphics was appropriate text. Sample:

Today 56 percent of all women work. Seven out of 10 full-time. So most daytime television advertising plays to an empty house, not the lady of the house. That means you've lost money—lost money on production, on television time. Make a change. Put your advertising budget to work where she works—in the hundreds of offices, stores, factories, laboratories where working women are listening to WLTA, Atlanta's on-the-job radio.

Virtually from day one, WLTA showed a profit, Art Carlson says, "because of Jack DeHaven's sales ability and his skill in building a sales team." This pattern was to prevail through the seventies. There were also modest ratings gains. But the station suffered basically the same problems as most other "Sound of Your Life" stations.

"The format, in Atlanta like elsewhere, just didn't generate big numbers," Art Carlson added. "No matter how good the sales efforts are, without large rating numbers, you're not going to generate large sales. So, Jack (and others) kept pressuring for format modifications, especially at WLTA. Jack convinced me we should make some modifications in the format."

Those revisions, which began in mid-1978, gradually resulted in a hybrid format perhaps best labeled "Adult Contemporary." Al Saunders, familiar with this programming genre, moved to Atlanta as station manager/program director to concentrate on "formatics," enabling General Manager DeHaven to concentrate on sales and administration. WLTA-FM 100 now projected more personality in its air product, enhanced by two strong names in the Atlanta disc jockey

family, “Skinny” Bobby Harper and Gary McDowell. During midday, the station’s music hewed closely to the “Sound of Your Life”/Beautiful Music line. At other times, it rocked softly—except on weekends, when it took on a slightly harder edge.

Around the time WLTA’s music policy was undergoing an evolutionary change, a bold decision was made to carry the 90-game schedule of the Flames, Atlanta’s entry in the National Hockey League. The NHL’s southernmost radio address was 99.7 mHz for two seasons—1978–79 and 1979–80. The Flames’ play-by-play team consisted of “Jiggs” McDonald (who later joined the New York Islanders Network), “Boom-Boom” Geoffreon (who left to coach the Montreal Canadiens), and Bobby Harper (who eventually became a featured WSB personality and a member of the Atlanta Falcons’ broadcast crew).

The interjection of hockey diluted the music-intensive nature of the evolving format. Nonetheless, the Flames probably helped call attention to the Adult Contemporary nature of the music. Hockey on WLTA also afforded a splendid opportunity for outside promotions. The Atlanta Flames’ home games at the Omni Rink provided ideal forums for call letter exposure. A unique flyer explaining the games proved a popular giveaway. “WLTA wants you to learn how to enjoy hockey,” the invitation read. Unfortunately, not enough Atlantans appeared at the Flames’ box office, and at the close of the 1979–80 season, the franchise moved to Calgary.

As Jack DeHaven had observed, FM was already packing a wallop in Atlanta when he arrived in 1974. The April/May 1980 Arbitron ratings showed a growth in FM listening from 41.6 in 1976 to 58.6 by the spring of 1980.

No doubt about it, FM was now big league, and Susquehanna was playing there. Thus, the fine-tuning of programming in a major market like Atlanta became a preoccupation. While the transition to Adult Contemporary continued, “it was tentative, slow, and never quite complete,” Al Saunders maintains. Still, WLTA-FM 100 was doing reasonably well. Over a two-year span, the station generally ranked a solid number two in its primary demographic target, the 25–54 year olds.

But then, says Al Saunders, “the bubble burst”: WSB-FM went Soft Rock and WKHX-FM changed to Country.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well—and Ruefully

What happened in Atlanta very simply is this. There was this big “hole” in the market, and we were trying to fill a hole bigger

than any single radio station could fill. Because of past programming and what we were doing currently, WLTA did not have any clearly defined image. To some people, we were Beautiful Music, to others, we were "Almost Rock." We even played enough country-oriented songs that we thought we could attract some country audience. We were literally a hybrid. On top of this, we weren't doing much music research in those days.

So in came WSB-FM with Soft Rock, and then came WKHX-FM obviously filling the Country hole, and we got hit from all sides. The worst part of this was our muddy and confused image. We were almost unable to take any direction and concentrate on it because the image of the station did not match the product, no matter what.

We had some problems, too, like talking too much. Some drastic steps had to be taken.

The first "drastic step" would be a massive research project, an experience Art Carlson stresses was immensely instructive: "It taught us some very valuable and painful lessons—lessons that were to guide Susquehanna Radio in its shift from an instinct-driven, programming company to a research-driven, programming company."

Some personnel changes that took place around this time included the addition of Sandy Goldberg, who had supervised the Cincinnati format changeover. When Jack DeHaven assumed group-wide responsibility for sales, Sandy Goldberg was assigned regional responsibility for Atlanta, Toledo, and Cincinnati. Messrs. Kennedy and McDonald completed the triumvirate who mounted the imposing Project Atlanta—the research effort whose bottom line would ultimately mean a new format and new call letters.

Step one of the research project was hosting a series of focus groups. As expected, key definitive evaluations flowed from the focus groups. For instance, given WLTA's hybrid format, the younger participants perceived its music as "softer," and the oldsters as "harder." WLTA's format was described variously as "Mellow Rock," "Soft Rock," "Easy Rock," and "A Little Bit of Everything."

WSB-FM, on the other hand, was found by the focus groups to be well understood with a clear image. It was unanimously regarded as a Soft Rock station. Overall, WSB-FM was perceived as more upbeat, more consistent than WLTA.

With the focus groups' subjective data at hand, a scientific sampling of the entire Atlanta market could go forward. After analyzing these results, National Program Director McDonald was able to suggest three format possibilities to replace the eclectic one that had fallen upon disfavor with Atlanta listeners. These included: "Crossover" Country; Young Adult Contemporary; and Soft Adult

Contemporary. The third alternative was chosen. With the new format came a change in call letters in spring 1983, and WLTA-FM became WRMM (WARM 100).

Two years later, it was clear that while WRMM's Soft Adult Contemporary product could be graded "average" to "good," it was not performing consistently. WSB-FM had held onto its lead and reacted appropriately. But by now, another competitor had joined the chase and was pursuing the same audience as WRMM and WSB-FM.

The new player was WFOX-FM, Gainesville, Georgia. WFOX-FM's challenge arose as a direct result of the FCC's deregulation policies. The commission had passed what became known as the "Arizona Waiver." This meant WFOX-FM, licensed to Gainesville, could establish a studio in another city (Atlanta) so long as 51 percent of its non-entertainment programming originated in its city of license (Gainesville).

So now here were three stations trying to divvy up a pie that ought to have been cut for two. On the personnel front at this time, Atlanta regional executive Goldberg appointed Juli Dorff WRMM station manager following Susquehanna's sale of WHLO (Akron) in late 1984. In March of the following year, the station moved to larger quarters at 3405 Piedmont Road.

Meanwhile, WRMM, WSB-FM, and WFOX-FM each launched heavy promotion campaigns. No sooner had the latest skirmish over the Atlanta airwaves gotten under way than events took a bizarre turn, shifting the battleground to the U.S. Federal District Court in Atlanta.

The WSB-FM vs. WRMM case actually began in March 1982, when WSB-FM (98.5 MHz) switched its format from Beautiful Music ("Beautiful 98") to Young Adult Contemporary (which more and more came to be called Soft Rock), and changed its identifier to "Atlanta's New 99 FM." Meanwhile, digital radios came upon the scene, and a listener seeking a favorite station needed to know that station's exact frequency: WRMM soon dropped the "WARM 100" identifier and began promoting its 99.7 location. Given the closeness of the two stations' dial locations and their similarities in musical content, listener confusion soon developed into difficulties with the all-important Arbitron ratings system. To minimize the detrimental impact of this potential confusion, WRMM also began to use the rounded "99," and identified itself as "WARM 99."

WSB-FM went to court seeking to enjoin WRMM from using 99 on the air. In his opinion favoring Susquehanna, Judge J. Owen Forrester wrote: "It would be absolutely unconscionable to allow one station to appropriate for itself and exclude all others from using a

whole number which truthfully describes an approximate geographic location on the FM dial.”

Following Judge Forrester’s decision in June 1985, Dave Kennedy raised another point in a memo to the Radio Management Committee: “The implications of this case extend well beyond the two stations involved. Radio broadcasters across the country will sooner or later be forced to acknowledge the rapid proliferation of digital or electronic-tuned radios. Those who have ‘rounded up’ their frequency will be at a disadvantage to those who have ‘rounded down,’ given the automatic scanning mechanisms available on many such radios. The station that has emphasized its exact frequency will be in the best position of all.”

With the Atlanta megahertz melee out of the courtroom, WRMM moved on to its third format change.

In a nutshell, this is what happened. When WFOX-FM added oldies to its mix, WRMM and WSB-FM beefed up their music lists with oldies, rendering WFOX-FM’s approach less unique. WSB-FM (presumably on the basis of research) then dropped many of its oldies and substituted up-tempo current tunes. WSB-FM’s “facelift” to a more pronounced contemporary sound yielded a clear distinction among the three competitors: WFOX—oldies; WSB-FM—current hits with small doses of oldies; and WRMM—an even mixture of oldies and current hits.

All three stations sought basically the same audience. New research underscored two major points: WRMM needed a format that exuded more vitality and an ad campaign that communicated that philosophy. Already with new call letters (WARM-FM), a new manager, a new format, and a new ad campaign came to 3405 Piedmont Road in February 1986.

The new manager succeeding Juli Dorff was Bill Phippen. A New Yorker by birth, Mr. Phippen considered Atlanta his real home. He was a 10-year general sales manager for WQXI-AM & FM in Atlanta from 1971 to 1979, when the station was at its peak. He also worked at WSB-AM & FM in Atlanta as general sales manager, and as a general manager at stations in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and Phoenix.

In addition to his management and leadership abilities, Mr. Phippen proved outstanding at identifying, training, and developing staff members who ultimately moved into major management positions within Susquehanna and the industry. A prime example of Mr. Phippen’s ability to nurture talent is Monte Maupin-Gerard, who also joined the station in February 1986, as general sales manager. Formerly a top-notch account executive at competitor WSB, Ms.

Maupin-Gerard's skills and growth were later acknowledged by her appointment as general manager of WFMS.

Although his background was in radio sales, Mr. Phippen's intuitive sense of programming added immeasurably to his success in broadcasting. The new format Bill Phippen would develop and preside over at WRMM was Contemporary Hit Radio, or as the trade often referred to it, Top 40. Actually, Top 40 radio of the 1980s bore only a surface resemblance to the Top 40 of 30 years earlier. A strong reliance on current hits appealing to the 18-to-34 demographic block was the sole similarity.

To go with this new Contemporary Hit Radio format was a new identifier, "Power 99.7—Atlanta's New Home of Rock-and-Roll," and a new ad campaign.

Late in 1986, Executive Vice President Larry Grogan added the Atlanta station to his list of responsibilities. "Bill and I hit it off immediately," Mr. Grogan reported to Mr. Carlson. "We have in Bill not only an experienced general manager, but a guy who really knows the Top 40 format. What he lacks is a program director with the creative genius to break Power 99 out of the pack in Atlanta." So the very difficult search began.

Mr. Grogan recalls a mission he and Rick McDonald were sent on by Bill Phippen during the fall of 1987: "Rick and I were working at our stations in Tampa/St. Petersburg when Bill phoned and asked us to fly to Ft. Lauderdale to meet Rick Stacy, a Miami program director. Bill had already interviewed Rick, and felt he had just the right experience, talent, and personality to take on the job at Power 99. Rick and I ended up on a 12-seater, white-knuckle flight through scattered thunderstorms on (whoever heard of this!) Sunshine Airlines. I remember the two of us looking at each other and saying at the very same time, 'This guy Stacy had better be good!'"

Rick Stacy was hired in October 1987, and immediately began to refine the on-air product. The energy level exuded by the announcers was increased, as was their profile, and the slogan for the station was shortened to simply, "Power 99."

On February 10, 1988, the official call sign became WAPW and the WARM letters were transferred to WSBA-FM, York, to better reflect the warm, "Soft Rock, Less Talk" format of WARM 103. With this fourth call letter change, Art Carlson commented on the dynamic radio environment in the Atlanta market.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

There are only a handful of markets that can be considered in the same breath with Atlanta. Even with four or five additional

“move-in” FM stations, Atlanta still has very few stations. Additionally, the market’s growth potential remains enormous. It is not at all impossible that before the year 2000, Atlanta will be considered the best radio market in the U.S. in terms of billings and profits per station.

The ability to be very successful in Atlanta is so enormously probable that if we stumble with one format, we look around for the next one. Ideally, you try to find a format that has the greatest longevity and you stay with it. That isn’t always true and isn’t always possible. The difference is in the market. Some markets are so crowded, it may be more practical to sell a station while it’s doing well, maybe wait a few years, then come back in and buy another one with a different format.

But there are markets—not many—where the logical strategy is to live with the shelf life of the format, then change the call letters and go on to the next one. Atlanta fits that description.



The Bill Phippen/Rick Stacy team proved to be a “dynamic duo.” In describing the new format and energized station, Manager Phippen recalled the carefully constructed revitalization plan that was put in place: “At WAPW, 1988 was a building year, and we went from five shares in the ratings to the high sevens. Then we really became aggressive in 1989 and 1990, and the station came in second or third in overall total audience and number one in our demographic concentration.”

As WAPW’s ratings increased, so did the reputation of its manager. In a fitting tribute to his leadership at WAPW and his distinguished career in the radio industry, Bill Phippen was recognized as the 1990 General Manager of the Year at the Poe Convention, hosted by “Bobby Poe’s Pop Music Survey” publication.

WAPW’s growing success reflected an amalgam of on-the-air and off-the-air factors: on-the-air, programming was refined and fine-tuned; off-the-air, Power 99 produced and executed numerous sales and promotional events. In the latter category were the annual Baby Expo, Toys for Tots, the Memorial Day Blast-Off (a free concert, featuring top nationally known talent), and a spectacular seven-story-tall tomahawk built to celebrate the Braves’ 1991 pennant win.

By 1991, WAPW’s public service and promotional savvy had earned the station two top industry awards: The Bobby Poe Major Market Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR) Station of the Year and the Gavin Major Market Station of the Year. In 1992, WAPW was named the “Radio Station of the Year” by the Gavin Awards.

But no citation is as significant as one bestowed by one's peers. All hands at WAPW were justifiably proud to receive the Georgia Association of Broadcasters 1991 Station of the Year award. This award marked the first time the group's panel of judges (comprised of the association's board of directors and past presidents) chose to give the award to a music station or an FM station. All such previous awards by the state group had gone to News/Talk outlets. In addition, Mr. Phippen was presented the "Golden Mike" award as Manager of the Year in Georgia. The concurrent winning of these honors is a truly remarkable achievement.



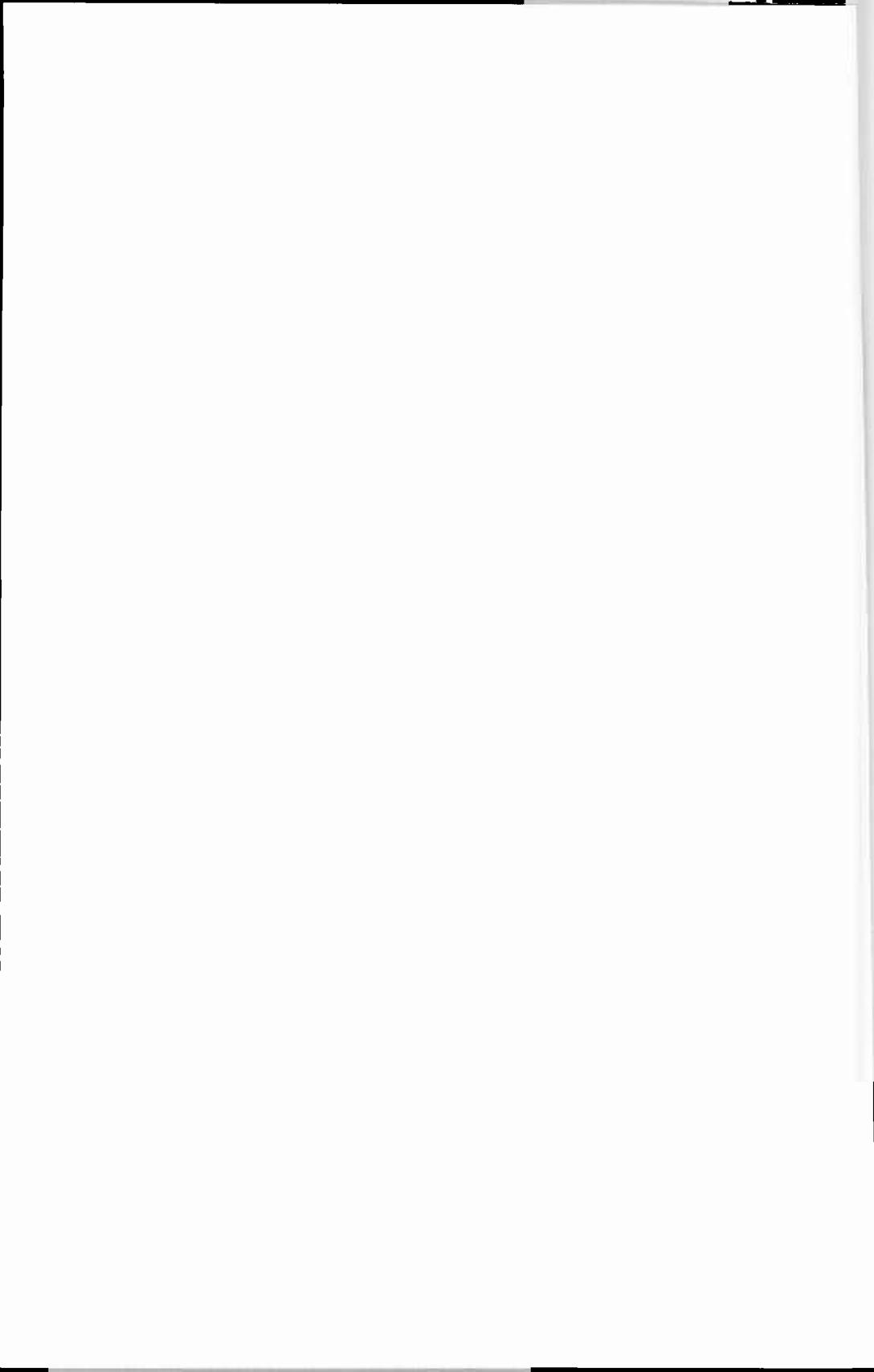
Sadly, on September 22, 1992, Bill Phippen passed away following a brave battle with cancer. In his honor, the Bill Phippen Scholarship Fund was established at the University of Georgia by Susquehanna Radio, WAPW, and the Atlanta Radio Association. The recipients of this scholarship will be students of the College of Journalism who are pursuing a career in broadcasting, with an emphasis in radio. In this way, Mr. Phippen's legacy of nurturing young, aspiring broadcasters within the radio industry will live on. Mr. Phippen will be sorely missed by the Power 99 staff, Susquehanna Radio personnel, and everyone in Atlanta radio circles.



When Atlanta declares itself the "Capital of the New South," the designation stands unchallenged. No major market has earned a more positive image than Atlanta in the past 25 years. It has traditionally enjoyed distinction as a "good broadcasting town," stretching back to radio's pioneer days. WSB ("Welcome South, Brother") owned by Cox Communications, and WGST (formerly owned by Georgia Tech and at one time on Susquehanna's list of possible acquisitions) were both founded in 1922.

During Susquehanna's Atlanta years, the city's reputation as an important media and international trade center has continued to rise. Meanwhile, economic, social, and political forces, together with natural physical advantages, have made Atlanta one of the most appealing places to live.

"Atlanta," says Dan Sweat, head of Central Atlanta Progress and one of the city's premier ambassadors, "is a city of the future not of the past." Susquehanna concurs.



Deep in the Heart of Texas

KPLX/KLIF



Chapter 19

In recounting the successes of WSBA, WARM, and WHLO during the late 1950s and early 1960s, much credit must be given to the emerging concept of “strip marketing” and its application to the broadcasting industry. Commenting on this concept, Art Carlson contributed the following thoughts on “Radio and the New Age of Marketing,” in the November 20, 1961 issue of *Sponsor* magazine:

Today there are many new and constantly changing marketing patterns, creating changes in advertising planning—but none more important than the development of the giant, complex, super-metropolitan area best described as the “strip market.” . . . The advertiser who realizes that strip markets are not a marketing concept of the future, but an existing reality, will realize the benefits of more effective advertising.

Once again, Susquehanna applied the strip marketing concept to station operations, this time in the leading Dallas/Fort Worth market.

Texas has traditionally enjoyed a reputation as a “good place to do business.” That renown for free enterprise in Dallas’ case got its biggest boost when the East Texas oil field opened in the 1930s. Dallas quickly cashed in as a banker for the operation. The huge capital reserves created were thus available to finance more exploration for oil and for diversification into such areas as insurance and electronics. Old-fashioned entrepreneurial daring has contributed greatly to the growth of many post-War Dallas-based companies. Dallas also has become a gateway for southwestern trade, leading the region in banks, distribution centers, and even fashion.

Yet despite Dallas' "good press," Mr. Carlson points out, "it was not on our list of potential expansion markets." Although the city's business climate was upbeat, the competitive situation seemed to militate against the possibility of establishing a station in the Dallas/Fort Worth region. "There were just too many stations in the market," the Radio Division president emphasized. That did not mean, of course, that if an attractive prospect arose, the Company would ignore it.

Such an engaging possibility presented itself early in 1973, when it was learned that KXOL-AM & FM of Fort Worth, part of the Wendell Mayes Stations group, were for sale. The obligatory feasibility study revealed that KXOL-FM, though licensed to Fort Worth, was capable with complicated engineering adjustments of putting a dominant signal over Dallas as well. Thus, the bright prospect of entering one of the nation's largest strip markets led to negotiations with the Mayes Stations.

Time, urban sprawl, and politics had tied Dallas and Fort Worth tightly together. In 1973, the connection became even more pronounced when the Census Bureau designated Dallas and Fort Worth as a single metropolitan statistical area. The designation "Metroplex" was assigned to the region, making it physically the largest Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) in the nation—and one that would become the ninth largest in population, only a whisker behind Houston. Dallas, "where the East ends," and Fort Worth, "where the West begins," were inextricably united when the Dallas/Fort Worth Regional Airport opened in 1974, halfway between the two, and became the largest commercial airport in the world.

KXOL-FM became part of the Susquehanna family in March 1974, the same week that WLTA-FM in Atlanta entered the fold. In splitting its KXOL-AM and FM outlets, the Mayes Stations (headed by Bill Jamar at the time) sold KXOL-AM to Signal Oil Company. Susquehanna soon changed its new KXOL-FM to KPLX, call letters chosen to capitalize on the regional "Metroplex" designation.

With 100,000 watts at 99.5 mHz on the dial, the station was located at 1705 West Seventh Street in Fort Worth. Representing a large geographic jump for Susquehanna, KPLX was the Company's first acquisition west of the Mississippi. The purchase also marked the Company's entrance into its largest market to date.

When Susquehanna purchased the station, it was well aware that KXOL's 600-foot tower in Arlington, located 30 miles from downtown Dallas, would never be able to radiate at full effectiveness throughout the Metroplex region. A move to a higher tower was in order, and the most desirable site in the area was Cedar Hill, a moun-

tain that is a veritable “antenna farm” from which most local TV and FM stations transmitted. But the move to Cedar Hill required two years of delicate maneuvering through the thickets of FCC regulations, leases, covenants, legal briefs, and even the “electronic ministry.”

The tangled Cedar Hill tower story began with a clause in the KXOL bill of sale. A provision in the proposal stated that the price paid for KXOL would be substantially greater if the FCC Table of Allocations could be changed to allow the relocation of KXOL to Cedar Hill. Since this modification involved a frequency change for an adjacent station at Tyler, Texas, this FCC approval was required.

Prior to the actual transfer of control, Susquehanna entered into an agreement to purchase an existing tower at Cedar Hill. The land at Cedar Hill was owned by the Hill Tower Company, while the tower itself was owned by T. Mellon Evans (of the Pittsburgh Mellons). Mr. Evans leased the tower to Evans Broadcasting Company, which he also owned, which in turn leased portions of the tower to a shower of tenants, including Pat Robertson and his Christian Broadcasting Network. As Art Carlson explained, the tower was “covered with leases,” and, “when you factored in all the related costs, insurance, etc., we were guaranteed to lose money.”

The use of this tower had other complications in that the top 78-foot section of the 1,559-foot structure consisted of a 24-inch square pedestal used to mount a television antenna. The ownership of this antenna was in question after having been transferred several times through religious foundations and bankrupt corporations.

The proposal of Susquehanna’s director of engineering, Charlie Morgan, was to remove the television pedestal and replace it with a 78-foot pole, upon which KPLX would mount its antenna.

In May of 1975, the FCC amended its Table of Allocations, thus allowing KPLX to file an application for a construction permit to relocate the transmission facilities to Cedar Hill. Mr. Morgan filed the application on June 12. One year later, after receiving FCC approval and the completion of the construction phase requirements, a new and much-improved KPLX went on the air. With its tower and transmitter building safely ensconced on Cedar Hill, the station could now beam its 100,000 watts with maximum effectiveness throughout the vast 17-county area. KPLX was now, from a technical standpoint, equal to or better than any station in the market.

Although the station had existed since 1962, shaping it in the Susquehanna mold meant virtually beginning from scratch, and that meant hiring a resourceful manager. Selected to fill those very tall boots was Wally Tucker, manager of WFBL in Syracuse, N.Y. Mr.

Tucker's efforts at KPLX began in early 1974, several months prior to Susquehanna's takeover in March. He recalls that his move to Susquehanna capped one of the most unusual hiring scenarios he's ever encountered, either before or since.

A True KPLX Tale—Wally Tucker

When the headhunter called me, I had interviews with Jack DeHaven and Art Carlson. These were not your typical interviews. They included written questions like, "What is your philosophy of broadcasting?" and "How do you handle a situation where an ad agency stands in the way of closing a major sale?" Each question could have easily filled three or four pages. Art was very secretive about which Susquehanna station I was being considered for. I remember going back to Syracuse and checking the grapevine and discovering Susquehanna was in the process of purchasing stations in Atlanta and Fort Worth.

Figuring either of those assignments would be a great move up from Syracuse, I pursued the opportunity with all the talent I could muster. Eventually the call came from Art Carlson, but the offer was to move to Long Island or Indianapolis! I remember saying, "Art, what happened to Dallas/Fort Worth and Atlanta?"

He replied, "I never mentioned Dallas/Fort Worth or Atlanta."

Well, I was disappointed, but I hung tough and was eventually hired to go to Texas.

Mr. Tucker's first project after Susquehanna's acquisition of the station was to find more spacious accommodations for KPLX. These he found at 6465 Spur 303, Fort Worth. New studios, a newsroom, production area, and sales domain were to serve as KPLX's home for the next five years. The station's format had been predetermined to be the "Sound of Your Life." Four Metroplex competitors were already using some variant of Beautiful Music, making it clear to Manager Tucker and his fellow KPLX hands that their work was cut out for them. With Texas gusto, they placed considerable emphasis on the "selling atmosphere" of the "Sound of Your Life" format. A KPLX sales piece summed up the product as follows:

- Your favorite musical groups and vocalists.
- Personable air communicators who know how to say just enough, how to entertain and sell enthusiastically.
- Information segments to maintain listener attention—news, weather, sports, business/financial news.
- Fascinating audience participation contests.
- Exclusive KPLX "Listening Post."

Unfortunately, most of the Metroplex preferred the Beautiful Music renditions of competing stations KMEZ and KOAX. Despite KPLX's increased coverage area, there were no dramatic improvements in the ratings. KPLX eventually did go from 33rd to 15th in the Arbitron listener sweepstakes, and billings showed approximately the same ratio of improvement. Art Carlson put it this way: "The 'Sound of Your Life' format commonly had mild success, and yet never overwhelmed anyone. We had some fairly decent numbers, but much like Cincinnati, never really made it in Texas. It wasn't a financial disaster by any means; it was just an unrealized potential."

Still, whatever the unfulfilled expectations that haunted the Company's Texas outpost, two staff members deserve to be singled out for the intensity of their efforts during KPLX's "Sound of Your Life" years: Ted Jones, the creative program director, and Craig Eaton, who wore many hats in programming and promotion.

In late 1978, two groups of managers came to Dallas to study the market and investigate programming alternatives to "Sound of Your Life." Larry Grogan, Sandy Goldberg, and Dave Garrison (a former summer intern who later joined Susquehanna), formed the first committee, while George Hyde, Herb Levin, and Jack DeHaven made up the second. As Larry Grogan reported, "It became apparent to both groups that KPLX was not really considered a serious contender in the marketplace." Both teams suggested several format possibilities, including Country.

About the same time, plans were completed for building larger quarters to house KPLX. A site was chosen midway between Fort Worth and Dallas at 411 Ryan Plaza in Arlington. Groundbreaking ceremonies took place during the 1979 National Association of Broadcasters convention being held in Dallas. Projected date of occupancy was late 1979 or early 1980.

Meanwhile, as KPLX's new building construction got under way, a remarkable thing happened: An opportunity arose to buy an AM station in Dallas. Back in 1974, Susquehanna had declined to purchase KXOL-AM, choosing the stand-alone KXOL-FM. But here in 1979, a different set of circumstances existed. This was not an "ordinary" station being peddled. It was KLIF, a facility whose historic set of call letters identified one of the bellwethers of the Top 40 era. Although KLIF's engineering requirements were complicated, the pluses far outweighed the minuses.

KLIF's colorful founder, Gordon McLendon, had formed in 1948 a national sports network, the Liberty Broadcasting System (LBS). Mr. McLendon was keenly aware of the potential audience for play-by-play sports, despite the relatively few games then carried by

the major networks. Calling himself the “Old Scotsman” on the air—he was in his early thirties at the time—he broadcast realistic recreations of baseball and football contests, using up-to-the-minute game information and dozens of pre-recorded sound effects. So realistic were these re-creations that many listeners were convinced that they were actual live play-by-play broadcasts.

Disapproving of Mr. McLendon’s success and fearful of the impact his growing network of stations could have on game attendance, the major league baseball clubs took legal action against Liberty, and in 1952, the network was silenced. Without baseball, LBS was not a viable network, and Mr. McLendon began buying stations. His radio domain at one time included flagships KLIF and KNUS, Dallas; KILT, Houston; KTSA, San Antonio; WAKY, Louisville; KEEL, Shreveport; KABL-AM & FM, San Francisco; WWNW, Detroit; WYNR (later WNUS), Chicago; WYSL, Buffalo; KADS (now KOST), Los Angeles; and KELP-AM & TV, El Paso.

Although Todd Storz, founder and owner of Storz Broadcasting, is generally credited with developing the Top 40 concept, Mr. McLendon’s innovative contributions to the format are legend. As an undisputed leader in the Top 40 hierarchy, Mr. McLendon came to be known as the “P.T. Barnum of Broadcasting.”

A True KLIF Tale—Gordon McLendon

I was flamboyant. But out of necessity. A fellow named C.E. Hooper, who ran the dominant rating service at the time, listened to us when we had started our new format. He said, “Gordon, I’ve listened to it, and you’re doing everything right but one thing.” Well, I thought I was doing it *all* right. But Hooper said, “You’ve got to promote. You’ve got to have a lot of promotions on the air.”

Thus was born what I believe to be the modern, all-new Top 40 format. Todd Storz did a variety of it, but not with as much promotion. KLIF was the first station to do it with flamboyance and razzmatazz. It all begins with creativity and programming. You can have the greatest sales staff in the world and it doesn’t mean a thing if you don’t have something great to put on the air.

Mr. McLendon’s promotions at his stations around the country, aided by copycat stations, helped get listeners back to radio. It was not uncommon for word of the latest McLendon spectacular to spread nationwide within days. Among them were the KLIF Mystery House Number, the KLIF Mystery Telephone Number, and the \$50,000 KLIF Treasure Hunt.

There was also a sober side to the McLendon Top 40 genre. Early in the game, he involved his stations deeply in news and public affairs. KLIF, he maintains, was the first station to editorialize, the first radio station in Dallas to offer sustained coverage of election returns, and the first outlet to use mobile news units.

The accounts of Gordon McLendon's savvy are legion. Marcus Cohn, of the Cohn and Marks law firm, related a typical McLendon story.

A True Texas (By Way of Louisville) Tale—Marcus Cohn

Gordon McLendon called and told me he had bought WAKY in Louisville for \$500,000. I asked him how long he had been considering the purchase since he had never mentioned it to me. He said that the opportunity had arisen the day before and he had decided within 24 hours to buy it. I asked him whether he had ever been to Louisville, or indeed if he had inspected the station. He said he hadn't. I asked him how on earth could he buy a station he had never seen?

He told me it was quite simple. He knew: (1) how many stations were in the market, (2) what their formats were, (3) WAKY's coverage, and (4) Louisville's retail sales. I then asked what WAKY's gross and net figures had been and were. He said he didn't know and couldn't care less. He said he knew what he could do with the station and that was the only thing that mattered.

Incidentally, he sold WAKY several years later for about five times what he paid for it.

By 1978, Gordon McLendon had disposed of all his stations to pursue other interests. He had sold KLIF in 1972 to Fairchild Industries, whose primary business was not broadcasting, and Fairchild had actively sought a buyer for several years when Susquehanna purchased the station in 1979.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

Fairchild, which was principally involved in electronics and airplane construction, somehow had gotten into the radio business, buying stations in Minneapolis and Dallas.

The stations went steadily downhill. By the late seventies, Fairchild had sold their Minneapolis station and had had KLIF on the market for some time. But no one would buy it, so the price quoted was steadily dropping to \$6 million or less. It seemed to us to make sense to have an AM/FM combination because of the tremendous growth of the Dallas market. So we entered negotiations long after the station was first offered for sale.

I can recall the meeting at Fairchild headquarters. No price had been mentioned, but we knew we were going to make an offer as part of the discussion. Finally, I blurted out a number which was on the low side of what our parameters were. But I did it in a way that indicated we had analyzed what the real value of the station was, and we had come up with the figure, \$4.25 million, and were waiting for some negotiations. The Fairchild principals, the executive vice president, their head financial man, and a couple of others, sat there for a few minutes. And just like that, they said "OK." There was no negotiation.

As the takeover troops trudged up the stairs of 2120 Commerce Street in Dallas to the station's studios and offices, Larry Grogan remembers that the KLIF property Susquehanna inherited was "actually two buildings put together, each one on a different level, so the second floor of one building was about halfway between the second and third floors of the other. You were constantly going up and down stairs. It was great for your heart."

The KLIF acquisition, then, was another instance of applying the "Susquehanna formula;" that is, buying a property with a deteriorating physical plant, subsequently moving it to larger and more efficient quarters, and installing state-of-the-art equipment. KLIF's depressing building, its failed format (Adult Contemporary), and its location in a deteriorating section of Dallas all added up to the typical Susquehanna project.

"Technically," Mr. Carlson says, "KLIF was the most complicated tower operation of any station in America." But that, as they say, went with the 1190-kHz Dallas territory. Sixteen towers in all were needed to maintain KLIF's two patterns. For its 50,000-watt daytime signal, four towers (at Irving, near Texas Stadium) were required to do the job; 30 miles east of Dallas, 12 towers were used to radiate KLIF's 5,000 watts for nighttime coverage. Director of Engineering Charlie Morgan described the idiosyncratic nighttime signal as, "one of the most restrictive I've ever seen. It was the only station I knew of within the market where the sky wave interference came back down to mix with ground waves and caused interference to itself."

Over on the program side, there was never any doubt that Susquehanna would retain an Adult Contemporary format at KLIF. But the Susquehanna version would be freshened and revitalized. Incorporated in this rendition would be the very best features of the format, with emphasis on the strength of KLIF's legendary call letters. "Come Home to KLIF" was the slogan that wrapped around every on- and off-air promotion.

By now, many former Top 40 stations such as KLIF had changed to the Adult Contemporary format. News and information took on an added significance, while musically—and this was particularly true of KLIF—oldies were emphasized. The idea was to recapture the aura of an earlier time in radio, while still injecting a contemporary feel. Dean Tyler, a specialist in this program format, was hired as operations manager. He had earned his stripes at WIP in Philadelphia, where he had overseen a similar transition of a one-time Top 40 colossus to Adult Contemporary. With pop music becoming synonymous with the FM band, it was not unusual for the KLIFs of the radio world to step up their presentation of news, information, and service. The following checklist from a contemporary sales presentation encapsulates the emphasis on nonmusical elements during Susquehanna's first months as KLIF licensee:

- KLIF is everywhere . . . its appeal is to various family members with a variety of listener services.
- KLIF keeps Dallas/Fort Worth up to date with concise, to-the-point, reliable news coverage—local, national, and international.
- KLIF presents customized, expert weather forecasts by highly regarded Accuweather.
- KLIF's helicopter traffic reports with Dick Siegel, plus its overall programming relevant to auto listening, make the station desirable for the advertiser who wants a selling opportunity virtually at the point of purchase.

The Company spared little expense in supporting the "Come-Home-to-KLIF" theme. Dean Tyler and his crew swung into action and then waited for their first Arbitron report card.

In 1979, two moves that would fundamentally alter the Company's Texas operations occurred simultaneously. In five years, KPLX had outgrown its original habitat and was relocated to 411 Ryan Plaza in Arlington, the accepted midpoint between Fort Worth and Dallas. The original plan was to have KPLX use approximately two-thirds of the Ryan Plaza building, renting the remainder until the time came for future KPLX expansion. The KLIF purchase altered that picture. No one questioned the logic of having both stations under one roof at Ryan Plaza.

As plans for moving KLIF from Commerce Street progressed, KPLX christened its new location with a new format in January 1980. As a result of the earlier management team visits (and corporate headquarter's own evaluation), a strong consensus for a switch to a Country format materialized. There were several AM stations already cranking out country music, the most formidable being WBAP, Fort

Worth. The 50,000-watt powerhouse at 820 kHz had often been described as "covering half the U.S." On the FM side, the Country field belonged to KSCS alone, an enviable position. WBAP and KSCS were owned by Capital Cities. Incredibly, no one had challenged KSCS' Country format on the FM band. Enter Susquehanna.

The competitive picture in the Metroplex at that time was, in Art Carlson's opinion, "the biggest part of the KPLX story."

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

The number one Country station, KSCS, was an enormous success; its Country format was discovered almost by accident. The man who created it was Joe Somerset—I think he was Capital Cities' vice president of programming at the time. When they bought WBAP and KSCS, their main concern was WBAP, which was (and still is) a very large operation. Like a lot of people, they said, "What do we do with the FM?" They decided to play Country.

Well, Joe Somerset's greatest successes had been in Beautiful Music, so he took all the basic approaches and trappings of that format and adapted it to Country. That meant a very low-key presentation, four or five songs in a row, a limited number of commercials—all the things you historically associate with Beautiful Music.

The format had already been called "Continuous Country" when they started syndicating it. KSCS obviously developed a terrific reputation for playing a lot of music. We weren't a clone when KPLX went Country. We had our own announcing style and other differences, so that listeners knew there was another choice for Country radio in Dallas/Fort Worth.

Larry Grogan, who had supervised the WFMS switch to Country, was asked to repeat that role at KPLX. The Texas transition was no less colorful than the one he orchestrated in Indiana.

A True KPLX Tale—Larry Grogan

I brought my own "SWAT team" down from Indianapolis—Herb Allen, my program director, and Norm Phillips, my chief engineer. We put the Country thing together at 411 Ryan Plaza while Wally was holding the fort at the old building. Of course, Wally knew of the change, as did the sales manager, and that was about it. The first thing Norm did was construct a dubbing studio. To keep the current KPLX staff from knowing what was going on, we had to do most of the work at night.

I didn't know any of the staff and how they'd react. We were a sort of covert, middle-of-the-night team, kind of like placing dyna-

mite throughout the building. So we got everything ready for the format change, moved to the new building, switched broadcasting facilities, and 15 minutes later were into Country. As I think back on it, to the poor guys on the air, it must have been mind-boggling!

With the on-site help of Mike Hoyer, the talented KPLX staff member who had assisted with the WFMS transition to Country, the format was implemented under Larry Grogan's guidance. But, no sooner had the Grogan team returned to Indianapolis than its leader received a call from York. Wally Tucker had resigned. Art Carlson called Mr. Grogan to return to Texas and meet with Mr. Tucker.

The Grogan-Tucker meeting was a short one. "I didn't need to do much talking," Mr. Grogan said. "Apparently Wally had some second thoughts about the resignation and withdrew it."

Wally Tucker's change of heart, however, was short-lived, and he resigned in February 1980. Larry Grogan was appointed interim supervisor of KPLX and KLIF as an intense search for a manager got under way.

In the spring, the trail ended at WHBQ in Memphis. T.J. Donnelly, who was manager of that RKO station, signed on as KPLX/KLIF manager in May 1980. When he arrived, optimism in the new building was still running high following the introduction of the Country format at KPLX. Down on Commerce Street, the plea continued to "Come Back to KLIF," while plans to move the station to Ryan Plaza took on an added urgency. Mr. Grogan, meanwhile, continued his supervisory role, going to Texas periodically from his Indianapolis base.

With KPLX's change to Country completed, Messrs. Grogan and Donnelly turned their attention to the "sizzle." New graphics, sales promotion materials, slogans—a thousand details related to the "packaging"—required immediate and daily attention. The program philosophy was spelled out:

KPLX plays the hits! The best in the country music world. We play the winners! But KPLX plays more than the hits of today and the classics of yesterday. WE HAVE FUN. Promotions, quizzes, requests, dedications, and much, much more.

"All Star Country" was chosen as the promotional handle, with graphics in red, white, and blue. A smiling Texan in cowboy hat and boots stood astride the call letters in many KPLX graphics. Initial reaction through mail, phone calls, and street comments was positive. Dallas/Fort Worth appeared to be saying "yes" to its new Country sound.

When the first Arbitron report card came out in midsummer (covering April/May 1980), loud Texas cheers were in order. After being an also-ran for so long, KPLX's numbers moved out of the shadows and into the sun. There was even more cause for jubilation when Arbitron's October/November 1980 report showed even more audience gains.

Local and corporate managements, however, also received a melancholy message in those same ratings books: listeners were *not* coming home to KLIF. As the year wore on, there was only one patch of blue sky for KLIF. The Commerce Street lease had finally expired, and in late summer, the move to Ryan Plaza was completed. But as Mr. Grogan said, "The more we hammered on the 'Come-Home-to-KLIF' theme, the more frustrated we got."

Few dilemmas in broadcasting are more unsettling than a format that isn't working, and "this KLIF thing" was even more troubling. "Donnelly didn't understand it. *I* didn't understand it," Mr. Grogan confessed.

But he did feel he had identified the core problem: "People just don't want to 'come home.' They just don't believe any of the nostalgia nonsense lasts very long. You look at the scrapbook once a year and that's about it."

With the decision makers in agreement that, indeed, you can't go home again, it was time to change formats. On New Year's Day 1981, KLIF made the shift to Country, but not as a replay of KPLX. The difference between the music on the two stations narrowed down to this: KPLX's blend was more modern, while KLIF's was to have a more traditional slant.

Each station was to have its own identity and its own staff. They would be completely separate in every way except two, the sales effort and sharing the Radiocard, already in use in other Susquehanna markets.

The KPLX-KLIF combination thus became the second such AM-FM Country alliance in Dallas/Fort Worth, with WBAP-KSCS having been at it for some time. The outlook seemed promising:

- Country counted for 25 percent of the Dallas/Fort Worth radio audience.
- WBAP listeners often had to turn elsewhere for their music, since sports programming pre-emptions occurred over 200 days a year. Further, research showed 62 percent of WBAP's audience was over the age of 45.
- KBOX, the other Country AM station at the time, had signal problems and could cover Dallas only. Seventy-two percent of its audience was over 45.

KLIF, on the other hand, provided:

- A 50,000-watt daytime signal, blanketing northcentral Texas
- Programming fashioned by the same people responsible for the rising success of KPLX.
- A Country format to appeal to adults aged 25 to 54.

KLIF was endowed with the same standards of quality that had become Susquehanna's hallmark—a top-notch staff and a handsome promotion budget.

Almost immediately, KLIF was victimized by two misfires, which were not uncommon in the pre-research era. Both involved promotional strategies. First, there was the slogan “Country . . . Texas Style,” which never caught on. “Too parochial,” says Larry Grogan. “The Texans simply saw through that bit of hype,” says Dave Kennedy.

Even less appealing in the heart of country music territory, in Larry Grogan's opinion, was the choice of the armadillo as “mascot.” “As a transient, in and out of the city, the only image I had of an armadillo was as a slow, dumb animal that you would run over with a car. All the armadillos I ever saw in Texas were lying flattened-out along the highway. I didn't think we benefited from the image of some armor-coated clod walking across the road to be run over.”

The life spans of the “Country . . . Texas Style” slogan and the armadillo mascot were mercifully short. “Classic Country” and two “Urban Cowgirls” were replacements.

For the next five years, from 1981 to 1985, local and corporate management mounted a heroic effort with KLIF's Classic Country. One of the first steps was a coup of sorts: The station snared top Country deejay Don Harris, 15-year WBAP veteran, for its critical morning drive-time slot.

In addition to Mr. Harris, KLIF fielded an exceptional lineup across the board. In 1981, Dan Halyburton returned to Susquehanna as operations manager for KLIF and KPLX. Promotions compatible with the format rang through the Dallas/Fort Worth air with staccato-like regularity. The station's remote vehicle took the show on the road. KLIF's “Urban Cowgirl” competition was a media event of considerable proportions, even for Texas. Modeled along Miss America lines, the contest afforded two young women the opportunity to be urban cowgirls, representing the station, mascot fashion. In the same vein, the KLIF “Star Search” sought the Metroplex's top country and western singer.

But no promotional gambit caught the KLIF flavor better than its billboard showing. Mr. Grogan calls this outdoor campaign "probably the greatest thing we had going." The billboards, featuring whiz-bang one-liners from lyrics of country songs, created a notable stir throughout the Dallas/Fort Worth media community. Badges and other spinoffs capped one of the most talked-about radio station flings the Metroplex had ever seen. Even though KLIF staff people were disappointed that the posters did not translate into more listeners, a positive attitude continued to prevail.

On the FM side, in the meantime, the KPLX Country panache was rubbing off on a growing constituency. One of the catalysts was the "K-PLEX Party." These "true Texas happenings" featured country music for dancing, fun contests, great prizes, and occurred three or four times a month. Dan Halyburton said the K-PLEX Party "really helped get the station rolling."

Big-time radio, in the 1980s and in Susquehanna's largest city so far, posed a continuing promotion challenge. Devising promotional hoopla in the nation's ninth largest market required a delicate balance between budget and the need to make a big enough stir for attention. The following promotions showed how KPLX could think big and still stay within the bounds of fiscal responsibility:

- **Texas State Fair**—KPLX booth was a regular presence. Station personalities emceed name acts on grandstand stage. One year, fair attendees received half-price admissions by presenting empty KPLX-imprinted Coke cans for recycling.
- **"Spirit of Texas"**—KPLX and WFAA-TV created an original song to commemorate the Texas sesquicentennial.
- **Fort Worth Fat Stock Show**—An annual event, KPLX displayed a truck loaded with full Pepsi cans. The person with the closest guess as to the number of cans won the truck.
- **KPLX Texas Lottery**—In the absence of an official state version, the station designed its own, using all the elements of a regular lottery.

On the sales front, despite KLIF's ratings inertia, the "Double Country" AM-FM sales strategy was enjoying tremendous success. "Since Country is the number one format in Dallas/Fort Worth, you need to 'double cover' yourself with AM Country radio as well as FM," a sales brochure argued. "Ignore the AM *Country* market, and you miss one-third of your market, because, of the million folks a week who listen to country music, one-third tune in on AM. . . . (Ours) is a lively on-air sound—current Top 40 Country for KPLX, oldies and familiar Country on KLIF." So well was the KPLX-KLIF sales combi-

nation working, the motto "Results Radio" was coined and began appearing in brochures and trade advertising.

In spring 1982, T.J. Donnelly resigned as general manager and was replaced in that position by Dan Halyburton. As part of the Company's developing regionalized management plan, Larry Grogan moved to Dallas. There, he took on new responsibilities as supervising executive of Susquehanna's Texas and Indianapolis properties, later to become regional vice president, western region, then executive vice president of the Radio Division.

The competitive picture in the Metroplex area at this time showed six stations (KPLX, KLIF, WBAP, KSCS, KBOX, KXOL-AM) formatted in Country. Then along came KIXX, located in Denton which is north of Dallas, but with a very listenable signal.

"KIXX did start getting some audience, at our expense," Art Carlson remembers. "KPLX had lapsed into some very bad habits. But we managed to get the station back on track during the first few months that KIXX was into Country." Two of the bad habits Mr. Halyburton helped break were over-commercialization and a failure to fine-tune the music list. KPLX managed to "dodge the bullet."

While KPLX was scoring one ratings victory after another, KLIF's inability to rise past 20th place hovered like a black cloud over 411 Ryan Plaza. "We tried all sorts of adjustments to KLIF's Country format," Larry Grogan said, "but it never really worked the way we wanted it to." Remembering the success with WBAP's Don Harris, Susquehanna Executive Vice President Grogan brought in Bill Mack, "the A-1 night guy over at WBAP. But neither Bill Mack nor anything else seemed to help KLIF much. We stumbled along, trying to salvage our AM Country format. Both KPLX and KSCS were just clobbering KLIF. We were beating ourselves with our own muscle!"

A reluctant decision was made to replace KLIF's format. Following research and many hours of planning, a dramatic strategy materialized. Surprisingly, as the KLIF format possibilities were being explored, it appeared that Dallas/Fort Worth was the only major market without a "Talk" station. (WFAA had dropped theirs several years earlier.) That a Talk "hole" appeared on the Metroplex dial in 1985 was just one of those radio oddities that crop up in this sometimes peculiar business.

KLIF had been moving slowly in the Talk direction, already picking up NBC's "Talknet" from 6:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M., thus presenting a strange "Country/Talk" hybrid. Now, after months of planning, the pieces came together, and on January 22, 1986, under Program Director Dan Bennett's watchful eye and ear, KLIF became the only all-Talk station in Dallas/Fort Worth. The starting lineup read like this:

- 6-9 A.M. "NORM HITZGES SHOW"—In "America's most rabid sports town," a call-in morning gabfest, the only such special in a major market. Co-hosted by Dan Bennett.
- 9 A.M.—Noon "DR. LYNN WEISS SHOW"—A psychotherapist specializing in personal advice.
- Noon-1 P.M. "THE BUSINESS HOURS"—John Pendolino with financial advice, business experts, market reports, consumer affairs.
- 1-3 P.M. "AT YOUR SERVICE"—Features Karen Bloom and Art Snow, plus experts in law, medicine, accounting, and other fields.
- 3-6 P.M. "THE DAVID GOLD SHOW"—a controversial conservative host covers politics, lifestyles, local and national issues.
- 6-9 P.M. & Midnigh-3 A.M. BRUCE WILLIAMS (NBC Talknet).—Mainly financial advice.
- 9 P.M.—Midnight & 3-5 A.M. SALLY JESSY RAPHAEL (NBC Talknet).—Personal advice.
- 5-6 A.M. "DALLAS-FORT WORTH MORNING REPORT"—KLIF, CNN, NBC News Departments combined to present weather, traffic, sports.

On weekends, gardening, pets, fishing, home repairs, and car care gained the spotlight. Play-by-play sports, including the Dallas Mavericks, Monday Night NFL football, and Southwest Conference football rounded out the Talk menu.

None of Susquehanna's stations received the kind of press coverage accorded KLIF's Talk Radio transformation. A sampler:

"There's enough drama to rival a soap opera every weekday morning when troubled listeners call the "Dr. Lynn Weiss Show" on KLIF Talk Radio, 1190 AM, to unload their most personal conflicts and hang-ups and seek advice."

—*Dallas Life* magazine, 8/10/86

"KLIF-AM, seeking to boost its noon business talk show, will give away an opportunity to earn an MBA at the University of Dallas."

—*Dallas Morning News*, 8/3/86

"Right now I'm gearing myself to possibly not playing."

—Gary Hogeboom on KLIF's "Norm Hitzges Morning Show." Conversation reported in *Dallas Morning News*, 3/5/86

“David Gold is undeniably controversial and occasionally outrageous. . . . As one of what he claims are “only eight identifiable political conservatives on major market radio stations,” Gold proudly, loudly breaks ranks with his more liberal colleagues.”

—Dallas *Times Herald*, 3/4/87

“We wanted to give listeners something they could not find elsewhere.”

—KLIF’s Dan Bennett in Dallas *Morning News* interview, 2/5/86

Under the best circumstances, a format change is fraught with uncertainty. But the success of KLIF’s new Talk format not only validated the rationale for making the change, but pushed KLIF to a new level of achievement. By retaining its existing audience while attracting new listeners, KLIF became the most successful news and information station among the targeted 25-to-54 age group in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.



In Dallas/Fort Worth, “it all came together.” Why, with several other stations cranking out country music in the nation’s number one Country market, should KPLX enjoy its substantial success? It may be the “foreground presentation”—personalities, contests and information, all in a lively country music environment.

Indeed, the quest for creating marketing ploys with Texas appeal is never-ending. This is superbly illustrated in the creation of the slogan, “Flex Your Plex.” The radio impresario who brought Country to Susquehanna traces its genesis.

A True KPLX Tale—Larry Grogan

The lifestyles of Dallas and Fort Worth are different, and to link the two of them with a word like “Metroplex” did not go down too well. Besides, they didn’t want to be known as an industrial complex as much as they wanted to be identified as part of the Sunbelt. They felt “Metroplex” lacked warmth. In fact, we had dropped the Plex thing when we came on with Country. But as we went up against KSCS, we knew they didn’t have a promotional word with those call letters, but we did when we said K-Plex. So we went back to it again.

About this time Dan Halyburton hooked up with a New York agency executive, Dale Pon, who dreamed up “Flex Your Plex.” It didn’t make any sense, but then a lot of good advertising doesn’t

make sense. It was a handle the audience and the station could identify as a springboard for promotion.

If we had taken "Flex Your Plex" and treated it as a "snapshot" instead of a "movie," we'd have spent a ton of money on a meaningless exercise. But we promoted it, painted it all over town, and didn't walk away from it. I firmly believe "Flex Your Plex" was the sparkplug, the thing that gave the station an identity, the personification of a promotional theme that really got us moving.

At the same time KPLX programmers were flexing their creativity, the sales department tackled modern marketing. Says Mr. Grogan, "These salespeople would sit in front of a computer for three or four hours, generating the kind of stuff that turns a \$10,000 order into an \$18,000 one. 'Selling from the heart, but arguing from the head,' I call it." The Grogan "heart/head" formula clicked. By 1987, KLIF/KPLX had outgrown its Ryan Plaza home in Arlington. Late in the year, a grand opening, Texas-style, heralded the move to Suite 1600, Riverchon Plaza, 3500 Maple at Turtle Creek, in Dallas. Thirty percent of the new 14,000-square-foot facility was allocated to state-of-the-art studios and operational areas.

The 1980s saw Susquehanna's two properties mature and become absorbed into the Texas mainstream. That maturation was to take a giant Texas stride beginning in late 1990 when a management initiative would enable KLIF to become an even stronger player in the Dallas/Fort Worth media market.

From KLIF's first day in the Susquehanna fold, it was felt the station's tower array would never allow the station to realize its full potential in covering Dallas and Fort Worth. Thus it was in the closing days of 1990, the Company finalized an arrangement that would, as Dan Halyburton described it, ultimately "boom out a signal that goes from Oklahoma City to east of Tyler, way past Abilene, and south to Austin." It was Mr. Halyburton who spearheaded the move (a literal one) that meant yet another reincarnation of KLIF.

A True KLIF Tale—Dan Halyburton

In 1989, we had approached a company called Anchor Media, which owned a combination, KZEW-FM and their AM station, the old WFAA at 570 kHz, the area's original Talk station. We were interested in acquiring the WFAA frequency and moving KLIF off 1190 kHz; Anchor was not interested. Then early in 1990, when Anchor was in the process of selling its FM property, we contacted them again. This time the answer was "yes."

To accomplish this, however, we had to petition the FCC for a temporary suspension of the "duopoly rule," the regulation that pro-

hibited a licensee from owning more than one AM station or more than one FM station in the same city. The FCC approved our application for a duopoly waiver, and for a three-month period, we owned two AM stations in the same city. Then, for a one-week period, we duplicated KLIF's programming on both AM frequencies. We couldn't run the commercials, however, because our competitors filed a protest, claiming it was unfair competition if a station could sell commercials on two AM stations simultaneously. So we rigged up a system to blank out the commercials on the 1190 frequency, and substituted the announcement that duplicate programming of KLIF was now being broadcast at 570 on the dial. We also informed the listeners that at the end of the week, KLIF would be heard at 570 exclusively.

We then sold the KLIF frequency to Greystone Broadcasting, which now calls their station KUII.

KLIF's ratings increased, our prestige in the marketplace grew, and our acceptability as an advertising medium grew dramatically.

With a new dial address and a wider coverage pattern, Dallas/Fort Worth's News/Talk station could expect bigger and better things—most importantly, audience growth. Recognition of KLIF's new-found prominence came soon, as the station reaped a harvest of awards for its news operation in the early 1990s. These included the National Headliner Award for outstanding radio news coverage; Associated Press awards for best overall coverage, best sport news story, and best feature story; and the Dallas Press Club Award for best newscast.

But if the new KLIF format was reinvigorated with accolades, thanks in large part to its improved physical facility, the "old" KPLX garnered its share of recognition, too. In 1990, the station swept the Country Music Association's and *Billboard* magazine's awards for general manager, program director, music director, and personality of the year. Dan Halyburton was named General Manager of the Year; Mac Daniels was designated Music Director of the Year (in 1987, 1989, and 1991, as well); and Program Director Bobby Kraig added the 1990 award to his many others. In addition, Susan Fine was named *Billboard's* Promotion Director of the Year.

These honors, particularly the personality award, should not be taken lightly. As country music gained in national popularity, the Dallas/Fort Worth Country station wars heated up considerably as the 1980s drew to a close. KPLX's arch Country rival, KSCS, wooed the station's long-time morning host, Terry Dorsey, into their fold. That void was filled by the incomparable morning team of Steve Harmon and Scott Evans, who came to KPLX from Charlotte, North

Carolina. A measure of their popularity can be found in the KPLX "trophy room," as "Harmon & Evans" joined the station's 1990 awards sweep by being named top Country Radio Air Personalities—the first *team* of personalities in the Country Music Association's history ever to win this award. As Harmon and Evans continue to gather awards, they have, in addition, become hosts for a countdown show that airs on 300-plus Country stations, "The Weekly Top 30 with Harmon & Evans."

To say the battle for the Country audience in Dallas/Fort Worth is fierce is certainly not an exaggeration—even for Texas. "Country's a different animal in Texas," Art Carlson has observed. "It's not Nashville Country or any other Country. This music has an audience that ranges from bank presidents to teenagers. It is a part of the Texas way of life, and Susquehanna is proud to be a part of that lifestyle."

Of course, behind the on-air performers who serve up that "way of Texas life" stands a group of talented, dedicated, and hard-working producers, engineers, salespeople, writers, and administrators—always on the prowl for new ideas, innovations, and gimmicks to catapult KPLX's and KLIF's winning ways through the last part of the 20th century. Exceptional sales performance has been a hallmark for the two stations, with the most dramatic growth starting in 1990 with one-time number one Susquehanna salesperson, Gailya Silhan, as general sales manager; Patrick Sbarra, KLIF sales manager; and Bob Waterman, KPLX sales manager. When Ms. Silhan left in 1991, Mr. Sbarra took over as general sales manager, and KLIF's star salesperson, Sabrina Bunks, moved up to sales manager at KLIF. Yet another measure of dramatic sales performance occurred when KPLX's Liz Barber ultimately became Susquehanna's all-time leader in sales.

As for the anchor cities themselves, the following observations about Dallas and Fort Worth, made in the 1980s, may well stand as future good-news harbingers for those two metropolitan areas of the Sunbelt:

From Dallas Magazine's Sesquicentennial Edition (July 1986):

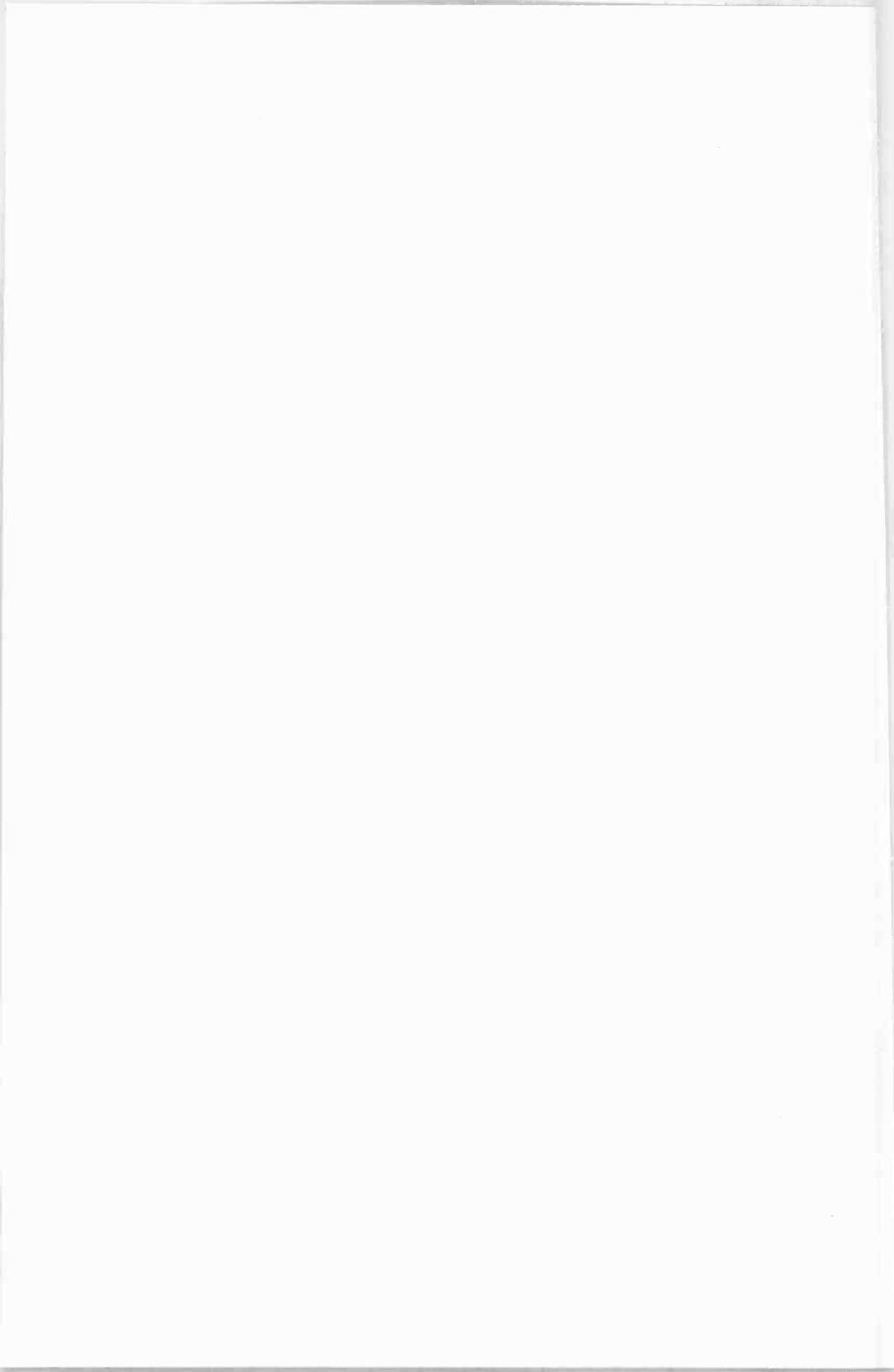
Throughout its history, Dallas has experienced a series of peaks, but the early 1980s long may be remembered as the time when the city reached the pinnacle of its existence. When most of the nation was battling a recession, Dallas prospered. When record 20 percent interest stifled economies throughout the United States, Dallas was undergoing a period of unbridled growth. . . . Dallas began gaining momentum in the late 1970s, just as the "rush to the Sunbelt" began to develop. Coat-tailing on the fame of Lorimar Production's "Dallas" and the Dallas Cowboys, "America's Team," the

city was in the right place at the right time. Business and industry from recession-plagued northern cities were welcome and streamed into the city. Dallas greeted them with open arms. . . . *Time* magazine proclaimed in 1981 that Dallas was a "city that works." . . . New skylines emerged. . . . Dallas/Fort Worth Airport gained national prominence. . . . The 1984 Republican National Convention gave Dallas a needed shove in convention and tourism, and the potential of this growing industry was realized as Dallas became one of the top five convention cities in the nation. . . . The first half of (the 1980s) will be remembered by big buildings, big banks, and a multitude of big deals. . . .

From the New York Times (Dec. 17, 1984):

Fort Worth has always been torn between its unpretentious West Texas cattle town origins and the nagging feeling it should be out there competing with Dallas. . . . But if Fort Worth has never quite got its act in order, its Old West Charm, lively arts scene and low-cost, low-headache lifestyle have made it one of the most livable cities in Texas. . . . Its cattle-culture heritage is most conspicuously on display during the annual Fat Stock Show and Rodeo. . . . The mix of old West and high culture has become Fort Worth's best selling point. . . . "It has a lot of contradictions," says Edmund Pillsbury, director of Fort Worth's Kimbell Art Museum. "It's a blue collar town, but it has a small group of people of enormous wealth." . . . A new federal currency printing plant will inject \$100 million into the economy. . . . H. Ross Perot has just purchased 16,000 acres for possible development. . . . A proposed \$125 million plan to redevelop the city's historic stockyards (could make it) a Williamsburg of the West. . . . No one expects a Dallas-type boom, but these are rare times in Texas, when it's more fun to be the tortoise than the hare.

Whatever the difference between Fort Worth and Dallas, KPLX and KLIF stand tall as two institutions that will help shape those cities' cultural and marketing environments into the 21st century.



Corporate Growing Pains and Pleasures



Chapter 20

Sparked by technological advances, stunning developments in modern communications in the early 1970s had, for the most part, become household appliances by decade's end. Satellite dishes, cable TV, video cassette recorders, compact discs, fiber optics, cellular radio, and pocket calculators became part of American life and language. "Television" meant color television.

In radio, the most dramatic progress of the seventies was FM's coming of age, as the number of FM stations on the air jumped from 2,164 to 3,155 during the decade. The percentage of sets equipped to receive frequency modulation went from 48 percent to 71 percent, and FM's audience share rose from 6.8 percent to 30.3 percent. In 1979, FM's audience share crossed the magic "sound barrier," earning a 50.9 percent rating.

The 1970s were years of remarkable expansion for Susquehanna: starting the decade with just seven stations, it would end with seven on each band. While another measure of the Radio Division's expansion can be seen in the 299 percent sales increase between 1970 and 1980, figures can only partially reflect a company's story of growth. Equally significant during this decade was the emerging relationship between one station and another, and between each individual station and the corporate body.

At the threshold of the seventies, Susquehanna was dedicated to further expansion and would be looking carefully at growth possibilities in the radio field. There were similar commitments to expansion in Susquehanna's manufacturing, cable, factory retail outlets, and outdoor advertising enterprises. It was these parallel "tracks" repre-

senting the diverse company enterprises that led to the search for a new headquarters building in York.

The rationale for such a building, Louis J. Appell, Jr., has pointed out, "was a very simple one: We, as a corporation, were 'scattered to the winds.'"

Louis J. Appell, Jr., Remembers It Well

My office was at 53 North Duke Street, and Art and his people were out at the WSBA Building. The corporate accounting department was located at the old Pfaltzgraff West York plant. The Cable TV management people were at the Cable building on the Queen Street hill. It was very difficult to communicate face to face. In addition, all these operations were expanding. It was clear the corporate staff was going to have to be increased. The only way this could be accomplished was either by maintaining the disparate locations and building additions at several places, or by combining them all under one roof.

Of course, consolidating under one roof had the great attraction of making communications more accessible among the people who were running the total corporation.

Having come to that conclusion, the decision as to where to locate the building was an easy one. It seemed clear to me that it was important that, with our strong business interests in the York community, we ought to pick a site which was practically and psychologically beneficial to the community as a whole. Given these pre-conditions, we decided to locate our headquarters in downtown York.

When it came time to design the building, the objective was to create one that would blend well with the surrounding area. We wanted a contemporary building, but at the same time, one that looked like it belonged on the site. The final effort turned out to be very satisfactory, a good addition to the neighborhood and one of which I feel we can be proud.

The new Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff building at 140 East Market Street in downtown York sits on land acquired in 1967. It was designed by Architecture Affiliation, Towson, Maryland, and was constructed by L.M. Klunk and Sons contractors, a York firm. The work, begun in mid-1968, was completed in late 1969.

The new structure incorporated 15,700 square feet on three levels. In its original configuration, the floor plan called for Pfaltzgraff marketing executives and the order and design departments to occupy the first floor. The Radio Division, accounting, data processing, bookkeeping, and billing departments were assigned to the second level. The third floor was designed for the chief executive officer, cor-

porate secretary, legal counsel, and vice presidents. In 1983, an extensive remodeling program provided for new Radio Division offices on the second floor.

The Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff building has drawn praise from historians, architects, and visitors as a fine example of new construction blending with older, existing structures. With continued growth, Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff offices entered the 1990s occupying 12 restored buildings in downtown York.

If the new headquarters building was a metaphor for a growing corporate organization, the imagery could also have applied to the Radio Division. The move of its staff in November 1969 from the WSBA Building to 140 East Market Street marked the end of one era and the beginning of a new one. For within a few years, Susquehanna Radio would be on its way to becoming one of America's leading radio groups.

If one word described the mood and the mode of operation at this time it was "centralization," in every area except sales. "At one point," Art Carlson recalled, "we got the bright idea to try to schedule every record for every AM station. We did implement that plan, but there was only one problem: there were too many unpredictable variables. One news bulletin would make a difference, or the varying commercial loads would make a difference." Since music was the primary focus, the first efforts at intensive centralized management began with a "Board of Music Governors," consisting of Art Carlson, National Program Director Jack Murphy, his assistant George Burns, and WSBA Program Director Bob Janis.

"But centralized corporate management of six AM stations and one emerging FM outlet in other areas was not all that difficult," Mr. Carlson added. "It is fairly easy to systematize a business reporting set-up and have one or two people stay on top of things and run a fairly tight group operation."

As the 1970s rolled on and acquisitions of FM properties moved into high gear, centralized management, with its concentration on music, was the order of the day with stations on line in Toledo, Cincinnati, Canton, Indianapolis, Atlanta, and Dallas. (WKIS in Orlando, Florida, was the only AM station purchased during this period.) Steve Trivers had come to York in 1969 to become Mr. Carlson's administrative assistant. One of his assignments was the care and feeding of the tapes that comprised the "Sound of Your Life" library. Steve Trivers and Bill Wertz, WSBA-FM music director, later took the format to Kalamazoo where they started their own station group and went into the syndication business. George Hyde, who replaced Mr. Trivers in 1972, was also heavily involved with the FM operations.

Meanwhile, over on the AM side, the group integration concept was exerting its influence. Jack Herr transferred to York from the manager's position at WARM to become vice president/administration, with concentration on the AM stations. George Hyde held the comparable position with the FM stations.

A review of the activities of the Susquehanna Radio Management Committee (SRMC) during the first half of the 1970s shows the Susquehanna stations were not just acting like a group—they *were* a group.

- First SRMC meeting held in Florida, February 27, 1970, at the new WQBA building. Selected agenda items: "Corporate Policy on Advertising 'X'-Rated Movies," "Susquehanna Stations' Merchandising Policy," "Our Accounts Receivable Problem," "Operation Engineering Update."
- First SRMC meeting in board room of new Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff building, June 3, 1970. Main item on agenda: "The State of the FCC," featuring Stanley Neustadt, Esq., Cohn and Marks, Washington attorneys.
- Distribution of new *Sales Training Manual* and more detailed P&L statement—SRMC meeting, corporate board room, September 3, 1970.
- Unveiling of *Susquehanna Marketing Manual*—SRMC meeting, corporate board room, October 20, 1971.
- First meeting of station news directors, York, Pennsylvania, April 20, 1972.
- At SRMC meeting (at WLQR in Toledo, October, 1972), members are assigned areas of responsibility (sales training, sales promotion pieces, personnel management, cost-cutting ideas, etc.) to report to group.
- First SRMC meeting whose agenda included split sessions for AM & FM stations (Orlando, Florida, February, 1973). Also first SRMC meeting featuring more than one outside speaker. Speakers included: Dr. Herbert Greenberg, president, Marketing Survey and Research Corp.; Rod Caborn, manager, Advertising and Promotion, Walt Disney World; Jim Long, TM Productions; and Carl Loucks, VP/RAB.

- First separate conference for Susquehanna program directors, York, April, 1973.
- SRMC meeting, June, 1974, has to be held at York Valley Inn Conference Center because, as Mr. Carlson advised, "The Susquehanna Radio Management Committee is now of such size that we can no longer comfortably hold our meetings in the corporate board room."

The SRMC may have outgrown the corporate board room by the mid-seventies, but the Company would never outgrow its need for a basic philosophic guidepost. With the acquisition of new stations and the attendant arrival of new employees, a review of the Susquehanna Philosophy, originally enunciated in 1969, found it still to be a viable credo.

Said Chief Executive Officer Appell, "The motivation behind the Susquehanna Philosophy was to provide a road map for management personnel who, by virtue of their jobs, are required to make decisions of all sorts on a daily basis. We think it important that there be a shared understanding by which we have attempted to run the Company over the past years. It is hoped by use of this Philosophy, the overall goals and objectives could be extended into the future and be of use to a larger company."

A larger company, of course, meant more than a growing radio group. Other Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff divisions were also expanding. Corporate personnel changes resulting from Company expansion were inevitable. When Cable TV of York reached the operative stage, its controller, Dick Guerin, became general manager of this newest Susquehanna subsidiary. Bill Goodfellow was appointed manager of accounting. In 1974, Ken Howarth came on board as controller, and in 1975, Bill Goodfellow was selected to head a newly created department dealing primarily with payroll, and property and casualty insurance.

Mr. Carlson has described the first half of the 1970s as the period embracing the "zenith of centralization in Susquehanna." The thrust of his description was, in the final analysis, more applicable to the FM operations than to the AMs. With the burgeoning FM universe and its preemption of musical fare, AM stations began stressing more nonmusical elements such as news and sports, deferring to local situations for determining what and how much. FM, on the other hand, was enhancing its reputation as radio's music box. By 1974, when the Company's FM flock had grown to seven (the FCC allowable limit at the time), all were programming the "Sound of Your Life" format. "We were playing the same tapes at the same time on seven

FM stations," Mr. Carlson recalled. Such a standardized music approach was eminently workable, thanks to a specially built studio in the corporate radio wing. Here a production team, headed by Joe Coria, worked around the clock, cranking out tapes for Susquehanna's seven "Sound of Your Life"/Beautiful Music stations. The two major national Beautiful Music format suppliers, Schulke and Bonneville, could not match the "Sound of Your Life's" pioneering computerized selection system, a "chaining" that avoided song repetition and, at the same time, assured a correct balance of mood, tempo, vocals, and instrumentals. At one point, George Hyde remembers, "Mr. Appell insisted on listening to each tape before it was put into the system—I'd say that's quality control."

The Company's commitment to the "Sound of Your Life" during the early to mid-seventies was unwavering. In those pre-research days, Susquehanna applied the best principles of enlightened management and forged ahead with "Sound of Your Life" standardization. Mr. Hyde recalls the chief executive officer's analogy to describe the need for product standardization: "I remember Louis Appell saying there were a lot of similarities between our format and Howard Johnson's. We thought, 'OK, let's hear one.' He said he happened to like vanilla ice cream and the one thing he liked about vanilla ice cream was that it tasted exactly the same at every Howard Johnson's across the United States. That was what he wanted our format to be—exactly the same in every application throughout the United States."

And so, Mr. Hyde rode circuit to monitor compliance to the "Sound of Your Life" format. He would arrive in town unannounced, with his tape recorder turned on before he unpacked. Armed with music lists, he could quickly determine if stations were adhering to the tapes precisely the way they had been pre-recorded in York. He said one such assignment stood out: "I remember Dick Drury and I going to the Holiday Inn in Batesville, a town in southeast Indiana, equidistant between Indianapolis and Cincinnati. We sat there a couple of days, with our tape recorders running, monitoring both Cincinnati and Indianapolis to make sure they were playing exactly the right cuts at the right time according to our highly computerized schedule." Wherever "dissenters" were discovered in Susquehanna, they were soon brought to heel.

But despite exacting quality control, listener enthusiasm for the "Sound of Your Life" was, except in a few markets, on the wane. As documented in several station narratives, the "Sound of Your Life" format simply did not attract large audiences. There was another problem, too.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

At those stations that were doing well with the format, we were suffering from a real product problem. When we started "Sound of Your Life," there was all sorts of material available. One by one, though, the key artists stopped recording. More than anything, the record companies found they weren't selling records by our mainstays—the Herb Alperets, Ray Conniffs, Bert Kaempfers, Billy Vaughns, and Percy Faiths—and they dropped out of the business.

We had to find new sources. First thing we did was have people go to record stores and look for albums by artists we used. I remember even sending Rick McDonald and Sandy Goldberg to Toronto and Montreal to go through Canadian record stores. But we still weren't building enough of a library for "Sound of Your Life." So we decided to record material for ourselves.

Over the years, we had a number of jingle packages recorded by Anita Kerr. Anita, a 1950 winner on the Arthur Godfrey "Talent Scouts" show, may not be one of the best known people in music, but she's one of the most talented. Anita had moved to Switzerland and built a recording studio there—one of the best in the world—and was looking for something to do. Dick Drury and I had maintained loose contact with Anita over the years.

We sat down with Anita and Alex (her husband) and she told us she had been thinking along the same lines. Our concepts fit perfectly, and we established a business venture where we would pay production costs. Alex, who earlier had been a European sales manager for RCA Victor Records, would handle sales in Europe and we would have North America. So now we could go ahead and produce a mix of vocals and instrumentals for which there were no versions available. We were using what amounted to a bunch of "gypsy" musicians from all over Europe. Our two bass players, for example, had the numbers one and two seats in the Lisbon Symphony. The Anita Kerr Singers at that particular time flew in to Montreux from London regularly for recording sessions. We did roughly 100 selections in three sessions.

Named the Susquehanna Strings, this remarkably talented group was recorded in a variety of multi-track configurations: two 24-track, two 16-track, one 8-track, and one 4-track Studer recorders, and a 32-track Dolby noise reduction system. Thus, the "Sound of Your Life" library was enlarged for Susquehanna stations, and the format was enhanced for possible national syndication.

In retrospect, it is clear that a warehouse of Anita and Herb and Percy and Bert, all played together, could not have helped the format live up to its expectations. As the seventies progressed and the "Sound of Your Life" was gradually replaced by different musical ap-

proaches, other concerns occupied the corporate agenda. One was the nation's 200th birthday celebration. "We decided for once we were going to be ahead of the game and make an attack on the Bicentennial year of 1976," Mr. Carlson remembers. The result was one of modern radio's finest productions, "An American Idea."

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

We had a day-and-a-half meeting initially and a shorter one a bit later. The subject: what can we do from a programming and sales standpoint for the Bicentennial? The main project that came out of these sessions was "An American Idea." We would develop well-produced bits of history, not only the most dramatic events in the nation's past, but also some sidelights that had interesting twists. I can recall winning the battle of "'An' American Idea," as opposed to "'The' American Idea."

At that time we had a young production guy from Akron, Ohio, by the name of Mike Carroll, who was remarkably talented at doing voices—not just the usual impersonations, but he could go back in history and sound like those people should sound. Because of Mike, we built our first four-track studios for "An American Idea" in the WHLO Building in Akron. We hired a writer, Rod Lawrence, who researched and wrote many of the episodes. Helen Gotwalt, Phil Eberly, and Al Saunders also did some of the writing.

"An American Idea" featured a sparkling array of milestone events as well as the accomplishments of well-known and obscure persons—in short, a commemoration of American diversity. The series began in April 1975 and ran through 1976. A sampling follows:

Ernest Hemingway

"Nick sat against the wall of the church where they had dragged him clear of the machine-gun fire in the street. Both legs stuck out awkwardly. He had been hit in the spine. . . ." (*fade*) . . . His style was spare, clean and virile. Stripped to a few raw essentials, it would set the literary world on its ear, much like the man himself, Ernest Hemingway.

(*Music*) . . . Flamenco, or Spanish trumpet . . .

From the bull rings of Spain to a number of battlefields around the world, Hemingway's life would closely parallel that of his fictional world. (*Music segue*) . . .

Hemingway, expatriate in Paris and member of the "Lost Generation," amateur boxer and lusty brawler, aficionado of the bullfight, big game hunter and deep-sea fisherman. In two wars, a front

line correspondent, developing the terse style that would make him a legend, and in 1953, a Pulitzer Prize for his classic tale . . . *The Old Man and the Sea*.

(Music segue) . . . (Mix with water splashing) . . .

"The shark came in a rush and the old man hit him as he shut his jaws. He hit him solidly and from as high up as he could raise the club. . . ." *(fade)* . . . "This time he felt the bone at the base of the brain. . . ." Filled with its powerful symbols of life and death, Hemingway's work became a commentary on man's inner courage in the face of impossible odds and gave an unmistakable expression of AN AMERICAN IDEA!

Boston Tea Party

"Tea, gentlemen, the issue is tea. And to each of us here tonight, one thing must indeed be evident. Tea stands for tyranny!"

"Aye!"

"Here, Here!"

At a town meeting in Boston, 1773, Sam Adams had once again brought things to a proper boil. Tea, British tea to be exact, was putting a crimp in the American economy.

A spectacular harvest that year in India had produced more tea than even the British themselves could handle. And so off it went to American colonies, tons of East Indian tea at a special bargain rate.

"Leave it be on the dock!"

Bargain tea would not be welcome, however, in New York or Philadelphia. For one thing it was priced lower than domestic brands, and in Boston especially, it put a number of merchants on the warpath.

Disguised as Mohawk Indians, some fifty Bostonians stormed British ships, and dumped over three hundred chests of East Indian tea into the harbor.

Outraged, King George soon closed the entire port, but aid soon came from as far off as South Carolina. The colonies thus found themselves united under a common cause.

And the need for independence, as dramatized by the Boston Tea Party . . . was soon . . . AN AMERICAN IDEA.

Not only was "An American Idea" a glittering celebration of the Bicentennial, it also proved to be a sales smash, generating approximately a million dollars in revenue. In addition to running on the Company's own stations, "An American Idea" was carried by outlets large and small throughout the radio industry. Armed Forces Radio helped beam it around the world. All told, over 500 stations carried Susquehanna's sketches of American history. These results, especially in a field drenched with "Bicentennial," were a tribute to sales stal-

wart Dick Drury, Jack Herr, George Hyde, Carl Loucks (former vice president, Radio Advertising Bureau), and Bill Stewart. Thanks to the Eastman Company's Rick Duffy, the Colgate Company bought the package for the nation's top 100 markets. The series won a *Billboard* award as one of 1976's outstanding features.

Buoyed by the success of "An American Idea," the decision was made to enter the production business. Susquehanna Productions was formed with a simple sales rationale: one of the best ways to reach radio's twin goals of high unit rates and long-term advertising contracts is with the sale of feature-program sponsorship. Since the advent of Top 40, and continuing through the medium's evolution in the sixties and seventies, radio advertising had generally come to mean spot announcements. But while the sponsorship of high-interest, high-impact features (such as news, weather, and sports) is more expensive than straight spot announcements, such sponsorship could offer a special setting for the advertiser's message, and also lend prestige to the sponsor by the association with an important segment. Carl Loucks was made sales manager of Susquehanna Productions, and Dick Drury took on the additional duties of heading the production arm of the new subsidiary.

The first entry on the new division's roster was Anita Kerr and the Susquehanna Strings. "If you operate an adult music station, you know the problem," a sales piece began. "There are so many great contemporary hits you want to play, but in their original versions, they just don't fit your adult format. If only somebody would record bright, adult versions of these songs! Now somebody has. . . ." When the 1977 NAB Convention rolled around, Susquehanna Productions offered these additional features to the nation's broadcasters:

"America 2000"	"Anita Kerr Jingles"
"CB '77"	"Sound of Your Life"
"Magazine of the Air"	"Home Handyman"
"Farm Profit"	"Gourmet"
"From the Driver's Seat"	"Decorating Ideas"
"Plant & Garden Show"	"Sports Trivia"
"Dog Tales"	

With a line-up so diverse, each program develops a life of its own. None, however, was as interesting as "Farm Profit." Massey-Ferguson had purchased "An American Idea" in more than 250 small markets. After WHLO's Larry Kindel had created interest in the program—Susquehanna Productions' Carl Loucks had closed the deal. Massey was so pleased with that program that they encouraged Susquehanna

Productions to develop another. The result was "Farm Profit." "Farm Profit" eventually ended up on hundreds of small market stations under Massey-Ferguson sponsorship for a successful run of several years. It concluded when the sponsor, beset by hard times, was unable to continue support. However, the failure to make significant progress in placing the "Sound of Your Life" format, more than anything else, hastened the demise of Susquehanna Productions. When it was disbanded in the early 1980s, Mr. Loucks formed his own direct mail firm; Dick Drury had left the Company earlier to resume his career in station management.



On March 4, 1970, Susquehanna sent out the following notice:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Susquehanna Broadcasting Co. announces the complete installation of facilities of its new Washington Bureau. The bureau will function as headquarters for a Capital-based news operation, serving all Susquehanna stations, and is located at 4801 Kenmore Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22304.

Named to head the Washington Bureau is Jeffrey S. Lubar, who formerly served as Washington correspondent for such stations as WDBO in Orlando; WBIG in Greensboro, North Carolina; WCSC in Charleston, South Carolina; and WSPA in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Mr. Lubar is a graduate of American University, with a bachelor's degree in Communications and International Affairs, and is a member of the Radio-TV Association of the U.S. Congress, and Sigma Delta Chi, the Professional Journalism Society.

Susquehanna stations are: WSBA-AM-FM-TV, Harrisburg/York/Lancaster; WARM, Scranton/Wilkes-Barre; WHLO Akron/Canton; WICE, Providence; WGBB, Freeport, Long Island; and WQBA, Miami.

REF: Susquehanna Broadcasting Co.
Radio Division
140 East Market Street
York, Penna. 17401

Steven C. Trivers
Administrative Assistant
to the Vice President

For the next 16 years, Susquehanna's sundry Washington interests were aggressively and lovingly attended to by Jeff Lubar. The following account offers a glimpse of one newsman's life inside the Beltway.

A Susquehanna Memoir—Jeff Lubar

Susquehanna's Washington office was in business for so long under the guidance of the same person that it's kind of like the "Tom Landry Syndrome." For a long time he was the only coach the Dallas Cowboys ever had and I'm the only Washington rep Susquehanna ever had. The main focus was gathering the news pertaining to each one of our markets. In February 1984, we began providing coverage for two outside clients, WGST, Atlanta, and the Georgia Radio News Service. I wore several hats, of course, providing research information for our various stations and attending industry functions to show the "Company flag." I served as a liaison with the federal government on various matters as they came up and required a man on the scene.

As far as news is concerned, I have covered everything from Congress, to the White House, to the Supreme Court, the Pentagon, State Department—you name it. I covered Watergate, ABSCAM, moonshots, riots, demonstrations, hostage-takings, hijackings, and political conventions. I guess one of the high points of my career was the Watergate hearings. In those days, I was serving on the Board of Correspondents Committee and was in charge of credentialing all out-of-town, independent correspondents who wanted to cover the House Judiciary Committee impeachment hearings.

In the early eighties, we marketed a feature called "On the Up-beat" and also began developing issue-oriented campaigns for trade associations. But whichever hat I wore at any given time—newsman, researcher, lobbyist, marketer, PR person—I found each day working for Susquehanna in the nation's capital a challenging one.

While Susquehanna's Washington News Bureau may have been one of the higher profile assets that Central Radio had provided for the stations, there were others less visible, but nevertheless, significant. Among the services Central Radio supplied during much of the 1970s were these: Bob Shipley made regular trips to Susquehanna stations to help announcers keep their professional skills in top shape; Jim Boswell monitored Company stations to maintain a quality product, and also supervised a continuing tape monitor of competitors in Susquehanna markets; National Program Director Drury made regular station visits to aid local staffs in fine-tuning their product.

As the seventies unfolded it became apparent that fewer programming and marketing decisions could be made by instinctual or other informal techniques. Broadcasting was changing at a faster rate, or so it seemed, than at any time since the advent of television. Factors such as the flowering of FM, the format explosion, changing

tastes in popular music, and technological advances affected the decision-making process at radio stations. Forward-looking broadcasters realized that research needed to play a more important role, and that audience studies such as Arbitron's alone were inadequate. In-depth research would be as necessary to the modern radio station as it was to Procter and Gamble.

"Do-it-yourself" research was already in place. Jim Peacock of the central staff, who led a modest, on-going research project that sampled Pfaltzgraff factory workers and non-broadcast Susquehanna personnel, wrote, "Perhaps our largest programming weakness is our lack of knowledge about our audiences, and about their perceptions of our music. For too long, we have relied upon guesswork in evaluating our product, and I believe the time is rapidly approaching when we must become more objective and listener-oriented in our music planning. In short, I believe the "Sound of Your Life" music-makers must begin to use audience research if we are ever to have any certainty about what we do. No, research won't tell us how to build tapes; there may always be some subjectivity. . . . But research can be a valuable management tool. It's an area we can ill afford to ignore."

Mr. Peacock (who later left Susquehanna to join Arbitron Ratings) helped sow the seeds that bore fruit in the appointment of Dave Kennedy as director of research in 1979. Dr. Kennedy described the main byproduct of Susquehanna's growing research consciousness this way: "Marketplace differences and competitive scenarios proved vital in determining the dimensions upon which listeners judged each of these stations. Importantly, Susquehanna learned that listeners in separate markets could develop different perceptions of identical program formats."

By the late seventies, research of one form or another produced useful results for managerial decision making at WKIS, WLQA, WFMS, WQBA, WLTA, WSBA-AM/FM, and WARM. Dave Kennedy stressed that these initial studies "did not represent a revolution in our radio management as much as they did an evolution of management's existing practice of getting some feedback from the outside." All was not easy at first, however:

A Susquehanna Memoir—Dave Kennedy

Early resistance to research as an inappropriate application of science to an art form existed in various quarters. A program director (since gone) who was particularly nonplussed by the idea of research at his station likened our fate to that of Chrysler Corporation in 1979 because, as he reasoned, "They probably did a hell of a lot of research and look where it got them." A station manager (also de-

parted) who had heard several focus groups describe images of his station in far different terms than he would have used suggested that the research was a waste of time and money because “these people are so wrong. . . . They just don’t know what they’re talking about.”

The most frustrating outcome of early research projects for the Susquehanna stations was the absence of a clear set of expectations or hypotheses against which the results could be compared. In essence, the research was conducted in a vacuum, containing no delineation of programming goals and objectives.

Still, despite the difficulties, research at Susquehanna had come a long way. In time, sturdy bridges were built between programming and research, and with them came the realization that, as Dave Kennedy puts it, “art and science are integral components of each.”



When Mr. Carlson refers to Susquehanna as a “research-driven, programming company,” his listeners are sure to add, “and a sales-oriented one as well!” The Company that was a seven-station group at the close of the 1960s was very different from the one that was to be 14 strong a decade later. By the time the station family had grown this large and was represented in markets as disparate as Dallas/Fort Worth and Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, sales comparisons would often be meaningless. For example, aside from size differences in the markets cited, most advertising in Dallas/Fort Worth is placed by agencies, while in Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, the majority of business emanates directly from advertisers. There are those who say, “all selling is alike—only the unit of sale is different.” Obviously, this cliché was coined before the advent of radio. Surely, the fundamentals such as grooming, preparation, customer service, and keeping receivables up to date are universally applicable. But after that, differences rise in profusion.

Central Radio’s perspectives on sales changed between 1969 and 1979. For example, the Miami conference held in spring 1969 was the last time all sales people met as a group. As the number of stations and sales representatives grew, this gathering became impractical as well as cost prohibitive. Generally speaking, Susquehanna Radio’s group sales function became more decentralized as time went on.

Wide use was made of the Radio Advertising Bureau’s “consultant sell,” which sought to elevate the salesperson’s role from the level of peddler to sales consultant. An elaborate, seven-page series of questions enabled the salesperson to lead the prospect through a log-

ical interrogation, step by step. Through learning as much as possible about the advertiser's business, the salesperson (and in turn, the station) could render better service and maximize the chances for an ad campaign success. Also making their debuts early in the 1970s were the *Susquehanna Sales Training Manual* and the *Susquehanna National Sales Primer*.

But the Radio Division's sales *pièce de résistance* of the decade was the *Susquehanna Marketing Manual*. Within the oversized binder was a wealth of material to make every salesperson as knowledgeable as possible on virtually every category of business. It was "open-ended" so that a specially tailored presentation could be prepared by the individual stations. The manual, updated and revised in ensuing years, featured contributions from Susquehanna's top sales people and sales management, and was still in use at most Company stations many years later. The development of large quantities of high-quality sales pieces became a Susquehanna trademark, and the envy of competitors around the country.

It should be stressed here that the Company's radio sales force did not remain a parochial one, limited only to Susquehanna's various markets and stations. From the time WSBA became a charter member of radio's trade association, the Radio Advertising Bureau (organized in 1951 as the Broadcast Advertising Bureau, or BAB), to the day when Susquehanna peaked with 19 member stations, Susquehanna was recognized as a prominent industry booster. Art Carlson has been a member of the RAB board since 1966, and served as its chairman for the years 1978 and 1979. Miles David was RAB's president for 18 years beginning in 1965, and fought many of radio's battles alongside Art Carlson. The now-retired RAB chairman saluted Susquehanna and its Radio Division president.

A Susquehanna Memoir—Miles David

The thing that always struck me about Susquehanna was leadership. It's one of those companies which is a very quiet leader. It seems to me, Susquehanna did very little over the years to talk about itself publicly, but, meanwhile, was way out ahead in many of the trends in the radio business: a smooth-working centralized operation, a New York sales office to work with the national reps, using strategic planning, a diversely programmed group of stations, pioneering in the Spanish language market—to name a few.

As I look back over the past 20 years with RAB, and think of Art Carlson and Susquehanna, I can't think of anything progressive within the radio business that Art was not one of the first to advo-

cate. Whether it had to do with improving radio audience measurement or trying to create new forms of sales development, Art was involved. Other than one or two individuals, Art is the longest-serving member of the RAB board.

I think, personally, I learned more about radio from Art Carlson than almost any other individual. . . . You could talk to Art and get (a) perspective and (b) no B.S. The problem with many other individuals was you had to sort out "a" from "b" or "b" from "a". You just didn't know whether you were getting those people's thoughts or their self-promotion. You never got that with Art.

One of Miles David's RAB predecessors, a colorful, controversial fireball named Kevin Sweeney, had a direct hand in redesigning Art Carlson's career path. Twenty-two years before he became chairman of the trade organization's board, Mr. Carlson had applied for a job at the RAB, only to be turned down by Mr. Sweeney. Says Mr. Carlson of his rejection, "I've always considered it the great irony of my career, winding up as chairman of the outfit that refused to hire me 20 years ago!"

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

During my first year on the board, the one tool I thought was the greatest single thing RAB did was the "Instant Background" series. There was a discussion of eliminating this tool and I lobbied successfully against it—and the series is still going strong today.

I've also always pushed for long-range planning. The Radio Advertising Bureau is a non-profit organization. It still has to generate enough funds to pay for itself, and ideally the more money it generates, the more good things it can do for radio. But RAB has always had to struggle to have the funds to achieve its mission. Essentially, RAB's budget has not really grown over the past decade.

I have always felt RAB has been the most undersupported, misunderstood organization in our business. With 10,000 radio stations, no other medium is as fractionalized. The difference between the number one station in New York and the only station in Mexico, Pennsylvania (which I believe is the smallest city with a licensed station), is not just day and night—they are different universes. The variety of things RAB has to do for a wide variety of stations and groups is mind-boggling.

But on balance, I think the RAB has weathered the various storms and every time has emerged a little bit better. Let's hope in the coming years the industry will come to realize that the need for a strong and effective trade association is vital to real growth in radio.



The 1970s were no less a decade of government activism than the previous one. Although the practice of “community ascertainment” had been introduced in 1960, the FCC had enunciated no specific guidelines for conducting the ascertainment surveys. Stations, generally, in concert with Washington legal counsel, supplied a narrative at license renewal time on how they were fulfilling their public service obligations. Eleven years later, the FCC issued a *Primer of Ascertainment of Community Problems by Broadcast Applicants* in order to clarify the broadcast applicant’s obligation in this area.

Still, even with the primer, the need to simplify and collate the information the FCC required in the now yearly community ascertainment process was great. In response, Phil Eberly designed a two-part questionnaire to use in conducting the survey. Mr. Carlson recalls showing the questionnaire at Cohn and Marks: “Jack Murphy and I were meeting with Stan Cohen at a time when the lawyers were still grappling with how to instruct stations to handle the ascertainment survey. I showed Stan the WSBA form and it became the pattern they recommended to all their client stations.” Cohn and Marks subsequently devised a formula to arrive at the number of interviews a station should conduct. On the list were persons from all major sectors of the community—government, religious, human services, education, youth, elderly, minorities, service clubs, citizens-at-large. The main question was: “What do you consider the major problems and needs in the (name) area?” Responses were tallied, and when the station filed its ascertainment report, it was required to indicate how it had responded to those problems and needs. The ascertainment requirement was discontinued by the FCC in 1983.



Against the backdrop of the seventies—Kent State, My Lai, Watergate, the Pentagon Papers, détente, Red China, the Bicentennial, the Jonestown Massacre, Three Mile Island, and the instantaneous communication of world events—Susquehanna had become a 14-station group.

FM had finally come into its own, and Susquehanna moved into larger markets via the FM route. These new profit centers would set the tone for the eighties and more expansion.

At the corporate level, a number of personnel changes took place before the end of the decade. In 1978, John L. Finlayson joined

the Company as controller. Peter P. Brubaker, a Lancaster native who had been a 1973 summer intern from the Harvard MBA program, joined Susquehanna as manager of corporate services in 1977. A year later, he headed the new Company treasury department. In 1979, Mr. Brubaker assumed responsibility for Cable TV and WSBA-TV, relinquishing his duties in data processing and personnel, which were assigned to John Finlayson.

When Bill Simpson moved over to Pfaltzgraff to become vice president/manufacturing in 1978, he was succeeded as Company counsel by Craig Bremer. Messrs. Finlayson, Brubaker, and Bremer divided their duties among the growing Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff manufacturing, cable, WSBA-TV, retailing, outdoor advertising, and real estate divisions, and Sinking Springs Farms.

Nothing said about Susquehanna Radio's central office staff would be complete without mention of Sue Krom. Ms. Krom joined Susquehanna's Pfaltzgraff Division in 1964, moving over to the Radio Division the following year as secretary to Art Carlson. Since that time, she has been an integral member of the corporate staff, a member whose responsibilities have increased in direct proportion to the growth of Susquehanna Radio. Over the years, Ms. Krom has served as an invaluable liaison between the stations and Central Radio, with responsibilities ranging from administrative-type projects such as policies and procedures to sales idea exchanges, employee benefit questions, personnel matters, and coordinating the fulfillment of more than a million Radiocards for many Susquehanna stations. In 1985, Ms. Krom was promoted to Manager of Administration, and named Vice President of Administration in February, 1992, her 25th anniversary with the Radio Division.

The "Soaring Seventies" marked the establishment of a Susquehanna station in the country's tenth largest market (Atlanta), the 29th (Cincinnati), the 9th (Dallas/Fort Worth), the 38th (Indianapolis), and the 55th (Orlando). It was now a vibrant company maintaining a tractable balance of medium- and large-market stations. During that time, the "7 and 7" rule governed the number of stations that could be owned. Few in 1980 would have guessed that, before long, the FCC would make it a "12 and 12" rule, but the ownership restrictions did indeed change. Still, even before that, it was time to usher in a new use of that old broadcasting cliché, "coast-to-coast."

Westward to the Golden Gate

KFOG/KNBR



Chapter 21

When Alabama and Stanford played to a tie in the 1927 Rose Bowl game, a new expression swept across America. The term was “coast-to-coast,” one of many colorful phrases that began to creep into everyday language as a result of that exciting contraption, radio. Conventional wisdom suggested that until simultaneous coast-to-coast delivery of radio signals could be effected, the medium would not really come of age.

Likewise, for Susquehanna to reach its full maturity, it needed a coast-to-coast presence. Art Carlson put it this way: “In spite of the growth we had enjoyed earlier, we would not be considered a major company until we had stations from the East Coast to the West Coast. So the search was on, and in fact, had been on for some time. San Francisco was a prime target.”

Although comprising only 13 percent of California’s Bay Area population, San Francisco is the hub of a wheel. It is the code word that defines the state of mind and the lifestyle of that region. There is, say San Franciscans, strictly “no contest with that other larger city to the south” in at least three spheres: San Francisco is more cosmopolitan; San Francisco is the financial center of the West Coast; and culturally, San Francisco wins hands down. Physically, too, the city’s charm is striking and legendary.

Then there are the city’s idiosyncrasies. In the fifties, it was the “beatniks” sitting around drinking espresso in the cafes in North Beach. In the sixties, it was “hippies” who took over a pretty working-class neighborhood called Haight-Ashbury and proclaimed San Francisco the capital of the New Age. During the seventies, alternatives

for everything from marriage to sex to religion solidified San Francisco's reputation for unconventionality. The eighties version of the San Francisco stereotype took root when the gay community gradually made the city its unofficial capital.

"Melting pot" is a term that might have been fashioned for modern San Francisco: 28 percent of its population is foreign born. African-Americans, Hispanics, and Chinese contribute 12 percent each, Filipinos make up 5 percent, and Japanese 2 percent. There also are large numbers of Nicaraguans, Italians, Vietnamese, and Samoans. The city is more than 50 percent female and more than 50 percent unmarried. *Time* magazine has provided an appropriate frame for showcasing the city: "San Francisco is beautiful, vivacious. San Francisco is physically dramatic. It is funky, but clean . . . elegant, but spunky. San Francisco is tolerant of crazies, beatniks, hippies, microchip venture capitalists, yet preserves the old cable cars and Victorian follies."

Susquehanna's West Coast presence began in San Francisco in December 1983 with the purchase of KFOG-FM. With the June 1989 purchase of KNBR-AM, Susquehanna's dynamic AM/FM combination made the Company one of the major operators in San Francisco. In coming to San Francisco, Susquehanna not only established a coast-to-coast identity, but also set up shop in the country's fourth largest market.

KFOG

Positioning a radio station in San Francisco presented its share of challenges. A detailed market study revealed there were no "format" holes in the San Francisco Bay Area. Given the more than 60 radio stations covering all or parts of the Golden Gate country, every conceivable format was being delivered to the "City by the Bay."

There was another consideration as well. A San Francisco FM station would have to cope with the area's hilly terrain, since FM signals travel in line-of-sight fashion. (AM signals, by virtue of their lower frequencies, follow the earth's surfaces.) Indeed, in some sections of San Francisco, FM signals have been "wiped out" altogether. The slower emergence of FM's audience-share leadership in the hilly Bay Area versus the national average is shown in the following Arbitron data:

FM Audience Shares

	Year	San Francisco Metro Area (%)	USA (%)
Fall	1976	39.7	40.8
	1978	47.2	47.6
	1980	51.4	54.3
	1982	54.1	58.9
	1984	58.3	64.3
	1986	63.1	68.7

Regardless of ratings, the lure of the Golden Gate mystique could not be denied. Despite the hills and the over-population of both the AM & FM spectrums, Susquehanna Radio's president felt the call of the West.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

General Electric was getting out of the radio business once again (1983)—this was about the third time—and they had a number of fine properties for sale. And while we looked at some of their other markets, our target was really KFOG from the beginning. I had a feeling we could walk away with KFOG for a very low price and that it would be the one that would have the least buyer demand, and that's the way it turned out.

The San Francisco purchase was a real challenge in a number of ways. First, we were required to sell a station (to stay within the "7 and 7" rule). The rather obvious choice was WLQR in Toledo. I say "obvious" because the station had been delivering high ratings, but the feeling was that the Beautiful Music format had peaked, and also that Toledo was not exactly one of the great growth markets in America. So on one hand, we "traded" a nicely profitable station in Toledo for a big money loser in San Francisco. Or you could look at it another way: We traded Toledo for San Francisco, a move most people would view as a real positive.

I think it's interesting to note that GE was the biggest company from which we bought a station. Randy Bongarten, head of GE radio at the time, moved to NBC radio after the GE station sales were complete. After GE bought RCA, the owner of NBC, once again, Randy, as head of NBC radio stations, had the job of selling off all of GE's radio stations. And, once again, Susquehanna bought the last GE [NBC] station for sale, KNBR. Randy made a very good point about large conglomerates in radio. He claims that companies like GE or IBM or AT&T will never again be active in our industry because they don't understand the wild fluctuations of the radio busi-

ness. They like something they can plan out two or three years ahead, where in our business long-range planning is what you are going to have for lunch tomorrow.

General Electric was one of broadcasting's foremost trailblazers, both as a manufacturer and a licensee. At the time of the KFOG purchase, the GE radio group also included an FM station in Boston and AM/FM combos in Nashville, Denver, and Albany/Schenectady/Troy. KFOG, as it turned out, was the last property the giant conglomerate sold. Tony Salvadore, KFOG's general sales manager during the station's last days with General Electric (and general manager under KFOG's Susquehanna ownership), recalls the unique metaphor GE insiders used to describe the station: "They called KFOG 'GE's Vietnam.' They couldn't win and they couldn't get out."

KFOG, at 104.5 MHz, 7,900 watts, may not have the tallest tower in the world, or even within Susquehanna, but it probably has one of the nation's most unique tower locations. Sitting atop Mount Sutro (a real mountain in the center of the city), KFOG's tower site enables the station to deliver a superior signal. In short, the Mount Sutro location is an ideal one for coping with FM's inherent signal problems in the San Francisco area.

During its General Electric years, KFOG was hardly a ratings leader, showing in fourth place among San Francisco's four Beautiful Music stations. Prior to General Electric's stewardship, the Kaiser Corporation, the original licensee (1960), had programmed it in the Beautiful Music format. When GE purchased KFOG in 1977, it made no immediate musical changes.

If there was a cosmic moment in the life of KFOG-FM, it was 6:00 A.M., September 16, 1982. At that hour, KFOG, a Beautiful Music station located at 900 North Point in Ghirardelli Square, began pumping out rock-and-roll, but rock-and-roll with a difference. The sudden contrast with its previous musical fare was particularly noteworthy because KFOG had programmed nothing but Beautiful Music since it first went on the air in 1960. Randy Bongarten had despaired of KFOG's fixed fourth place in the Beautiful Music mire. Early in 1982, Mr. Bongarten had gone to Lee Abrams (of the consulting firm Burkhart-Abrams) with a format idea—an Album Rock concoction that would appeal to adults in the 18-to-34 age range. All previous approaches to "Album-Oriented Rock" had been designed for a younger demographic group. Mr. Abrams went into action with characteristic gusto and soon emerged with an Adult-Oriented Rock hybrid designed to appeal to the older age group. Mr. Abrams' invention was

developed without research and with only a good “gut feeling” about it. Mr. Salvadore recalls the strategy behind the format’s creation. He gives Mr. Abrams full credit for hatching what was first called “Super Stars II,” a derivative of the Album-Oriented Rock format that Mr. Abrams had conceived in the early seventies.

On a KFOGgy Day in San Francisco—Tony Salvadore

Really, “Super Stars II” (also called “Timeless Rock”) was the “graying” of the Album Rock format. If you look back in the early seventies, when Lee Abrams created the original Super Stars AOR format, its audience appeal was the 12- to 24-year-olds. Well, here it was the early eighties and Album Rock stations were *still* appealing to the 12 to 24s, forgetting that everybody was ten years older. The idea behind “Super Stars II” was simply to “gray” the original Abrams Album-Oriented Rock format. He got rid of the heavy metal groups and relied on the older kinds of classic groups. The idea was to give the audience the impression that the disc jockeys, not some computer, were in control of playing the listeners’ favorite music. And hand-in-hand went the concept that there was some adventure to the whole thing—that it wasn’t a pre-programmed station.

We became the “quality rock-and-roll” of San Francisco. We didn’t play Journey or Black Sabbath or AC/DC. We broke all the rules for this format. . . . But we also opened to absolutely rave reviews.

The fall 1982 ratings were encouraging, but the real raves for the new KFOG came from the press—and were unanimous. None, however, matched Bill Mandel’s review in the *San Francisco Examiner*, on September 27.

On a KFOGgy Day in San Francisco—Bill Mandel

I’ve been listening to the new KFOG (104.5 FM) with growing wonder. About two weeks ago, the station switched from marmalade-heaven, “Easy Listening” or “elevator music” to Rock. Just what the Bay Area needs, I thought, another Rock station. . . . But KFOG, so far, has been the Rock station I’ve dreamed about for years. Rather than pick a segment of the station, the station has been programming music from Jimi Hendrix to the newest of the New Wave. An hour’s set can include Vanilla Fudge, Romeo Void, the Beatles, the Who, Donovan, Police, the Fixx, the Bank, Pete Townsend, the Doors, and A Flock of Seagulls.

The format seems to be aimed at people who really love rock music and have a sense of history about it, spinning as it does from

the late sixties to progressive new material. . . . The listener is gratified and a little challenged by a mixture of old favorites (not oldies, though) and new music. . . . KFOG has introduced a particularly fine innovation: all new music is introduced as such, allowing listeners to switch their mental antenna into listen-analyze mode. The problem with listening to familiar music is the laziness it induces. KFOG feeds that cozy, lazy feeling but wakes us up from time to time to learn something new.

If you're a serious rock fan, I highly recommend giving KFOG a listen.

After such an auspicious opening, KFOG's staff was on an upper. But a downer soon followed.

On a KFOGgy Day in San Francisco—Tony Salvadore

We went into the winter with great hopes, and in January of 1983 we got a call from Randy Bongarten, who said he was flying out to talk with the station department heads. We assumed, of course, it had something to do with good news since we had just come off what we felt was an OK (rating) book and had the momentum going.

Randy arrived in town and assembled us at the Clift Hotel and proceeded to tell us GE had made a corporate decision to get out of the radio business. Talk about our worlds crumbling down! We had just assembled this team from all over the country to try this brand new idea in the album radio genre and four months after we got the thing rolling, Bongarten is standing there in front of us in January telling us GE is going to sell the thing.

Needless to say, we went through many months of uncertainty until that day in July 1983 when we were assembled again and told that Susquehanna was going to buy KFOG.

With Susquehanna's acquisition of KFOG completed in December 1983, Tony Salvadore was named the station's general manager. Mr. Salvadore's career prior to KFOG had taken him from WPTR in his native Albany to stations in Akron, Cleveland, and Detroit. In 1985, Mr. Salvadore was made vice president/general manager of KFOG. At the same time, in line with the Company's restructured management, Larry Grogan was named KFOG regional executive.

During the first year of Susquehanna's ownership of KFOG, Dave Kennedy mounted a series of research projects to determine if Mr. Abrams' Rock masterpiece was indeed the best format for KFOG. It soon became apparent that a somewhat unexpected perception de-

veloped as KFOG's signal sailed around the Bay Area. This perception was that KFOG was the successor to the legendary KSAN-FM of the 1960s. KSAN was the pioneer "progressive rock" station, the favorite of the "flower children." Although the times had changed considerably, KFOG's appealing unpredictability was similar to that which had been offered 15 years earlier by KSAN's program director, the late Tom Donahue. "(Radio should play) the best of today's rock-and-roll, folk, traditional and city blues, reggae, electronic music, and some jazz and classical selections," Mr. Donahue had said. "I believe that music should not be treated as a group of objects to be sorted out like eggs with each category kept rigidly apart from the others." In one sense, KSAN's tradition was continued when KSAN personalities Bonnie Simmons and "Scoop" Nisker joined the KFOG staff. (While the Patty Hearst kidnapping drama was unfolding in 1974, Cinque, spokesman for Hearst's abductors, would talk to only one member of the press—KSAN's Scoop Nisker.)

Just as KSAN's programming captured the mood and tone of San Francisco, so did KFOG in the 1980s. Art Carlson's first and later impressions were very favorable: "KFOG was standing out as one of those rare radio stations that is really a part of the feel of the city. We knew it was a tremendous advantage to be considered virtually a part of the landscape, and that required some unusual programming and promotion."

Through the entire KFOG experience, the cutting edge of the "unusual programming" was obviously the music. Lee Abrams had correctly divined the musical longings of the "Baby Boomers," those cherished market prospects. Jon Sinton, also of Burkhart-Abrams, claimed this group "was turning away from radio in the late seventies because they weren't into 'music-to-kill-your-parents-by.' On the other hand, they remained loyal to the rock-and-roll they had grown up with, and they were also just starting to earn and spend a lot of money. . . . What we were trying to do with KFOG, and this is important, is look beyond the traditional demographics and see the station as a function of psychographics. . . . The music you grew up with in your adolescence is the music you take to the grave with you."

Still, there was a great deal more to the KFOG model than music. Just as a skilled chef and a mediocre cook can create different cuisine out of the same ingredients, so can two program directors with the same format produce two entirely different sounding stations. At KFOG, Susquehanna's original program director, Dave Logan, was a master of the trade. National Program Director Rick McDonald says of Mr. Logan: "Dave brought a certain unpredictability to

the station. I think it was geared to those who were tired of 'cookie cutter' radio. A KFOG listener might hear a 1960s TV theme slipped between two rock songs. It was the sort of station where you didn't know exactly what was going to happen next, which was much of the charm of it."

What KFOG was demonstrating in its purest form was "narrowcasting." As we have seen earlier, the proliferation of stations and mutations of formats had forced radio through the seventies and eighties to target specific audiences with "tailored" programming that concentrated on listeners' demographic or ethnic characteristics. By now, "broadcasting" was really a misnomer. History, it can be argued, does or does not repeat itself, but good listener-oriented radio knows no era or season. In the late twenties, hip Americans stayed up all hours to catch the Coon-Sanders Nighthawks broadcasting from Kansas City's Hotel Muehlbach. The band's genial co-maestros-emcees invented a term with which their coterie of fans could describe themselves—"Knights and Ladies of the Bath." In the narrowcasting era, another gaggle of listeners, with a common loyalty to their favorite San Francisco radio fare, were dubbed "FOGheads."

Throughout Susquehanna's first years at KFOG, it became painfully obvious that the facility at 900 North Point would never do. KFOG in its Beautiful Music days had all the space it needed (2,200 square feet), ensconced in its attractive Ghirardelli Square quarters. But for the new KFOG, the pressing need for more space made finding new digs a priority. Never at a loss for words, Mr. Carlson recalled that "the average sales cubicle was only slightly larger than a coach seat on an Eastern Airlines plane by the time we really staffed up, and they were the lucky ones! Several sales people used the conference room as their office. In fact, the conference room had become a combination of storage, sales, and anything else. Ghirardelli Square was a beautiful location, but there is very little advantage to a radio station being located in a tourist area."

Charlie Morgan certified that "if two people were to occupy the production studio, they had to move the tape machine out to the hall. The air studio was no bigger than the average clothes closet."

Nowhere were the vicissitudes of management better illustrated than in KFOG's abortive move to new quarters. After making a verbal agreement to acquire space in a restored landmark called the Ice House, the Susquehanna team began making plans for the move. Unfortunately, last minute maneuverings in the highly competitive San Francisco real estate market found Susquehanna out in the cold. So close did KFOG come to moving to the Ice House address, that

20,000 Marketron billing forms were ordered, along with stickers with the North Point address, to handle billing during the expected short stay at Ghirardelli Square. However, when the Ice House deal fell through, *all* 20,000 forms eventually had to have a sticker with KFOG's new address applied.

Following that false start, KFOG moved to 55 Green Street in March 1985. Located in the historic North Waterfront district in downtown San Francisco, the site is noted for evading the congestion and high-cost problems of the financial district. In a short time the general area became the new advertising and broadcasting center of San Francisco. Among KFOG's neighbors were KGO Radio & TV; KBAL; KPIX-TV; KSFO; and KYA-FM; as well as Dancer, Fitzgerald and Sample, and Ketchum, advertising agencies.

By the time KFOG was completely settled in its Green Street home, the station could capitalize on the perception that it was the 1980s version of KSAN. The music focused on both ends of its target audience, stretching from 25- to 44-year-olds. Its disc jockeys were offbeat without being eccentric, and capricious without being gross. Promotions, which were occasionally off the wall, were connecting with listeners. If "relaxed/laid back/unemotional" is the way to describe *cool*, and if San Francisco is the "cool capital of the nation," then it is not unseemly that KFOG has declared itself "the coolest station in the nation."



Whipping up promotions to appeal to baby boomers is especially challenging. Here is a group in which the majority have some college education and many are engaged in active career pursuit, with a significant percentage holding high-level, high-paying positions. KFOG's listeners are more liberal than the national norm, partly as a reflection of the times in which they grew up, the volatile sixties and early seventies. Vietnam, Woodstock, and Watergate are all signposts for this generation. The station's devotees are active, dine out regularly, attend cultural and sporting events; they participate in life rather than observe it. They expect KFOG to participate with them, to be on the leading edge of what's happening. Their self-image is one of current-trend awareness, yet they prefer "Classic Rock" over new artists. On the VALS scale (see Chapter 17), KFOG listeners mostly fall in one of these blocks of the U.S. population segmentation: societally conscious, experiential, or "I-AM-ME." Thus, giveaways in the grand-manner category include getaways to places such as Wimbledon. Contests on a smaller scale use lifestyle items as prizes—VCRs,

cameras, CD players, large-screen stereo TVs, top-of-the-line stereo systems, satellite receivers, coffee table books, expensive running shoes, ski resort tickets, and select concert passes. A sweep through the KFOG archives reveals these representative promotional offerings:

- When Bruce Springsteen appeared in San Francisco, the station arranged with Coliseum officials to pay all concert-goers' parking costs.
- To tie in with the station's fund drive for replacing the street sign at the famous Haight-Ashbury corner, KFOG gave away souvenir posters of the noted landmark.
- When the Kingsmen, the popular Top 40 group, surfaced on California Wine Cooler spots and revitalized their career, KFOG broadcast several of their live concerts.
- KFOG's "Sourdough and Salami Kazoo Marching Band," composed of listeners and led by the station's morning team, livens up the San Francisco scene in parades and other public functions.

In perhaps no other Susquehanna market is the challenge to capture the heartbeat of a city so keyed to the programming (and its promotion) as in San Francisco. Because San Francisco evokes an image of sophistication and enchantment, KFOG must be in tune with the city, literally. Still, it cannot be a contrived or predictable radio station. It must resonate with the sound of surprise, yet not be different merely for the sake of being different. KFOG must be hip musically, but not avant-garde; committed to music, but not a jukebox. *Everything* must contribute to KFOG's carefully honed sound. Talk about fine-tuning!

Since an important part of the station's core audience is composed of what are commonly called "yuppies," KFOG is appealing to an ever-growing constituency. A week before the 1984 Democratic National Convention, Lacey Fosburgh wrote in the *New York Times Magazine* that "Yuppies have descended on San Francisco in hordes in recent years. They have brought with them their penchant for BMWs and Saabs, Perrier and chardonnay, gourmet food, the best clothes, and a willingness to remodel almost anything to live here. Ambitious in their work and demanding about their personal lives, they are rapidly changing the San Francisco scene into its own version of New York's Madison Avenue and the Upper East Side."



At this point in the KFOG story, it is necessary to flash forward to June 1989, when Susquehanna acquired the San Francisco her-

itage station, KNBR. Practical logistics dictated that both facilities be under one roof. Tony Salvadore, who was named general manager of the new AM acquisition while keeping the same job at KFOG, observed that “somewhat naively in our minds, this move was only six or eight months down the road.” But many difficulties were encountered in finding the right location, complicated by the October 1989 earthquake. After an intensive search, Company officials found 55 Hawthorne Street to be an ideal spot to house the two operations. In January 1991, KNBR and KFOG moved to the new 16,500-square-foot facility, on the top floor of an 11-story building.

On the KFOG program front, around this time, management found it necessary to make some format adjustments. It is beyond the scope of this work to describe in detail the many points of such fine-tuning. Suffice it to say that given the fickle nature of radio audiences and the trendy patterns of popular music in general, attention to product refinement is a daily regimen. And so it will certainly always be at KFOG. For as a *New York Times* writer pointed out, “San Francisco is one of the few places with a great—if wacky—musical history.”

With this city’s idiosyncratic musical heritage and traditions fixed firmly in mind, it must also be remembered that among San Francisco’s 20 top-rated radio stations, 14 different formats are represented. As General Manager Salvadore put it, “You have to press forward and play the music—that’s the most important part of what we do.” In this regard, he offered a mini-recap of KFOG’s musical biography.

On a KFOGgy Day in San Francisco—Tony Salvadore

When the Company acquired KFOG, it was a very well-programmed, eclectic Album-Oriented Rock (AOR) station. And with some variations over the next five or six years, we basically kept that stance. Then, in 1989, based on a stagnant rating situation—but still doing OK—we were looking for more audience growth. We did some research, looked at our competitors, and discovered there wasn’t anyone “playing the hits.” Some had tried, but had not been very successful. We felt we would open up the best possibility of the station to acquiring a larger cumulative audience. We were right! That aspect of the station’s audience went up dramatically for a couple of rating periods. But what we discovered is that such strategy was a short-term solution. That’s when we decided in early 1992 to go back to our roots. Veteran AOR programmer, Greg Solk, was brought in from Chicago to lead KFOG toward completion of this objective.



Whatever the advantages of having two stations at the same location, reaping the full benefits of those advantages requires that management be aware of the subtleties of the relationship between two staffs working under one roof.

On a KFOGgy Day in San Francisco—Tony Salvatore

When we took over KFOG in December, 1983, it was a very small, closely knit radio station with a 24-person staff. While the Company certainly improved our position in San Francisco when it bought KNBR, we lost a bit of that camaraderie we had as a stand-alone FM—"the little guys against the world." So we had to work hard to maintain that separate, but equal, status we enjoyed with the AM. It's difficult because KNBR has so much political power. We're the Giants' station. The mayor calls up and talks and so on. KFOG is a very smooth, non-intrusive music station, but it's not wired into the fabric of this town like KNBR is. We have to work hard to maintain a separate identity. It's easy to do on the outside, with billboards, different newspaper stories, etc. But inside it's another story. KNBR has 75 people on its staff, while KFOG has 25 or so. So it's been a challenge. To further meet that challenge, we made Dwight Walker FM station manager in December 1991. Dwight has been able to bring KFOG up to par in terms of the way the people internally feel about KNBR and KFOG, in terms of solidifying the feeling of the FM having an independent identity.

With KFOG's "in-house" and marketplace identities firmly established, the station could look forward to its second decade of flying the Susquehanna banner. San Francisco, probably more than any other Susquehanna market, is a pop music bastion. After all, was it not in the fifties that San Francisco was a jazz mecca? That in the sixties, San Francisco became home to a host of psychedelic rock bands? That in the seventies, San Francisco was one of the few places punk rock thrived?

As the San Francisco beat goes on, KFOG, well aware of that musical tradition, will be Susquehanna's pied piper for the Golden West.

KNBR

For anyone connected with a radio station, the first several months of a new ownership are both exciting and uncertain. In general, how-

ever, those involved would hardly call them momentous. But it didn't take long at KNBR-AM—Susquehanna's last acquisition of the 1980s—to disprove that conventional notion. Susquehanna became the licensee of the 50,000-watt powerhouse on June 6, 1989. Four months later, on October 17 at 5:04 P.M. (PDT), came a defining moment that would forever be etched in broadcasting history. The major earthquake that shook the San Francisco area just before the start of Candlestick Park's first World Series game in 17 years would focus national attention on a rare public service opportunity that befell KNBR. But we're getting ahead of our story.

Before KNBR became part of the Susquehanna radio family, the outlet had built a solid reputation in the Bay Area. With its enviable clear-channel facility at 680 kHz, KNBR's call letters projected a splendid image through the years. Despite the inevitable programming, personnel, and technical changes, the station had stood as an enduring symbol of broadcasting stability.

KNBR began life as KPO on April 17, 1922. Like any number of radio stations of the era, KPO's initial owner was a department store, Hale Brothers Stores, Inc. Through the 1920s, as radio went through growing pains, KPO increased power from 50 watts at its founding to 5,000 watts in 1929, and changed frequencies six times before the decade ended. In 1928, the station settled into its now-familiar 680 kHz dial location. Hale Brothers had retained full ownership until 1926 when the retailer sold 50 percent of the stock to the *San Francisco Chronicle*. (By the mid-1920s, newspapers were becoming alarmed by the impact of this upstart medium and across the country acquired full or partial interest in radio stations. Even earlier, such newspapers as the *Detroit News* [WWJ], the *Atlanta Journal* [WSB], the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* [KSD], and the *Des Moines Register* [WHO] had owned pioneer stations in their cities.)

In the fall of 1927, "The Entertainer of the West," as the station was now called, became part of a phenomenon that would add even more luster to the Roaring Twenties' reputation as a decade of excitement, invention, and growth. That phenomenon was network radio. The National Broadcasting Company had already proven the feasibility of linking stations coast-to-coast by broadcasting the Rose Bowl football game January 1, 1927.

When KPO joined the National Broadcasting Company, it became one of the network's two affiliates in San Francisco. In those days, NBC had two distinct nationwide operations, a Red Network and a Blue Network. In 1931, the pioneer broadcasting chain introduced regional identities by establishing Orange and Gold Networks on the Pacific Coast. Thus, KPO became NBC's Red and Orange San

Francisco affiliate, while KGO, NBC's second San Francisco affiliate, was named the network's Blue and Gold outlet.

The early 1930s were busy times at KPO. In 1932, Hale Stores and the Chronicle Publishing Company sold the station to General Electric. In an unusual arrangement, one of the most extraordinary in broadcasting annals, General Electric immediately leased the station to the National Broadcasting Company. GE was to retain the license while programming, sales, and the station's day-to-day management were assumed by NBC. The station would henceforth be considered one of the crown jewels in the network's radio operations. It was also in 1932 that serial dramas, which later became known as "soap operas," were beginning to pique listener interest. By then, such trailblazers as "Just Plain Bill," "Myrt and Marge," "The First Nighter," and "The Goldbergs" had already become favorites on the NBC and CBS networks. This dramatic genre was considered the province of the national networks and not particularly suited to local or regional origination. There was at least one major exception to that premise. It occurred at KPO, when on April 20, 1932, the Orange West Coast hook-up launched "One Man's Family." This serial drama's originator, who became its lifelong writer-director, was Carlton Morse. It didn't take long for the program to "go national," for less than a month later the show aired across the country on the full NBC Red Network. "One Man's Family" enjoyed one of the longest runs in NBC history, not signing off until 1960.

The early thirties were marked by an outburst of network program innovation: Fred Allen, Jack Benny, Burns and Allen, the Marx Brothers, and Ed Wynn were among those former vaudevillians who launched their radio careers at this time. The period was also known for its physical and technical refinements at affiliates such as KPO. No improvements, however, would be more consequential than the boost of power in April, 1933, from 5,000 to 50,000 watts.

In 1938, General Electric transferred ownership of KPO to its former lessee, NBC, which now became KPO's licensee, as well as KGO's. When KPO moved to its new four-story home (called NBC Radio City) at 420 Taylor Street in 1942, it marked the station's third location since its founding.

KPO's first important post-war change came in 1947 when the station adopted the new call letters, KNBC, an identity that it would retain for 15 years. Television, which by 1962 had already altered the media landscape, played a key role in the later change. That year, the National Broadcasting Company completed its new TV facilities in Burbank, California, and petitioned the Federal Communications Commission to transfer its KNBC call letters to its TV station to

achieve a closer identity with the network's new Hollywood showcase operation. In November of 1962, the revised "audio calling card" at 680 kHz became KNBR.*

By the early 1960s, television's impact on radio was already profound. Radio had by now surrendered its preeminence as America's mass home entertainment source and was forced to create new formats and program concepts. Like most radio stations, KNBR was now relying on personalities and music to replace traditional network programming. In 1967, the station's Middle-of-the-Road music format was updated and so were its physical facilities. These changes, reflecting the requirements of modern radio, found KNBR moving from Taylor Street to the newly constructed Fox Plaza at the San Francisco Civic Center.

More changes came in 1978, when KNBR's studios moved to Suite 400 at 1700 Montgomery Street. AM stereo broadcasting was adopted in 1983, and in 1984 "Talknet" was added to the program mix.

So things stood until 1986, when NBC and GE reversed the roles they had played in 1938. Then, GE had sold KPO to NBC. Now, 48 years later, General Electric bought the National Broadcasting Company as part of their RCA purchase. In the deal, of course, went KNBR. It was, to borrow the immortal words of Yogi Berra, "deja vu all over again."

Tony Salvatore, vice president/general manager of KFOG and KNBR, picks up the story from here:

From the KNBR Memory Bank—Tony Salvatore

Susquehanna had a desire to match an AM station with our KFOG. And since I was the Company's eyes and ears in San Francisco, KNBR was a property that was not unfamiliar to us. When General Electric put the station up for sale, we were outbid spectacularly. Naturally, we were disappointed, but at the same time, optimistic that another opportunity would come our way. Then we began to hear rumblings that the buyer couldn't finance the deal. Well, GE

*Not long after the call letter change, General David Sarnoff, the legendary broadcasting pioneer, was in the Bohemian Grove-Russian River area one Sunday and in need of transportation to his next destination. Apparently at a pay phone and without coins, the NBC founder placed a call to the company's nearest station, KNBR. John Grover, the lone announcer on duty, thinking a prank was in the offing, refused to accept the call. In Sarnoff's second attempt to get through, Grover informed the operator of the station's policy on collect calls, and further, that one with Sarnoff's resources "didn't call people collect." It didn't take long for the General's ire to bear repercussions. An NBC vice president in New York heard promptly from the stranded chairman, and was told in effect, "Fire that idiot at KNBR and get me a limousine here at Russian River." Later, compassion prevailed and Grover kept his job.

came back to Susquehanna—and we completed the buy for a lot less money!

In the last three or four years under GE ownership, the station floundered in the ratings. The programming was outdated. The music was a mix of Middle-of-the-Road items, with talking and chattering. What was keeping KNBR afloat and enabled it to be one of the highest billing stations in the market was the San Francisco Giants.

When Susquehanna took over, it was like a fresh breeze from the ocean. We made changes, adding some pizzazz and some energetic new people. In other words, we did a lot of things a good heritage station like KNBR deserved.

Vowing to do “a lot of things a good heritage station deserves” meant for Susquehanna probably the most unique challenge the Radio Division had experienced since its major expansion began in the late 1950s. Through a fortuitous coincidence, both the “heritage station” and the heritage parent company celebrated milestone years simultaneously—KNBR its 70th anniversary and Susquehanna its 50th—in 1992. By then, KNBR’s rejuvenation was well underway, in a manner that befit such historic call letters.

Perhaps more through benign neglect than willful negligence, KNBR’s two owners prior to Susquehanna had been satisfied to chart a course for the station that had left its identity somewhat fuzzy. This left the station with no clearly defined position to see it through the competitive battles that beset every broadcaster. When Susquehanna, soon after becoming the licensee, set out to clarify KNBR’s place in the San Francisco Bay Area, the first step in redoing the station’s program structure was to maintain two strong foundation blocks and build from there. One of these building blocks was the “Frank and Mike Show.” The other was sports programming that featured the San Francisco Giants, the Golden State Warriors, and sports-talk segments. Bob Agnew, who had joined KNBR as its new operations manager under Susquehanna, had observed the station during his 10-year tenure at competitor KCBS:

From the KNBR Memory Bank—Bob Agnew

KNBR, in my mind, never had any kind of image as a sports station. Sports was a fledgling thing that was on the air but never really promoted, never had any identity. So what we set upon doing was to get away from music entirely, refine and define that KNBR was more than just Frank and Mike, give the station some personality, and start moving into a Talk and Information format. We felt

that KGO, the predominant Talk leader in the market, number one for umpteen years, could stand some competition—and that we could create a niche, fine-tune the station, and gradually build and build, and pull away some of their huge ratings.

Agnew further described KNBR's program refurbishing as "a kind of magazine format: lighter, more interesting and entertaining programming in keeping with the theme of a friendly station that Frank and Mike so strongly projected in the morning." After a year, the station was ready for the next major transition—the introduction of a sports-talk show that focused on the top sports writers and columnists in the area and featured a knowledgeable host who could talk sports for people driving home during the commuting hours. The show was titled "Sports Page 68," and the first host was Gene Washington, the former San Francisco 49er.

"We hooked up with the number one sports newspaper in northern California, the *San Francisco Chronicle*," Mr. Agnew recalled. "What the *Chronicle* got out of this was cross-promotion on KNBR, especially continuing plugs for its various sports writers. What "Sports Page 68" did was give life to these sports scribes, let listeners get to know better these people they love to read (and sometimes hate), and give the fans some insights into what went on behind the scenes—not only in what they (the sportswriters) wrote, but how they came up with their ideas." Later, as Mr. Agnew pointed out, "Sports Page 68" pulled in writers and broadcasters from around the country.

When Susquehanna took over KNBR ownership in mid-1989, the San Francisco Bay Area was in the midst of probably the greatest single year in its sports history. The San Francisco Giants and the Oakland Athletics were both driving to pennants that ultimately led to their confrontation in the World Series in the fall. Later in the year, the station's new three-year Golden State Warrior association would find the team involved in the playoffs and finally, although KNBR did not carry their games, the 49ers would cap off a championship season with a Super Bowl victory.

Along with the sports connection came managers, coaches, and players—on the air and off—to afford KNBR a close relationship with the franchises. The Giant Fan Club was made an integral part of the station's association with the ball club. This close identification with sports was also a point of departure that afforded KNBR its initial opportunities to be a prime public service mover in the late summer

and fall of 1989. Both situations sprang from ill fortune. But, then, as Shakespeare observed, "Sweet are the uses of adversity." The KNBR team rose to both occasions.

Circumstances involved in the first opportunity centered on the San Francisco pitcher, Dave Dravecky. This Giant hurler who came to the club in a big 1987 trade with the San Diego Padres was a key to the team's winning a National League Western Division championship that year. When doctors discovered bone cancer in Mr. Dravecky's pitching arm, he missed the entire 1988 season. By August 10 the following year, the stylish lefthander's rehabilitation was such that his doctors pronounced him fit to pitch again, and on that day he made his first major league mound appearance in over a year and a half. Seizing the chance to lend moral support to a brave athlete, and at the same time raise funds for his favorite charity, Isabelle Lemon, KNBR's widely heralded promotions director, went into action. Ms. Lemon developed a fund-raiser of such originality that it attracted national attention and succeeded beyond anyone's expectations. KNBR's resourceful staffer describes her "Pledge-Per-Pitch" campaign in conjunction with Dave Dravecky's return to pitch for the Giants on August 10, 1989:

From the KNBR Memory Bank—Isabelle Lemon

We were inspired by the fact that Dave Dravecky had made a comeback, which no one thought he could ever do. We thought we could probably channel the great feeling he inspired in people into helping others. So we came up with the "Pledge-Per-Pitch" idea and asked people to pledge \$5 for every pitch Dave would make in his return to the mound against the Cincinnati Reds on August 10, 1989. Dave went seven innings that day, and, as a result, we raised \$130,000 for Lifesavers of America, a national bone marrow registry. The drive was conducted in the name of a little, six-year-old boy whom Dave had befriended and who was in need of a bone marrow transplant. In addition, as the result of our publicity for Lifesavers of America (which was then only six months old), over 700 people made appointments to have their blood tested at a cost of \$75 each to become part of the National Bone Marrow Registry.

If the Dave Dravecky story, KNBR's first outstanding public service after flying the Susquehanna flag, was poignant, the second experience was downright shocking—literally. Bob Agnew's eyewitness account of how a fun-and-games event turned into the life-and-death drama of the northern California earthquake of 1989 deserves to be placed in a time capsule for Bay Area residents to share years hence:

From the KNBR Memory Bank—Bob Agnew

We get to that October 17 day in '89 and we're all set with our World Series coverage; we have our people out all over Candlestick Park for pre-game programming. Dwight Walker and I were walking outside our big tent which we have outside centerfield. As we're walking toward the press entrance, there's a shake and a rumble. I had a drink in my hand and my reaction was "Boy, I've had too many here." I went to put my right foot down, and it didn't go all the way down. I kind of wobbled. Then I looked up at those huge light stands at Candlestick Park which are 80 feet in the air and they're swaying and twisting and I'm saying, "Holy moly, this is a good one!" It turned out this was a *great* one. We were stunned. Dwight turned white as a ghost because, being from York, Pennsylvania, and new to the area, he hadn't experienced an earthquake before.

I go up into the broadcast booth and get on the phone back to the station and talk to the board operator, who's kind of shaken up when he sees part of the acoustical tiling falling down. There's no communications at this point in terms of how severe the quake was. An announcement is finally made that the game will not be played. ABC television was carrying the game, and thanks to their blimp, we saw that a portion of the Bay Bridge and the Cypress structure of the Nimitz Freeway had collapsed and that there was a fire in the Marina. All of a sudden we're saying, "Boy, this World Series is secondary. We've got a tremendous story on our hands, and how are we going to handle it?" In a nutshell, our news staff pulled off an amazing feat.

The San Francisco earthquake of 1989 was a major turning point for KNBR. That the quake occurred during the World Series made it a big news boost for the station. KNBR's powerful signal, the fact that both of the Bay Area's major league teams were involved in the Series, and that this was *the* sports station, meant people were zeroing in on 680 kHz for their basic earthquake news reports.

Bob Agnew gives glowing praise to his news and sports reporters and to the KNBR technical crew under Chief Engineer Bill Ruck's leadership.

From the KNBR Memory Bank—Bob Agnew

I'd love to say it was all wonderful pre-planning, but it mainly had to do with our people, our backup generator, the transmitter location, and fate that we did not get knocked off the air. KGO and KCBS, our chief competitors, had their transmitters knocked out. As the Emergency Broadcast Station, we were the source of information for the officials. We were hooked up with City Hall so the mayor could communicate to the city.

We were on the fourth floor with the generator right in the lobby. It was amazing how Bill Ruck managed to pull all the cable and wires up through stairwells to keep things going. All our wire services were down. Our lines between UPI and AP were severed. In fact, one of our reporters had to go to downtown San Francisco and walk up 30 stories to the Fox Plaza Building to get word to the wire services to repair our lines because we had no other way to get to them.

KNBR became a beacon for many people who were without power. We were a calming voice, saying "This is what's going on. Tell us where you are; we'll relay this or that." People were listening to us. It brought the community together. A lot of people came back to KNBR, which was a real plus for us.

If KNBR's coverage of the earthquake itself was dramatic, the aftermath afforded the station an opportunity to render even more public service—an opportunity of the sort that few stations ever encounter. Isabelle Lemon recalls how the on-going KNBR Care Fund, a year-round charities omnibus, concentrated on the post-quake calamity:

From the KNBR Memory Bank—Isabelle Lemon

We manned the phones at the radio station for five days, relaying requests for help, for food, and other needs. As a result, when we finally closed the Care Fund for Northern California Earthquake Relief, we had raised \$653,000, money to be shared between the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross. To my knowledge, there was no single entity that raised that much money—for earthquake or any other kind of relief. KNBR was the only radio station in the nation to be honored by the American Red Cross at its 1989 National Recognition Dinner in Washington, D.C.

Ms. Lemon's KNBR portfolio is bulging with public service successes. It is beyond the scope of this work to describe all of them. Still, several should be singled out:

- KNBR's "Bridge-to-Bridge Run," one of the nation's top ten races, donates its proceeds to the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of San Francisco. Ms. Lemon estimates Bridge-to-Bridge Runs have raised over \$300,000 since their inception in 1979.
- In conjunction with the Golden State Warriors, "Toys for Tots" collected over 4,000 toys in its 1991 drive.
- Following the Oakland fires of 1991, KNBR's Care Fund raised funds for fire relief and a Salvation Army mobile canteen for the Oakland area.

No one knows where the Lemon public service and promotion juggernaut will strike next. "People say, 'What are you doing next year?'" she observes. "It all depends. We move quickly when something happens. Especially in 1992, because KNBR celebrated its 70th anniversary on April 17. I considered having Tony (Salvadore) throw out the first pitch at Candlestick park that day."



When Susquehanna bought KNBR, it also acquired two of San Francisco's most entertaining and engaging radio personalities, Frank Dill and Mike Cleary. It is no exaggeration to say the Frank and Mike morning show has become a San Francisco institution. Their wit, topical humor, and instinct for having their hands on the pulse of the city have enabled KNBR's daily broadcast to burst through the airwaves with a bright and sunny start. Frank Dill plays straight man to Mike Cleary's jester, and every morning, Monday through Friday, between 5:30 and 9:00 A.M., an aural chemistry takes place in the Bay Area. Frank and Mike are at it for another day.

As the original host of KNBR's wake-up program, Frank Dill for years was known as "The Morning Mayor of San Francisco." He arrived at the station in 1965. In the early 1970s, Mike Cleary joined the staff to do the 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. show. As time went on, Cleary would join Dill for the final hour of Dill's 9 to 10 stint. In the late 1970s, their efforts were combined, and they have been a San Francisco media fixture ever since.

No one should attempt to put down on paper the composition and properties of a show such as Frank's and Mike's. Some parts are scripted, others rely on the spontaneity that only radio can offer. The sparks that are ignited in good-natured banter and comedic bits make 680 on the dial glow during those morning hours. Impersonations appear from time to time as Mike Cleary mimics Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, George Bush, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Stewart, Julia Childs, Jack Benny, Bing Crosby, Bear Bryant, and other celebrities. In addition, the pair's kibitzing with local sports figures adds a special dimension to KNBR's sports image.

The following is a sample of a topical Frank and Mike exchange:

MIKE: (in George Bush character voice) Gosheroonies and like other same-type expressions, Frank, this is the President, George Bush, but you can call me "Gramps."

FRANK: I can't call my President "Gramps."

- MIKE:** Gosh, it's just that when I get off this like un-speech thing and press conference stuff, I get a kick out of just being one of the guys . . . you know . . . a wealthy, older kick-around kind of guy who likes to relate.
- FRANK:** Well, I'm not really in a position to . . .
- MIKE:** Excuse me, Bar, will you come see if I got this floor looking good? If so, I want to vacuum the sofa in the Blue Room, people are always dropping coins.
- FRANK:** What are you doing?
- MIKE:** I just waxed the Oval Office floor and now I'm dusting. . . . This bust of John Adams is driving me crazy . . . nobody's cleaned behind his ears in years.
- FRANK:** Mr. President, why are you doing all of this?
- MIKE:** Because I have been faulted in the press recently for being negligent when it comes to domestic issues. So, I said, Bar, the people really want a Dagwood and Blondie in the White House. Give me a honey-do list and I'll get started.
- FRANK:** Mr. President, those are not the domestic issues people want to see addressed!
- MIKE:** I can understand that. Most people probably don't have a bust of John Adams in their homes. But later during a press conference, I am going to empty the dishwasher. That they can relate to.
- FRANK:** Mr. President, what about health care issues?
- MIKE:** I checked with my doctor and he said I'm like OK to clean this place top to bottom. Well, I've got to go. . . . I'm giving Millie a flea dip and bath, and then Bar and I are going to wash Air Force One. Great photo op. Bye, Frank.

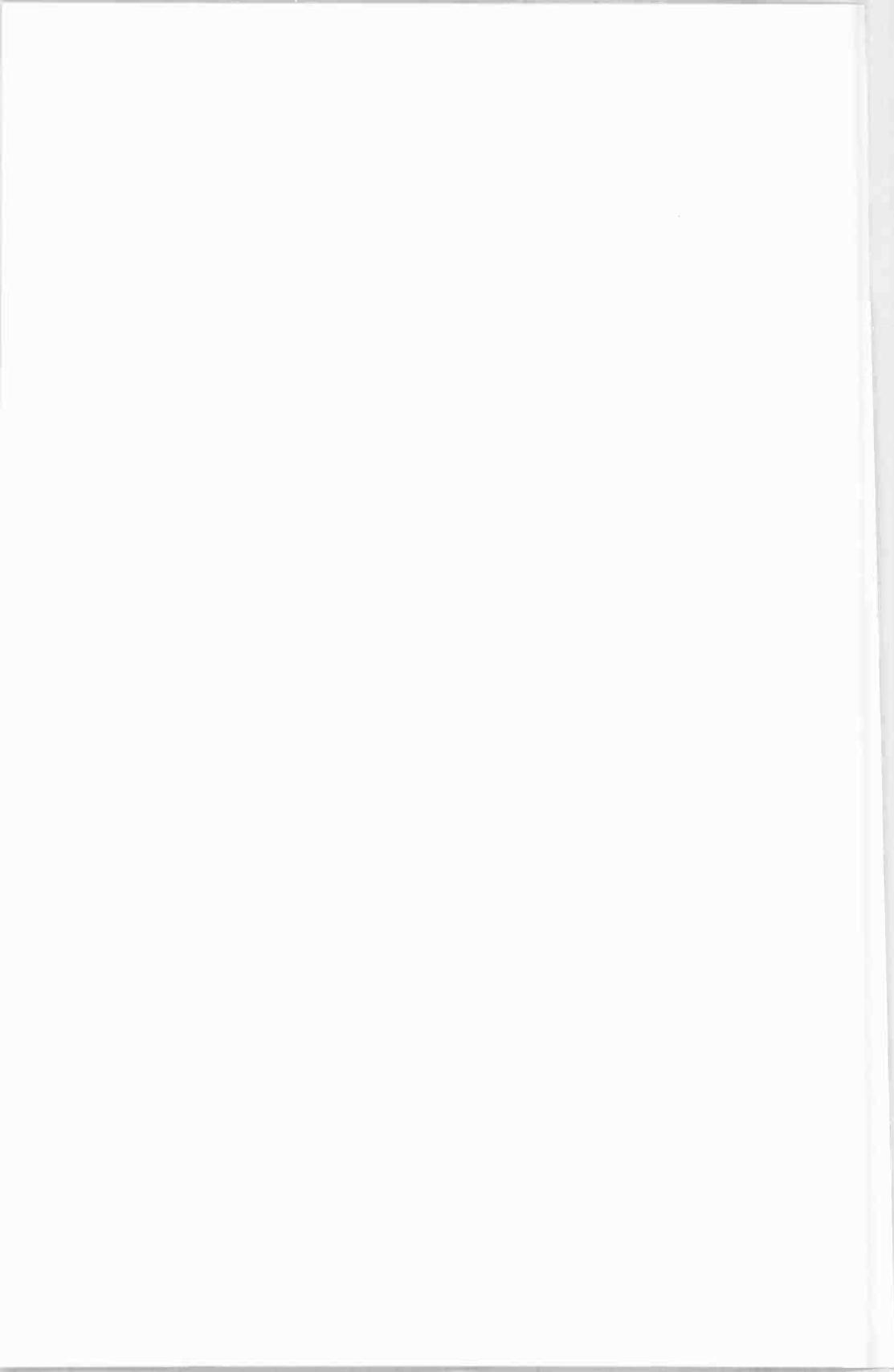
In 1991, a third member was found for the "Frank and Mike Show." Cammy Blackstone has been described by Bob Agnew as "a bubbly young woman, the most amazing, vivacious thing you've ever heard. With her Andy Devine kind of raspy voice, she does traffic reports, but a lot more, too. She's been everything from 'Miss Poison Ivy Queen' to 'Miss Garlic Festival,' 'Miss Pumpkin Queen,' 'Miss Lettuce Queen,' all kinds of goofy things. Cammy provides a bright, young sound and a new shot of life for the show."

Off the air, Messrs. Dill and Cleary are a priceless resource in the public service realm. The pair ring bells for the Salvation Army, emcee charity golf tournaments, do fund-raising banquets, lead the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon, host police dinners, preside over political roasts—the list goes on and on.



By 1992, KNBR had evolved into a primarily sports-oriented station. After mornings with Frank and Mike and syndicated talk show host Rush Limbaugh, the balance of the station's non-play-by-play programming is sports talk. Featured are longtime KNBR sports talk host "Razor Voice" Ralph Barbieri, and a relative newcomer to KNBR but a veteran sports talk host, Pete Franklin, who is considered by many to be the "father" of radio sports talk.

As KNBR prepared to move into its fourth Susquehanna year, Tony Salvatore remarked, "It's been a great ride so far." He might have added, "and we've only just begun!"



Covering the Sunshine State

*(Florida Network,
WHVE/WTKN)*



Chapter 22

Radio, like all enterprises regulated by the government, can be dramatically affected by philosophical changes and the shifting winds of political thinking.

Nationally, a new president sets in motion changes of direction at the federal regulatory bodies. Such changes range from ripple effects to wave-like upheavals. Since the modern version of the FCC came into being in 1934, no executive branch action has fomented changes in regulatory philosophy more than the arrival of Ronald Reagan in 1981. Deregulation had gotten a head start under President Jimmy Carter, but with the Reagan administration, the policy roared ahead at full speed.

Many were the results of the new philosophical thrust following President Reagan's appointment of Mark Fowler as FCC chairman. Shrinking the voluminous paperwork that had burdened broadcasters for years was one of the first Fowler transformations. Other changes that would leave their imprint on the radio and television industry followed, but the most significant by far was the revision of station ownership rules. Previously, the "7-7-7" rule limited one licensee to seven AM, FM, and TV stations each. In September 1984, the rule was amended to allow 12 AM and 12 FM stations. This change would shape Susquehanna's growth in the 1980s.

When the "7-7-7" rule was still in effect in 1983, moving into the Company's second Top 10 market, San Francisco, required the sale of WLQR in Toledo to acquire KFOG. Now, the commission's revised ownership rules signaled a new phase for expansion-motivated

firms such as Susquehanna. It also signaled a dramatic escalation in the selling prices of radio stations.

In Susquehanna's case, there were a number of considerations as further expansion was contemplated. In the early to mid-1970s, Company philosophy pointed toward having seven AM and seven FM outlets, ideally in 14 different markets. A decade later, this strategy had become obsolete. Art Carlson put it this way: "More and more, we were facing competitors who had AM/FM combinations. And while the AM station in a market like Dallas may throw in only a one or two share, when the largest stations in the market have sixes and sevens, that one or two is a pretty big number. There are other considerations, too. Let's say in Dallas, where an FM like ours had limited commercial units, we were able to use the AM station for promotions that require more frequency. So there was increasing evidence, particularly in a major market, that you needed both an AM and an FM. Now if you had to settle for just one in today's world, FM makes more sense than AM."

Moreover, as Mr. Carlson points out, stand-alone AM stations were having increasing problems. The purchase of KLIF in January 1980 meant not only that Dallas was now represented by an AM/FM combo, it also signified that the Company had reached its "7 and 7" FCC quota. Therefore, Susquehanna's expansion plans would have to be placed on hold until the FCC came through with its much talked-about "12 and 12" rule, which was not a given. In the meantime, a unique opportunity arose that allowed expansion without affecting ownership limits.

The Florida Network

Not long after the inception of radio broadcasting, regional and state networks had sprung up alongside the national chains. The Florida Network, a linkage of stations joined by interconnected telephone land lines, was eight years old when it joined the growing Susquehanna family in June 1982. Headquartered in Winter Park, Florida, the Sunshine State's network was owned by Don Kennedy, also the principal of the Georgia Network. It was via this Georgia connection that his path and Susquehanna's intersected.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

Don Kennedy wanted WLTA as an Atlanta affiliate. It was not terribly important for us to be too involved, but we did carry some of his business. Well, two things happened to Mr. Kennedy. First, the Florida Network was not doing all that well financially. In fact, he

was losing a lot of money. And while he had done fairly well in Georgia with his original network, all of a sudden he had competition. The WGST-originated Georgia Radio News Service was launched, based on the logic that they should expand their All-News operation into a state network.

So Mr. Kennedy was in a fight in his home state, without a News or News/Talk station as a base. He wanted to sell the Florida Network to have funds to compete in Georgia. As we looked at the situation, it seemed brilliantly simple that we could pull in a state network with our News/Talk operation at WKIS, particularly since Orlando is in the center of the state. The assets of a state network are very limited, similar to those of, say, a national network like Mutual, without owning stations. Studio equipment, satellite dishes, those sorts of things are the only assets of a state network.

We felt that Florida was uniquely able to sustain a network, because, despite the large number of people who live in Miami/Ft. Lauderdale, Tampa Bay, Jacksonville, and Orlando, there are still roughly some three million people in smaller markets. Florida as a state is growing, and it has a lot of little radio stations.

One of Susquehanna's first important tasks was to upgrade the Network's technical facilities. As delivery of radio and television programming via satellite by 1982 became a reality, its superior sound quality was immediately apparent. In comparison, programming fed through traditional telephone lines stood out like primitive audio beside that of satellite transmission. Bob Poe, who was FN's first sales manager, and later its general manager, called the inherited telephone facilities "scrapyard lines . . . they were in very bad shape."

It was also about this time, Mr. Carlson said, "We were hearing stories that radio line charges were not going to increase a little; rather increase 10 or 20 times or even more." Eventually, all those telephone horror tales came true and the necessity of using satellite delivery became obvious. However, making that determination and implementing it were two entirely different matters.

Plans had called for renting channels on the satellite Westar VI, owned by Western Union. Art Carlson, Bob Poe, George Hyde, and Charlie Morgan were among those present in Florida for the launching, a mission of the space shuttle Challenger. It was assumed to have been a successful launch. However, Westar VI was lost in space. Mr. Carlson learned about it the next morning as he listened to a news-cast while shaving: "When I heard the news, I let out a yell. My wife wasn't sure whether I had hurt myself, or my favorite basketball team, North Carolina, had lost their game the night before!"

Following the unexpected setback in space, it was decided to rent two channels on Westar III to replace the terrestrial land line

system. Station affiliates were offered three plans for acquiring satellite dishes: a three-year lease, after which the station owned the dish; a full-time lease; or outright purchase. There was also another obstacle to overcome.

Riding the FN Circuit—Bob Poe

We had to sell our affiliates on an affiliation fee they hadn't paid before. Operations Manager Rod Hemphill and I spent three months going from town to town, from Pensacola all the way down to Key West. I'd estimate we covered about seven or eight thousand miles. We had a heck of a time selling those affiliates, but we did it.

It was April of '84 when we turned on the switch to the satellite. We thus had a satellite uplink here in Orlando, one in Miami, and partial use of one in the Tampa/St. Pete area, plus some 50 earth stations around the state.

As Mr. Poe and Mr. Hemphill will attest, many who are familiar with broadcasting in only medium to large markets cannot appreciate the dynamics of radio in a small market. "We saw stations located in Quonset huts, in people's houses, in mobile homes," Mr. Hemphill said. Many of these had fewer than 10 employees, including part-timers. To have a quality news service such as that created by the Florida Network was a boon to smaller market operators. Newscasts, which originated at the Network's key station, WKIS, were fed on the half-hour from 6:30 A.M. through midnight. The primary focus of these newscasts was Florida news, with a Tallahassee bureau and a crew of top-flight correspondents reporting the news as it happened. In addition, Network affiliates were fed hourly weather updates and three sports reports daily.

The Florida Network proved an enhancement for WKIS. As Florida's only statewide news service, FN was able to gain better access to state officials and others in various walks of life. The Network was also a major distributor of sports programming, including play-by-play football and basketball for college and professional teams.

While the Florida Network was generally achieving its objectives of expanding sales and improving the quality and scope of the WKIS news operation, it was not quite the same as having a solid AM/FM combination. By 1987, two things had happened in Orlando.

First, the change in the ownership limits, plus a move by several new FM stations into the market (allowed by the FCC's technical deregulation), had greatly enhanced competition.

Secondly, what Susquehanna had projected for the Orlando market when it first bought WKIS was now coming to pass. A full-

fledged boom was under way. Orlando had become a prime market target for many radio groups, and as a result, FM stations there were being sold at prices comparable to those in top 20 markets.

Finally, another twist of fate occurred. The opportunity came along to swap WKIS for a comparable AM in the Tampa Bay area. Inasmuch as an FM in that market had been added to Susquehanna's portfolio, the swap made sense and took place. This left the Florida Network, once again, a stand-alone operation, and the obvious conclusion was to sell it. The sale to The Profit Group, Inc. was completed in 1987.

WHVE-WTKN

It was never any secret that Houston ranked at the very top of Susquehanna's list for future expansion, or that Tampa Bay was targeted as the second most desired market on the Company's blueprint for growth. That both acquisitions would be made during 1986 added a heightened sense of excitement and energy throughout Susquehanna Radio.

Tampa/St. Petersburg/Clearwater has traditionally been defined as America's 21st market. But, as we know, broadcast media make their own markets. Within the standard television Area of Dominant Influence (ADI), Tampa Bay is actually three separate radio markets: Tampa/St. Petersburg; Sarasota/Bradenton; and Lakeland. If one radio facility were available to cover the entire region effectively, wouldn't that be a remarkable strip market? Indeed it would! And that's exactly what Susquehanna had in mind in locating in southwest Florida, on the Sun Coast, the state's fastest-growing market.

Because Tampa Bay was number two on the Company target list, the on-going search was not quite so intense as it was for Houston. But early in 1986, a radio station became available in Sarasota. Sarasota? Wouldn't that be stretching the limits of strip marketing beyond reasonable boundaries?

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

WAVE was a sleeper, if we could get it at a reasonable price. But first we wanted a full study of what could be done technically with all facilities in the market. WAVE's coverage wasn't all that bad; in reality, though, its Tampa signal was not entirely competitive. Still, it was a facility that could be vastly improved—one we felt that could be transformed into one of the four or five best in the Tampa Bay area. We decided to look at WAVE very seriously.

It was owned by Cosmos Broadcasting, and we surmised they were the ideal candidate to sell a station. Cosmos had several major VHF TV stations, but a rather strange radio portfolio—the FM in Sarasota; an AM stand-alone in Columbia, South Carolina; and an AM/FM combination in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

We weren't the only ones to figure WAVE had a great deal of potential. We tried in many ways to contact them. Louis even wrote a letter to their chairman of the board. But they never responded, not even to subsequent phone calls, letters, and telegrams. Nobody was getting through to Cosmos. I imagine people were making blind offers. As we later found out, Cosmos had decided to get out of radio, but they wanted to do it all at once and in a neat way. We were able to press the right buttons and our persistence paid off because we bought WAVE by itself, without getting involved in their stated group disposal intent—and we weren't in any competitive bidding situation, even though they had blind offers. We inherited a very interesting radio station.

When Susquehanna's fourth station in Florida, the 16th overall, was founded in 1973 by Sarasota Radio Co., its call letters were WQSR. Cosmos Broadcasting, which bought the facility in 1980, changed the letters, first to WSRZ, then to WAVE. With main studios and offices at 4306 North Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, the WAVE facility also included a St. Petersburg sales office at 9450 Koger Boulevard. Susquehanna acquired the property on July 1, 1986, with the hope of inheriting WAVE's call letters intact. The FCC was now allowing stations to use the same call letters in different markets, providing they were not in the same service (two TV stations, for example, or two FM stations). Cosmos "owned" the call letters by virtue of having WAVE-TV in Louisville. They could have allowed Susquehanna to keep "WAVE-FM," but decided against it. Hence, to retain a phonetic proximity, the call letters became WHVE. The slogan would be WHVE, "102 and a half."

When Susquehanna acquired WHVE, the format had evolved into a curious blend of Album Rock, Jazz, Folk—a hybrid sort of Adult Contemporary whose appeal Dave Kennedy described as "cultist."

Despite its Sarasota location, WAVE garnered significant Tampa/St. Petersburg audience. Even more notable, the highly creative sales effort, led by General Sales Manager Drew Rashbaum, was delivering a significant revenue share from the Tampa area. Both these trends continued and grew during the early days of Susquehanna ownership.

The obligatory new market research was purposely limited, pending facility improvements. Basically, Susquehanna main-

streamed the format to a more conventional Adult Contemporary sound. Rick McDonald explained, "We did keep the evening jazz seven nights a week, because that seemed to be the thing most people wanted to preserve. Programming jazz in the evening is not an uncommon approach across the country now."

Jazz for WHVE was more than on-the-air musical embroidery. The music played a key role in the station's outside promotions and public service. For example, two of St. Petersburg's top 1986 musical events were jazz concerts sponsored by WHVE: 50,000 turned out in St. Petersburg's Straub Park for "Hot Jazz on a Cool Night," featuring the Jazz Crusaders in a benefit for the Community Alliance and Festival of States; 40,000 showed up for Spyro Gyra in another "Concert in the Park" series, this one to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

Subsequently, several minor music variations were implemented and WHVE (by now called "The Wave" on the air), in due time, settled into a format that became known as New Adult Contemporary (NAC). Jazz, however, still was a key ingredient of the musical mix, and that music served as a springboard for many station-sponsored outdoor concerts and events—the Clearwater Jazz Holiday was one. WHVE General Manager Gordon Obarski felt one of the main reasons the Tampa/St. Petersburg area had one of the largest concentrations of jazz clubs at that time was "definitely due to 'The Wave'."

But if the WHVE programmers were involved in their own fine-tuning of the station's sound, engineering needs called for a "new tune." In order to meld Sarasota/Bradenton into the Tampa/St. Petersburg/Clearwater market, an improved WHVE signal with stronger coverage toward Tampa became priority number one. Cosmos, the station's previous owner, had filed for permission to build a taller tower southeast of Sarasota. Such a permit required approval from three bodies: the Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Aviation Administration, and local zoning authorities. Susquehanna was granted construction permission by the FCC and FAA, but thanks to political machinations related to the Sarasota/Bradenton Airport, zoning approval appeared to be a long way off. Susquehanna's next move, therefore, was to amend its application with a petition to build a new tower at another location.

Finally, in early January 1989, despite the many obstacles involved, particularly from the Private Pilots' Association of Bradenton, a new, 1,784-foot tower that met legal standards and Susquehanna's own requirements was constructed. And although things turned out fine from an engineering standpoint, all was not well. For no sooner had the new "stick" gone into service than vandals began shooting

out the tower lights, a residue, perhaps, of the long, complicated legal wrangle. After a lengthy period of having a contingent of station-hired guards patrol the site, the mischief-makers withdrew.

To continue Susquehanna's Tampa/St. Petersburg story, we must now look northeast to Orlando. As noted earlier, the growth of Orlando had been phenomenal. Thanks mainly to Disney World, it had become known as the number one tourist destination in the world, and ranked third behind New York and Los Angeles in the number of hotel rooms. Further, the region had experienced remarkable growth in the past 15 years with nearly 450,000 new residents and an economic boom that, for example, had generated a 114 percent increase in high-tech employment.

While Orlando was growing and the purchase of an FM to go with WKIS was increasingly improbable, Tampa Bay also was booming. Although the growth rate on Florida's west coast was not as sharp as the Orlando area's, the market was substantially larger, and a projection of current growth rates showed that it would be well into the 21st century before Orlando would even come close to Tampa.

When, in 1988, the opportunity arose to swap WKIS to Guy Gannett Broadcasting for their WPLP of the Tampa/St. Petersburg market (570 kHz, 5 kw), it appeared to be an easy decision. By combining WPLP with WHVE, Susquehanna now had an AM/FM combo in the Tampa Bay area; and Gannett, by acquiring WKIS, now had an AM facility to go with its existing FM, WSSP in Cocoa Beach, for the Orlando area.

One of Susquehanna's first steps was to apply for a call letter change from WPLP to WTKN, taking advantage of the phonetic possibility that lent itself to "Talkin'," an obvious reference to the format, which would be News/Talk.

Not that the swap solved all problems in Tampa Bay. While Guy Gannett had improved the facility by moving to a new transmitter site considerably north of Tampa/St. Petersburg, the studios were located in a ramshackle building in an older, hard-to-reach residential area. The studio facility was in such bad shape that there was at least a chance that local authorities might condemn it. Logistical problems were enormous.

The various facilities, studios, sales and administrative offices, and transmitters of the newly acquired WPLP and the established WHVE were scattered about the Tampa Bay area. To keep tabs on all aspects of both operations became a major management challenge.

Gordon Obarski, who formerly was general manager of WARM 98 in Cincinnati, moved to Tampa to manage WHVE and now had an AM/FM combination to supervise. Both before and after the addition

of the AM, Mr. Obarski was spending an inordinate portion of his time in his car.

Talkin' Radio with Gordon Obarski

It would take me an hour to get to Sarasota from my home. Then it would take an hour and 20 minutes to get to the combined sales and administrative offices which were at 11300 4th Street, North, in St. Petersburg. We didn't move those components all together until January 1990. Before that, I was running to three or four places every day. I was "brain dead." Art Carlson called me one day—this was during the advent of the big cellular phone phenomenon—and told me that a lot of the managers were requesting these phones. He insisted that I get one within 30 days, which I did. On the day Charlie Morgan called me to say we received FCC and zoning approval for the new tower, I was on the Sunshine Skyway Bridge.

The move to combine WTKN and WHVE in new, state-of-the-art studios and offices at Koger Center in St. Petersburg was achieved in near record time. At last the stations could be operated in a normal manner. The one exception was engineering, since the distance between WTKN's tower site and the new WHVE tower was almost exactly 100 miles.

The WTKN News/Talk schedule began the broadcast day with a news magazine-type show, followed by listener call-in programs featuring local hosts until 3 P.M., followed by sports talk until 7 P.M., when the Larry King Show aired. WTKN presented a heavy play-by-play sports menu, highlighted by University of Florida football and basketball, major league baseball, plus some of the Mutual Network's sports programming.

With the Tampa/St. Petersburg area high on the priority list for a major league baseball franchise, one WTKN promotion stands out. To help press the cause, the station acquired a 1978 diesel Buick and dubbed it "The Bartmobile," so named after Baseball Commissioner A. Bartlett (Bart) Giamatti. The Bartmobile became a familiar sight in the Tampa Bay area in the summer and early fall of 1989. In the meantime, Commissioner Giamatti died, and the vehicle was renamed "The Baseball Machine." It was then on to the 1989 World Series in San Francisco for "The Baseball Machine" to continue the lobbying effort for a Tampa/St. Petersburg baseball team. Surely, the new commissioner, Fay Vincent, would be impressed by such civic concern. But Commissioner Vincent was to have more immediate matters on his mind. For as noted earlier, the 1989 World Series opened with one of San Francisco's worst earthquakes. Later, one of

history's little ironies would come into play as Bob Lurie, the San Francisco team owner, in early 1992 agreed in principle to move the Giants to Tampa/St. Petersburg.

WTKN was in a highly competitive battle with the established News/Talk market leader, WFLA. When CBS purchased WSUN-AM to pair with their FM Album Rock station in the market, the specter of three full-fledged News/Talk operations existed.

This situation led to the decision for WTKN to specialize, and in 1990, the station affiliated with Business Radio Network, greatly minimizing the amount of expensive local talk programming. An additional change was made with a switch to CNN radio as its programming cornerstone, two days before the Gulf War began.



By mid-1991, WHVE and WTKN were finally heading in the right direction, both artistically and financially. But like all enterprises, radio stations do not exist in a vacuum. The recession that began in the late eighties required some serious Company-wide reassessments. Much as Susquehanna regretted contemplating the prospect, a divestiture had to be considered. Here it should be pointed out, selling radio stations (for whatever reason) does not pose the enormous logistical problems confronting, say, a General Electric, if it wished to divest itself of one of its huge divisions. Unpleasant as the prospect was, the decision was made to sell WHVE and WTKN. Susquehanna's executive vice president put the matter into perspective.

Talkin' Radio with Larry Grogan

As we continued to steer the Company through the recession, we began to "rightsize," as opposed to "downsize." What we were trying to do was to get the Company to a manageable size so that we could maintain our business styles and momentum by virtue of our own resources, without having to seek additional cash resources from the outside. We wanted to protect ourselves from the inside.

In closing the Tampa/St. Petersburg/Sarasota chapter, perhaps Gordon Obarski spoke for the entire Susquehanna family when he said, "I know no one really wanted to do it, but it was a financial decision that needed to be made. November 27, 1991, was a sad day indeed."

Into the Kaleidoscopic City

KRBE-AM/FM



Chapter 23

Well before KRBE-AM & FM became members of Susquehanna Radio's growing family, Houston's status as the number one target market had made it a tantalizing prospect for expansion for Susquehanna. Executive Vice President Larry Grogan, with his penchant for painting vivid word pictures, perhaps has best summed up the essence of Houston, Texas: "Houston is a city for our future. It's almost brand new and it's a symbol of young America. You can see where people who are accustomed to symmetry would find Houston a puzzle. This seeming kaleidoscope called Houston should be our next challenge."

On December 3, 1986, the Company hit the acquisition bull's eye and took possession of KRBE-AM (10 kw day, 5 kw night, 1070 kHz) and KRBE-FM (100 kw, 104.1 mHz). KRBE/KRBE-FM, located at 9801 Westheimer, 7th Floor, represented the 17th and 18th stations under Susquehanna's proprietorship.

During the 1970s alone, Houston and its suburbs added 906,034 people, more than any other U.S. metropolitan area; the city itself grew 29.2 percent, and its oil-related economy created over 670,000 jobs. Small wonder then that enlightened media companies considered it a coup of no small proportion to land a property in Houston. Susquehanna's rite of passage into Houston, like the entries into each of the other markets, is unique in its own right.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

As soon as we started enjoying real success in Dallas with KPLX, it became evident that potentially the best market we could

get in was Houston. For at least five years, it had been our number one target. It's a great radio market, and we only wished we had tried to get there earlier. I think over that five-year period we made an offer on everything that was for sale in Houston. The only thing we turned down were the move-ins—those outlying stations that have been moved closer to the principal city, but often do not have a comparable signal to major in-market stations.

One outfit with which we had tried to create a sale was Lake Huron, which owned KRBE-AM & FM. Lake Huron, based in Saginaw, Michigan, also owned an FM in Tampa/St. Petersburg. Jack Kay, Susquehanna's vice president/real estate, was in the Palm Beach area and made contact with Bill Edwards, the principal owner, who had his corporate winter office there. Jack was able to set up a meeting in Saginaw for Louis Appell and Peter Brubaker to talk about our interest in buying both Tampa/St. Petersburg and Houston—particularly Houston. Mr. Edwards, who was close to 70, and his even older partner, said that they didn't really have any interest in selling.

But times and situations change quickly. Not too long after this meeting, the tax laws were revised in a manner which made it attractive for people like Edwards and his partner to consummate a sale before the end of 1986. We had already bought Sarasota (with our Tampa goals in mind), so that unless we wanted to sell WHVE, Lake Huron's Tampa/St. Pete property was out. And besides, the combined price of Houston and Tampa/St. Pete was probably too big for us anyway.

But I thought I ought to give broker Gary Stevens a call to see what was cooking with KRBE. Gary said, "Your timing is great. We have some interest in the Houston and Tampa Bay stations together, but the money isn't big enough. We have a lot of interest in Tampa Bay alone, all because of the depressed Houston economy." So he said, "Will you pay so-and-so for the KRBE combo?"

I think I said "sure" without even asking Louis, since it was less than we had figured. The price did go up a bit in the next few days. From the time we made contact to the time we agreed to buy was 48 hours. This is what happens when you know a market, know the facilities, and know what they're worth to you.

The respective biographies of the KRBE stations in their pre-Susquehanna days, like the life stories of acquisitions that preceded them, are fascinating slices of Americana. KRBE was a dream-come-true for Bill Edwards, co-founder of Lake Huron Broadcasting. In 1968, Mr. Edwards had purchased an AM station, KENR, a daytimer on 1070 kHz. It took three more years to acquire a full-time grant. KENR's Country format was right on target, and by 1975, the station

had become number one in the market. That same year, when KRBE-FM, owned by General Cinema became available, Edwards' company purchased it.

Ray Carroll, now a leading salesman for Susquehanna's Houston properties, was on the KRBE-FM staff at the time. The apprehension he experienced with the imminent Lake Huron ownership was an age-old uncertainty shared by countless employees in the same shoes. Did we say *shoes*?

On the KRBE Beat with Ray Carroll

We didn't know what to expect. Would Lake Huron change KRBE-FM's format (which was Top 40 at the time), to Country (which was the sister station KENR's format)? Or would the new owners turn their KENR format from Country to Top 40, Progressive Rock, or some other form of pop music? So the staff handled it like this: On the very day of Lake Huron's takeover, the entire staff came in with a cowboy boot on one foot and a tennis shoe on the other!

KRBE's convoluted format history—from Classical to Progressive Rock to Top 40—continued under Lake Huron management. Following Lake Huron's purchase of KRBE-FM in 1975, KENR became KRBE-AM, and both the AM & FM outlets were moved into the Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR) arena. In the early eighties, both stations became Adult Contemporary, but in 1985, it was back to CHR again. Ratings, which were excellent in 1983–84, had fallen apart by 1985–86. By the time Susquehanna took over the stations near the end of 1986, the new management team had analyzed recent studies and determined to stay with Contemporary Hit Radio. However, unlike KRBE's previous owners, Susquehanna opted not to run separate versions of the format, thus becoming the only facility in Houston to simulcast its AM and FM operations.

The initial ratings under Susquehanna showed KRBE-FM, known on the air as "Power 104," had moved past the market's CHR leader, KKBQ, landing right behind KMJQ in the overall second-place position of the Houston numbers race. But it is a distinct occupational hazard to bask too long in the first flush of victory. KRBE knew, of course, that it was in for a pitched battle with the traditional leader, KKBQ. Paul Christy, KRBE program director at the time, stressed that perspective needed to be kept, since each ratings sweep, like a sporting event, is a new ball game: "We've got great admiration for the competition, but we still want to beat them. . . . Feelings of

arrogance or forgetting where you came from are destructive attitudes. . . . KRBE is going to continue to be innovative and avoid the temptation of becoming set in its ways. I've seen too many stations lose what they have by trying to 'just hold on' instead of going farther."

Leading the charge of "going farther" with KRBE was the newly appointed general manager, George (Sandy) Gamblin. A Canadian whose radio career began in sales at WRKT in Cocoa Beach, Mr. Gamblin's management career had taken him to Charlotte and Houston as sales manager, and Louisville and Milwaukee as a general manager before joining Susquehanna in 1986. Mr. Gamblin described what he considered the fundamentals for KRBE to win the hearts (and ears) of Houstonians: "We will be bright and consistent with our music. We will be aggressive promotionally on the air and on the outside. Those are our power buttons. We will be in the public eye daily. Everybody will be out there shaking hands and doing things."

But "being in the public eye . . . out there shaking hands and doing things" are often not enough. The linchpin of a successful radio station is still its sound—more precisely, its format. Then, too, there is the possibility of new competition to muddy the waters further.

And that is exactly what happened. In mid-1989, a third station, KNRJ or "Energy," entered the Contemporary Hit Radio musical derby, splitting the Houston audience share three ways for this particular format. Susquehanna's goal had been to establish KRBE as the dominant CHR station in Houston, but with three competitors in the same format, the identities of the stations, including KRBE, became blurred. Although KRBE's ratings improved slightly, listener loyalty and time spent listening were too low for management acceptance.

Meanwhile, to replace Manager Gamblin in late 1989, the Company tapped Nancy Vaeth, whose winning performance in Indianapolis and her desire for a new challenge had earned her a move to America's eighth market. Nancy Vaeth's career in broadcasting began as an account executive at WEZG/WSOQ in Syracuse, New York. Ms. Vaeth later moved to KMJQ in Houston in sales, and from there joined Susquehanna as account executive at KPLX/KLIF in November 1980, becoming general sales manager two years later. In the latter part of 1985, Ms. Vaeth moved to WFMS as vice president/general manager, and returned to Houston to manage KRBE in 1989.

While the modest KRBE ratings gains mentioned above might have satisfied many a broadcaster, the KRBE management team un-

der Ms. Vaeth felt this would not suffice in Houston. Initially, management tried to fine-tune the station by fixing the problems that were identified in the research. Musically, research indicated that KRBE was too broad, playing a mix of music that listeners found eclectic, yet somewhat incompatible. Personality issues were also addressed. But correcting all the conventional problems resulted in only marginal improvements in the ratings. In the summer of 1990, Steve Wyrstok, assistant program director of Power 99 in Atlanta, joined KRBE as program director.

By early 1991, KNRJ changed formats, narrowing the CHR field, once again, to KRBE and KKBQ. The KRBE team felt radical steps were needed to offer listeners a clear choice between the two stations. Manager Vaeth recalled these steps:

On the KRBE Beat with Nancy Vaeth

We decided to implement a presentation change at KRBE. We made the decision to pull back all the “negatives” associated with Contemporary Hit Radio, such as disc jockeys talking over records, screaming jocks, lots of jingles, and excessive hype. In their place we put a more subdued presentation. We dropped the word “Power” from our station identifier and called the station “104 KRBE.” We adopted the slogan, “Hits. Without the Hype.” Our disc jockeys became more informative about the artists and titles connected with the music. They announced every song and artist so the audience always knew what they were listening to. We added special features, such as a daily CD review, movie and video reviews, “Lunchtime Comedy Clip,” “Earthbeat,” and other special information and entertainment segments.

We broke with a television and outdoor advertising campaign that told people exactly what we did. The result has been consistently growing shares. By the summer of 1991, we once again surpassed KKBQ, and right after that rating survey was released, KKBQ changed format to Country. So we had finally not only achieved dominance, but exclusivity in the format by the fall of 1991.



If the 36 stations on the crowded Houston airwaves vie for attention 24 hours a day, it takes little imagination to understand how their promotional prowess must be challenged. KRBE must maintain a significant presence in a city that offers an endless chain of public service and promotional possibilities. One promotion that has proven to be particularly popular and profitable has been the KRBE night-

club partnership. In September 1989, a unique challenge was presented to KRBE when a proposal was made for the station to join forces with the development team of a new nightclub under construction in Houston. The challenge was particularly great, since the nightclub was starting from scratch with no identity or even visibility from the street to attract public attention. KRBE created the image, produced the commercials (some were national award winners), and broadcast a live dance show from the club on the weekend. The results were so successful that the club doubled in size the first year and has continued to prosper. To date, KRBE has generated over \$1 million in exclusive billing on this unusual venture.

KRBE further enhanced its hit music image by hosting exclusive, by-invitation-only mini-concerts, known as "Power Houses." Featuring live performances by up-and-coming recording artists, usually on the heels of their first hit, these lively events were held in local dance clubs and quickly became the "hottest ticket in town."

Recently, two events sponsored by KRBE garnered the National Association of Broadcasters' "Best of the Best Promotion" awards. In 1990, KRBE's Ghostbusters II Ectomobile captured the honor, with the station's Pepsi Texas Chill-Out winning in 1991, significant industry recognition for Marketing Director Carol Maher and her staff.

On the public service front, the following list of on-going events comprises but a short roster of station involvement with the community:

- **The Moonlite Fun Run**—Started in 1989 to benefit Warren Moon's Crescent Moon Foundation for underprivileged children, the Moonlite Fun Run is the only nighttime run in Houston. The first year, nearly 800 runners participated in the event, a number that has doubled since then.
- **Easter Egg Hunt**—This KRBE-sponsored event began in 1985 and attracts nearly 5,000 children and parents for the largest Easter egg hunt in Houston. KRBE supplies over 20,000 plastic eggs for the search.
- **Spring Break**—Originated by KRBE and the Galveston Park Board of Trustees in 1987. Designed to make Galveston Island a safe and entertaining site for college students, Spring Break has grown to an annual event serving over 200,000 students and island visitors.
- **Foley's Thanksgiving Day Parade**—For many years, KRBE has been the exclusive Houston radio station involved with the parade. In addition to the KRBE float and the KRBE Boom Box, the station's live broadcasts prior to the parade feature interviews with guest celebrities, such as Aaron Neville, Alan Thicke, Corbin Bernsen, Tom Wopat, and Bronson Pinchot.



Susquehanna's presence in Houston has coincided with a gradual redefining of the city's economy. As Houston struggled through the collapse of the oil industry in the early eighties, by necessity its economic base was forced to diversify. This diversity should prove highly beneficial to Houston in the future and make the market more attractive to broadcasters.

Houston may symbolize the American dream, or some might say the "American experience," better than any other city. It certainly typifies the Texas "can-do" spirit. During its oil boom years, Houston expanded in every conceivable way. The only exception might be in highway construction, where it was physically impossible to keep pace with the burgeoning population and their automobiles. The result was round-the-clock traffic problems more commonly associated with New York or Los Angeles.

When the boom turned to bust, the fallout was dramatic. Not only did employment and activity in the oil industry drop sharply, but the dramatic overbuilding of office space, homes, condominiums, and other businesses led the way to bank and savings and loan failures. Houston experienced these problems before they became widespread throughout the country. The city also suffered from a steady stream of negative publicity in the national media, which in turn discouraged advertising spending.

Rather quickly, and clearly in response to this dire situation, the special spirit and positive attitude of the city, the state, and the people started to take hold and the Houston economy began to rebound.

By the end of the eighties, Houston was among the top six markets in the country in terms of the number of new business start-ups. Remarkably, it became number one in terms of new businesses that started out employing 10 or more people.

As a result, the Houston of the early nineties is based on a much more diversified economy than its predecessor and is far less subject to dramatic fluctuations caused by the changing demand for oil. Its future will continue to be impacted by major changes in the energy industry, but probably never again will it experience a boom or bust cycle like that of the eighties.

Susquehanna bought KRBE after the boom but before the full impact of the bust. The Company weathered the lean years and watched the market return to a growth mode. Today, growth in Houston is steady, in contrast to the spectacular rise that occurred in the seventies and early eighties.



After two years of change and adjustment under Nancy Vaeth's leadership, KRBE, as "Hits. Without the Hype," has returned as a solid radio station in Houston and a solid business enterprise within Susquehanna. With the recent format fine-tuning and presentation changes, KRBE has risen to the number two position in its targeted 18-to-34 age group.

As programming and ratings improved, KRBE's Sales Manager Billie Parrott, with the recent addition of New Yorker Jim Reilly, assembled a solid sales staff that was able to take advantage of this opportunity for increasing sales revenues. Once again, long-time sales leader Ray Carroll, and others, started setting station sales records.

Young Adult "Top 40" music will always have a place in America's music spectrum, and contemporary radio will constantly be challenged by the changing musical tastes of the listening audience. But whether it is Contemporary Hit Radio, or any other format, as long as the station is well-managed and staffed with talented and dedicated people, KRBE will be among the market leaders, whatever the challenges.



Every city has a nickname, or possibly two or three, associated with it. But no town, city, or state can match the multi-faceted lineup of monikers by which Houston is known. Here are but a few:

America's Growingest City; Land of the Big Rich; Nature's Gift to Texas; Southwest's Foremost Educational Center; Space City, USA; The City of Gracious Living; The City of Magnolias; The Cultural Center of the Southwest; The First City in Texas; The First Cotton Port; The Headquarters of the International Oil Trade; The Home of Astronauts; The Land of the Big Inch Coil Pipeline; The Largest City in the South; The Largest City in the Southwest; The Leading Industrial City of the Southwest; The Leading Spot Cotton Market; The Metropolis of the West; The Miracle City; The Oil Center of the World; The World's Heart Transplant Capital.

So can anyone think of a better metaphor for Houston than "kaleidoscope?"

A New Frontier in the Old Dominion

WGH-AM/FM



Chapter 24

In the spring of 1985, the communications industry seemed at times to be as much the subject of stories as the reporter of them. At 140 East Market Street in York, the FCC's new rule allowing one owner to hold 12 AM and 12 FM stations occupied a prominent place on the Susquehanna agenda. Not only had the ownership ground rules been liberalized, but the interminable waiting periods for FCC approval of transfers were mercifully shortened. No sooner had the New Year begun than an AM/FM combo became available in the Tidewater section of Virginia.

Art Carlson Remembers It Well

We would never be in Norfolk, Virginia, if it weren't for the "12 and 12 Rule." Norfolk was a market we were interested in, but as we grew and entered bigger markets, it was always just a bit too small for us. Tidewater is a very interesting market. Depending on your count, Norfolk/Virginia Beach/Newport News is the 33rd or 34th market in the United States—certainly a growth area of the Sunbelt. It has a tremendously stable economy, based heavily on military personnel and national defense—and, of course, it is the largest market in Virginia. For Susquehanna, though, it had been kind of passed by in our thinking.

So when we were presented the station, I quickly looked at it and said, "No, it's just not what we're looking for." I sent the presentation up to Louis and got a note back saying, "Why aren't you interested in this? Did you see the price?" Well, yes, I had seen the price, but if I wasn't interested in it, the price didn't seem to mean

much. So Louis said, "Why don't you take another look at it?" Which we did.

Curiously, Susquehanna was the first large group operator to own a radio station in the Tidewater area. WGH-AM (5 kw, 1310 kHz) and WNSY-FM (74 kw, 97.3 MHz) came into the Company fold officially on May 20, 1985. The main facilities of both stations were located at 2302 West Mercury Boulevard, Hampton, Virginia. The purchase represented another addition to the Susquehanna strip market collection, since the Census Bureau's official consolidated metropolitan statistical area (CMSA) is Norfolk/Virginia Beach/Newport News. Besides the three major cities that make up its CMSA cluster, these smaller municipalities form the rest of Virginia's number one market: Chesapeake City, Gloucester, James City, Poquoson City, Portsmouth City, Suffolk City, Williamsburg, and York. The Tidewater area's population by the mid-1980s was 1,302,700. Other vital statistics: 69.8 percent of the market was under age 44; the median age was 28.2 years; effective yearly buying income ran \$18.7 billion; and the average yearly household effective buying income was \$26,912.

The region's natural endowments have contributed to Tidewater's potential as a good radio market. The locale's big and growing tourist industry and significant naval and maritime presence, even after defense-spending reductions, offer a particularly young and responsive radio audience. In addition, the absolutely mandatory use of the automobile as the means of commuting makes for a high incidence of in-car listening. As Mr. Carlson has observed, "Look around the country and you really have many of the finest radio markets where you have the greatest driving commute."

WGH began life in 1928 as Virginia's fifth radio station. The original call letters were, interestingly, WNEW, changed in 1934 to its present WGH identification, which reportedly stood for World's Greatest Harbor. Like many radio stations of early vintage, WGH had a long newspaper connection. The actual founder was Ed Bishop, who sold out to the *Daily Press* in 1936. The *Daily Press*, owned by the Bottom and Van Buren families, would leave a lasting imprint on WGH.

Throughout the thirties and forties, WGH operated as a conventional network affiliate. In 1956, following the decline and fall of radio networking, WGH went independent. In time, it became one of the most successful Top 40 stations in the East, and for over 14 years, it held first place in the Tidewater radio race. When Top 40 was in full flower, it was not uncommon for WGH, Norfolk, to be doing things usually associated with Top 10 markets. In 1964, disc jockey Gene

Loving traveled to England where he spent a week with Beatle George Harrison. WGH concert sponsorships and tie-in promotions included Top 40 artists such as Diana Ross and The Supremes, Tom Jones, Ray Charles, and Sonny Bono.

WGH-FM, which went on the air in 1948, meanwhile, built a reputation as a superior Classical Music station. Sandy Goldberg, first general manager of WGH-AM & FM under Susquehanna's ownership, is quick to acknowledge that "when you went up the East Coast, there were three fine Classical Music outlets—WGMS in Washington, D.C.; WQXR in New York; and WGH-FM in Norfolk."

When the *Daily Press* decided to sell its Norfolk AM/FM combo in 1983, WGH-AM had long since yielded the leadership status of its glory days. Nonetheless, it still enjoyed a respectable position in the middle of the Tidewater radio pack. However, WGH-FM, which had never pursued the numbers, was as popular as ever with the classical crowd. Into this milieu came Comcor, Inc., a Dayton, Ohio, health services firm, to purchase the station. Comcor's first move was to dump WGH-AM's by-then modified Top 40 format, substituting an oldies approach. Also into the briny deep went the WGH-FM call letters, and up sprang WNSY in its place, cranking out an Adult Contemporary format. And then, on the very day Mr. Goldberg went to Norfolk for his first look and listen, WGH-AM scrapped the oldies and turned its dish toward a satellite Country network.

"In a year and a half," mused Mr. Carlson, "instead of fulfilling Comcor's dream of broadcast riches, WGH-AM and WNSY became bleeders, and the owners decided to get out of the business. So we got a very fortuitous buy—and there was no one bidding against us."

One of Susquehanna's first moves was to close down a number of studios that served no useful purposes. "They had more studios," said Charlie Morgan, "than most stations had offices, storage rooms, production rooms, newsroom, and studios, together." New call letters, WRSR, replaced WNSY in September 1985. The slogan adopted was "97 Star FM." Considered as format possibilities were Contemporary Hit Radio, Adult Contemporary, Album-Oriented Rock, and Urban. When the research was digested and analyzed, it indicated Contemporary Hit Radio for WRSR. Dave Kennedy described WRSR's initial audience reaction as "satisfactory, but not yet up to expectations."

In 1986, the WRSR call letters were officially dropped, following research which demonstrated an existing association in the minds of listeners between the call letters WGH and Contemporary Hit Radio. The WGH-FM call letters were brought back, and the station became known as "97 Star/WGH."

Over on the AM side, under Susquehanna's stewardship a brand new format approach aired. "Travelers' Radio" was a format designed for the tourist influx into the Tidewater vacation area, rather than for local residents. The format featured a constant stream of features aimed at giving tourists the kind of information normally found only in printed form.

This format was designed for sales, not ratings. It enjoyed reasonable success its first and only year. The biggest problem was that the Tidewater's vacation season, even counting the "shoulder" season, lasted eight months, at best. This created a rather embarrassing program void the balance of the year. Upon cold reflection, the format was dropped after a one-year try.

Early in 1986, WGH-AM made a strong commitment to sports. The baseball lineup included the Triple A Tidewater Tides' complete schedule, the CBS Game of the Week, the American League and National League Championship Series, and the World Series. Also included were college football, the NFL's Monday night football game, horse racing's Triple Crown events, University of Virginia basketball, and "Sports Talk" nightly. A mainstay of the Sports format was long-time local sports voice, Tony Mercurio. Mr. Mercurio's "Sports Talk" show was the most prominent element of the program lineup. WGH-AM duplicated the programs of 97 Star/WGH during non-sport periods.

In April 1987, Susquehanna's new AM/FM combo moved to a new address: 281 Independence Boulevard, Pembroke Building, Virginia Beach.

But, alas, that star at 97 failed to shine as brightly as Susquehanna had hoped. Despite the heroic efforts of a dedicated staff, the station's growth failed to meet the Company's goals. Late in 1989, the decision was made to sell the WGH properties. Larry Grogan pulls no punches in a candid look back:

WGH/Eagle 97 Redux—Larry Grogan

Norfolk is a very southern market. It's a city that, in many respects, is isolated and doesn't like outsiders, especially Yankee outsiders. I think we were thought of as "big guys."

After a couple of years of working with the station and becoming familiar with Norfolk's advertising community, I concluded it was really a cluster of five or six smaller cities all put together—Norfolk, Suffolk, Hampton, Chesapeake, and Virginia Beach, and so on. All of these are politically separated, as well as geographically separated by a lot of water, bridges, and tunnels. And each one is very protective of its own piece of turf. To call that all one market is easy

for Arbitron and the big marketing people to say. Those who are selling products see it as a big market, but those who are buying products see it as a group of smaller communities. I don't mean this in a negative way, but people from Hampton, for example, don't go to Norfolk. It's unheard of for them to think of going across the bridge. That doesn't mean they don't do it at all; they just don't *think* they do it.

So in light of such a realistic assessment, it was decided to leave Norfolk and concentrate the Company's energies and resources elsewhere. A buyer was found, and when that fact became known at the stations, it did, in the words of Mr. Grogan, "great damage internally to our staff. They saw an end to their careers at the station and to their future competitiveness on the street. They felt they were just being kicked around in a very short-term, dying venture."

In the interim, while the prospective new owner was planning the details to make the purchase official, General Manager Goldberg and Susquehanna parted company. Larry Grogan and Wayne Olson, the administrative manager at the Dallas stations, took over the management reins through the summer of 1990. But the sale fell through, and as Mr. Grogan put it, "We now had to go back and call Lazarus out of the tomb. At that moment, we just felt that all things had to have a brand new beginning."

With a renewed commitment to the stations, Russ Schell, WFMS operations manager, was appointed station manager in Norfolk. Mr. Schell, as a sort of laboratory exercise, had put together a format he would use if he were programming competitively against WFMS. He called his format "The Rebel," a mix of country and rock music. Thus, on Labor Day 1990, "The Rebel," to be identified as "Eagle 97," landed at WGH-FM in Norfolk.

The competition was not too surprised at this move, given Russ Schell's background. One station, which itself was planning to change formats, actually began programming Country music a few days before Eagle made the switch, in an attempt to thwart the plans of WGH. But it was all a ruse, and within a day of the launch of the Eagle, the competitor backed down and switched formats again.

Audience response to Eagle 97 was swift and positive, especially among its targeted 18- to 34-year-old listeners. The switchboard was flooded with calls, and the stepped-up promotional appearances drew countless converts from the competition. But despite the early signs of success on the programming side, the sales effort proved to be a formidable challenge. The Tidewater business community appeared to be taking much more of a "wait and see" attitude than did those first eager listeners.

"It was at this point," Mr. Grogan recalled, "we realized how really parochial—and I mean that in a positive way—Norfolk was, and that we needed someone within the marketplace who had local credentials to come in and shepherd the business." That someone was Bill Whitlow, who joined Susquehanna in June 1991. Mr. Schell, meanwhile, had found a challenge more to his liking in Atlanta.

Mr. Whitlow, who had been sales manager at WNVZ in Virginia Beach and WNOR in Norfolk, was successful in wooing over from the competition two well-known Norfolk personalities, Jimmy Ray Dunn and his sidekick, Jay Pendergast. "These personalities," Bill Whitlow observed, "brought a lot of youth, fun, and a whole different look of country music to Eagle 97. We did a lot of promoting the fact that Jimmy Ray Dunn was joining the station, and it caught on real quickly. Now, there's just a love affair with these guys."

To freshen up programming, afternoon personality Smokey Rivers was promoted to program director. The original Eagle 97 Country/Rock format clearly succeeded in its mission of attracting listeners and differentiating the station from its competitor. Smokey Rivers initiated the next evolution of this format, taking the station to a broader, more mainstream Country sound, which is serving the station well.

Mr. Dunn became the focal point of station public service events, one of which is the annual 25-mile March of Dimes walk from Williamsburg to Virginia Beach. The Radiocard was introduced and was an immediate and growing success. Now solidly established as one of Tidewater's two major Country stations, Eagle 97 runs the full gamut of promotional activities associated with an active, major station.



In early 1991, WGH-AM changed programming from Sports to a Country format provided by the Satellite Music Network (SMN). The reason for this change was to complement the now Country-formatted Eagle 97. It was as Mr. Grogan described it, "completely automated, computer-driven . . . probably the most high-tech radio station we have yet to run in the Company.

"But while that may be the technology of the future," he added, "we didn't stay with it mainly because the opportunity for sports in AM programming became a more acceptable format nationwide, and was really beginning to build its own identity."

During the period of automated Country programming, the popular Tony Mercurio "Sports Talk" show remained on WGH-AM.

Also, certain sports play-by-play was continued. Thus, it was not as confusing as it might seem when WGH-AM switched back to All-Sports in early 1992. Part of the justification for this move was the creation of a new national network, Sports Entertainment Network (SEN), which allowed the station to easily maintain a sports presence 24 hours a day. Play-by-play of local sports events and other sports features were expanded.

Now WGH-AM is truly the sports headquarters of the Norfolk area. A wide range of sports is featured: in baseball, the Atlanta Braves and Chicago Cubs; in football, the Dallas Cowboys, plus local high school and college games. In basketball, both Old Dominion and James Madison now present their fall schedule on WGH, along with major University of North Carolina games. In addition, complete, year-round coverage of NASCAR races is a major program ingredient.



Susquehanna's experience has served to underscore the extreme volatility of the radio business and how very different each market is. Companies, like individuals, are never too successful or too seasoned to learn.

WGH-AM, the only three-letter call sign Susquehanna has ever had, is a set of call letters that, with its more than 60 years of history, conjures up an image of dominance. However, over recent years, with at least five format changes or major modifications, its image is perhaps somewhat blurred. WGH-FM has had only two format changes, but they have been major ones. Now, at last, both stations are strongly positioned in the market and have found a course that should lead to long-term success.

Ironically, with all this change, there is one unique constant at WGH in the person of sales representative Bill Walker. Mr. Walker has worked continuously for the stations for 37 years. When he started in 1955 as an announcer, WGH had yet to move into Top 40. During his career, he was for a time promotion manager, then moved into sales and sales management, and now is a leading account executive for the stations. No wonder he is known locally as "Mr. WGH."

With a goal of developing the same kind of operational stability that Mr. Walker represents, WGH-AM and FM are poised to capitalize on the growth potential of the Tidewater market. Since Susquehanna purchased the stations, a majority of the other stations in the market have been sold, many for two or three times Susquehanna's investment. This is further evidence that Tidewater is maturing as a radio

market, and, to paraphrase an old bromide, "WGH is a success about to happen."



And so our chronicle of Susquehanna Radio's first 50 years ends by coincidence in the Tidewater region of Virginia, where Captain John Smith started the first English-speaking colony in North America. Like Captain Smith's modest beginning, with a hardy band of adventurers in 1607, Susquehanna 385 years later would grow from a small operation in York, Pennsylvania, in 1942, to a nationwide group of 15 stations employing over 650 persons in 1992. Captain John Smith knew that success was a journey, not a destination. So it will always be with Susquehanna.

Afterword

The five decades of Susquehanna Radio not only span a remarkable period of American history, but a period of dynamic change in the world of communications.

In 1942, television did not exist, except as a technology. Cable television probably wasn't even a thought by any futurist of that time.

Newspapers were the primary communication and advertising medium, with most large cities having multiple newspapers, and almost every town large enough to be capitalized on a map having a daily paper. Today, two-newspaper markets are as rare as rain in the Sahara, and over the past 50 years, a daily newspaper has closed on an average of every 70 days. Recently, however, that pace has accelerated to one every 20 days.

Magazines were dominated by Life, Look, and the Saturday Evening Post, plus an upstart Reader's Digest, as well as two growing news publications, Time and Newsweek. Fifty years later, the three biggest have been long gone, with only the Reader's Digest surviving and prospering. The news weeklies survive in a totally different form. However, today there are more than 2,000 consumer magazines to be found on newsstands.

Radio in 1942 consisted of some 900 commercial stations, as opposed to the almost 10,000 that are in operation today. FM, like TV, was a new technical development not available to consumers. Network radio was the dominant entertainment medium, and any station not affiliated with a network had trouble making ends meet.

Each passing decade in radio has seen dramatic change from the beginning to its close, and Susquehanna Radio's history has remarkably paralleled the basic changes of each decade.

The primary occurrence of the 1940s was, of course, World War II. Prior to the war, there were only 882 radio stations. A handful went on the air during the war, including WSBA. As we returned to a peacetime economy, AM radio stations popped up everywhere, with

any city of size getting a radio station, and major markets more than doubling the number of facilities. By the end of the decade, most new stations allowable under the FCC's technical rules had already been created. Television was not yet a competitor, but rather was a healthy infant about to experience a major growth spurt.

In 1949, Susquehanna Radio consisted of WSBA (and simulcast WSBA-FM), a rather typical single station licensee during that period. Group operators were primarily networks and large industrial companies.

The 1950s witnessed a dramatic transformation of radio. Starting the decade as the primary medium for comedy, drama, and live music, radio's entertainment role diminished to one of virtual irrelevance in one short decade. The growth of television viewing was so dramatic that by the late fifties, the "death of radio" was becoming widely predicted.

However, during the latter half of the fifties, a new kind of radio had developed and was growing rapidly. As network affiliates lost audience, independent stations programming music and news and featuring local personalities were garnering the major share of listenership in market after market.

Susquehanna became a group operator in the late fifties with the addition of WARM and WHLO. In each of our three markets, we successfully put a Top 40 format on the air and quickly achieved market leadership.

The 1960s, ironically, were a period of relative calm in radio. The switch of listenership from network-based to locally produced programming was nearly complete by the end of the sixties. In addition to Top 40, several other music-based formats were now enjoying success in a majority of markets. FM was constantly referred to as "tomorrow's radio," but only a few hardy pioneers were finding success on that part of the spectrum.

Susquehanna expanded rapidly in AM and began experimenting with and developing future plans for FM. As the 1960s drew to a close, the Susquehanna group consisted of six AM stations and one FM.

The 1970s featured such extraordinary audience gains by FM that by decade-end, FM had switched places with AM in terms of total radio listening. As a result, a plethora of FM stations emerged as significant audience factors in each market, basically doubling the number of major competitive factors. The explosion in the number of viable stations fueled revenue growth, and to a lesser extent, industry profitability. However, the high inflation rate of the period

overstated both, and tended to mask the fact that the number of truly financially successful stations was actually growing smaller.

This was the decade of Susquehanna's greatest expansion. During a three-year period starting in 1971, seven stations (six FM) were acquired. The FCC's "7 and 7" ownership rule was still in effect, and the Company constantly flirted with that limit during the second half of the decade. By acquiring FMs in much larger markets than those where we had AMs, Susquehanna was transformed from a middle-market group into a major-market entity.

The booming 1980s featured dramatic growth with a new twist. The financial community discovered radio as a potentially highly profitable business. Spurred by revenues rising faster than inflation rates, a buying and selling frenzy occurred which drove station values up to seemingly unsustainable levels.

In September 1984, the "7 and 7" rule was discarded in favor of a "12 and 12" limit. The expansion of group operators became commonplace. Further, a lot of new radio companies appeared, many new to the medium. At the same time, changes in FCC rules allowed the creation of many new FM stations, and many suburban and rural stations were allowed to move into major markets. As a result of all this, competition heightened sharply.

The first part of the decade was probably the healthiest financial period for radio since the mid-1960s. However, by the end of the decade, the number of competitors in most markets had grown so dramatically that it was increasingly difficult for a majority to operate on a truly successful basis. This, in turn, fostered greater specialization of program formats. Now most stations delivered a smaller audience share, but one that was highly targeted. Virtually all audience and sales growth was in FM, and an increasing number of AM stations started to become liabilities.

During this buoyant and flamboyant decade, Susquehanna Radio again expanded rapidly, especially in FM, reaching a peak of 19 stations in the late 1980s. This growth established Susquehanna as a coast-to-coast operator and one of the top dozen companies in radio. Our continuing expansion required significant changes in management structure and operational approach.

The early 1990s can best be characterized as the "hangover after the party," not just for radio, but for all media, and, indeed, most consumer businesses. As a result, no period in radio history has been so financially treacherous, and the industry has struggled to operate successfully in a difficult environment. Susquehanna coped with these problems during this era, and sharpened its focus on the primary goal of operating successful stations.

While no one can predict the shape of radio by the end of the 1990s, it is certain to be markedly different than the situation that prevailed as the decade began. In all probability, a significant shake-up and shakeout will occur, resulting in an even more sharply focused approach by those stations that are truly successful.

Throughout each of these five decades, Susquehanna has changed much along the lines that the industry has changed: often ahead of the field, sometimes behind, but always responding to the shifting winds of competition.

Despite continuing changes in the business environment, government regulation, and competitive structure, the manner in which Susquehanna Radio has operated has not changed.

The basic philosophy of management and operation that Louis J. Appell, Jr., enunciated in 1969 is as true today as it was when first published. Hardly a word need be changed. (Please refer to Chapter 13.)

Not only has the operational philosophy been constant, but Susquehanna is also unique in the length of time that key managerial people have been involved. Chairman of the Board Louis J. Appell, Jr., has led the Company from the time it entered its second decade. My own tenure dates to the purchase of the second station. Executive Vice President Larry Grogan has been with the Company over 15 years, and Senior Vice Presidents Dave Kennedy and Charlie Morgan have logged 20 and 30-plus years, respectively. Programming Vice President Rick McDonald also belongs to the 20-year group, and Vice President, Administration Sue Krom has passed the 25-year mark. At the station level, longevity is equally significant. Managers Chris Huber, Dan Halyburton, Nancy Vaeth, and Joe Schildmeyer have been with Susquehanna more than 10 years, with Chris over the 30-year mark. We should not ignore two retired managers—Phil Eberly, who spent his entire working life of over 40 years at WSBA, and Al Saunders, who logged more than 30 years. This same kind of length of service, rare in our business, is also found among station department heads and employees in general.

But while the operating philosophy has been consistent, and a large portion of the management comprised of veterans, operational techniques have changed dramatically. For more than a decade, strategic planning, research-based programming, and other increasingly sophisticated techniques have replaced the “seat-of-the-pants” approach that characterized radio and Susquehanna decades ago. Our continuing goal is to anticipate change and to manage by using a maximum of modern ideas and techniques, tempered with the common sense and experience that a seasoned management team possesses.

The basic components of operating radio stations have not changed; only the way they are put together and are executed really changes.

Programming is our product, and its success is where everything starts. Technical operations have gone from tubes to transistors to integrated circuits. Maintaining state-of-the-art technology is mandatory to our overall success. Promotion has been a mainstay of Susquehanna stations since the beginning. As the decades have gone by, promotional activities have grown in size, scope, and importance.

While programming gives us the opportunity for success, sales are the backbone of success. Susquehanna has always had a strong sales orientation. As much time, effort, and money are spent to consistently improve our sales effort as on any other phase of operation. The final operational component is general and administrative. Change is just as continuous in this area, with the move from adding machines to calculators to computers but one example of the constant improvement in internal operations.

As the Susquehanna group operation grew and changed, the need to share ideas among stations grew as well. After years of exchanging information through the postal services, over the telephone, and then by fax machines, Susquehanna, in 1991, introduced a computerized communications network called SusCom. The SusCom forum allows the stations to pool and share their knowledge through a message board system, a file library, and on-line conferencing. SusCom is just one additional service available to the Susquehanna group that will enable the stations to become more customer-focused and the top marketing resource in their markets.

But the bottom line of Susquehanna success can be summed up in two words . . . its people. It is the people whose individual and collective commitment, creativity, and hard work have made the Company what it is and what it will be. The "average" Susquehanna radio employee has a winning attitude, is secure in his or her knowledge of past successes, but is always looking to the future with an almost fanatical belief in radio.

On September 1, 1992, Susquehanna Radio completed its first 50 years—the next day, the second 50 began.



*Arthur W. Carlson, President
Susquehanna Radio Corp.*

A Note on Sources

For my research in writing this book, I relied on interviews, correspondence, memos and related documents, published material, and program tapes.

In regard to the interviews, I conducted more than one hundred, interviewing a number of persons several times. Given the fallibility of memories, a rare incorrect fact or date taken from these interviews may have slipped through, despite the presence of an elaborate fact-checking safety net every step of the way. However, I derived most of the hard facts and all of the statistics from documented sources. These, and all sources, are detailed in the bibliography that follows.

For my bibliography, I was able to draw on scores of useful books, reference works, and articles pertinent to the period covered by this book and touching in some way on Susquehanna's history. I found most of them enlightening; however, rather than attempt to list them all, I will confine myself to those I found most informative and provocative.

In listing these published sources, I have divided them into three categories—books, newspapers and periodicals, and miscellaneous. Among the books are three kinds which I found helpful: those that have to do with broadcasting history; those that focused on popular music and programming; and, since the events in Susquehanna's 50-year span did not take place in a vacuum, several works that cover the history of the period. The newspapers and periodicals stand as indispensable sources and provided me with both local and national perspectives, as well as specific information on various aspects concerning or affecting Susquehanna and/or its stations. In the catch-all miscellaneous collection I have included yearbooks, encyclopedias, almanacs, fact books, directories, rating surveys, annuals, and other unclassifiable reference materials.

P.K.E.

Selected Bibliography

Books

Barnouw, Erik. *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*. Vol. 1, *A Tower in Babel*. New York: Oxford, 1966.

Dr. Barnouw's three-volume history is acknowledged as the standard work in this field. Volume 1 covers broadcasting's beginnings and traces the story to 1933. In this volume, as well as those that follow, the author examines the broadcasting phenomenon as a vivid portraiture of American social history and business enterprise.

Barnouw, Erik. *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*. Vol. 2, *The Golden Web*. New York: Oxford, 1968.

In this volume, Professor Barnouw picks up broadcasting's odyssey and carries it to 1953, a period when the giant radio networks had their great impact on American civilization; hence, the "golden web" of the title.

Barnouw, Erik. *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*. Vol. 3, *The Image Empire*. New York: Oxford, 1970.

The author continues his definitive history, chronicling television's arrival and growth, and how the sight-and-sound medium built upon the ramifications of the radio networks. Dr. Barnouw's work here reveals how show business, politics, merchandising, and war merged in unprecedented ways to define a new era in American life. Surprisingly, he ignores the resurgence of radio that began in the late fifties.

Brooks, John. *The Great Leap*. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.

This is one of several studies I used to absorb the social, cultural, and industrial climate of some of Susquehanna's first 50 years. Brooks' theme is the multiple revolutions in American life between 1939 and 1965.

Carr, Patrick, ed. *The Illustrated History of Country Music*. New York: Doubleday/Dolphin, 1980.

A nice companion to Bill Malone's monumental history, this book is fan-oriented but can easily serve as a modest introduction to the field. Unfortunately, it is marred in spots by hype (e.g. Chapter 11: "The Death of Rock, the Rise of Country").

Eberly, Philip K. *Music in the Air: America's Changing Tastes in Popular Music, 1920-1980*. New York: Hastings House, 1982.

Popular music, the staple of modern radio, was an important program component since the medium's beginnings. From the improvised musical offerings of the 1920s, through the structured order of the networks' heyday and into the contem-

porary period. the book examines the symbiotic relationship between radio and popular music.

Fornatale, Peter, and Mills, Joshua E. *Radio in the Television Age*. Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook, 1980.

The authors are mainly concerned with radio's growth since the advent of television. They discuss technological innovations (e.g., the transistor, car and clock radios), ratings, formats, the emergence of FM, the new teen culture, the modern radio pioneers (Alan Freed, Gordon McLendon, Todd Storz, Chuck Blore, et al). Although previewed in its preface as "a history of radio in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s," this work is more a survey than a history.

Frith, Simon, and Goodwin, Andrew., eds. *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*. New York: Pantheon, 1990.

Editors Frith and Goodwin, pop music writers, have assembled 35 articles in one volume to cover virtually every aspect of the "serious" side of popular music. Elton John once observed, "Pop music is just fun. That's one of the reasons I don't take myself seriously." Nevertheless, there are plenty who think otherwise. such as the writers of these essays, who discuss the social, cultural, economic, and technical aspects of the music. Many of the pieces are heavy going, but most are valuable in understanding pop music's influence on contemporary society.

Gotwalt, Helen. *Reminiscences of The Oldest Member: A Tribute to WSBA*. Unpublished monograph, 1986.

A longtime friend of mine and an invaluable resource through her WSBA years and beyond, Mrs. Gotwalt spent a long and significant portion of her life as an important behind-the-scenes writer, producer, and general cheerleader for Susquehanna's flagship station. Her 55-page WSBA memoir is valuable for appreciating WSBA's early days.

Hall, Claude, and Hall, Barbara. *The Business of Radio Programming*. New York: Billboard Publications, 1977.

Written by veteran *Billboard* radio/tv editor Claude Hall and his wife, this tome is a wide-ranging survey of radio's program side. It is divided into two parts: (1) research, promotion, production, disc jockeys, and careers in the field; and (2) interviews with managers, disc jockeys, and consultants who were well known when the authors published their book. A decade and a half later, most of the names are still recognizable and their influence remains extant.

Head, Sidney W. *Broadcasting in America: A Survey of TV and Radio*. 3d ed. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1973.

Professor Head's college text is a comprehensive survey of the outward characteristics of radio and television through 1972. The author avoids what he calls "encyclopedism" in favor of condensation.

Joseph, Peter. *Good Times: An Oral History of America in the Nineteen Sixties*. New York: Charterhouse, 1973.

The event-filled, personality-packed years that were the 1960s are viewed here from the perspectives of 125 political figures, entertainers, newspaper columnists, and other celebrity types, as well as a few less familiar observers. This is another study that enabled me to immerse myself in a particular period to aid in the reconstruction of the Susquehanna story.

Kennedy, David. *The Relationship Among Audience Image Perceptions of Identically Programmed Radio Stations*. master's thesis, 1976.

Susquehanna's Senior Vice President Kennedy, a WLQR announcer while attending Bowling Green University, was intrigued by the rating disparity between WLQR, Toledo (high) and what was then WLQA, Cincinnati (low). Both stations

were programmed virtually identically, yet their ratings showed marked difference in listener acceptance.

Kirby, Edward M., and Harris, Jack. *Star-Spangled Radio*. New York: Ziff-Davis, 1948.

Two radio veterans examine the medium's response to World War II challenges on both the home and war fronts.

Lessing, Lawrence. *Man of High Fidelity: Edwin Harvard Armstrong*. rev. ed. New York: Bantam, 1969.

Before Edwin Armstrong was lionized in the PBS documentary "Empire of the Air" (based on a book by the same name), this biography was the major work tracing the life of one of FM's pioneers.

Lichty, Lawrence W., and Topping, Malachi C. *American Broadcasting: A Source Book on the History of Radio and Television*. New York: Hastings House, 1975.

This is a valuable work for the broadcasting researcher. Consisting of essays and articles by radio and TV professionals, media writers, and communications' scholars, this is truly what the editors proclaim in their title, a "source book." They cover seven general areas: technical, stations, networks, economics, employment, programming, and regulation.

MacDonald, J. Fred. *Don't Touch That Dial: Radio Programming in American Life from 1920 to 1960*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979.

While most other histories of radio broadcasting during this period deal largely with the entertainment, regulatory, and technical sides of the medium, MacDonald relates the content of programs to the life of the average listener. Using anthropological, historical, and sociological perspectives, he attempts to capture radio's impact on the American culture during its first 40 years.

McFarland, David T. *The Development of the Top 40 Format*. New York: Arno, 1973.

One of the doctoral dissertations in the *New York Times*/Arno series on the history of broadcasting, McFarland's scholarly labors are presented here. Beginning with the pre-Top 40 era, the author traces the rise of the controversial and successful format, examining in detail some of its inner workings. The exhaustive research, including interviews with several of Top 40's innovators, means little is left to know about the subject after an encounter with McFarland's dissertation.

Malone, Bill C. *Country Music, USA*. rev. ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985.

Until Professor Malone's scholarly first edition appeared in 1968, no one had done a serious history of country music. The author's highly readable work traces the music's origins, its various hybrids, its growth, and its modern radio connection, leaving little about country music uncovered.

Naisbitt, John. *Megatrends*. New York: Warner Books, 1982.

When preparations for Susquehanna's history began in 1986, Naisbitt's book was already four years old. His publisher touted it as "a primer for the eighties that outlines where sophisticated technology is taking us, how we will be governed, and how America's social structure will change." Since broadcasting is a technology-driven industry, I periodically checked to see how his forecasts were comparing with technological reality. Naisbitt's siren song, almost shrill at times, heralded the twin themes that we would move from an industrial to an information-based society and that we could go from "forced technology" to "high tech/high touch." How prescient he turned out to be!

Phillips, Cabell. *The 1940s: Decade of Triumph and Trouble*. New York: Macmillan, 1975.

The author, a long-time member of the *New York Times* Washington staff, traces the decade in which the United States became the most influential nation on

earth. Phillips captures the drama of that remarkable era into which Susquehanna strode—the texture of everyday life, the tumult of domestic politics, and the sweep of international affairs.

Rogers, Donald I. *Since You Went Away*. New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1973.

This is a chronicle of what life was like on the home front during Susquehanna's nascent years. The book supplies a backdrop for understanding how World War II shaped WSBA program decisions and how the station maintained a delicate balance of public service and entertainment.

Routt, Edd, and others. *The Radio Format Conundrum*. New York: Hastings House, 1978.

Although 14 years have passed since Routt and his co-authors tried to cut through the arcane subject of formatting—the heart of radio programming—the subject remains bewildering in many respects. Still, the authors' ground-breaking work is a worthy resource for anybody attempting to understand why format selection and "fine-tuning" are the most volatile and challenging functions in broadcasting.

Sklar, Rick. *Rocking America: How the All-Hit Radio Stations Took Over*. New York: St. Martin's, 1984.

A former ABC Radio vice president turned consultant, who took the Top 40 format to ABC's flagship, WABC, New York, Mr. Sklar is not modest in recounting his accomplishments. Mostly through anecdote and reminiscences, he traces his connection with the rock radio genre. Although the book's title indicates a national perspective, most of its contents deal with WABC, and how it resonated through radioland.

Slate, Sam, and Cook, Joe. *It Sounds Impossible*. New York: Macmillan, 1963.

A trip down memory lane and a tribute to oldtime radio, this book by two former CBS executives furnishes interesting recollections and anecdotes important to understanding how little radio's modern incarnation resembled its earlier form.

Summers, Harrison B. *A Thirty-Year History of Programs Carried on National Radio Networks in the United States, 1926–1956*. New York: Arno, 1971.

Another in the *New York Times* "History of Broadcasting" series, this compilation lists pertinent information about the major network shows, including: seasons on the air, network, day(s) of the week, length, hour heard, sponsors, and, when available, ratings. The listings provide an excellent source for gaining a reasonably reliable picture of network radio programs during the webs' golden years.

Williams, John. *This Was 'Your Hit Parade'*. Camden, Maine: printed privately, 1973.

Top 40 Radio's inventors make no bones about their debt to "Your Hit Parade," one of network radio's longest running shows. In this year-by-year, week-by-week log, the author supplies everything one needs to know about the seminal program that ran from 1935 to 1958.

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Atlanta Constitution—Journal

Baltimore Sun

Billboard

Broadcasting magazine

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Dallas magazine
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Fort Worth Star-Telegram
Harrisburg Patriot
Houston Chronicle
Houston Post
Indianapolis Star
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Journal of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters
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Miami Herald
Newsweek
New York Times
Orlando Sentinel
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Philadelphia Inquirer
Providence Journal-Bulletin
Radio and Records
Radio-TV Mirror
Rolling Stone
St. Petersburg Times
San Francisco Examiner-Chronicle
Scranton Times
Sponsor magazine
Television/Radio Age
Toledo Blade
TV Guide
TV Host
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Wilkes-Barre Times Leader
York Daily Record
York Dispatch
York Gazette and Daily

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Cohn and Marks Memos

FCC Documents
Inside Susquehanna (Newsletter)
Hooper ratings
National Association of Broadcasters (Brochures)
National Jazz Service (Brochure)
Places Rated Almanacs
Pulse ratings
Radio Advertising Bureau (Factbooks, Brochures)
Radio Today (Arbitron Brochure)
Simmons' Profiles
SPC Today (Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff Co. newsletter)
Standard Rates and Data Service
Station and corporate correspondence, memos, brochures, promotion pieces,
manuals, and handbooks
Station program tapes
Television Factbook
Tune-in Yesterday (Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio)
Joel Whitburn Pop Annuals
World Almanacs

WGGB

KLIF★1190

STEREO
COUNTRY
INDIANA
95
WFMS

WHLO
CANTON STEREO 107 FM

WLTA
FM 100

wlqa
98.5 STEREO CINCINNATI


kis
of Florida

KNBR 68
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S SPORTS LEADER

The Adult
wghom
Contemporary **13**

WARM 103 FM

WHLO
AKRON-CANTON

SUPER Q
MUSICA
FM 108

WICE ★ 1290
ALL-STAR RADIO

KNBR 68
The Sports Leader.

I BELIEVE IN
WSBA
910

WAVE

102.5 FM

Best Country

★ KPLX 99.5

WLOR
STEREO TOLEDO 101.5 FM





Susquehanna Radio Corp.



KNBR /KFOG

San Francisco, CA

KRBE-AM/FM

Houston, TX

KLIF/KPLX

Dallas/Fort Worth, TX

WAPW

Atlanta, GA

WARM/WMGS

Wilkes-Barre/Scranton, PA

WFMS

Indianapolis, IN

WGH-AM/FM

Norfolk, VA

WERM

Cincinnati, OH

WSBA/WARM-FM

York, PA

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